### Prisoner 319

*by ur_the_puppy*

**Summary**

After being a prisoner in Azgeda Tower for over a year, Clarke Griffin is suddenly transferred to a new prison - Polis. Commanded by Lexa, the youngest and most ruthless Head of Polis Prison in decades, Clarke finds herself in a completely new environment - with no friend's or clue of what's going on Clarke must navigate her way through an unknown world.

All the while holding her secrets close to her chest.

It wouldn't help to have people know that she was a highly trained assassin who was supposed to be dead.

or

a prison au with a supernatural twist. raven is sarcastic, octavia is a human fireball, clarke is a deadly mess and lexa is, well, very gay

**Notes**

I have a very bad habit of jumping from story to story so I'm just gonna put a warning in advance that it may take a while to update sometimes. With that being said, I randomly had this idea the other day, and then an hour later had accidentally planned out an entire fic. whoops?

But i do hope you guys enjoy this first bit. I don't know how long this story is gonna go for,
but hopefully, it'll be a while.
Leave a comment and kudos if you like it! :D

(translations in end notes)
She doesn’t dream.

Or it’s more she doesn’t sleep. Though if she ever does, it’s nightmares that greet her. Not bad dreams, not good dreams, not one of those unexplainable dreams that leave you questioning yourself – it’s either waking in screams or nothing. She can’t do anything to stop it, so she’s learned to adapt, to stay awake as long as possible until exhaustion wins out. Sometimes, she’ll work to strain her muscles. Her body rising and falling, sweat bleeding down her neck with only her ragged breaths as music to pass the time. Other times she’ll use the plastic knife that hides snugly under her meager mattress, spending hours and hours scratching white lines into the grey cement walls, marking remnants of the world her heart aches to see. If you were to get close enough to those walls, you’d see the trees captured in their sway, the terrifying snarl of a rabid dog positioned right next to the ataractic scene of a lone wolf howling into daunting midnight skies, the moon so full you’re almost tempted to squint your eyes.

And sometimes, when the cracked mental walls that tremble at the mere jump of rabbit begin to shake, really, really shake – she crawls to the back of her cell and hugs her legs tight. She shuts her eyes and feels the phantom touch of her father ghost her skin, hears his chuckle and see’s the crinkle in his eyes.

His eyes always a different blue than the last.

She can’t tell which blue is his anymore.

She doesn’t cry. Or it’s more she doesn’t let herself remember. Though if she ever does, it’s nightmarish darkness that greets her. It slithers in through its worn-in hole, readying itself on her shoulders and fists. Its coils tighten and her knuckles clench, those grey walls their target.

Today though, she hasn’t let herself remember. So instead, she sits in the corner of her room with her head buried deep into her chest, blonde hair that hasn’t met water in weeks hiding any chances of seeing her face.

That is how they found her.

“Get up,” a gruff voice growled. “You’re getting an early breakfast.”

She didn’t move.

“This isn’t a request. Get up, now.” A new voice chimed in, this one lighter than the last. Feminine.

She still didn’t move.

She heard a sigh. “Fine.” It’s the gruff one. “We’ll do it the hard way.” The guard slides in the key, and the sharp click that bounces around the suffocating space has the girl’s head finally lifting. Both of the guard’s freeze. She watches them; eyes narrowed as they lazily adjust to the light. The barred door remains closed, the female guard’s hand already gripping tightly to her gun. The male guard, he hesitates before slowly pulling the door open, his lungs not daring to breathe. He gulped. “302-5. Stand up slow and put your hands against the wall. Don’t try anything or you’ll find a bullet in your head before you can blink.”
She stared at him. A cold dead stare that has freezing hands brushing against his spine. He throws a quick glance to the other guard, her face doing a poor job of masking the fear that they both feel. He offered a weak reassuring nod, which she gratefully returned. He turned back to the prisoner, those ice-cold blue eyes still on him. With tentative steps, he edged closer to her.

“Against the wall. Now.” He ordered, his voice holding a slight tremor. He cleared his throat. “I don’t feel like a fight this early in the morning.” The authority is back in his tone and the girl’s hackles rose. His steps almost falter, his hand jerking to his side for his gun. But she didn’t move. Just stared, an empty deadly gaze that shouldn’t scare him as much as it does. If it was any other prisoner then this could be over in a matter of seconds, but it wasn’t. It was far from. He didn’t know why he was even chosen to oversee this prisoner’s transfer, considering his youth to the job. Whether it was because he was either dispensable or trusted he didn’t know, all he did know – was that he was dealing with a highly trained assassin.

“You have till the count of five.” The female guard stated, pulling out her gun openly so the prisoner could see. She’s still staring at him. “Five.” The male guard creeps into the cell. “Four.” The prisoner’s eyes take on a dangerous glint. “Three.” The guards share a glance, apprehension and fear travelling between them. The female guard shuffled closer to the cell, her gun now raised. “Two.” The prisoner still hasn’t moved.

Frustrated the male guard wedged himself so he’s only an arm’s length away from her. “If you’re not on that wall Griffin by the next count I’ll kill you my damn self.” He muttered, their gaze now holding cold flames on both ends. His voice turned almost taunting, and he made the mistake of allowing a smirk on his face. “What? You got stage fright?”

He knew had gone wrong when the prisoner grinned widely at him, her canines almost appearing like fangs in the harsh light. “One.” She whispered.

By the time the guard had blinked her partner was on the pressed up against the wall, the prisoner holding him with his arm twisted behind his back. She almost shot, but she remembered the distinct orders not to kill and the very extensive list of punishments for if you did. “Hey!” she yelled, but it was too late.

She saw the other guard charging for her in the corner of her eye. The guard in front of her struggled in her grip, so with a calm that she shouldn’t have she pulled his arm up a bit more, the limb going opposite to what it should be. When the female guard finally came barreling into the cell she pulled him backwards, holding like a human shield. In speeds that broke laws she quickly ducked and plunged her hand under her mattress, snatching the jagged plastic knife and pressing it into the guard’s throat. As expected, the other guard stopped dead still.

“Put it down.” She ordered, her voice fighting to be above a whisper. She pushed the knife in a little deeper, the plastic struggling to break through skin. The prisoner grinned wickedly, forgotten excitement sparking her veins.

“Oh what?” she teased.

“Put it down!”

She rolled her eyes dramatically. “Oh come on, you really think shouting that is going to work?”

“I said-“

“Yeah I got you the first time. Listen, you answer a question for me, truthfully might I add, and I’ll let him go.” She cocked her head to the side. “Seem fair?”
“I’ll kill you for this you bitch,” the guard in her grip snarled. His words would have most people running for the hills, but the prisoner was unfazed – annoyed even. She sighed.

“I’m talking. Quiet.” She scolded. His face lit up red in fury, but before he get any type of hit in she kneed him hard in the back, almost sending him crumbling into the floor, her hold on him the only support. The guard groaned but she brushed it off, looking back over to the woman who was trembling a little in front of her. “So?”

“Okay.” She swallowed. Her knuckles gripped white to her gun. “What’s your question?”

The playfulness was lost to the prisoner’s eyes. “Where are you taking me?”

“To hell,” the guard wheezed, a broken chuckle following his words. He sagged in her arms for a moment. His word’s didn’t affect her in any way, and it enraged him that it was like he hadn’t said a thing. But with the pain still present in his back, he ground his teeth, restraining himself from acting out. The girl raised a brow at the female guard. She paused before she answered.

“You’re being transferred.”

Any last traces of amusement drained from the prisoner’s face. “What?” she breathed.

“You’re going away Clarke. Far way from this shithole.” He snickered. Clarke bit down her growl. Instead, she schooled her features like how her mother taught her.

“Where?”

“Polis.”

She dropped him. Well, she kicked him, his body slamming into the ground. Clarke took a few slow steps back, her arms raised. The guard scrambled to his feet with the help of his partner, bloodlust in his eyes as he stared the prisoner down. He looked almost animal. His eyes dropped to the prisoner’s bed and to the discarded gun that laid on it, but before his fingers could even twitch his partner was carefully walking forward, and cuffing the prisoner’s outstretched wrists. His gaped at the sight, wasn’t she just holding a knife to his throat? Without speaking his partner led the prisoner out, except as Clarke passed the guard she lagged a moment, and gently pushed his dropped jaw up.

“I’ll save a seat for you in hell.” She grinned, and then she was being hauled away.

When Clarke glanced behind her she could practically see the steam bursting from his ears. She threw in a wink for good measure.

The guard led her down copious amounts of halls, and unlike last time, she was conscious as they stuffed her into an armoured van with car walls so thick it was like iron. Though most of her wanted to start something, a fight, a chance of escape, she instead sat quietly as the truck plundered down roads she couldn’t name. Both of her wrist were cuffed either side of her, her legs tied together with a metal chain. With a sigh she pulled her legs up to her seat, the four guards in the back with her tensing and gripping their weapons. She closed her eyes. She let her head fall into knees, and she pushed hard enough into them until stars plastered her vision.

The emptiness was coming back.

The little ruffle with the guards before was fun; forgotten emotions cracking open a curious eye. But it was gone as quick as came, and like always that sinister numbness was coming back, sinking
into her bones and shutting off everything but the essentials to survive. Her time in Azgeda Tower had broken her somewhat, and it was thoughts that once terrified her that she now welcomes in like old friends that was slowly but surely shutting her down. The world was becoming further and further away from her, the glass that separates her from it thicker and thicker. At a time, she’d try and smash down those walls, furiously break through the glass and leap to the buzzing ground with fistfuls of laughter. But she was tired.

So, so, tired.

The cuts on her knuckles were barely visible now.

Clarke let her eyes flutter open briefly. There was no window to gaze out of, as she expected, so she looked over to one of the guards. She stared at the one in front of her, her manners and self-consciousness long forgotten. His skin was dark like midnight, packed muscle straining the confines of his black shirt. She scanned every inch of him before settling on his eyes. A depthless brown. His jaw was achingly sharp, and she could almost envision what they would look like in the hard lines of charcoal. She tried to focus on the image, drawing one of the only things that had kept her going for so long. It was strange, but to her art gave her hope. It gave her will, a will to keep going. To explore, to find, to create, that even if the world seems like an endless shithole there’s always something that gives her hands some ledge to hold on to.

It gave her will when she was beaten over and over again.

When she was left on the brink of death, when she was death itself, red that wasn’t her own dripping from her fingers. It seemed that creating art was the one thing that kept her human.

And Clarke found herself forgetting how to draw.

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“Get up, you’re needed.”

Lexa groaned, rolling over and stuffing her face into her pillow. Her sister Anya, who was currently trying to get the girl out of bed, sighed dramatically.

“You’re actually impossible.”

“I’m not impossible,” Lexa mumbled into her pillow. “I’m amazing.”

“Get out of the fucking bed Lexa.”

Lexa faked a wince. “Ouch, swearing early this morning.”


The brunette froze, and Anya knew she had got her. Slowly, Lexa removed her face from the painfully comfortable pillow, instead aiming her glare at the dirty blonde leaning against the doorway. “What?” Lexa bit out. Anya almost laughed. With a suppressed grin, she cocked her head to the side.

“Rumour has it we lose an hour.” She contemplated. Lexa basically tumbled out of her bed, swearing the entire time. The brunette rifled through her wardrobe as quickly as she could, clothes flying and littering the oak floor. Her sister didn’t help, merely watching in delight as Lexa, her loose brunette curls flying, desperately tried to ready herself. It was common knowledge that Lexa was never late, though Anya liked to think that it was more her peers were too scared to tell her
when she was. She of course would never admit that she may or may not have turned off the girl’s alarm, mostly because she liked to mess with her. Though it wasn’t meant in any cruel way, it was entirely the opposite in fact. Anya had seen the way Lexa’s job was pressing on her, each day adding more invisible bricks on her chest. It broke her heart but she’d never say. All she could do was try and lighten the girl’s day every now and again, throw in the snarky remark that normally earns her a playful glare. Sarcasm was already in her nature anyway, so it wasn’t like it was hard. Anya was pulled from her thoughts as Lexa plundered out from the bathroom, wet hair clinging to her back as she clutched tightly to a white towel.

“How much time I got?” she breathed, and the smallest slither of guilt nagged at Anya because Lexa was really not going to like what she was about to say.

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“An hour. Daylight saving’s is tomorrow.”

Lexa’s glare was so harsh it felt like the equivalent of being slapped. But Anya grinned devilishly.

“Yu joken-“

“Before you berate me,” Anya interrupted, stepping forward with a hand raised. “I actually do need you out of bed right now. I just wanted you up and dressed fast, and this was the quickest way.”

Lexa’s surprisingly detailed threat died in her throat. She frowned. “What do you mean?”

“There’s a transfer today. And before you give me shit for not warning you, I was just told about it half an hour ago.”

“What? How?” Lexa asked bewildered. Transfers normally came with at least a week of warning. Anya sighed, running a hand with through her hair.

“I don’t know. It’s high profile, and I was given next to no information on the prisoner. Only that she is extremely dangerous and needs to have at least double near triple the security compared to the normal gist. She has to have a guard on her at all times, preferably you.” Lexa nodded slowly, taking all the information in.

“Where is she transferring from?”

Lexa saw the hesitation in Anya’s hazel eyes. “Azgeda.” She looked like she wanted to say more, and Lexa instantly caught on to this, her gaze hardening.

“Chich.”

Anya sighed again. “Azgeda Tower.”

Lexa choked on air. She felt exposed, like a thousand pair of eyes was suddenly intruding on her. She swallowed the lump in her throat. “I thought they got shut down.”

“They did.” Anya agreed. “But it was reopened for her. Just for her.”

Lexa nodded numbly. Her legs not feeling like her own she edged over to the clothes strewn over her bed, glancing at Anya as a sign for her to leave. She kept the tremor out of her voice, years of training finally helping. “I’ll meet you by back. I assume that’s where they’ll hand her over?”

Anya bobbed her head. “Lincoln and Indra will be there.” With that she slipped out of the door, not needing to say goodbye. The moment Anya was out of the room Lexa released a repressed breath, her chest straining.
She had thought she was over it.

She had convinced herself she was, had told herself over and over again, ‘it wasn’t your fault, it’s wasn’t your fault.’ She’d repeat it every morning, the few lingering seconds before she’d fall asleep, in the middle of the night when rest didn’t come so easy. And with it, she chanted her mantra.

*Love is weakness.*

Still she remembered that day so clear and detailed that it would surprise her when she’d realise it happened over three years ago. She’d lost her three years ago, had seen so clearly the red that bled through her shirt three years ago, had heard her scream that still shakes her to the very core-

Lexa squeezed her eyes shut, and it angered her that despite that a few tears still leaked onto her cheeks. When the urge to cry finally passed she opened her eyes and wiped her face with the back of her hand. She could cry another time. With trembling hands she slipped into her uniform, the rugged charcoal jacket hiding the black long-sleeved shirt underneath, tight coal coloured pants decorated in straps and belts with a few daggers sitting snugly in their attached pouches. Sliding on equally black fingerless gloves and then clipping on her shoulder guard, she felt her own stoic mask click into place as well – the one thing that she’d always wear. Before she left her bare room, the space holding just the essentials, Lexa stopped by the bathroom to clean and prepare her face. She tried not to catch the eye of the person in the mirror, instead rushing in and deliberately averting her gaze as she turned on the tap and splashed ice-cold water onto her face. But it was pointless, because she still had to apply the mask around her eyes. Lexa gripped tight to the edges of the sink. Slowly, and reluctantly, she brought her sight up.

The person in the mirror stared at her.

And stared, and stared, and stared until she was forced to blink and the miniscule movement was enough to snap her from her daze. She let loose a breath, more than just air escaping her. Locking eyes with the woman in the mirror, the pain and emptiness so agonizingly clear she steeled her features, the defiance in her strong enough to wipe away the emotions inside and instead leaving the person who she needed to form to survive – *Heda*.

*Heda* didn’t feel fear. *Heda* didn’t feel pain. *Heda* didn’t feel love.

*Heda* was her one and only lifeline.

Lexa picked up the nearly used-up tin of face paint and with practiced care she began rubbing the black around her eyes, her fingers pressing it into her skin like muscle memory at this point. In the mirror she watched herself as if it wasn’t her, but someone else who just happened to look like her. And in a way, it was true.

She sped up the process in fear that tears would spill and ruin it.

She finished quickly, her cheeks only wet with paint, her eyes now holding a terrifying intensity with the black that surrounded it, circling around the green orbs and spreading outwards, arching up only for beneath to drip downwards in hard spikes. She then moved onto to her hair. Once it was dried, her nimble fingers worked the brunette strands easily, and after a few minutes when Lexa was pleased enough with her surprisingly complex braids she went to grab her gun, though she’s never used it, and the very last thing needed to finish her get up. Tentatively, she kneeled by the side of her bed, reaching under and pulling out a small red velvet box. Her fingers trailed fondly over the material, a tightening in her chest that she hadn’t noticed slacking slightly. She flicked open the box, and from the inside a small circular piece of metal stared up at her, the shape almost
gear-like. Lexa smiled faintly. Inside the case was also a special cream that acted like glue, and she squeezed out a small dot of the cream and dabbed it in the centre between her brows, carefully placing the gear there.

It was a gift from her mother, the only gift. An heirloom that passed through the family.

Or what was left of it.

This time, she managed to squeeze her eyes shut and have no tears escape. She finally left her room, cringing slightly when saw the numerous missed texts from Lincoln, her brother. She must have slept through them, because they were from about three hours ago, most of them asking whether Lexa knew about a transfer he was suddenly called on. Well, at least Anya wasn’t lying. With one last fleeting glance, her eyes catching on the one thing in the room that held any personal attachment, a photo of her, Anya and Lincoln when they were kids, she shut the door.

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Lexa arrived at the back half an hour later. It was a special wing, made to look intimidating as possible, blocking any chances of escape if the prisoner was stupid enough to try. Polis was known for the more dangerous criminals, or the ones who done more than just evade taxes. Of course they didn’t house an entire building full of psychopaths, but it did mean that the guards were highly trained and the bars were thick. Lexa, the only colour on her other than black being a thin red sash that hung just above her knees, stood with her back straight as she waited for the prisoner to arrive. Beside her Anya stood rigid tall, one of Lexa’s most trusted guard’s Indra standing next to her. Indra had been at Polis longer than she had, and it was her who was probably the closet thing Lexa had to a mother now. She had known her since she was a kid, Indra being a good friend of Lexa’s father, Gustus. Whenever she’d come over she’d always give Lexa a special hug, one just for her, she’d reach and grab that cookie that Gustus had hid from her on the top of the shelves, sneaking it into Lexa’s hand when he wasn’t looking.

And now, she worked under her. Lexa being the captain of the guards.

The Commander.

Lexa’s radio crackled to life, all the heads in the room snapping on to it. As well as Anya and Indra Lexa called for a few others, as she didn’t actually know who or what she was dealing with. She brought the radio to her mouth.

“Sha?”


“Kei, hod up.” Lexa clipped the radio back to her hip. She nodded to one of the guards. “Open the gate.”

“Sha Heda,” he murmured, scurrying off to obey her order. Lexa turned back to the front; her eyes deadlocked on the heavy metal door. Thick glass hugged the edges of the steel, allowing Lexa to see the blurred shapes of a black van pulling up, the side doors sliding open and what she think’s to be a blonde being pushed out. She threw one last glance to Indra.


She gave her one of her rare smiles; though it was a more a twitch of the lips. “Nou get yu daun Heda. Ha ai na teik ai hana.”
Lexa took a deep breath, ridding herself of her unwelcome nerves. It wasn’t really that she was nervous about casing a new prisoner, but it was more that she hated not knowing things and being left in the dark. She fought tooth and claw to be where she was today, a lot of that being just so she knew everything, so there were never any surprises. She decided the new recruits, she trained them, she knew each and every inmate. There were no secrets, and Lexa prided on herself on that.

Except for now, when she was being dragged out of bed at five in the morning for a transfer she had no idea was happening, and also, with hardly any information given to her about the prisoner herself, only that she was categorized as extremely dangerous.

That was it. A stranger who may or may not be able to fight, may or may not be a killer, may or may not be a real true threat.

She knew nothing, and it made her blood run cold.

In the corner of her vision, Lexa saw Anya loose a shaky breath as well. It was obvious the stress wasn’t just haunting Lexa. “Here we go.” Anya muttered.

The guard from earlier dashed into the room, tripping slightly as he went and began putting in the password to open the door, and through the distorted glass Lexa could see Lincoln punching in the key code simultaneously. With the shrill beep and click of the mechanism, the door unlocked.

And when it opened Lexa’s heart lodged itself in her throat.

The girl looked barely alive.

Her probably once shining blonde hair was dull, ridden in knots, though Lexa could see there was effort at some point to try and smooth them out; the task seemed abandoned. Her grey jumpsuit had numerous rips and tears, as if it was the only one given, smudges of black, dirt and red splotched randomly on the worn out material, the holes revealing pale skin that hadn’t seen the sun in months. But it wasn’t those details that caught Lexa’s attention; it wasn’t any of that somehow crushed yet enraged her.

It was the girl’s eyes.

Her faded blue, sunken in, ringed in red eyes. Bags of bruised blue sagging from underneath. Lexa masked her shock well, or at least she hopes so, but she did hear Anya’s catch of breath; saw Indra’s slightest widening of the eyes. And though there was a deafening emptiness to her, she merely cocked her head to side like a bird, curiosity brightening her features. She squinted those bleached eyes, her words seeming to finally snap the spell of silence in the room.

“What’s with the paint?” she asked, her voice holding no trace of fear, no trace of the nerves that for some reason still resided in Lexa’s stomach. But Lexa did hear the slight crack in it, not of uncertainty, but of exhaustion. She schooled her features to the coldness that they usually held.

“What is your name?” Lexa questioned, ignoring the prisoner’s own. But she didn’t seem phased by this, it actually seemed like she was expecting the brush off.

“You don’t have a clipboard with all my details?” she countered. Lexa’s gaze hardened, her eyes boring into the blonde’s. Of course she was one of the snarky ones. She gave the slightest tip of her head in Indra’s direction, and that was cue enough for her to an intimidating step forward. But the prisoner didn’t even glance in her direction, her eyes only stuck on Lexa’s. Lexa could sense the challenge. The assessment. Could see the gears in the girl’s head turning as she tried to decipher who was who.
“I only ask out of courtesy, Clarke.” Lexa said, and she could have sworn she saw her shiver. “But if you don’t want my respect then that is fine, we can easily work without it.” Lexa clicked her fingers, and a moment later Lincoln and Anya grabbed Clarke by the arms, one on each side. Though Clarke didn’t struggle which surprised Lexa, as she seemed like the type who thrived off of starting trouble. Instead, she raised her arms slightly, giving them a better grip on her. Lexa stepped closer to her, and she was pleased that for a heartbeat fear flickered in the pale blue. “You will address me as Heda. Here we hold very strict rules, and if break any of them, you’ll find the consequences particularly,” she paused. “Unkind.” Her words were like shards of ice and she knew it. Even then though Lexa could sense that they weren’t truly scaring her, something darker and colder residing already where her words were trying to attack, parrying and blocking them out. Their iron gazes still held, and the more Lexa looked the more she found… nothing. It was strange, but Lexa had always been good at reading people through their eyes, and she truly believed that they were the gateway to someone’s soul. And Clarke’s, well, they were just so empty. Scraps and remains of torn emotions scattered around the hollow space, crumbled dust where hope once stood, a drained lake where faith once ran free. It felt like staring on to a battlefield, all that was left from the carnage being anger and rage. Yet even then those emotions were suppressed by despair.

Lexa realised she had been staring at her for too long, and as she pulled herself out from the blonde’s hold, she caught sight of the slight confusion, the curiosity. And suddenly Lexa felt hollow. So, so, hollow.

She didn’t know why but suddenly it felt like her heart was caving in on itself. Like a spark of fire had flushed through her entire body, a harsh lick of flame that trailed and stung through skin and bone. It was pain but it wasn’t, and it was snuffed out as quickly as it came, like the blink of a God. For her entire life Lexa had always felt she was missing something, she’d never admit to anyone, but there was always a part of her that felt incomplete. That feeling now boomed through her like the war drums in her ears, an incoherent chant from thousands of souls that she’d heard all her life but blocked out.

And now it seemed like she was finally being able to hear the words.

Anya coughed, playing it off like a real one surprisingly well. Lexa’s gaze snapped to her sister’s, and the pounding in her chest relaxed when she saw the warmth there. She bobbed her head ever so lightly, the movement only noticeable if you were looking for it. Luckily for Lexa, Anya was.

Lexa turned back to Clarke, finding her expression unreadable. She shoved the foreign feelings inside of her aside. “If you have any problems, you come to me. Do not test me and we won’t have any trouble. You will be given a change of clothes and shower before you are escorted to your cell. Anya,” the dirty blonde nodded at her. “Will take around the facility. You will listen and do everything she says, as you will for any other guards here.” Lexa took a small breath, forcing the terrifying smile that normally take’s no effort. “Welcome to Polis.”

Clarke didn’t say anything. Instead she held that same intense stare, which Lexa could only assume to be a ‘yes’. Lincoln let go of Clarke’s arm, though he stuck close as Anya began hauling the prisoner away. Lexa stood still, her legs seeming not to work.

If Lexa had looked, she would have seen Clarke craning her head behind her to catch one last glimpse of her.

Lexa jumped when a gentle hand was on her a shoulder, her stiff shoulders slackening when she saw it was only Indra. Her brown eyes shone with concern.
“Are you okay Leksa?” Indra asked softly. Lexa swallowed, nodding stiffly.

“I’m fine. Go with Anya, keep an eye on Clarke. I have duties to attend to.” Lexa dismissed. Indra lagged a moment, unsure of whether to just let Lexa off the hook. Lexa sighed. “Go Indra. I am fine. Ai swega.”

Frowning Indra gave in, bobbing her head and disappearing down the corridor. When Indra was far enough away, all the air rushed out of Lexa’s lungs. She staggered a couple steps, blinking rapidly as she hissed at the remaining guards to get back to their posts. They did, even if they threw cautious looks in her direction, the doubt of whether they should step in drying their throats. But none wanted to deal with the consequences of disobeying Heda, so they let her be. And when Lexa was alone, she spun on her heel and let herself fall forward, her hands snapping out to grip onto a desk for support.

Something felt wrong, off. Or it was more this something had been made clear, that it had always been there. Always been in her.

That goddamn feeling of being hallow.

It rocked her to the core.

All it had taken was a look into that prisoner’s eyes, all it took was a lingering stare; and her heart shattered. Something tired and ancient had cracked open a curious eye, and Lexa’s body shook with the after effects. She snapped her eyes shut, forcing in soothing breaths to calm the uninvited turmoil that for some reason swirled and twirled relentlessly in her gut.

“Ste yuj.” Lexa muttered to herself, whispering the words like a prayer. “Ste yuj.” She repeated the words over and over, clinging onto the sound like a lifeline, the only ledge that kept her from falling down, down, down, into a bottomless cavern. Her breathing quickened, a strange dull ache on her shoulder suddenly burning. She kept chanting the words, over and over as she did whenever she felt hopeless. It was something she had picked up from her mother before she died. She had knelt by her five-year-old side, tears prickling her eyes. She’d interlaced her hand with Lexa’s tiny one, shaking fingers tucking stray hairs behind her ear.

“Ste yui strikon. I will be back.” Her mother assured, smiling sadly. Lexa whined, shaking her head.

“I don’t want you to go, I’m scared nomon.” Lexa pleaded. Her mother chuckled; the sound so broken Lexa didn’t know how she didn’t pick up on it then. The acceptance, the knowingness. She wasn’t going to come back.

“Sen ai op, I will tell you a very big secret okay?” She said, squeezing Lexa’s hand tight. “Whenever you are afraid, all you have to do is close your eyes, and remind yourself how strong you are. Fear is merely a feeling fyucha, it cannot hurt you, only confuse.” The older woman leaned forward, planting a soft heartbroken kiss to her daughter’s forehead. Lexa stared up at her with those wide green eyes, and the innocence in that green was almost convincement enough that she should stay. But she knew better, so instead, she brought up Lexa’s hand and kissed it fondly. “Ai hod yu in strikon.”

Lexa jerked away suddenly, her mind rushing back to the present. She cursed at herself from under her breath for letting her mind wander, for letting it remember and relive. Only now did Lexa realise that tears had slipped, leaving off ink trails in their wake. She was going to have to redo her mask. Lexa sighed, at least the sudden sensation from before had passed.
With a tired breath and exhausted legs, Lexa went back to her room.

Despite the fact that she was still a prisoner and Anya seemed to hold a permanent scowl, Clarke was beginning to feel the tips of her fingers of again. True to Heda’s word she was dragged straight into the showers, and she almost smiled in relief, but her lips twitched upwards instead in surprise. It had been a long while since she had had a shower. Since she had had been offered something, and the offer actually went through. It was… unfamiliar.

As expected she wasn’t allowed to shower in privacy, not that she wasn’t used to it. It barely fazed her really. She was glad it was Anya, a woman, that had gone in with her and not a man. Clarke can clearly remember in her first few weeks of her time in Azgeda Tower when Nia, the head of the Tower, had ordered that anyone take her to the showers to make herself at least half-presentable. He had gone in with her with a sneer.

She’s pretty sure he hasn’t woken up from his coma yet.

The steaming water wasn’t enough to completely lax her muscles, but God, was the sensation of it nothing short of amazing. She almost groaned but bit her tongue to save herself the embarrassment. She’d turned up the temperature till it was near blistering hot, but it seemed no matter how high she went, the outside warmth stayed there – outside. It didn’t rid of the coldness that had leached onto her soul. She had just finished her shower, rinsing herself of the dirt and grime that had been lingering on her for far too long when the scowling guard had finally said a word.

“Did you tour?” Anya had questioned, her eyes narrowing on the multitude of scars that dug into the blonde’s skin. There was barely a gap of smooth expanse where a white line didn’t cross, scars overlapping, or the larger ones, like the monstrous one on her stomach that hugged right from her hip to her navel, still gleaming an angry red. Still fresh, recent.

Clarke flinched as the memory of the blade slicing her stomach burned her retinas. Ice blue eyes found indifferent brown ones. She shrugged as if the cuts and scrapes that she wore were nothing, and not the clear torture that they screamed.

“I said no.”

Anya hadn’t questioned her further.

Now, with clean wet hair and a grey tracksuit and pants, Anya stood next to an empty cell. The guard flicked out her hand, indicating for Clarke to wait. She did. Anya tapped the iron bars with the blade of a dagger. The harsh sound made Clarke tense, and it took nearly all of her self-control not to reach forward those measly centimeters and snatch the blade from the woman, snapping it and throwing it down below. Instead Clarke clenched her fists and focused on the sensation of her nails biting her skin. That is, until suddenly there was movement in the supposedly empty cell.

“Piss off. I have another hour left.” A sleep-filled voice grumbled. Clarke craned her neck to try and see in the cell, surprised to find a lump hiding under a blanket on the bottom bunk. Anya rolled her eyes.

“Shut up Reyes or you’re cleaning the bathrooms.” Anya said, this time earning a halfhearted grunt from inside. Anya scoffed, her gaze flicking over to Clarke. “This is your cellmate, and this, your cell. As Heda said, don’t try anything or you’ll find yourself in solitary or worse.” Just as she was about to leave Anya lagged a moment, stopping by and leaning into Clarke’s ear. “I know what those scars are.”
Then she was gone, strutting down hall and snapping at any inmates who got in her way. Clarke blinked, swallowing the lump in her suddenly dry throat. She couldn’t know, could she? Clarke knew that she had been transferred for a reason, either Nia was trying some other method to make her talk or the crazed woman had finally given up on her, letting her fall back into the system. And while she hoped it was the latter, her better half knew it wasn’t. If it was the first reason, then it meant she could trust no one. Not that she already did that, but anyone could be linked with Nia, just ready to say something, to test her.

Push, push, push, until the one day she reaches her limits and snaps.

And Nia can drag her back into her clutches.

Clarke was so consumed in her thoughts she actually jumped when an unknown voice snapped at her.

“You gonna’ stand there all day?” her cellmate asked, cocking an eyebrow. Clarke eyed the woman warily. She seemed around her age, early to mid twenty’s, her skin a proud bronze with dark brown hair accompanied by equally dark eyes, something far ancient twirling in the depths of her irises. Clarke took the first step into what would probably be her home for a while, her breath catching and releasing with the fall of her foot. With one step in, the rest followed easily, and she found herself shrugging the bag given to her and throwing it up on the top bunk. Her cellmate, now up and sitting on the edge of her bed, examined Clarke like the blonde did to the brunette.

With nothing left for her hands to do, Clarke went to the opposite wall and let her back slump against it.

For a short while, the two women sat in a staring contest, the prize never clear and the winner never chosen. Again, it was Clarke’s cellmate who spoke first.

“You look like shit.”

Clarke almost smiled. “Should’ve seen me when I came in.”

“You were worse than…” she vaguely gestured up and down Clarke’s body. “This?”

“Much worse.” Clarke smirked. The Latina grinned in reply.

“Name’s Raven. You seem cool.” She introduced, holding out her hand. Clarke bobbed her head.

“Clarke.”

Raven’s hand still stayed outstretched. Her face wasn’t hurt from the rejection, but more curious.

“You a germophobe or something?”

Clarke stiffened, subconsciously bringing her hands behind her. “Nah. Just not big on shaking hands.” Raven eyed Clarke suspiciously, but let the topic drop. The girl let out a melodramatic sigh, flopping down onto her bed. Clarke smiled at the sight.

“You’ve woken me up an hour before breakfast. I could be asleep right now you know.” She turned her head on her pillow, her weirdly interested brown eyes landing on Clarke. “What time did you get here?”

Clarke shrugged. “Early. I didn’t catch it. I was kinda’ just dragged out of one cell and chucked into another.”
“Oh?” Raven perked up a bit, leaning against her elbow so she could fully face Clarke. “Where’d you move from?”

Clarke stayed silent. The hell was she even doing? She was being reckless, talking so openly with someone about her situation. It was dangerous and stupid, yet Clarke still found herself caving from the expectant look on her cellmate’s face.

She hadn’t had real human contact in months; it wasn’t really her fault that she wanted to talk to someone.

“Azgeda.” Clarke eventually answered, though her tone indicated for no more questions on the subject. Thankfully, it seemed that Raven understood. She nodded.

“Hm. I hear it’s bad down there, I’m just glad Azgeda Tower or whatever got shut down – I hear it used to be the worst of the worst.” Raven recalled, her nose scrunching in disgust as if the thought of the place repulsed her. “You should be happy that you didn’t have to go there.”

Clarke of course didn’t tell Raven that she already knew how bad the place was, how she had been in the damn Tower for over a year. How she knew it’s layout top to bottom, knew which room’s were used for what; typically growing darker and darker the higher the floors raised. Clarke didn’t say any of that; instead she hummed along to Raven’s words. “Yeah, I should be glad.” Clarke mumbled. Raven got up from her bed, the metal contraption wheezing.

“So. The million dollar question. What’d you do?”

Clarke grinned devilishly. “Thing’s that some people disagreed with.”

“Oh come on,” Raven groaned, throwing up her arms. “Why you gotta’ be cryptic?”

“Because it’s more fun,” Clarke lied, shrugging. “This way you I can watch you try and guess. And fail.”

Raven scoffed. “I’ve been housed with a psychopath. Wonderful.”

“In that case, I suggest you stay on my good side.” Clarke winked. Raven glared at her, though Clarke saw the playful glint in her eye. Grinning, she moved to clamber up on her bed, the shower having made her realise just how tired she truly was, when Raven snatched Clarke’s wrist as she shuffled by.

‘Hey do you- holy shit.” Raven breathed, her eyes widening. Clarke instantly retracted her hand, shoving it deep into her pocket.

“What the hell?” Clarke snapped. Raven just gaped at her, making Clarke ground her teeth.

“What?”

“Your hand…” Raven whispered. She gulped. “Can I… Can I see?”

Clarke stared at her, her eyes cold and hard. Slowly, and only because it looked like she was going to be seeing a lot of Raven so she may as well get it over with, Clarke withdrew her left hand. Raven’s wide eyes were trained on her fist as it lifted, as it finally found free air. Hesitantly Clarke let her fingers stretch.

“Jesus,” Raven muttered. On Clarke’s left hand, was a leather fingerless glove. And while from a distance it seemed ordinary, when looked at it closely, you’d see the way the material was sewn into the blonde’s very skin. Stitch by stitch, outlines red and mocking. It made Clarke sick to look
at. Had actually had her throwing up the entire first week when it was first sewn onto her. Clarke’s hand began to tremble; feather light bronze finger’s grazing the material. She jerked her hand away, hiding it behind her back.

When Clarke carefully looked up, she was surprised to find anger in the Latina’s eyes. Clarke frowned, but before she could speak Raven had interrupted her.


“Don’t bother with anger, it’s nothing. Just a little parting gift.”

“Gift?” Raven spat, “You call that a gift? It’s sewn into your fucking skin. That shit would’ve hurt…” she blinked a couple times, brining her burning gaze to Clarke’s. Confusion melded with the anger. “Why?”

“A reminder.” Clarke muttered darkly. She can still remember the tattoo hidden just under the suffocating leather, could practically see the mark through it. “It’s just a reminder.”

Clarke’s head snapped to the side, her face stinging from the slap. But in comparison to what she had just endured, what she had been subjected to for the past year; the hit was nothing. Clarke, her face bloodied and beaten, chuckled at the woman in front of her.

“Don’t tell me you’re finally getting soft on me Nia,” she taunted, a hand instantly smacking the other side of her face. Blood splattered onto the cold concrete floor.

“You are a disgrace.” Nia hissed, her grey eyes seething with fury. “A scrap of a human being.”

“I may be,” Clarke breathed, her eyes shining with defiance. “And yet you’ve gotten no where.”

Nia smashed her boot into Clarke’s belly, and she crumpled to the floor with an agonized cry. The deep wound across her stomach had just been stitched, and the rippled skin easily tore open. She hunched her body desperately to try and stop the spill of blood, the restraints that tied her hands behind her back making Clarke almost scream in frustration. Nia sneered at her from above.

“Stupid, stupid girl.” Nia chastised. “I’m the only reason you’re alive.” Her tawny hair was scraped back into a bun, leaving her soulless eyes so clear it was, or should have, been terrifying. She crouched down so she was level with Clarke, long white scars curving down her face like tattoos. “Give me what I want Clarke and this can all be over. I’ll let you go, you’ll never hear of me again.”

Clarke laughed coldly. “Oh we’re way past those lies Nia. You just wait, once I get out of here-“

“You’ll never escape Clarke, jos wan op.”

“I nearly escaped today,” Clarke panted, rage simmering right beneath her skin. She was losing too much blood and she knew it – she also knew Nia knew she knew. It was a test, to see if Clarke would cave and give in. The mere thought of it made her scoff bitterly.

“You did, and you’ve proved to me you’re more stupid than I thought.”

“It’ll only be so long,” Clarke purred. “I’ll never stop, and one day I’ll break through. And when I do, oh and when I do,” she leaned in close till their faces were inches apart. “I’ll tear you limb from limb and bathe in your blood.”
Nia smiled. And Clarke knew she was planning something. It didn’t help that blood was starting to trickle down her lip.

“You’re right.”

Two words. Two words that made Clarke pale, her skin crawl and the deep slice in her stomach seem like nothing.

And she was right to be scared.

“Guards!” Nia yelled, standing up suddenly. Clarke swore, gritting her teeth and trying to crawl away. But Nia pressed her foot down on Clarke’s stomach, and the scream that vibrated from her throat was barely human. A swarm of guards barreled into the room, eyes wide and cautious as they surveyed the room for any danger. Nia nodded in Clarke’s direction, the blonde only able to whimper. “Tell Roan it’s time, I want a healer on the prisoner now.” They scurried off, three staying back with their leader. One of them was a healer, and hesitantly he approached Clarke. The other guards tensed, their grips on their swords tight as the healer knelt down by Clarke’s side. She didn’t make a move to hurt him though, if anything she was just moaning in pain. The healer glanced in Nia’s direction, being greeted with an icy stare. It didn’t intimidate him.

“Do you want her alive?”

“He nodded and went to work, pulling up the prisoner’s white shirt to reveal the jagged scar, the slice just missing her crucial organs. It was a miracle she was alive. Oddly, it looked like some of the inside was partly healed, naturally, but he ignored it and instead cleansed the cut.

Clarke could distantly feel and see someone trying to stop the flow of blood. She thinks to be a he, the guard pulled out a roll of cloth and began to wrap it around her stomach, him having to lift her up slightly so it could go the way round. Pain shot through her body as if a clawed hand had wrapped her waist and was squeezing, tighter, tighter, till she’d be left in two. When he was done, Clarke’s head was still fuzzy, and she instinctually lifted her hand to place it on her stomach. But then she remembered where she was, and her hand was snatched back to her side so fast it slapped the ground.

“You finally done with me?” Clarke breathed, her voice cracked. Nia laughed, a sound she had never heard, and never wanted to hear again.

“Oh I am far from done. Roan,” her eyes found the man who had just entered the large hall, his face frowning as he saw the sight in front of him. “Do you have it?”

“Yes mother.” He said, looking over at Clarke uneasily. They locked gazes, and he hated that his mother was in the room with him.

She should have escaped.

Internally he swore at himself, if he had distracted them for longer, had made sure to check that cursed alarm that had completely slipped from his mind; she could have made it. Idiot. Clarke stared at him, and he hated that there was appreciation in her eyes, forgiveness.

She should have escaped.

Wordlessly, Roan, a tall you man with steel blue eyes, handed over a leather glove. Clarke furrowed brows, thoroughly confused, while Nia’s face brightened sinisterly, a curl on her lips that
was nothing short of malicious.

“It’s beautiful,” Nia whispered, her hand touching the material so gently as if it would shatter with a breath. Roan didn’t say anything, instead looking over to Clarke. He didn’t even know what he was making, just a request that his mother had given him. Craft a glove with the infusion of an Other’s blood. It had taken him a long while, but he’d finally done it, only to discover that it was for the prisoner who Nia had been toying with for months, for the one person who actually listened to him when he needed to speak, reminded him of the humanity that he thought he had lost. He reached into his pocket, pulling out a small black box. His hands trembled but he quickly steadied them, not wanting his mother to see.

She should have fucking escaped.

“Here.” She took the box, carefully flipping it open to the sewing utensils that lay inside.

“Thank you Roan. You’ve truly proven yourself today.” She praised, the slightest smile tugging at her lips.

That’s how he knew that something was wrong.

He scrambled to his feet but instantly three guards were on him, shoving him and grabbing him by the arms. Clarke yelled for him, Nia’s face so cold it felt like the temperature in the room dropped. She stared at Roan as if he were garbage.

“Do you honestly think I wouldn’t notice you sneaking around? Making friend’s with our guest here?” Nia hissed.

“Mother, please-“

“You disgrace me! At first I thought you were perhaps manipulating her, but I’ve seen your true motives. Trying to get her to escape. Branwoda skirsh, Yu na ste daun na deimeika gyon op.”

“No!” Clarke screamed, trying to pull herself up.

“Don’t!” Roan barked at Clarke, fear in his eyes at what she’d do. What Nia would do to her. “I’ll be fine, I promise-“

“Na em gonot.” Nia ordered, her expression bored. She flicked her hand, and Roan was being forcibly dragged from the room. Clarke desperately fought to be on her feet, the second she found them Nia harshly grabbing her by the hair and pulling her head back. “I want you to remember Clarke,” she muttered, Clarke almost throwing up at the feeling of her breath on her neck. “That when you watch him die tomorrow, his blood is on your hands.”

“I’ll drag your death on for hours you bitch,” Clarke snarled. Nia grinned. She shoved Clarke to the ground, but Clarke channeled her rage like a physical force, and though her hands were bound she managed herself up to shaky legs.

“I will break you Clarke.” Nia promised. “One day, one day you’ll snap. And I’ll be there to take you.”

“Never,” Clarke swore. “I’ll be dead before that happens.”

“Oh death is too sweet of a thing for you.” Nia smiled. The blood loss was beginning to make its presence known, Clarke blinking herself awake. Her head was hazy, so when Nia finally decided to make her move, she could barely keep up.
Nia clicked her fingers.

Guards stormed her.

She was on the ground.

The guards held her down.

Nia was grinning widely now, as she slipped on the glove, which, with a pinned wrist, Clarke couldn’t stop. She struggled, but she couldn’t stop it.

Then Nia pulled out the sewing materials from before, nodding her head for the guard to bring her hand forward.

The hand with her mark, a black tattoo that swirled. Pure panic paralyzed her, and Nia snatched the opportunity, digging the needle into her skin.

Clarke screamed.

Nia kept going.

Stitch by stitch, she made the process agonizingly slow, purposely so it would be as painful as possible. Eventually, Clarke’s throat was rubbed raw from yelling, her vocals chords too strained to keep going. Clarke’s screams, or lack of screams, didn’t affect Nia in the slightest. She kept going.

Stitch, by stitch, by stitch, by stitch.

When she was done, something terrifyingly cold and dark flooded Clarke’s body.

And Clarke felt herself crack.

-

Clarke hadn’t realised she had fallen asleep until she bolted upright, the stinging memory of her dream still too fresh.

“Fuck,” Clarke breathed. There was a reason she avoided sleep, and it was for this very situation. For remembering. She didn’t need reminders of the past; she didn’t need to relive moments that broke her in more ways than should be humanely possible. Clarke shook her head, squeezing her eyes shut and forcing a few slow breaths. She could do this. She just had to stay calm, focused. She almost felt the urge to cry, but the sensation darted away before she could fully register it. She wanted so badly to cry, to let the hell that burned from inside of her out.

She hadn’t cried in months.

Suddenly an alarm went off, and Clarke swiftly glided off the top bed in one fluid motion. She landed with barely a thud, her head ducking under the bunk and tapping Raven’s shoulder. Raven, groaning her disapproval at being woken up, swatted Clarke’s hand away and pulled the grey blanket over her head. The alarm still rang like a siren, and Clarke didn’t understand how Raven wasn’t panicking like her.

“Raven!” Clarke hissed, her voice sharp enough that the girl finally decided to look at her. She threw her blanket off her face.

The alarm-

“Oh the alarm. Gotcha. My bad.” Raven shoed Clarke away, the blonde complying even if she was really confused. Raven got off the bed, letting out a much needed stretch that crackled perfectly up her spine. “Alright, so no need to panic, it’s just the lunch bell.” Raven explained. Her brows furrowed. “It’s pretty much the standard sound.”

Clarke could hear the hidden question in her voice. She stiffened. Clarke wasn’t going to tell Raven how she had gone entire weeks without food when Nia was feeling spiteful, or if she was feeling truly evil, offering food that was laced with something, forcing Clarke to choose whether it was worth it.

She also wasn’t going to tell Raven how there was only one alarm for when she was in Azgeda Tower, and that was for when someone tried to escape.

It never ended well when that happened.

Clarke shrugged, something that was beginning to become a common reaction. “Home schooled. Had a different sound back at… Azgeda.” Just saying the word made Clarke want to scrape sandpaper against her tongue. Raven nodded, but Clarke could tell she wasn’t convinced. She didn’t say anything more though, and for that Clarke was exceedingly grateful. Raven sighed, glancing around the tiny space, her eyes seeming not to find whatever they were looking for.

“Bloody Octavia,” Raven muttered under her breath. She turned to Clarke, clapping her hands together. “So. Lunch?”

“Lunch.” Clarke nodded, letting Raven slip past her and out into the corridor. Clarke followed, sticking close as she quite literally had no idea where they were going. Anya had just shown her the showers and her cell, listing off directions to the courtyard and recreational room and a bunch of others that she’d never find. Their cell seemed to be on the highest floor, lines of barred metal stretching far from left to right. They walked down the hallway, but it wasn’t really a hallway, just a wall of cells on one side and a hand bar that came up to her waist on the other, the opposite side holding the same layout. Clarke peeked over the edge, spotting another three floors of the same thing. The place was huge, but it wasn’t the size that made Clarke uncomfortable. It was the fact that it had people, how idle chatter lingered in the air and not complete, deafening silence.

After going down a couple floors and passing a growingly empty amount of cells, Raven suddenly stopped. Clarke almost tripped, just catching herself. She didn’t even have time to ask what was happening when a brunette, who looked slightly younger than Clarke, leaned out of the cell. Her face held a playful smile, but it dropped the moment she caught sight of Clarke. The girl straightened, her arms going to her sides.

“Who’s this?” the girl questioned, eyeing Clarke warily.

“That’s Clarke, my new roomie. She just got here.” Raven said, though Clarke saw the look the Latina was giving the brunette.

It seemed the girl either got the message or relented, because her stiff shoulders were relaxing. She held out her hand. “I’m Octavia. This lad’s one and only friend.”

“Fuck you Blake.” Raven fired back, but the grin on her face proved it was lighthearted. Clarke still hadn’t taken Octavia’s hand, and Raven glanced at her from over her shoulder. Her gaze was questioning, and surprisingly soft. She held Clarke’s eye for a few moments, before turning back to Octavia. “Clarke here is not a shaker. Got some weird shit about it. Nothing too weird though.
Octavia remained silent, her eyes trailing over Clarke suspiciously. And to Clarke’s upmost surprise, she simply nodded her head and smiled.

“Alright. Come on, if we’re slow Ontari and her groupie’s will steal all the good shit.” Octavia said, joining her and Raven as they began walking for the cafeteria. Raven swore suddenly. “I swear, if that bitch nicks all the apple crumble… she goddamn knows they only make it on Tuesdays. Bastard.”

Octavia snickered, earning a light punch to the arm. They kept walking, now off the hall of cells and trailing through corridors.

“Who’s Ontari?” Clarke asked, the two girls next to her both rolling their eyes at the name.

“Who’s Ontari you ask? A complete bitch. No other word for her.” Raven deadpanned. “She thinks she runs the place, has a bunch of Ice Nation lackeys that follow her ‘round. While she’s absolutely insufferable, you can’t touch her because you hurt her, her gang hurts you.”

Clarke noticed the way Raven’s voice changed as she talked about Ontari’s ‘groupies’. “Did they… hurt you?”

“Hah! Hurt Raven? Please, God himself couldn’t do that.” Octavia laughed. “Nah they were just cunt’s to her for a while. Did some cruel shit. They backed off though, ran back with their tails between their legs the second Raven had had enough of it.”

“Never mess with an engineer.” Raven grinned. But Clarke could see the lack of the usual spark in her eye, dullness now in it’s place. Already, Clarke was growing an extreme dislike of the girl.

“Yeah, I may pick a fight with her you know, just for the fun of it. Her lackey’s may be big, but they can’t fight for shit.” Octavia pondered, Raven throwing her a disapproving stare. When Octavia caught it, she sighed, throwing up her arms. “It’s not like the guard’s care! I’ll just throw in a quick punch. For that time when she stole your spot last week.”

“Octavia no, you can’t afford to be so reckless. You’re close to getting out, you gotta’ play by the rules.”

Octavia grinned mischievously. “Then I’ll get payback on her, by the rules.”

“O, whatever you are planning-“

“You heard about the riot in Azgeda Tower three years ago right? Right before it got shut down?” Raven said, staring at Clarke seriously. More seriously than she’s ever seen.

“Yeah,” Clarke said slowly. “Tensions were running high between two rival gangs, a fight broke out, guards got caught in the crossfire.”

“It’s not just that,” Octavia cut in. “The riot should never have happened. Nia, the head at the time, didn’t step in, saying some bullshit about it ‘solving itself.’ Though, everyone knows the real reason, the reason why the guard’s here now hate her.”
“What is it?” Clarke asked breathless.

“The gangs,” Raven said. “It was one called Trikru, the other Ice Nation. Nia didn’t want to step in because her daughter is in Ice Nation’s gang, and her herself was born and grew up in Azgeda lands. Ice Nation was made up all with people from Azgeda. The bias was clear, and it was because of it, that a lot guards got caught up in the brawl. The guards who got injured or killed, mostly just happened to be Trikru.”

Clarke blinked, taking in all the information. She knew how truly corrupt Nia was, how a warped dream had driven her crazy. Not crazy, but cruel. Desperate. Vindictive. Her letting a fight break out didn’t seem out of character at all. Clarke shook her head. “So, why are you telling me all this?”

“Because most of the guard’s here are Trikru. So, as you’d expect, they have an ingrained hate for anyone involved in Ice Nation.” Octavia explained.

“And Ontari, is Ice Nation.” Raven finished. Clarke clenched her fists in her pockets to try and quell the rage inside. She knew every guard in Azgeda Tower was Ice Nation, could tell by the white tattoo-like scar on their face that all of them held.

“But that’s not the best part,” Octavia added, Raven glaring at her as she obviously wanted to be the one to say it. Octavia ignored it.

“What?”

“Ontari is Nia’s daughter.”

Clarke felt her knees buckle, only saving herself from the falling to the ground by slamming her back against the white corridor wall. Her breath came out in pants, and she desperately tried to calm herself so she wouldn’t break down, at least, not in front of her newly made friend’s.

Daughter. Nia’s fucking daughter. She had never mentioned a daughter, and Clarke raked through her memories to find if there was any instance where maybe she at least hinted at it.

Nothing.

Her breathing became more controlled, but her head still swirled.

Nia had a daughter. Who was in prison. Who was probably like a carbon copy of her mother. God, the idea of Nia having a child made Clarke sick to the core. She wanted to throw up, wanted heave her guts out. Wanted to scream.

She didn’t.

“Clarke? You right?” Raven questioned, edging close to the blonde. Clarke’s head snapped up from where her chin was practically digging into her chest. She forced a smile at the concern in Raven’s eyes, her heart cracking slightly at the sight of it. It had been so long since someone cared.

“Yeah,” Clarke lied, waving her off. “I’m fine. Sorry, I haven’t eaten all morning, just hungry.”

Raven nodded unconvinced, Octavia just staring at her. “Alright… well, we’ve gotta’ be quick if we want to get the good food.”

Clarke bobbed her head; her pale blue eyes finding Octavia’s vibrant jade one’s. Octavia didn’t say anything, instead letting Raven lead as the group made their way to the cafeteria once more. They
made the last leg of the journey mostly in silence. It wasn’t tense, but it wasn’t at ease, and Clarke knew it was because Raven knew that she wasn’t telling her something, something that she’d probably want to know. But Clarke couldn’t tell her, couldn’t tell her why she was even in prison – what had pushed that step too far. How even if it was just for a second, she lost control.

And Nia hadn’t wasted a second to take advantage on that.

The doors to the cafeteria appeared up ahead, and the tension between the group dissolved as Raven’s stomach grumbled.

“I am going to eat everything I swear to god,” she muttered, her leisurely pace turning into a power walk. Octavia chuckled softly, Clarke letting a small smile spread on her face. They quickly crossed the distance to the grey doors, Raven nearly bursting through them to get to food. Octavia laughed louder at that, following in after her as she shook her head fondly. For a moment, she caught Clarke’s eye, and she nodded.

*I won’t ask* it seemed to say.

Clarke was grateful.

Octavia led Clarke in, Raven letting out a melodramatic sigh at the sight of a queue.

“Damnit!” Raven hissed.

“You’re late Reyes.” A voice from behind them stated dryly, Clarke’s head whipping around only to find Anya staring right back at her. Raven scoffed.

“Yeah, because I was showing the roomie around. And, no offense Clarke, but why do *I* get stuck with someone? We had a good thing going with the whole ‘this is my cell and my cell only thing’.”

“Precisely that Reyes. You thought we had a thing going.” Anya deadpanned. Raven waved her off.

“Whatever, I’m going to get food before I actually pass out,” she turned expectantly to Clarke. “You coming?”

“Yeah.” Clarke nodded, casting a quick glance in Anya’s direction before catching up to Raven who somehow had already joined the queue.

As it turns out, the food wasn’t too bad.

Or maybe that was the hunger talking.

Luckily, after waiting in a queue with a complaining Raven who found it impossible not to make an impatient comment or groan every three seconds they had made it to the servers, Raven finally shutting up as she rapidly snatched the last piece of apple crumble onto her tray. Honestly Clarke was confused as how it counted as apple crumble, but then she remembered the food she was made to eat before, and the slop on her tray suddenly looked like a five-star meal. Her, Raven and Octavia planted themselves on one of the empty tables, the table just big enough for the three of them. Clarke was surprised at how quickly she seemed to be accepted by the pair, Raven almost instantly bursting into a story about how she had given a college a boy a nasty virus just because he didn’t say thank you for when she held the door open for him.

“And he didn’t even look busy!” Raven had exclaimed. Octavia and Clarke only able to laugh hysterically as she tried to justify herself. When they had finished eating, Clarke noticing how
Anya had been watching her the entire time, Octavia clapped her hands to grab their attention. Her eyes were wild with mischief, and Clarke knew from the look alone it meant trouble. It seemed Raven knew this too, because before Octavia had even opened her mouth-

“No. Nope. Whatever crazy shit you have planned, shove it down and lock it away. No.”

“Oh come on Rae,” Octavia whined. “It won’t even be that bad. We just wait till she’s alone, distract her lackeys with something then—“

“O. No. I’m not letting you do some stupid shit and get yourself stuck in this shithole for who knows how long. You only have two weeks, appreciate that.” Raven scolded, her voice final. Octavia sighed loudly. She was silent for a bit.

“I mean are you sure—“

“Yes Octavia.” Raven cut in, glaring at her. Octavia huffed, falling back in her chair.

“Fine. Misses no fun.” Octavia grumbled.

“Misses save-your-ass more like.”

“Shut up.”

Raven grinned at her. “Never.”

They talked a little longer after that, Raven having a worrying amount of stories involving revenge on unsuspecting people who probably didn’t deserve it. Probably. Clarke found herself laughing, actually laughing, and when she did the sound of it shocked her. Had it always sounded like that? She hadn’t heard it in so long it seemed almost foreign, like it wasn’t quite her laugh but someone else’s. As if she was impersonating it. The conversation stayed light, Clarke finding out Octavia being in for getting done for a fighting ring, her loose temper and quick to violence landing her in constant trouble. When Octavia asked what Clarke was in for, she saw how Raven leant in out of the corner of her eye. But Clarke merely grinned.

“Very not good things.”

“What type of things?” Octavia questioned. “Like, ‘oh whoops I’ve been loitering’ or more ‘whoops I just murdered someone.’”

“‘Woops I murdered someone?’” Clarke repeated amused, an eyebrow raised. Octavia waved her off.

“You know what I mean.” She dismissed. “Come on, what’d you do?”

“I told you,” Clarke said. “Some very not good things.” Octavia and Raven both groaned, slumping back into chairs in defeat. Clarke grinned smugly at them, which earned her a glare from Raven.

“I’ll find out Clarke. I’ll find out.”

“I’m sure.” Clarke winked. Leaving behind a gaping Raven and a snorting Octavia, Clarke got up from her chair. “I’m just going to grab a napkin.”

Octavia scoffed. “Good luck finding one.” Raven hit her side lightly, Octavia hissing and rubbing her arm with a scowl. Clarke left her two friends to it, wandering over to the front and scanning the now empty food trays. She spotted two small cups that held the remains of plastic forks and
spoons. She crept over to it silently, more out of habit really, scanning the area around it for any tissues. As Octavia had predicted, there was none. Clarke cursed under her breath; throwing one last glance she surveyed the room for any runaway napkins, when her eyes caught sight of a girl with dark brown hair strutting over to Octavia and Raven. Clarke’s keen eyes saw how Raven instantly tensed, Octavia subtly gripping the fork in her hand and slipping it under the table. Clearly the girl meant trouble, and the urge to protect that Clarke could never ignore flared up in her. She lingered a moment longer before moving her way back to her new, and only, friends. She arrived just in time to hear an amused chuckle from the dark haired girl, and a scowl on Raven, Octavia’s eyes practically brimming with fury.

“Shut the fuck up brat.” Octavia spat. The girl snickered.

“What? You don’t like when I speak the truth? Tell me, do you even know your father’s name?”

“Hey.” Clarke stepped forward, mostly because this girl was pissing her off, and mostly because Octavia looked like she was about to snap. And like Raven had said, she may not have known the girl for long but she knew what prison was like, how shit it could be. She didn’t want Octavia having to deal with longer than needed. “You can back up right now.”

“Clarke don’t,” Raven warned, her voice unnaturally weak. It only angered Clarke even more. The girl gave her a once over, Clarke just noticing the white scars on face. Her brown eyes squinted for a second, but then her face lit up, a chuckle of disbelief on her lips.

“Well shit, who would’ve thought,” the girl breathed. “If it isn’t Jake’s daughter.”

Clarke stiffened, the rage burning her skin dangerously close to the surface now. It had been so long since she had heard his name.

“Who are you?” Clarke asked, her voice more of a growl. She heard a shaky breath from behind her.

“Clarke don’t-“

“Ontari.” The girl grinned. It took all of Clarke’s self-control not to snarl at her. “And you, are Clarke Griffin.”

Now that, made Raven and Octavia freeze. The pair glanced at each other. “How do you know my name?” Clarke muttered, taking a too-slow of a step forward. Ontari laughed in her face.

“No seriously? You think word doesn’t spread when someone get’s thrown into Azgeda Tower?” Ontari said, genuine disbelief on her sharp features. “Wow, a prison get’s opened just for you and you think no one notices? What, the great and almighty-“

“Biyo noda telon en ai na kodon yu swela.” Clarke snarled.

The entire room froze, and it wasn’t because Clarke had somehow spoken the language only the guards spoke, but that it was in a different dialect.

Azgeda.

Ontari’s eyes widened as she almost staggered backwards. In the corner of her eye Clarke could see Anya staring at her, hard. But she was mad, oh she was mad. She had been tossed and beaten, pushed to the brink of death only to be brought back to the living and cut back down. Had lost everything, had felt Nia take everything, take a very piece of her soul. And here, stood Nia’s daughter, insulting the innocent and sporting a pathetic gang. Exactly like her mother.
She wasn’t Nia, but she was close enough.

Ontari finally gathered herself, the entire room looking on to them. “How do you know how to speak that?”

Clarke cocked her head to the side, something dark slithering into her bones. “Did Nia not teach you?”

“Of course she did,” Ontari growled, her fists clenching. But Clarke held an eerie calm, and in all honesty it was far more terrifying. Clarke raised her hands.

“My apologies, I only asked because since she never told me of a daughter, I figured she didn’t spend the time to teach you.”

Ontari shoved her back with a snarl, her eyes lit up in rage. “You dare mock me? I can destroy you-”

“I survived your mother.” Clarke spat, the mere mention of Nia like swallowing sand. “I think I can survive her failed protégée.”

“I’ll fucking-”

“Hey!” Anya snapped, storming up to them. “The hell’s going on here?” she grunted. Ontari stood still, her body practically shaking with restrained fury. Clarke stared straight into Ontari’s eyes, not a drip of fear in Clarke’s own. She had been broken long ago; it took a lot more to scare her. Anya glared at both of them. “Well?”

“It’s nothing. Just a misunderstanding.” Raven cut in, her voice firm, as if daring them to go against her. Ontari and Clarke remained silent; their iron stare didn’t break. Anya, slight anxiety in her chest nodded slowly.

“Well, it looks like we’ll have to continue this another time.” Ontari sneered.

Clarke didn’t say a thing, just kept staring at her with that eerie calmness. The room was dead quiet, everyone waiting for the penny to drop. Raven, gulping down her own nerves, stood up with the scrape of her chair.

“Clarke. Let’s get out of here, she’s not worth it.” Raven said, nudging Octavia with her elbow when the brunette remained still.

“Yeah, come on. We can deal with her another time.”

“Yeah Clarke, go off with your friends. Leave our conversation for another time.” Ontari snickered. She glanced to the gang of people behind her, flicking her hand. “Let’s go.”

Clarke watched her go, and, really, she was actually going to let her go. It would be an achievement, as normally when she reaches this part of her it almost always ends in bloodshed. But then, when Clarke was just about to turn around and let her go; she had heard her mutter under her breath, heard the smile in her words.

“Don’t worry about her. She’ll follow her dumbass father and be dead within the week.”
Raven had seen the moment Clarke froze, the complete suction of warmth, of life, from the blonde’s eyes. She had known then. She snatched out a hand to grab her by the wrist, but by the time her arm had moved she was only met with air. And when she looked behind her, Clarke was leaping with a grace that shouldn’t be possible from table to table, her feet finding the edge of the metal, and then soaring through the air. For a moment, it seemed like the blonde was flying, but then she was diving back to the ground – right to Ontari. She landed directly in front of her, Ontari’s jaw dropping in shock.

“How did you-“ Clarke punched her. The crack of bone sliced through the air like a boom, sinister excitement sparking Clarke’s veins. The second Ontari was down, her gang descended on her.

Clarke wiped them out like they were nothing.

It was easy to slip in to the thing she had been for so long, ducking and weaving, punching and kicking, jumping over a fallen body only to dodge a blind swing, nimble hands grabbing an arm and twisting it, slipping away like shadow before someone else could get her. She wouldn’t deny that a part of her reveled in it, in the adrenaline of a fight, while another part was recoiled by it. But she’d lost that part long ago.

Four groaning, two unconscious bodies lay on the ground beneath her, gone within the space of five seconds. A wave guards threatened to swallow her whole, Anya rushing over to her in large strides. Clarke slammed her foot into one of the last of the gang’s chest, the woman crumbling to the floor with a cry. Ontari attempted to scramble up to her feet, but the moment she was even half-way up Clarke’s body was on her, a knee digging into her throat. Ontari tried to push Clarke off, to find any sort of leverage against the person on top of her – she didn’t. With seconds to spare, Clarke roughly grabbed Ontari by the neck of her shirt and pulled her up, her mouth right next to her.

“If you ever mention who I am again, I promise you, I’ll be sending Nia your head.” Clarke muttered into the girl’s ear, Ontari blanching at the words. She knew Clarke wasn’t lying.

Suddenly someone was grabbing Clarke around the waist, and instantly Clarke forced as much power into her legs, and pushed. She flipped whoever had had a hold on her over, though Clarke was met with the ground as well. Not even letting herself breath she was up on her feet again, her body twisting as she prepared to throw her punch.

Except, she stilled.

Lexa, panting with a razor-sharp dagger in hand, stilled as well.

And for some reason, the second that she locked eyes with her and saw that jaded green, the familiar emptiness that resided their, Clarke stopped. She lowered her fists, and slowly, lied on the ground, hands on her head. For a moment, nothing happened. The only sounds in the room the pained groans of the fallen women, the heavy breaths of others.

The peace didn’t last long.

Anya seized Clarke’s hands, roughly pulling them back as she hauled Clarke to her feet. She forcefully pushed her into a wall, cuffs clicking around her wrists. “The hell did I just tell you?” Anya snapped. Clarke didn’t reply. Scoffing, Anya pushed Clarke forward towards the doors, throwing a glance in Lexa’s direction. “Heda?” Anya questioned. Lexa brought her gaze over to her. There was something off about her, like she was on a tilt. But the sight was gone as quick as it came, the usual mask of indifference wiping her features.
“The Pit.” Lexa said finally. “Take her to the Pit.”

Anya bobbed her head, and then Clarke was being hauled away like she been this morning. Though Anya was much rougher.

Lexa slowly turned around, fear in everyone’s faces as her cold stare swept over them. “Would someone like to tell me what happened?” Lexa said, her voice dangerously calm.

“It was Ontari.” Raven blurted, the accused girl crying out.

“I didn’t do anything! It was that pyscho Clarke-“

“Come with me Ontari.” Lexa interrupted. Grumbling to herself, Ontari pulled herself to her feet, stepping over her fallen friend’s and joining Lexa’s side. “And the rest of you,” she warned. “If I see anything like this happen again, all of you will be facing the consequences.” She lingered a moment longer, raising an eyebrow. Feeling like she had gotten the point across, Lexa left the room, Ontari in tow. When she was far enough, she let loose a strangled breath.

What the hell had actually happened?

One minute she was working through a mountain of paperwork, the next Anya was radioing her saying Clarke was acting strange and she was sprinting down the halls, bursting into the cafeteria to find Clarke in the midst of a fight. But what really bugged Lexa was what had actually caught her attention.

How did Clarke learn to fight like that?

The document on Clarke didn’t actually specify what she was in for, the line just saying high treason. Lexa didn’t really know, nor did she want to know why she was so curious about the blonde. Logically, it would be because of how much potential threat and danger Clarke could be. And there was another reason, but it was dismissed so fast it barely counted as being there. Opening her office door and gesturing for Ontari to go inside, Lexa sighed.

The hell was she going to do?

-

The Pit, was really just another word for solitary.

Lexa had just finished her interrogation of Ontari. But like always when she tried questioning her, she just scoffed and said it wasn’t her fault. It was obvious she had started it; Ontari was almost always the cause of fights, but there was something different about her this time. When Lexa had asked what she had said, she actually hesitated, something she had never done. With a slight tremor in her voice, Ontari had shrugged.

“I didn’t say anything. She just attacked me.”

Lexa knew she was lying through her teeth. And as much she wanted to make her tell her the truth, she restrained, instead flicking her hand as an indicant for her to leave. She wasn’t going to get anything out of her anyway. The only way she was going to find out what truly happened was to talk to the only other person involved.

Clarke.

Lexa strode through the depressingly white corridors, thick iron doors lining either side. She hated
coming down here, and avoided it as much as possible, but it was clear she couldn’t this time. She
was just about to arrive at Clarke’s cell when Anya appeared out of nowhere, grabbing her arm and
pulling her to the side. Lexa snatched her arm out of her older sister’s grip.

“What the hell?” Lexa snapped. Anya ignored her.

“Are you going to see 319?”

Lexa frowned. “319?”

“Clarke you idiot. Are you doing to talk to her?” Anya asked, her eyes strangely serious, fearful.

“Anya what’s wrong?” Lexa said, her own fear bubbling up inside of her. Anya sighed, stepping
back.

“Lex, she knows trigedasleng.”

Lexa’s eyes widened. “How does she-“

“She knows Azgeda’s trigedasleng.”

Lexa felt her stomach drop. Suddenly the ground didn’t seem stable, but stubbornness kept her
upright. She blinked, forcing herself to swallow the dry lump that formed in her throat.

Trigedasleng was a language that only the guards spoke, Lexa learning it through Gustus, who,
before retiring, held the position of Heda. Growing up he’d slip into it without meaning to, and
eventually he just gave in and taught it to her. There was a coalition of sorts that brought all the
nearby prisons together, trigedasleng being a mandatory language that new recruits would have to
learn. Of course, with the thirteen prisons, the language would differ slightly in each facility, hence
different dialect began to form. There weren’t any massive changes, but you could easily tell if you
knew the language when there was a change.

And Clarke, a prisoner, had somehow learned Azgeda’s.

“Okay.” Lexa said slowly. “I have to go Anya. We haven’t had a fight in months, I’m not letting
any more break out.” Lexa turned to leave, and Anya let her, though her face was scrunched with
concern. She was worried, a lot. This whole transfer screamed trouble, and it was obvious there
was much more to the quiet blonde, who had scars that you could only get through battle, and
torture.

And Anya was scared that Lexa was going to get herself hurt in trying to figure her out.

Lexa walked up to the metal door, sliding open the hatch. She peeked in, seeing Clarke in the
corner of the stone walled room, her legs held tight to her chest. Her head was buried beneath her
blonde locks, making it impossible to see her face. Lexa knocked against the door.

Clarke didn’t move.

Sighing to herself, Lexa reached into her pocket and pulled the ring of keys, picking out the right
one and unlocking the door. She slid it open with a grunt, stepping into the room and then closing
it, though she left it slightly ajar.

“Clarke.”

She still didn’t move.
“Clarke.” Lexa said again, her voice harsher. No response. Lexa edged closer. The room was bare, only holding a metal toilet attached to one of the walls, and an excuse of a bed poking out from the opposite. Clarke was backed up right into the corner, and though Lexa should be furious at her for getting into a fight on her first damn day, she instead felt concern. She instantly squashed it down, scolding herself for letting something like that slip past her defenses.

She couldn’t get rid of it completely though.

“Clarke,” Lexa repeated, but this time with a softness that she hadn’t meant to use. And surprisingly, the change in tone actually worked. Clarke lifted her head. Lexa felt an unexplainable pang in her chest when she caught her eye. Lexa realised that Clarke didn’t react well to hostility, and that it was obvious from whatever she had been through, she wouldn’t get anything out of her through threats. Weirdly Lexa didn’t really have a problem with that. “Clarke what happened?” Lexa asked softly.

Clarke stared at her, her eyes dropping to her fists. Her bloodied fists. Lexa didn’t push, instead waiting patiently as Clarke stared at her hand for what seemed like a century. And then, with an incredibly quiet voice, she finally spoke.

“She’s Nia’s daughter.” Clarke whispered. Lexa frowned, not really expecting that as an answer. Clarke brought her gaze back up to Lexa’s. “She’s her fucking daughter.”

Dread coiled in Lexa’s stomach at way Clarke said Nia’s name - with familiarity. The last Lexa had heard, Nia was fired when Azgeda Tower shut down. But if it was reopened just for Clarke, maybe it was Nia who was the one who actually opened it.

“She is.” Lexa said, bobbing her head. She sucked in a sharp breath. “Why… why does that matter?”

“Because it let’s her get to me.” Clarke mumbled, her dull blue eyes never leaving Lexa’s. Clarke chuckled bitterly. “She’s everywhere.”

Lexa nodded along, not quite liking Clarke’s vague answers. Her voice sounded broken, but it was something more than that; shattered, hopeless. Lexa didn’t know what Clarke had done to end up here, but she knew that no one should ever sound like that. The pair were silent for a while, Clarke slowly letting her legs fall to the floor.

“How do you know trigedasleng?” Lexa asked after a while, now crouching down in front of Clarke. She smiled, but it was cold and sharp.

“I had to.”

“Why?”

Clarke’s smile fell, a flash of vulnerability in her eyes. “Because I had to.” She muttered darkly. Lexa decided not to push it, even if in any other circumstance she would have. The hell was she being so gentle for? Lexa sighed.

“Clarke you cannot start fights. For now, I’ll let you off,” she had no idea why she said that. “But if you ever start one again, my hand will be forced do you understand?” She tried to keep her voice soft like before, and it was oddly easy. Clarke nodded.

“It won’t happen again.” Clarke promised, her voice small. A breath that Lexa didn’t know she was holding escaped her.
“Good.” She stood up, Clarke’s eyes following her. “You’re free to go back to your cell.” Clarke didn’t say anything, just nodding her head. Without thinking Lexa held out her hand to help Clarke up. Lexa’s eyes widened, and she snatched her hand back, avoiding the curious stare from Clarke. “Sorry,” Lexa stammered, wincing at how childish she sounded.

Lexa almost jumped in shock when Clarke actually replied.

“It’s okay.” Her voice was soft, and despite herself Lexa felt a wave of calmness at the sound of it. She shook it off. Clarke pulled herself to her feet, following Lexa as she led her out of the cell. Lexa stopped by the door, gesturing for Clarke to go first, and as she did she brushed past her.

And Lexa felt sparks run up her arm.

Clarke felt it too.

Neither commented on it.

Lexa walked Clarke the entire way back, mostly because Clarke didn’t actually know the way, but a small part of her did perk up when Clarke asked for Lexa to show her. Damn her but Clarke looked almost cute as she called for her, her eyes avoiding Lexa’s as she asked how to get back. Almost. Almost.

It didn’t take long for Lexa to guide Clarke back, their steps slowing as they reached her cell. The moment Clarke had moved to head back in she was greeted by an attack-hug from Raven, nearly toppling her over. Raven squeezed Clarke’s stiff body tight, leaning out of it with a grin.

“That. Was. Awesome!” Raven exclaimed, finally letting go. It seemed that Raven hadn’t even noticed Lexa was right there, raising a brow at the Latina.

“What was?” Clarke asked confused. Raven rolled her eyes.

“You kicking ass! Especially Ontari’s. God, that bitch deserved it I swear-“

“Reyes.” Lexa said, Raven shutting up almost instantly. Lexa couldn’t help her smirk. “I would appreciate if you didn’t praise the behavior that Clarke exhibited.”

“You mean whooping Ontari’s ass?” Raven asked grinning. Lexa glared at her.

“Goodbye Reyes.” She turned her sight to Clarke. “Goodbye Clarke.” She said, her voice softer. Clarke watched as Lexa backed away, striding over to do whatever she needed to do. She hadn’t actually realised she was staring at her until Raven slapped her, her instincts overriding rationality as she whirled on her and grabbed her wrist. Remembering it was Raven she almost instantly let go.

“Sorry,” Clarke apologised, avoiding Raven’s stare. Clarke slipped back into the cell, Raven’s voice stopping her mid-climb to the top bunk.

“Why did you do that?”

Clarke paused. “Old habit’s die hard.” Then she was swinging her leg over, crawling to the end of the bed, and with crossed legs let her back slump against the white brick wall. Raven, now intrigued, padded over, clinging onto the metal ladder.

“Were you in the army or something?” Raven asked. Clarke swallowed, hard.
“My Dad was.”

“He teach you?”

Clarke smiled sadly, the memory of him still too fresh. He had died right before she went to Azgeda Tower, was actually the reason she went to Azgeda tower.

Her father had been murdered. And Clarke knew who did it.

It was a man called Cage, a crazed scientist with an obsession with The Others, a subspecies of human that was a myth. It was the tales that parents would tell their children when they were naughty, the ghost stories kids would say when the only light in the room was a torch illuminating their face; they weren’t real. But Cage believed they were, and dedicated his life in finding one. Finding an Other that he could show to the world, claim the glory and praise that would come with it.

And Cage, had thought Clarke was an Other.

He had harassed her father, Jake, over and over, just begging for a tiny blood sample. Nothing but a small prick he had promised. Jake had refused profusely, actively keeping Clarke as far as he could from Cage.

Then one day, police reported that her father had died in a car trash. But earlier, Jake had called her, frantically telling her to get out of her house, that it wasn’t safe. Clarke knew it was cage.

But what no one knew, not her mother, not her father, not Cage - was that Clarke went by another name, another title at night.

When she’d disappear for days at a time, return when the darkness in the sky was thick with blood on her hands. When she’d be out of contact for weeks, her mother and father worrying she was involved with drugs or drinking.

Clarke was secretly one of the most notorious and deadly assassins in a long while.

She was Wanheda.

And only she knew, but Cage had found out.

He had found out when Clarke got her revenge.

“He had taught me, yeah.” Clarke finally said, answering Raven’s question. “But I had lessons with someone else, he taught me most of what I know.”

Raven grinned devilishly at her. “And what do you know?”

“Bad, bad things.” Clarke grinned back at her. But her smile fell. “I don’t know what happened to him though.”

Raven climbed up the last bit of the ladder, throwing Clarke a raised eyebrow if she could sit next to her. Clarke bobbed her head, so Raven shuffled over to Clarke’s side, mimicking her in position as she let her back lean against the wall. Silence fell between them before Raven spoke up again.

“You lied.”

Clarke glanced at Raven, finding her to be already watching her. “About?”
“You were in Azgeda Tower.” Raven said, her eyes boring into Clarke’s. Clarke tore her gaze away.

“I was.” She nodded.

“Why didn’t you tell me?”

Clarke blinked, tears welling up in her eyes. She didn’t let them fall. “Because then you’d ask questions. And asking the wrong ones could get you killed.”

Raven was silent. Clarke brought her gaze back to her.

“I’m not safe Raven. You being friends with me… my mess can become yours, and you don’t want that.”

“Geez, who’d you piss off?” Raven chuckled, though it was uneasy. Clarke tried to smile, she couldn’t.

“Nia.”

Raven blinked. “What do you mean?” Clarke laughed coldly, turning her sight to her gloved hand.

“Do you know what happens when you say no to Nia?” Her eyes turned cold, her voice bitter. Raven stayed quiet, silently watching Clarke. “Do you know what happens when you say no over and over again?”

Raven gulped. “I don’t.” Clarke smiled then, and it was simultaneously terrifying and heartbreaking.

“I do.”

It took Clarke a long while to get to sleep that night. She just laid in her bed, staring up at the bland ceiling for hours and hours and hours, till her eyes grew sore and her body finally caved, wonderful darkness clouding her vision.

Clarke dreamed she was drowning in a sea of red.

And just when her head had submerged, and her screams became gurgled, she saw a flash of green above the water.

And she felt someone pull her out.

Chapter End Notes

well.. i hope you guys liked that. if you did, leave a comment and kudos as i need constant validation.
next chapter may take a while as I'm an idiot and juggling way too many fics at the moment.

~Translations~
Yu joken - You fucking
Chich - Speak
Sha? - Yes?
Oso hir Heda - We're here Commander
Lus dou - Open the door
Kei, hod up - Okay, wait
Ai em ogeda step. Em step, yu step - Watch her every move. She moves, you move
Nou get yu daun Heda. Ha ai na teik ai hana - Don't worry Heda. I know how to do my job.
Ai swega - I promise
Ste yuj - Be strong
Ste yuj strikon - Be strong little one
Nomon - Mother
Sen ai op - Listen to me
fyucha - Baby
Ai hod yu in strikon - I love you little one
Jos wan op - Only die
Branwoda skirsh, Yu na ste daun na deimeika gyon op - Foolish trash, you'll be dead by sunrise
Na em gonot - Get him out
Biyo noda telon en ai na kodon yu swela - Say another word and I'll cut your throat
Hey! look at me posting ~relatively~ on time, how crazy is that? you can hold your applause. anyway, i just want to say a huuuge thank you for the support for last chapter, you guys are incredibly incredible seriously, THANK YOU! this chapter is shorter than the last and i apologise but i still hope you guys enjoy, if you do, leave a kudos and a comment, as they make me write faster :D

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Clarke had always had keen eyes.

Ever since she was little, ever since she could only see the world from the height of a stack of hundred-year-old books – she could always see with a clarity that she shouldn’t possess. The slightest twitch, smallest blur of movement; she’d catch it. Her father, Jake, had picked up on this quickly, and was fascinated by it. While Clarke’s mother, Abby, wasn’t so excited by it. Often scolding Clarke when she’d pipe up about being able to see the TV remote in the dark, and excitedly asking ‘can you see it too?’ The answer of course was always plain no, a flick of the hand, and an uninterested grunt.

Sometimes, they’d play a game.

Clarke would be given something, a mug, a necklace, a pen, and it was Jake’s job to try and steal it from her. Jake was an army mechanic, and was often known by his close friends for his natural talent for stealth and sneaking around, his ability to have steps as light as a feather seeming to pass on to his daughter. He was good at being fast, like a bolt of lightening, sometimes so quick you doubt whether there was movement at all.

But in all of Clarke’s life, Jake had never managed to take something from her.

She’d always see.

And later on in her life, when her sight of the world moves from the shoulder of books to the shoulder of her father, she’d learn why.

But Clarke didn’t need keen eyes to see the obvious restlessness in the room. It was breakfast, Clarke sitting with Octavia and Raven in the spot they were in yesterday. Clarke wasn’t actually sitting with them yet though, instead idly waiting in the cue for food.

Her eyes however did catch the way people were looking at her.

A stare that lingered a moment too long, an abrupt stop and turn to find somewhere else to sit.

Clarke hated that she had lost control.

Again.

The smack against her tray jolted her back to the present, her gaze snapping to the server’s grey ones. They were harsh and cold, raw with impulse, the type of someone who’d start a fight if you
so much as breathed too loudly. She held the woman’s stare, her eyes involuntarily flicking up and down. A bruise on her neck, one from a fight, one from something other, a favour of the left hand, a small scar on her chin, scattered plots of tiny marks littering her knuckles. Clarke swore internally.

Why couldn’t she just look at someone and not see a threat?

Clarke tore her sight away, and now with a tray of food, went to go sit by her friend’s. At least she hopes she can call them friends. But as she made her way over, she saw the excitement and restless that buzzed around the room, including Raven and Octavia. Clarke walked up to the table. She frowned.

“What’s going on?” Clarke asked, glancing around.

In reply, Raven really slammed down the newspaper her and Octavia were intensely reading previously. Anya scowled at her from across the room from the noise, Raven shouting a rushed ‘sorry’ back at her. Clarke looked down at the newspaper, not mentioning that she could read perfectly fine when Octavia adjusted it so it wasn’t completely sideways. She froze the second she saw the massive bolded title, holding a word that she dreaded to see.

*Notorious Assassin Found Dead! – Wanheda Finally Off the Streets*

And despite herself, despite the cold hand that trailed over her spine, Clarke snorted.

"What?” Raven frowned.

Clarke just scoffed. “Seriously? You honestly believe she’s dead just because a newspaper said so?”

“He,” Octavia corrected. Clarke blinked, practically throwing her tray on the table as she snatched the newspaper. She skimmed through it quick, letting it fall to the metal table with a scowl. Of course they assume the assassin’s a girl, how on earth could a girl do anything so drastic? Clarke realised that she should probably be grateful for this, as it hides her identity even further, and that this played perfectly in her favour. She was still bitter.

Clarke ground her teeth. “Right. He.” She took a breath. “What happened? I didn’t actually read it.”

“They found his body,” Raven excitedly explained, not noticing the squinting of Octavia’s eyes. “Apparently, *Wanheda* was going after someone but failed. The person was expecting him, so they set up a fuck ton of traps and alarms. Of course, he got through, but didn’t expect that his target would able to fight back. Got shot in right in the head.”

Clarke nodded along. She couldn’t help but shake her head. Whoever had been trying to impersonate her was clearly an amateur; before you do anything you must learn as much as is physically possible about your target. When she’d be hired for one, or found one herself, she’d sometimes spend months gathering information on them, finding out the hidden weakness and boasted strengths. Or, if they were smarter, the strengths that no one knew.

But someone always knew. And Clarke would always find them.

“Who did he go after?” Clarke questioned, catching on to the hesitation in Raven’s eyes. Octavia though, didn’t seem to have any problem with it.

“Nia.”
This time, Clarke managed to keep herself standing from hearing the woman’s name. But like habit she flinched, the name more resonating with a slap than a word. Raven saw.

“Oh.” Clarke said after a while. If it was Nia, then it was obviously even faker than she could have thought, though staged would be a better guess. Her fingers felt numb as she realised this was directly aimed at her, Nia reminding her that though she wasn’t within arm’s reach of her; she can still touch her. Clarke realised she was still standing, and ignoring the curious stare from Octavia Clarke sat down next to Raven. Raven sent her a glance, the question in them obvious. Are you okay? Clarke nodded, and Raven let her go. Clarke cleared her throat. “Do they have a picture of him?”

“They do.” Raven said dejectedly. Clarke raised a brow.

“Raven’s mad he’s not hot.” Octavia explained, and Clarke couldn’t help but smirk.

“You’re upset Wanheda isn’t hot?”

Raven leaned back in her chair, ringing her hands together behind her head. “You bet your fine ass I am. I mean, come on, it’s not fair having someone as epic and famous as Wanheda only for them to come up to a withering four on the hot scale.”

“He’s not that bad,” Octavia chuckled lightly. “Just because you hate beards doesn’t make him instantly ugly.”


Clarke laughed softly. Mostly because of the imagined reaction Raven would have if she ever found out who she was. Her laughed died off when she remembered that she’d never be able to tell her. The burden would never leave. “So, do I get to have a say on how hot he is?” Clarke said, forcing the teasing smile on her lips. Raven narrowed her eyes.

“You find guys hot?”

Clarke frowned. “Yeah? Do you have a problem with that?”

“Oh no of course not,” Raven instantly said. A grin spread on her face that Clarke knew was nothing but trouble. “I’m just surprised since I thought you had the hots for Heda.”

Clarke choked on air, Octavia throwing her head back with a cackle. “Excuse me?” Clarke coughed. Raven waved her off.

“Oh come on, you think I’m blind? If it makes you feel any better I’m pretty sure she at least a soft spot for you. You’ll want to be careful about that though, a bunch people may want to be your mate because of it.”

“Hold on. I don’t like Lexa, I have no idea why you think that-“

“Lexa?” Raven exclaimed. “Oh my god you guys are already on a first name basis!”

Clarke scowled, not trusting herself to speak. Mostly because the notion of her liking someone was a dangerous one, something she hadn’t considered in a long while. She’d shoved away thoughts like that years ago; ever since the moment she learnt the consequences of such reckless actions, of liking, loving someone, and the chaos that came with that.

The bullet hole in her heart hasn’t yet healed, the memory of her boyfriend dying by her own hand
to save him the pain of being tortured still so unexplainably fresh in her broken mind.

She was an idiot to ever think that Nia wouldn’t find out about him. She paid the price for that, seeing his battered face dragged in through towering oak doors, a bashful smile on his face as they caught eyes. She can still remember the feel of his blood on her hand, red leaking from the dagger that she pierced into his stomach.

She wasn’t a fool and knew love came when it wanted, left in the dark hours without a blink of regret or explanation. But she also knew that she had to keep it as far away from her as she could.

Clarke swallowed her emotions like she always did, locking them away deep down inside. “I don’t like her. That would be beyond stupid.”

Raven just smiled knowingly, Octavia mirroring the expression. Clarke sighed dramatically, throwing up her arms.

“Honestly you guys are ridiculous.”

“Did you hear the news?” a familiar voice interrupted. Clarke stiffened, amusement draining from both Octavia and Raven. Reluctantly, Clarke brought gaze up to meet Ontari’s. She smirked when she saw the purple skin under her eye.

“I think see is the better word to use.” Raven quipped, earning a subtle elbow from Octavia. Anya was scrutinizing the interaction hard, her hand already on her radio. Ever the peacekeeper, Octavia piped up, breaking the intense stare between Clarke and Ontari.

“Move on Ontari. We don’t want a repeat of yesterday.” Octavia glared. But the girl only grinned, Octavia’s words having no effect. She took a step forward, and Clarke fought against her instincts to jump up.

“Did you hear Clarke?” Ontari teased. “They say Wanheda’s dead. How funny is that?”

She knew she was taunting her, baiting her. Clarke clenched her fists. She had threatened her yesterday, and the fact that Lexa hadn’t accuse her of being an assassin was sign that so far Ontari hadn’t snitched on her; she still hated that the brat knew. “I don’t want to fight.” Clarke gritted out, Ontari’s sickening smile only widening.

“Why, neither do I. Though I must ask, did see who Wanheda turned out to be? It’s quite surprising.” With that Ontari winked, spinning on her heel and strutting away, her lackeys following. Clarke’s fiery gaze was glued to her back until Raven tapped her shoulder, nodding in Anya’s direction. With a sigh, Clarke bobbed her head and tore her sight away from Ontari. Raven shook her head.

“What a bitch. Honestly, you quite literally whoop her ass and she has the nerve to still talk shit. I’ll give it to her though, her persistence is impressive.”

“Forget about her Clarke, she just wants attention.” Octavia added.

Clarke sighed, but she felt the tiniest of smiles nagged at her. It had been so long since she had this type of support, friendship. In all honesty it broke her even more. “It’s alright. She can mock me all she wants – I can still beat her ass any time of day.”

“Yeah that’s the spirit Griff. She ain’t shit.” Raven said, grinning widely, Octavia nodding along encouragingly. Clarke couldn’t help but chuckle softly.
“Thanks. So, is Wanheda really that ugly?”

Octavia scoffed. “No, Raven is just a narcissist and can’t fathom the idea of finding others attractive.” Raven gasped dramatically, feigning hurt.

“Octavia, how could you?”

“How could I speak the truth? Quite easily.”

Raven threw a piece of soggy bread at the brunette. “Asshole.”

“I learn from the best.”

After that the two fell into a bicker, an activity that Clarke was learning to be quite common. She didn’t have a problem with it, if anything she loved it, as it made her feel the slightest bit more human. Shaking her head Clarke reached for the newspaper, scanning the front and flicking through the paper to find the article. But as her fingers flipped to the page and her eyes spotted the photo in the corner she felt the ground drop from beneath her. If she were standing, she would have fallen.

“No,” Clarke whispered. She read the words under the photo. *Wanheda’s face revealed.* The man’s face was worn, old but not elder, wise but young, a dark swirling tattoo on his left cheek, and a scar of black ink slicing just above his blue eyes. The entire world felt numb, like her head had plunged under water, the only thing clear in her sight being him. All she could do was stare, stare at the face of her mentor. Of the person who taught her everything she knew, was the uncle she never had.

And she stared at the bullet hole in his head.

Distantly she thinks she can hear her name being called, but it doesn’t matter. Growing nausea churned in her gut and suddenly she had to get out. She had to get away, far, far, far away, where nothing can touch her ever again.

But she couldn’t do that.

Because she was in prison.

And Nia had killed one of the few remains of her family.

Clarke clumsily stood up from her seat, the scrape of metal against the floor like nails on a blackboard. Everything was spinning, the world seeming to sway even if her head stayed still. She couldn’t breathe. She couldn’t see. The only thing that played through her mind was his face, how his last moments would have been. She felt a hand touch her arm, and she flinched so hard away from it she basically stumbled. Raven snatched her hand back, holding them up so Clarke could clearly see them. But she couldn’t see them.

All she saw was a bullet in the head of a man who had the purest heart she had ever known.

Was it painless? Did Nia forcefully drag it on for hours? Did he put up a fight or did he let them, taking the safer, easier, way out, knowing that he didn’t have a chance? Turns burned her eyes, the sensation foreign, as she hadn’t felt it in months.

It felt like her body was collapsing on itself.

Her back hit something, someone, and that person grabbed Clarke by the shoulder’s, forcing her to look at them. Her mind was tumbling too fast for her to work out who it was.
“Clarke stop, you need to breathe. Calm down.” Breathe? How could she breathe when the air itself tasted like ash? It took a moment, but Clarke realised she was breathing, panting actually. Hard and fast, her lungs trying and failing to keep up with the chaos that cluttered around like a crazed dog in her head. The person’s touch on her felt so wrong it was almost like it was burning, and she wriggled herself out of their grasp. She tried to take a step and almost fell. She was about to just let herself collapse to the ground when her eyes caught something, saw something through its blurring haze. Brown eyes. Ontari’s brown eyes.

Nia’s daughter’s brown eyes.

A twisted and dark rage slithered into her blood, infecting the warmth and turning it cold. She knew. She had mocked her; she knew that Nia had killed him. It was almost like the temperature in the room dropped, but as she clenched and readied her fists, Ontari’s face held something she had never seen on the girl before. Softness, sadness.

“He didn’t say anything.” Ontari muttered, Clarke just hearing her. All at once, the air rushed out of her lungs like a kick to the gut. “She got nothing from him.”

Tears ran freely down her cheeks now. The rage in her sat confused, doubt grabbing it’s wrist and pulling it back. It was all too much.

It was all too fucking much.

She didn’t feel her legs as they began to move, taking her out of deadly quiet room. The more they moved, the quicker they seemed to become, faster, faster, faster, till she was practically running. But her steps were jagged and stilted, her running a stagger as her body took her before her mind could offer its opinion. She blurred through corridors, or it was more the corridors were the blur, her a stumbling figure. The corridors turned into cells, the gap to the three floors now sitting to her right.

She slowed, and gave the drop a long, long, glance.

And though her foot edged in its direction, the lust for revenge was too great, and instead her legs were moving again.

Clarke saw his pale, dead face flash in her mind over and over again like a broken record.

Then, she was in her cell.

And the numbness that had engulfed her went away, anger, despair, and sadness filling in the cracks. Clarke coiled her fists, and she punched the wall, the stone caving inwards. She hit it again.

And again, and again, and again.

A small part of her wished those hits would hit her.

How could she have forgotten about him? How could she have not told him to hide, to run? How could she have been so stupid to think he would be fine? Her knuckles smashed against the white wall, blood imprinting onto the stone canvas. It was her fault. His death was her fault, another death was her fault.

She hit the wall harder.

Harder, and harder, and harder-
“Hey!” someone snapped, rushing into the cell. Clarke ignored them. She had to feel something, to feel the pain she deserved. Her bloodied knuckles ached. “Clarke, stop!” the person yelled again, but it sounded muffled. Suddenly, hands were on her own, pulling them back.

“No!” Clarke cried, struggling in her captor’s grip. Her arms were crossed, making it increasingly difficult to pull them out. Desperation strangled her voice. “Let me go!”

“You need to calm down Clarke,” the person panted, obviously struggling as well to keep Clarke’s hands held back. But the longer she was held the harder she found the motivation to fight back, the strength of defiance leaving her. Eventually, the blonde finally slacked in the other person’s grip, and as Clarke’s legs went out from beneath, the person was crouching down with her. Raw sobs climbed up her throat, her body shaking with the intensity of them. She trembled violently with each cry, but the person never let go, their arms soon letting Clarke’s hands free as it didn’t seem like she was going to endanger herself anymore, and instead, their arm wrapped around the blonde’s waist, the other coming up to rest on her head. “You’re okay.” The person whispered into her ear.

“I’m sorry,” Clarke whimpered, “I’m so, so, sorry.”

“It’s alright. You’re alright.” The person repeated, gently rocking Clarke in their grip. Her sobs, after a while, dwindled to sniffles, and when they did it felt like her mind was coming back to itself again, the overwhelming whirlwind of emotions now under control. For a few moments, she just sat like that, sitting on the cold floor in the arms of a stranger, her brain too tired to work out what it was. Then she was being picked up and carefully put on a bed; distantly Clarke knows to be Raven’s. She curled into herself, the person who was just holding her crouching in front of her. When Clarke opened her eyes, they were met with the softest green she had ever seen.

“Lexa,” Clarke mumbled, and from the word alone she was flooded with a strange warmth. The brunette didn’t smile, but through her guarded expression Clarke could see concern.

“Clarke, what happened?” Lexa asked softly, trying her best to hide her panic.

Her eyes burned, but no tears fell this time. “She killed him.”

“How killed who?”

“Nia…” Clarke answered, and though her voice was bitter with the name it was also exhausted, tired. The woman had managed to destroy everything she held dear, only leaving her shattered pieces to hug tight to her chest. But day by day, piece by piece, she was losing them, and it was how the feeling of loss was becoming so familiar Clarke realised soon she’d have nothing left.

She was reaching her breaking point. Soon, she’d snap.

And the question was coming down to whether she was going to be dragged back to Nia with her fighting tooth and claw, or if she’s just going to walk through her doors with a stroll and dead eyes, a mere nod as a sign of defeat.

What was terrifying was how tempting the latter was beginning to become.

“Clarke,” Lexa prodded, her voice urgent and strained. “Did Nia kill someone? Do you have proof?”

Clarke scoffed. “Proof. She would never leave proof.” Her voice became low and lost. “He’s
gone.”

“Who?”

Clarke didn’t answer. Her gaze became distant, as if she was staring onto another world hidden just beneath this one, like looking onto a sight that only she could see. Lexa tried calling her name another few times but got no reply, and eventually she just gave up. With a sigh through her nose Lexa stood up, a part of her rallying against the idea of leaving her. And she almost gave in to it, almost pulled the metal chair in the corner to the bedside and sat down.

Instead she left the cell, left the quiet, trembling blonde behind.

Lexa went straight to the Medical Wing.

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Clarke’s steps slowed as she stopped by the surprisingly small shop. She dug out her phone, double-checking the address. No, this was it; she was at the right place. Almost hesitantly she approached the wooden door, and as she carefully pushed it open she jumped when a bell went off from above her. Her eyes fell forward, catching sight of a big muscled man behind a counter, casually leaning back and reading a book. Clarke tried not to pry, she really did, but a part of her seemed to be ingrained to take in any and all surroundings, so she pushed herself till she was on the tips of her toes, giving her height to spot the title.

“The Girl with all the Gifts,” the man said, catching Clarke’s curious gaze. He didn’t lift his eyes off the book. “Just letting you know, if you couldn’t spot it from where you were.”

Clarke blushed, fidgeting with her fingers. She didn’t mention that she had easily seen the book title from where she was. For some reason, she couldn’t find the confidence to say something, which was highly unusual as normally she would be the first to pipe up in a conversation, her voice always the first to be heard - but not today apparently. She stood nervously in silence, not quite sure whether it was awkward or not. With a deep breath, she forced the words out of her mouth which felt like it was sewn shut.

“Do you teach self-defense?” she finally asked, embarrassingly relieved at getting it out. The man tore his sight away from his book, but he didn’t put it down. His black scruffy beard almost touched the neck of his shirt.

“How old are you?” he asked, his eyes now serious and intimating. Clarke’s determination kept her back straight.

“Fourteen.”
“And why do you, a pretty little blonde, want to learn self defense?”

She felt a fire light inside of her. Really, she was about to go off at him, but then she remembered that no other nearby self-defense classes were available right now, and that he was the only chance she had. So, with a swollen tongue, Clarke swallowed her pride. It scraped down her throat like a stubborn lizard with claws. “Because I want to be able to defend myself.” She answered, noticing the smallest smile tug at the man’s lips.

Again, he stared at her for a while. But it wasn’t predatory, nor was it threatening in any way, it was otherworldly really. Clarke couldn’t find a word to describe it, expect that there was something different in his eyes when he looked at her like that, something that wasn’t quite him. Or maybe it was him, a part that only ever comes out at certain times, peeking out its curious gaze. Clarke shook her head at herself. She was overthinking again. His smile widened, though Clarke had no idea why. With a new lightness to his face he gestured for her to come up to the counter.

“I teach, but only one. An apprentice I guess you could say. A lot of people come to me for it – and a lot of people leave when they don’t get it.” He explained, and Clarke nodded along.

“Okay.”

“So, if you want to be remembered in my list of possible students, then give me a reason why I should teach you.”

Clarke opened her mouth then closed it. She hadn’t expected to get this far. She had gone looking for classes on a whim truly, an incident with her father enough that left her wanting to learn. She’d asked him actually, but he had shaken his head and said that she should never have to learn those things, or at least, not at her age. ‘Later, when your bones can take more of a punch,’ he had winked, and Clarke had giggled like she always did when he winked like that, slightly exaggerated and mistimed.

It had happened yesterday, when Jake had just gotten back from Afghanistan. She’d missed him so, so, much, and she had hugged him so tight he had joked he couldn’t breathe.

He still hugged her right back with the same intensity.

But after, when her and him had gone out to the park she had spotted it, seen the bully’s of the block hanging around. She had slowed her pace, Jake looking down curiously at her. She tried to tug at his shirt, urging for them to go back home, but Jake had been adamant about going, and by following his daughter’s reluctant gaze caught sight of the two boys up ahead. His face set in a frown, but as he was about to set off to scare them away Clarke was pulling even harder at his shirt, now desperate for him not to embarrass her.

Clarke hated that feeling of helplessness she had felt in that moment. It was strange and unwelcome, and had only really passed for a second, but it was enough to resonate deeply with her. To make her know that she never wanted to feel it again. She wanted to be able to stand up for herself, and even if her reasoning may seem ridiculous to some, she really couldn’t give a damn.

Clarke looked up to the man, and suddenly the words were falling from lips without her consent.

“There is nothing I can say but I want to learn, and there is nothing more I can do except hope that you give me the chance.”

He raised in brows in surprise, clearly not expecting that as an answer. In all honesty Clarke was surprised as well. Was it really her that had said that?
“What’s your name?” the man questioned after a beat of silence. Clarke couldn’t help but smile, feeling like she was getting close.

“Clarke. Clarke Griffin.”

He smiled at her, reaching under the counter and pulling out a yellow notepad. He pushed it towards her, sliding a pen next to it.

“Write your name so I don’t forget you, come back next week and we’ll see.” With that, he leaned back in his chair, picking up his book and taking out the slip of paper he had used to mark the page. Clarke furrowed her brows but complied, having to go right to the edge of her feet as she picked up the pen and began writing her name. She hadn’t even finished her ‘C’ when a large hand was gripping her wrist. Instinctually she tried to pull away, but the man must have realised this, because he instantly let her go. “I’m sorry I… may I see your hand?” he asked, his voice barely above a whisper.

Clarke stared at him, doubt swirling in her gut. She had a birthmark on her left hand, a slightly pinker bit of skin that her parents often told her to keep hidden for some reason. She hadn’t today, as it was far too hot for gloves. She had completely forgotten. But the more she stared, the more she felt the smallest tug of trust, seeing no malice or anger in his eyes. Hesitantly, Clarke lifted her hand, carefully placing it on the counter, the back of her hand facing up. She assumed he wanted to look at her birthmark.

He was. And his eyes were full of wonder and awe.

“Well I be damned… I never thought I’d see the day,” he chuckled, a finger gently tracing the pattern of the mark. He looked up to her. “Do you know what this means?”

Clarke frowned. “It’s a birthmark? It doesn’t mean anything.” The man smiled knowingly.

“Of course. But, it does resemble a certain symbol. Do you know what that is?” Clarke shook her head. “It’s the mark of Death.”

Clarke pulled her hand back, and the man laughed softly.

“Oh don’t worry its far from bad, especially for you. But I am being serious Clarke, it’s a symbol for it. Wanheda it’s called.

Clarke was about to leave, but her curiosity held her down. “Wanheda? What language is that?”

“One that you never want to learn, one that runs right back to the creation of mankind.” He said vaguely. Clarke was still staring at him uneasily, but as she pivoted her feet and he realised she was going to leave he reached out his hand. “Wait! I must teach you.”

Clarke’s jaw dropped. “What?”

“You want teaching yes?” He clarified, earning a shaky nod. “I can give it.”

“But, you just said-“

“Do you want my teaching Clarke or not?” the man huffed, and Clarke reluctantly shut her mouth. Despite his weird reaction to her birthmark, she was strangely desperate to learn how to protect herself. So, she took a few steps towards the counter, gulping down any nerves that threatened to block her throat.
“I do.”

He smiled. “Good.” He reached forward, ripping one of the pages from the notebook he had handed her earlier. He quickly scribbled a note, handing it to Clarke who took it with curious eyes. “We start tomorrow. Meet me there, it’s a park, full of locals and people if you don’t trust me yet.”

She tucked the note into her pocket, not quite being able to keep up. “Okay, tomorrow.”

“Four o’clock. Don’t be late.”

Clarke grinned, feeling some of her usual bravado trickle back in. “Wouldn’t dream of it.”

- “Again.”

Clarke groaned, rolling from her back to her front, pushing herself back up to her feet. That was the sixth time she had fallen from this stupid bloody tree, third time one of the traitorous branches had snapped and sent her tumbling. She glared at her instructor, who was sitting casually in a camp chair in the middle of the park, the same book in his hand as he waited for her to finish her task.

Climb the tree.

That was it. Just, climb the tree. And while Clarke had scoffed and said how easy that was, it was very obvious she was now eating her words, regretting each single syllable. She threw up her arms.

“What’s even the point in this?” Clarke exclaimed exasperated. He didn’t lift his sight off the book, instead turning the page.

“Again.” He repeated. Clarke narrowed her eyes.

“No.”

Now that, earned his attention.

Scarily slowly, he lifted his sight to hers, and Clarke swallowed thickly. “What was that?”

“I can’t do this, so no.”

He actually laughed. “Wow, I’ve never lost a student that fast before.” Clarke frowned, anxiety in her chest as she watched him get up from his chair.

“Wait, no I’m not quitting, I’m just not doing this.”

He stilled, staring at her dead in the eye. “By not doing that, you are quitting.”

“No, that’s not-“

“If you don’t listen to what I tell you to do,” he cut off. “Or at least take this seriously, then it’s obvious that my help isn’t needed here, or can’t help here.”

He had packed up his chair now, tugging it under his arms. Realisation that he was actually going to leave, to abandon her, the tree suddenly seemed like the easiest thing in the entire world.
“Don’t go! I’ll do it,” she promised, her heart calming slightly when he stopped walking away. “I’ll climb it.”

He turned back around, slowly walking back. He put his chair down, and book, which had Clarke frowning. Then, he strode right up to her, and knelt down so they were eye-level.

“If I give you a challenge that you find you cannot overcome, you do not give up. You ask for help, you take a step back, seeing if another approach will be better, having another go at it the next day – but you never, never, give up. Do you understand?”

“Yes Nyko,” Clarke murmured, avoiding his gaze. But he simply smiled, gently tapping her chin. Reluctantly she locked eyes with him, an ocean blue melding with a lakeside puddle. And she was surprised to find an incredible amount of softness in them.

“You did good today.” He said, smiling warmly. Clarke couldn’t help her own at the praise.

“Really?”

“Really.” With that, he stood back up. He checked his watch. “Okay, I think I’ve wasted enough of your time. Go on, you can go home.”

Clarke grinned giddily, but as she pulled out her phone and went to go put her music in, something she always did when walking home, she paused. She touched Nyko’s arm, grabbing his attention.

“How much?”

“How much what?” he asked confused.

“How much money. I don’t have a lot a lot, but I do have enough if you need-“

He waved her off with a scoff. “Please, you do not have to pay me. Don’t be ridiculous.”

Clarke frowned. “But, wants in it for you then?”

“Believe it or not Clarke, but I am not teaching you for extra cash. The book shop you found me in supplies that.” Clarke raised a finger, but he was already continuing. “You have a destiny, and I’m determined to have you prepared as is possible for it.”

Clarke was even more confused. “I don’t understand,” she eventually muttered, her brows knotted puzzled. Nyko smiled widely.

“Call it intuition, but you have lot’s of things ahead of you Clarke.”

“Yeah, like my math homework.” Clarke grumbled, bending down and swinging her school bag over her shoulder. Nyko chuckled softly.

“Yeah, something like that.”

Nyko offered to walk Clarke part of the way home, and though she was reluctant for having possibly another overprotective uncle, he mostly just walked by her side in content silence. Clarke didn’t mind it; there was something appealing about quietness, a specific type where your worries don’t exist and for a moment, or two, it seems like the earth slows it’s spin. They were about a block away from her house when he finally left her side, telling her to come back same place, same time, tomorrow.

And as Clarke climbed the steps up to her bedroom she thought of what Nyko had said just before
“How old were you when you got that tattoo?” Clarke had asked, mostly because she was desperately wanting to get her own. Nyko’s smile was wide and, she thinks, full of mischief.

“I was born with it.”

Clarke wasn’t alone for long. Blood was still trickling down her knuckles, her back now tight against the white wall, her body hidden in the shadow of the bunk above her when Raven and Octavia came rushing. Though at the sight of Clarke, completely and utterly still on the bed Raven flung her arm out in front of Octavia. The brunette almost tumbled back.

“What the hell?” Octavia hissed but Raven only sent her a quick glare. Her face softened.

“Can you stand guard on the hallway? Tell me if anyone’s coming?”

Octavia frowned. “Am I not going in?”

“Not yet,” Raven said, glancing at Clarke. “I’m going to talk to her first.”

Octavia nodded, albeit reluctantly, deciding that Raven did know the blonde more than her – even if they had only known her a total of two days – Raven had gotten the most out of her. Octavia sighed, sidestepping out of the doorway to the cell and casting a quick survey off the halls. No one was out, at least not yet. Before she fully resigned herself as guard dog, she grabbed Raven’s arm.

“Is she…” Octavia paused, trying to find the words. “Is she okay?”

“Honestly, I haven’t a clue.” Octavia blew out a slow breath, finally dipping her head and heading out.

Raven lingered at the cell door for a moment, her eyes hovering cautiously on the blonde. Clarke didn’t stare back, and it worried Raven slightly at the vacancy in her eyes. But the closer Raven looked, the more she felt something different, something… darker. A hot, simmering rage, practically brimming at the edge, tediously waiting for the one moment, that one trip, where it can finally spill. The only thing keeping it back being practiced discipline and grief. But there was something new to the mix.

A deafening sadness.

And defeat.

A dangerous, dangerous mix.

Raven cautiously approached Clarke, like one would a stray animal, slow and careful steps as to not startle them. Still, when she crouched down in front of her she flinched. Raven raised her hands so the blonde could see them, and she saw how her shoulder’s relaxed slightly. Raven took that as sign enough to keep going.

“Clarke?” she whispered, urging her to lock eyes. She eventually did, lifting her head ever so slowly. They barely held the blue in them anymore, an empty replica of the original beauty. Now with the blonde’s attention, Raven loosed a shaky breath, choosing to just dive right into it. She never was one for subtly. “You knew who Wanheda was?”
Clarke squinted at her, before realization dawned and something so cold Raven shivered appeared in her eyes. “Wanheda isn’t dead.” Raven frowned.

“But, the paper-“

“That man, he would never hurt a fly. He’s the kindest soul I’ve ever had the fortune to meet.” Clarke almost growled. Raven nodded, not wanting to fight.

“Okay.” She said, and Clarke seemed to have realised her sudden hostility because her features softened like velvet.

There was a beat of silence. “Did you know him?”

“I did.” Clarke whispered, and it was so quiet Raven was shocked she even caught it.

“Who was he?”

A friend, a brother, a confidant, a therapist, a trainer, a mentor. “Someone very special to me.” She eventually muttered. Clarke forced gaze upwards, and not at her fidgeting hands. “His name was, Nyko. He’s only dead because of me.” Clarke explained. She chuckled bitterly, and so, so sadly. “That bastard never put himself first.”

“And you’re sure he’s not Wanheda? I mean, he could have been doing stuff at night and you could have never known,” Raven reasoned. Clarke just shook her head with an empty smile. “Trust me, he is too a good a person to be Wanheda.” She couldn’t look at Raven anymore, look at the innocence and trust there. It made her feel sick. “Wanheda is still alive. Though I’m beginning to doubt whether she should be.”

“I don’t know, I quite liked Wanheda,” Raven contemplated, not mentioning how Clarke still insisted they were a she. Clarke furrowed her brows at her. “I mean, they got rid of all the scum bags that no one else could deal with. They never killed an innocent or even a guard, them always waking up from unconsciousness with a dead boss. Sure, they are a killer, but, out of all the types of killer’s there are – Wanheda is very low on that scale.”

Clarke stared at her.

Raven stared right back.

It was quite a few whole minutes till either of them spoke up again. “Do you really think that?” Clarke asked incredibly quietly. Raven smiled brightly.

“Hell yeah. Wanheda actually did me a favour anyway, so, I am kinda inclined for them.” Raven shrugged. She saw the slightest, smallest spark in the blonde’s eye.

“What was it?”

Raven smirked at her. “Ah, a secret for a secret. For that, I’d have to tell you why I’m here. And for that, I’d only say if you tell me why you’re here.” Clarke visibly deflated.

“I can’t tell you that.”

“Then neither can I.”

Clarke huffed, but there was a hint of playfulness to it, and that in itself had Raven grinning. Well, crisis avoided it seemed. Of course, she hadn’t even begun to question how Clarke knew the
suspected Wanheda, why she had punched the walls so hard they had caved and red splattered her fist – she still had the quite the list of questions to go through. But for now, it seemed that whatever initial burst of grief, anger, desperation, had passed, and for a little while, she could relax.

Really, she was an idiot for ever thinking that could happen.

She heard running down the halls, a moment later Octavia’s head popping in the cell.

“Doc is here,” she rushed out, and not a second passed when said doctor was appearing behind her. Raven saw it was one of the nurses, the nice ones, and it she felt some of tension choking her throat release. As much as she wanted to help out her new friend, she wasn’t experienced in it, and the idea of a doctor felt like a dream come true. She waved the nurse in; her loose red curls bouncing as she casually strolled into the room. And Raven was about to get out of her way, except when she turned around and saw Clarke she was suddenly rooted to the spot.

Absolute cold fear. That’s what it was. And when the nurse came closer, till she was an arms length away, Clarke scurried into the corner of the bed, backing up as far as she could, her gaze unflinching as she stared at the woman horrified. The nurse huffed at Clarke’s response.

“I can’t help you if you don’t let me.” She sighed, clearly irritated at the early morning emergency. But Raven could see she was practically shaking now, but whether it was in fear or rage, or a deluded mix of both, she didn’t know. Still, she felt a wave of unease from her response, her feet refusing to move away from the blonde’s side just yet. The nurse noticed, flicking her hand as indicant for her to move. She didn’t. Though she scowled, the nurse didn’t seem too bothered anyway, so instead she just edged closer with a huff. Clarke jumped so hard into the pole of the bed that a metal clang snapped at Raven’s ears. At this, Raven had had enough.

“Let me do it.” She said, trying to keep her voice relaxed and not full of the aggression she wanted to spit. The nurse scoffed.

“And leave you alone with medical supplies?”

“You can watch, stand right there,” she pointed to the doorway of the cell. “You’ll be able to see exactly what I’m doing. It’s just a cut knuckle anyway.”

The nurse stared at her, silently weighing the options in her head. When Raven could have sworn she could hear the tiny, tiny, whisperings from Clarke, she finally nodded her head.

“Alright. But I see the entire process.” She agreed, Raven unable to stop the smile spread on her face. “But you do exactly as I say,” the nurse added sternly. Raven bobbed her head.

She drew her finger over her chest. “Cross my heart.”

The nurse glared at her. Reluctantly, she handed over the roll of bandage and two small plastic bottles, one of water and one of antibiotic ointment. She took it, waiting till the woman had moved over to her spot till she could begin. Clarke was still staring at nurse with an immense amount of distrust.

“Clarke, I’m just going to clean your fist okay?” Raven said softly, trying to urge her to look at her. She refrained from touching her, as it seemed that every time she did the blonde would flinch like her hand was ice. Surprisingly, Clarke brought her gaze back to Raven.

“Yes.” She mumbled. Raven smiled widely.

“Okay, give me your hand.” She outstretched her fist; the wound on her knuckles not looking too
bad, though that it didn’t mean it wasn’t nice to look at.

“Clean it with water,” the nurse instructed, and Raven quickly snatched out her hand to grab Clarke’s, not allowing it to retract back to the blonde’s side.

“She’s okay, you can trust her,” Raven encouraged, keeping her voice low and soft. Clarke still eyed the woman warily, her shoulder’s still stiff and her body closed off. Raven knew a lost cause when she saw one. “Focus on me alright? I promise I don’t bite.” Raven winked, and she saw the smallest minute smile play out on Clarke’s lips.

Raven slowly let go of Clarke’s hand, relieved that it wasn’t instantly snatched back.

“Okay, I’m going to wash it, this might sting.” Raven warned, squeezing out droplets of water onto the exposed cuts. Her hand didn’t even twitch. Raven ignored it and cleaned the wound. The silence in the room was suffocating, and she could see out of the corner of her eye the hateful looks Clarke kept giving the innocent nurse. She knew there was no point in telling her off so she just let her, her herself gaining a small amount of satisfaction from Clarke’s little rebellion. It wasn’t often you were allowed to do so. When she washed and cleansed the cut, handing the two bottles back to the nurse, the woman grabbed Raven’s arm.

Clarke was already moving and Raven flung her free hand out.

“It’s okay,” she assured, and like a loyal soldier she didn’t move, instead staying right at the edge of the bed, knees bent and ready to jump at any given moment. Oddly, it touched Raven. The woman let go of her arm sheepishly, realising her mistake.

“Arm’s out, your sleeves need to be rolled up.” She said, and Raven complied. She wasn’t hiding anything up there anyway. Well, at least not today she wasn’t. The nurse pushed up her sleeves slowly, taking careful notice if there was anything pushed up inside. When nothing was there, she nodded and let Raven go back to Clarke. Clarke leaned back into the bunk, her eyes still glued to the nurse, trained tightly to even the slightest of twitches. Raven smirked and sat back down.

“Come on, almost done woman of steel.”

That seemed enough for Clarke to tear her death glare away, instead frowning down at her friend. “Woman of steel?”

“Well you didn’t even flinched for the water and shit so, yeah I’d say that warrants for that title.” Raven explained, stating it like it was obvious. But Clarke’s features darkened, and Raven could sense it was with sadness, a drip of anger ready to spread.

She didn’t say anything more.

With instructions here and there from the nurse, Raven carefully wrapped the bandage around Clarke’s hand, making sure it was tight but not so tight that her blood would be cut off. When she was done, Clarke was staring at her strangely.

“What?”

“You… did it,” She said, as if it wasn’t quite true. Raven furrowed her brows.

“Yeah, I did? What’s weird about that?” Raven asked. Clarke opened her mouth, but promptly shut it. She answered with a shrug, but from the look in Clarke’s eye, Raven could tell she wanted to say something. Raven sighed loudly. “Well, that’s that done.” She handed the materials back to the nurse. She grinned up at her. “Thanks doc. She’s good as new.”
“Funny, Reyes.” The woman deadpanned. She shook her head with a small smile. “Will you remind your friend she needs to come down to Heda’s office before the end of the day?”

“Sure.”

“Good. I’ll see you later then.” With that, she bobbed her head, giving a small wave to both Raven and Octavia, for Clarke though, she hesitated. The blonde was still giving her the death stare, so she figured it was best to just leave. And the moment she was gone, Clarke seemed to loose a strangled breath, her shoulder’s dipping and her back sinking into the wall. Octavia was about to go on, but Raven shot her a look, and with a roll of the eyes Octavia slipped back out. Raven turned to Clarke expectantly.

At first she stared at her fingers, but pulling strength from nowhere she forced her gaze upwards, right into Raven’s eyes.

“I’m a killer.”

The words seem so unnecessarily loud in the quiet room, her voice sounding like a roar when in reality they fought to just make it above a whisper and not a thought. Raven raised her eyebrows, not expecting that at all.

“What type?” Raven asked after a while.

“For hire.”

“Huh. I figured you were worse than that.”

“Wait what?” Clarke breathed, seemingly shocked by this. Raven chuckled, slapping her knee playfully.

“So you’re a killer, as long as you’re not someone that gets off on it, you’re fine.” Raven grinned, and Clarke stared at her open mouthed. She could see the shock in them, the bewilderment – the relief. She must have realised she was gaping at her because suddenly her jaw was snapped shut. Raven sighed, leaning back and splaying her hands out.

“So, I guess you wanna’ know what badass ol’ me got in for huh?” Raven questioned, cocking her head to the side. It seemed that Clarke still hadn’t recovered from the shock of Raven’s quick acceptance. She nodded shakily. “Well, hate to break it to you but, it sadly isn’t that cool.” Raven whispered, but a wicked smile broke out, one that escaped whenever she talked about her life and stories. “My family don’t have the best relationship with the law you see, and were in debt to a nasty gang ever since I was born, meaning I was taught quick how to be the perfect little thief. Sure, it was kind of fun, but I could never keep the scores, always had to go back to them. To work on the debt.” Her voice lost some of its bravado. “My parent’s knew I didn’t like it, and a guilty consciousness nagged at them until they let me go, go off to college and studies and anything that wasn’t illegal. And it was good, I was studying engineering and was working part time as a mechanic.” She smiled at the memories of that job, of the unexplainable joy and giddiness that flooded her bones whenever they got a new wreck, her goal being to fix it. She loved fixing things. “But, it only lasted for so long. When I was in my third year, I got a call.”

She took a breath then, forcing a showman’s smile. “And when family calls, you can’t say no. I was roped into some doomed heist, their target this jewelry store. Surprisingly, we’d actually gotten the jewels, but just as I had chucked the goods into the van – he was driving off. Leaving me behind with an army of cop cars turning the corner.”
Raven looked over to her.

“They got away. I didn’t. But, I honestly have no idea what that gang leader did for my family because they were still in debt to him. That is, until three years ago, and he was found dead. By Wanheda’s hand.” She smirked at the surprised look on Clarke’s face. “So, I owe it to that assassin, they fixed a problem I never knew could be solved. Mum even visits now, more guilty each time. It’s great.”

Clarke stared at her, and Raven was confused when she found something like awe in that pale blue. They plunged into pleasant silence, seemingly content to just let the words float in the air, the confessions dancing from breath to breath without the restrictions of a barred bone cage. At some point, Clarke nodded, and Raven nodded back.

What it was for, neither really knew.

-

It was three in the morning, and Jake swatted away at the hands that were shaking him, trying to wake him up. He had caught a glance at the alarm clock – it was not time to get up.

“Go away,” he grumbled, earning a sigh from his partner.

“Hon, get up, you need to see this.” Abby whispered, earning a curious eye from her husband.

“And what’s so important that it goes above sleep?”

Abby smirked. “It’s to do with your daughter.”

He was out of bed in seconds, and Abby had to hold in her laughter as he quickly (and hilariously) got himself up, a stained white shirt on backwards and a pair of inside out blue trackies. On the way out the door he snatched a hoodie in preparation for the cold early morning air. He followed his wife, Abby eventually stopping by a window that proudly showed off their growing garden. It was far from finished, but it wasn’t resembling a gravel desert anymore.

“Look,” Abby said, pointing out into the backyard. Jake leaned closer, squinting his eyes through the darkness. And through it, he saw her.

A large tree that he’d been too lazy to cut down, and incredibly strangely, Clarke sitting right at the top of it, her legs idly swinging as she perched herself on the highest branch, her smile brighter than the half crescent moon above.

“What is she doing up there?” Jake asked bewildered. Abby shrugged.

“I don’t know, at nine she said she was going to play outside. She came back in when I told her too, and I saw the dirt on her knees and elbows so I’m guessing she was trying to climb it. But… it seems she’s gotten back out.”

Jake blinked, staring back out to the weird sight before him. He made a move to go out to tell her to get down, worried that she was going to hurt herself but-

He couldn’t.

Because her smile.

Her incredibly bright and breathtaking smile.
Abby went to bed, mumbling about how she had to get up early in the morning, and for him to go out and get her down safely. He nodded letting her go, but when she was gone he didn’t move. No, he made himself a brew of tea, pulled up a chair and that book he had been neglecting, and waited for when Clarke was ready to come back down.

An hour later, when he heard the rustling of the leaves, he went outside and caught her when her footing slipped.

She was still smiling.

They say you always remember your first. And for Clarke, that was true.

Though that saying probably didn’t mean the first time you saved someone’s life.

She was seventeen, her blonde hair untamed and her cheeks full. In all honesty, she didn’t really know why she went to bar that night, why she chose a specific path, clambering up walls in the shadows and perching herself on a roof, two escape routes should she be spotted already sitting ready at the back of her mind. But she went anyway, a strange feeling in her bones that nagged at her like an itch. Always there, every now and again pulsing, reminding her of its presence.

And sitting up there, her toes curling in her black boots as they teetered over the edge, the feeling thrummed through her like a chant of the masses. Here, here, here they whispered, like a mosquito buzzing by her ear. Here, here, here. When she was older, she’d learn to tune it out, to not have it so loud and obnoxious. But now, she couldn’t do that, and the call for something she couldn’t explain pulled her to where she was, her eyes searching for something she didn’t know. It felt like there was two of her, and only one knew what they looking for. The other, merely following like a blind man.

Clarke tugged her leather jacket tighter, the growing cold starting to nip at her skin. She had been posted up there for hours now, and with a sigh she leaned back, ready to head the home. But as she stood up, internally scolding herself for giving in to such a weird desire, she saw it.

In the corner of her eye, she saw a hooded figure.

The whisperings in her ear seemed to scream.

Him, him, him.

And for the first time, Clarke listened.

He was hanging close to the entrance of the bar, casually leaning in the darkness of a nearby alleyway. Carefully, Clarke moved towards him from above, leaping from rooftop to rooftop, landing with nothing louder than a dull thud. She crept as close as she could, black hoodie hiding his face as she stared down at him from up top. She narrowed her eyes. Why him? What was special about him? She couldn’t explain it, but all she knew was that there was something about him. Something dark and suffocating. Clarke edged a little closer from her ledge, trying to see if there was anything on him that would explain it. Except she went a little too far, and the menacing pebbles rolled out from under her foot. Before her back had even hit the ground from the slip she was hurling herself away from the edge, desperate not to be seen. She was too far up for him to have heard the fall without concentrating, or at least she hoped so. Holding her breath, she waited.

One.
Hesitantly Clarke crawled back up to her feet. Crouching, she tiptoed back to the ledge, peering over it. She loosed a strained breath. He hadn’t noticed. She hung her head, letting out a soft chuckle.

The hell was she even doing?

Another hour passed, and the tiredness from the late hours was starting to show itself. For a moment, she considered just going home, slipping in through the unlocked window in her room and lying in the comfort of her own bed. And really she would have, but the second her hand even twitched the voices all came rushing at her. Here, here, here. Clarke huffed, but didn’t move.

It would be another hour until it happened.

Playing with the tip of her dagger, something she had brought with her on a whim, she finally saw the man move. The feeling from before coursed even louder through her veins, like a drum roll to the big event. It was seriously starting to piss her off that she didn’t know what the event was. But she listened to it, and with eyes trained on him, she noticed where he was headed.

A girl, a sway in her step and a hand trailing the pub’s wall.

Clarke gripped tight to her dagger.

Waiting till he was far enough away she moved to the side of the building, her calloused hands wrapping around a pipe and sliding down. On the ground she moved quick, her outfit casual enough that it allowed her to blend in, the blade hidden snugly in her boot. She followed him, but as she did she noticed that two other men had suddenly appeared by his side. Unease tightened her throat, most of the discomfort coming from the fact that it wasn’t her unease but someone else’s, something else’s. She ignored it.

After tailing them for a few blocks she saw them turn into another alleyway, what she knows to be a shortcut to the main roads. She quickened her pace, knowing that the woman they had been following was now alone and cut off. Creeping up to the mouth of the alley she lined her back against the wall, leaning out just in time to catch the snicker in the men’s voices.

“Hey lady, could I trouble you for a moment?” the black hoodie asked. The woman glanced behind her, what Clarke could see to be anxiety in her eyes, before turning back around and continuing on her way, her steps significantly faster. The man’s voice lowered. “Hey, I asked you a question.” She kept walking. With a growl he ran after her, roughly grabbing her by the hair and shoving her into a wall. Clarke slipped in between the buildings, moving up behind a rubbish bin that hid her.

The woman was now backed into the wall, the man and his lackey’s standing by his side.

The voices were practically roaring in her ear now.

Here, here, here.
“Please, I just want to go home,” the woman pleaded, frantic eyes jumping between the three of them. The guy in the black hoodie laughed, nodding his head.

“Of course, of course, so do we,” he said, taking a step forward. The woman flinched. “It’s just, you see I’m a little low on cash~~”

“I don’t have any money,” she hastily interrupted. The three of them shared a glance.

“There’s no point in lying.” He flicked his hand, and the two thugs behind him both edged closer. “Come on, just give me your money and we’ll be on our way. No harm, no foul right?”

“Please I-“

Suddenly a bottle smashed to the right of them, all four heads whipping to the sound. The man in the black hoodie frowned, nerves trialing up his arms. The woman stood still, her only movement the shivering that flooded her body.

“Who’s there?” the man said to no one, taking slow steps towards where the bottle had smashed. Clarke, waiting on the opposite side, snuck out from behind the bins. She crept up to the nearest man, and with one swift blow slammed the butt of the dagger into his head. He fell to the floor unconscious. From the sound the two other men snapped their heads behind them, but Clarke was already charging at them, and like a panther pounced onto the man with the black hoodie, a snarl that wasn’t quite her own on her lips as she hit him hard in the jaw. She was only on top of him for a second until another body collided with hers, sending her and the thug tumbling to the ground. The thug snatched her wrists, pinning her down. His brows furrowed when he saw who he was actually fighting.

“Who the fuck are you?” he chuckled. Clarke grinned, and the sight of it was enough for the thug to freeze.

“No one.”

His grip had loosened when he laughed, and Clarke took that to her full advantage. A flush of cold engulfed her; the whisperings turned chantings yelling like a siren in her head. Now, now, now!

Channeling a burst of foreign power into her legs, she pulled them up underneath from the man who was lying on top of her.

Then, she kicked.

And he flew, flew, flew, till he crashed into a litter of trashcans, the metal ring bouncing off the tight walls. Clarke scrambled up to her feet, ready to deal with the last thug when she faltered. Her eyes caught sight of the man lying unconscious in the pile of garbage.

How did she do that?

As it turns out, the single second of doubt was enough time for a boot to land in her stomach. The air rushed out of her, a fist slamming into the side of the face. Clarke staggered back, the man with the black hoodie already rushing at her.

“Watch out!” the woman shouted, the man tripping slightly as he had completely forgotten she was there. Clarke hadn’t though. Blood trickling down her lip she ducked, sweeping out her leg and sending the man crumpling to the ground. Before he could even pull himself to all fours, her foot smashed into his ribs, a sickening crack snapping through the freezing air. Clarke took a few shaky steps back, her gaze flicking over the three stilled men.
The shouting in her head calmed, until eventually, she was left with silence once more.

Clarke felt like she couldn’t breathe.

But that didn’t matter, not yet anyway.

“Are you okay?” Clarke questioned, hesitantly approaching the woman. She was staring at her wide-eyed, the confliction heavy of whether she should trust her or not. After a few slow seconds, Clarke staying absolutely still in case the woman felt threatened, she actually relaxed.

“I’m okay… I think,” she whispered. She pulled her back from the wall as if it was glued. She glanced around the unconscious bodies splayed around her. “Thank you, I thought… I don’t know. Thank you.”

“There’s nothing to thank.” Clarke muttered. The woman nodded shakily, her gaze leaving Clarke’s. There was a long pause before Clarke nodded back, either to herself or the woman she didn’t know. The adrenaline was starting to wear off, her probably bruised ribs spiking with a steady throb of pain. She wasn’t sure if she had even blinked yet. Casting a quick glance to the end of the alleyway, a soft light glowing from the streetlights, Clarke took a step back. “You’re safe now. Stay on main streets and in public eye, next time, don’t go home alone.” The woman nodded numbly.

“Okay.” She said shakily. Clarke gave her one last nod, but as she spun around to head back home a hand grabbed her wrist. She turned back, surprised to find the woman staring at with gratitude in her eyes.

“I-I don’t have any money on me right now, but I can-“

“I don’t want your money.” Clarke cut off, lifting up her hand. She gently pulled her hand out of the woman’s grasp. The woman shook her head.

“No, no, I must repay you. You… you saved my life.” She explained, and the way she said it almost made Clarke’s knees give out from underneath her. There was a warmth to it she had never heard, and it struck her like a bolt of lightening itself.

And suddenly, Clarke had an idea.

She steadied herself, clearing her throat.

“There is something you can do for me,” she said, and the woman’s face lit up. “If anyone ever asks, I was never here. You never saw me. To you, to anyone, I don’t exist.”

The woman frowned, but nodded her head slowly. “Okay.” Clarke gave her a soft smile.

“For your sake, may we never meet again.”

“Thank you,” the woman murmured. With a slight limp Clarke finally turned around, her sight instead of going to the alleyway end, but up above. Something shook in her bones, an entirely different presence from before. It wasn’t like the whispers which seemed to come from something else, but like a part of her that had never breathed finally took in its first gasp of air. A sizzling skittered through her blood, and the longer Clarke stared up the more the sensation increased, increasing, increasing, increasing till she felt like she was on fire from the inside.

Suddenly, the fire wasn’t just inside. A sharp pain erupted from the back of her hand where her birthmark was, a strange broken spiral with a jagged line diagonally slicing through. It was a mark
she was born with, and though she had always been told to keep it hidden by her parents, she often didn’t really see the point in hiding up a simple slightly pinker than the rest bit of skin. Her hand began to tremble violently, her free hand wrapping around her now shaking one.

With a gasp, Clarke saw that her birthmark was glowing.

And when the glow dimmed, the mark on her hand was now a complete black.

And Clarke finally felt complete.

“Oh my god…” the woman breathed, stumbling until her back was planted against the wall, the cold brick being her only support to stay on two legs. Clarke laughed, a totally free and full of joy laugh. She had never laughed like that before, with such *completeness*.

Honestly it shouldn’t have surprised her when she caught movement in the corner of her eye, reality ever reminding her of how good things didn’t last. Within a blink she was on the ground next to the lead thug, snatching the knife out of his hand and kicking it away. For good measure, she threw in one last kick to the stomach, bending down and roughly grabbing him by the back of his hair. She pulled his head till her mouth was right next to his ear.

“When death comes for you, know that I was the one that opened the door.” She let him go carelessly, his head falling with a thump to the cold ground. The buzzing in her veins thrummed through her like a bushfire now, everything feeling like it was burning in the best possible way, as if her body was preparing itself, readying. She caught the woman’s eye for the last time.

The woman stood gaping.

“Who are you?”

It was then that Clarke finally began to understand what she was. She gave the woman a wry smile. “*Wanheda.*”

And then, the build up in her reached its limit.

And it felt like something had exploded inside of her.

Then, when the blackness in the skies begin to bleed red, Clarke will fall from the clouds and laugh, catching sight of the houses, the people, the animals, the world; the overwhelming *life*.

After all, Clarke had always had keen eyes.

Chapter End Notes

shits getting a little bit more ~supernatural
hope you guys enjoyed! :D

(im p sure theres no tridgeslang in this one but if there is let me know and ill add translations)
Fear is a funny thing.

Normally Lexa has good control over her fears. She knows what they are, whether rational or not, and is typically able to have some power over it. Normally, she doesn’t have this feeling of dread in her chest and veins, doesn’t have her heart beating faster than what she thinks is humanly possible, and doesn’t have this dryness in her throat that makes her feel like she’s suddenly unable to name the last time she drank water.

Normally, Lexa isn’t so terrified when handling a prisoner.

Anya had called her in, a lovely dose of Déjà vu when her radio crackled to life, her sister’s gruff voice coming through the grainy speaker. Lexa only had to make out a couple words before she was out of her seat and running for the cafeteria once more.

Those two words were Clarke and trouble.

She arrived embarrassingly fast, finding the blonde to be stumbling around with Reyes and Blake only able to watch helplessly. Clearly they wanted to help, but Clarke seemed too far gone in whatever world she was in. She was so lost that when Lexa got closer Clarke bumped into her. She tried to bring her back, but it didn’t seem like Clarke even saw her. Then the blonde was running.

Lexus made the mistake of lagging a few moments, her icy gaze falling onto the two motionless friends. She didn’t speak, merely raised a brow. Reyes just shook her head, as did Blake, who both genuinely seemed at a loss of what had happened. Begrudgingly, Lexa let them be and went on after Clarke.

She found her punching the walls.
She was so focused on hitting them that Lexa slipped behind easily and grabbed her fists. She wasn’t surprised that Clarke struggled, so she just held on as tight as she could, patiently waiting for the blonde to stop. And she did, slowly, the energy, or maybe the want to keep going, drained from her, and Lexa carefully picked her up and laid her down in the bottom bunk.

She tried talking to her, managing to few words out, but they were disjointed and off. They didn’t quite make sense, and it was clear that Clarke was not in the right state of mind for a questioning. But Lexa was much more worried about Clarke herself, having seen a multiple breakdowns before in her time as Heda. Though Lexa wanted to stay with Clarke, for no reason she could work out, she forced herself to leave and head for the medical wing.

The moment she left the cell she was running.

That was when the fear came.

She burst into the medical wing, an array of eyes snapping onto her from the sudden entrance. Lexa ignored them easily, her own eyes searching through the relatively empty sick bay until they landed on the nurse she wanted. When she found her, she rushed over to her. Her head was still a little scattered with the whole turn of events, but while her words were a little breathless they still held that same sureness that every Heda should hold.

“Come with me now, there’s an emergency.”

At Lexa’s order, the woman hastily finished up her talk with her patient, rushing out a quick ‘sorry’ and ‘I’ll be right back’ before jumping to Lexa’s side as she exited the wing. Though the woman was completely surprised for Heda’s unexpected appearance, she still had mind enough to halt the woman’s quickly retreating steps.

“Wait,” the woman said, and thankfully Lexa stopped. She turned to her expectantly. “What’s the emergency?”

Lexa had the decency to look flushed. She nodded, apologetically, coming back to nurse’s side.

“At Lexa’s order, the woman hastily finished up her talk with her patient, rushing out a quick ‘sorry’ and ‘I’ll be right back’ before jumping to Lexa’s side as she exited the wing. Though the woman was completely surprised for Heda’s unexpected appearance, she still had mind enough to halt the woman’s quickly retreating steps.

“An inmate had a break down, she’s been punching the walls.” Just the thought of it had this weird sense of worry nagging at the back of her head. The nurse bobbed her head and scurried off, hurriedly coming back with the necessary supplies. She offered Lexa a weak smile, gesturing for the exit.

“Lead the way Heda,” she said. Lexa didn’t return it, but her eyes softened. She led the way for the most part, though the closer they got to Clarke’s cell the quicker her pace became, the poor nurse having to keep up with her, and hold her tongue, for Lexa’s sudden speed. When Lexa knew they were only a few cellblocks away, Anya suddenly appeared in her view. Lexa slowed down, reluctantly, but she soon found herself frowning from the unusual serious look in Anya’s eye. Something was wrong.

The first thing Lexa thought was Clarke.

“Did something-“

“We need to talk.” Anya interrupted, and the glare she got from it was honestly quite terrifying. But she was used to it. Anya flicked her gaze over to the nurse. “Alone.”

“Anya there’s an emergency, we can talk about whatever it is later.” Lexa stated, already making a move to go past her. Anya’s hand shot out, gripping Lexa’s arm. It was a dangerous move, and Lexa, exceedingly slowly, brought her eyes to meet Anya’s.
She didn’t say anything, as with a look like that, it was a miracle Anya didn’t suddenly turn to a pile of ash right there. She let go of Lexa’s arm, and the moment it was released Lexa snatched it back to her side.

The nurse watched the interaction with a mix of fascination and fear. When Lexa and Anya had done nothing expect glare at each other for a good minute, the nurse finally decided to intervene. She didn’t dare move close to them though.

“I need to get to the inmate. So,” Anya looked at her, hard, and it was enough that the nurse had to swallow her words. “So, if you could just tell me where to go I’ll leave.”

Lexa looked to her as well, but it was a lot softer compared to the dirty blonde’s. Lexa took a moment before she eventually dipped her head in permission.

“Prisoner 319. Cell a hundred and twenty six. Be quick.” She was about to let her go when Lexa had an idea. “Tell the inmate to come down to my office before the end of the day.” The nurse nodded back at her, and soon she was awkwardly shuffling past them and hurrying down the hall. With the nurse gone, and Lexa’s ticket to go check up on Clarke, she turned to her sister with a sigh.

Anya talked before she could.

“I need to tell you something. Important.”

Lexa just looked at her, obviously waiting for whatever she wanted to tell her. Anya sighed, and in a rare display brought her hand to the back of her neck. She bit her lip for a moment, contemplating something, before shaking her head and bringing her hand back to her side.

“Follow me, we need to talk somewhere quiet.” Anya muttered, already moving back the way that Lexa had come. Lexa didn’t say how it was already very quiet where they were, instead just followed her sister with growing worry. Clearly, something was bothering her, and this something seemed to be quite big.

Unsurprisingly, Lexa was right.

Anya led her to an empty hallway, and only once she had thoroughly checked that they were alone and no one could hear, did Anya finally let her shoulder’s relax slightly. Lexa just watched her the entire time, and when her sister came back to her side all Lexa did was raise a brow in question. Her sister let out a long sigh.

“I have news about Griffin.”

Only now did Lexa realise how she had been casually calling Clarke by her first name. She didn’t let it play on her face, but suddenly a flush of heat engulfed her. Luckily, the feeling past quick.

With Lexa’s silence, Anya continued. “Her case has been weird from the start, so I went and did a little digging on it.”

“Anya…” Lexa warned. While Lexa was indeed curious about Clarke’s (Griffin’s damnit, not Clarke’s) story, she had a sense that going down that path would only lead to trouble. She was right, exceedingly so, but Lexa didn’t know that. Anya only offered a shrug as apology.

“Listen, the point is I found something. You know the Skaikru prison? The Skybox?” Anya went on, nodding with Lexa when she saw her dip her head. “Well, it turns out that was where Griffin initially was. Before Azgeda Tower.”
Just the mere name of it made Lexa want to throw up, but her curiosity held down the desire. Lexa frowned. “And? Why are you telling me this?”

Anya let out another sigh, which even Lexa found strange, and when Anya suddenly seemed like she was going to back out, she said it.

“She had a death sentence.”

Lexa could only stare.

“A week before she was meant to… before the date, she was moved to Azgeda Tower with sudden evidence that she was actually an accomplice to the slaughter, and not the actual murderer.”

It took a lot of effort for Lexa to speak. “Slaughter?” she whispered. Anya grimaced.

“You heard about that attack a year and a bit ago? On Cage Wallace?”

“The scientist obsessed with the Others?” Lexa asked.

Anya nodded. “Yeah, him. You remember his attack?”

Lexa did. It was brutal, or at least that’s what she gathered from the newspapers. She herself wasn’t a fan of Cage, nor was she a fan of his quest to prove the myth of the Others, an apparent species of human’s with special abilities. They weren’t real, everyone knew that, but for some reason Cage had truly and utterly believed they were. While she didn’t like him, or approve of the very invasive methods of trying to prove the Others existence, his death was something even she had trouble stomaching.

He had been killed, along with a few of his closest associates. Doctor Tsing and a man named Emerson Lexa thinks, and the death was far from easy. While it was true that Tsing and Emerson had had just a knife to the chest, or throat for Emerson, it was Cage’s death that sparked most of the newspapers to life.

He had been ripped apart.

Or more cut, picked apart.

It was no surprise when his death sparked uproar, a mix of reports either relentlessly spitting how disgusting and heinous of a crime had been committed, while some, though hadn’t necessarily condoned the mystery murderer’s actions, but had quietly stated how Cage being gone wasn’t actually terribly awful.

The man, after all, had done some very bad things.

Lexa herself is a little conflicted, but for the most part went with that while it wasn’t too terrible that he was gone, his death was unnecessary.

“I do,” Lexa finally said, bringing her mind back. “It wasn’t pretty.”

“No, it wasn’t. But the point is, it was Griffin who was accused of being the killer.”

Lexa blinked. “Did…” she forced a breath. “Did she actually do it?”

“I don’t know,” Anya sighed, her shoulder’s dropping. She was glad to get the weight of this new knowledge off her chest. “I just felt like you should know. This Griffin… she reeks of trouble. Stay away from her. That’s all I’m saying.”
Lexa scowled. “What do you mean ‘stay away from her’? What are you implying?” She didn’t mean to sound so defensive, and it didn’t seem to help her case. Anya just looked at her, eventually shaking her head with a scoff.

“Look, I’m not implying anything. I’m just saying you drop everything and run the second you hear her name. She’s a prisoner, remember that.”

“I do remember that.” Lexa growled. She took a step forward, and the way that Lexa’s voice dropped Anya actually stepped back. But hearing that tone of defiance in Lexa only made it jump onto Anya’s.

“You are Heda. You will always be Heda.” Anya growled back. She dared a step closer to Lexa, but the brunette merely raised her chin at the action. “I’m looking out for you. Not because you’re Heda, but because you’re my sister. Don’t let your emotions control you.”

Lexa felt a fire light in her chest, and it took all of her effort to hold it in. “I don’t. I never have, and never will. You of all people would know that.” Lexa edged closer enough till they were face-to-face, inches apart. “Yu ait, ai laik Heda. En taim don ai yu, ai ai op teisa.”

Anya blinked, but a moment a later she could see Anya’s remark right at the tip of her tongue.

Instead Lexa turned around.

And she walked away.

She didn’t remember the rest of the morning.

Clarke stayed in her cell for the most of it, huddled in the corner of her top bunk with nothing but silence as company. Well, that’s not completely true. She had Raven, she also had Octavia who popped in more regularly than she expected. Her outburst about Nyko’s death had been staggering, and honestly it took all of her mental effort to just keep her head up. But she had been foolish in exposing her own weakness like that. So now Clarke was pulling her wits together to try and push past the grief she can feel strangling her heart.

She shoved any thoughts and memories of him as far as they can go. She would let herself mourn; she would, but not now. Not here, not with Nia’s spies everywhere just waiting for an opportunity like this. Emotions are dangerous, and are heavily tied in her abilities. Though the glove didn’t allow her to exercise them, it doesn’t mean that when the feeling is strong enough her body doesn’t react and attempt to bring out the Other part of her.

But it’s Nyko.

So she lets herself feel a little.

She tries to cry like she did in the canteen when she saw Nyko’s pale face. She tries to summon that sensation, bring out that stinging in her eyes. Because it feels right, like she should be crying about losing someone. It’s what she did for her Dad, it’s what she did when she watched cliché rom-coms when she was little, her nine year old bright eyes glistening in the glow of the TV screen.

She should cry. He deserves that at least.

Clarke couldn’t.
She almost punched the walls again because of it. These emotions, this hurricane in her chest she wanted out, but it was like her heart and mind were of two completely different things. The same station but with two trains on two separate tracks. Crying would release some of that. She knows it would.

But the sensation never came.

And when Raven saw Clarke shift slightly, probably to get up and go at the wall again, she shot Clarke a look. The blonde almost ignored it, but her heart growled at her and she reluctantly sat back down.

After two hours of doing nothing but sit in silence Clarke felt like she was getting her bearings again. The world didn’t feel as off as it did, and the numbness was beginning to retract as well. She stretched and clenched her fists to prove this. The white bandage was wrapped her hand, but already Clarke could see the red spots appearing around her knuckles and joints of her fingers. Her left hand, the one with the glove, echoed this except without the knuckle’s bleeding.

Apparently, the slamming of her fist against the wall hadn’t damaged the leather in the slightest.

Not that she was surprised.

She made another move to get up, ready to finally get on with the rest of the day. Her mind was still a little out of it, but she had managed to rid most of her emotions away, and it’d be better if she were actually doing something instead of staring at a wall. She’d been doing for nearly an entire year at the Tower. If she was out of that hellhole, than she wants to put as much as she can behind her for as long as she can.

Because she knows that she’ll be going back.

She hates it. But it’s true.

Nia will be coming, but right now, in these few precious moments she’s free from her immediate touch. Nyko… Nyko had been a reminder. But knowing him he’d want her to keep fighting, to push through. And that’s what she’s going to do.

Clarke took a deep breath, one deep enough that when she let the air pass through her lips she’s sure it was more than a breath that escaped her. For the day she decided that she’d go walk around the prison, figure out its layout. She didn’t know if it was going to be tighter than the Tower, if there’d even be a chance at escape. If there was even a point. Clarke swallowed the lump in her throat. No, there was a point. If she could escape, if she could get out of here and be free from Nia once and for all then…

Then what? It may have only been a year but it had somehow consumed every part of her. It wasn’t just a year but a lifetime, something that broke her right down to her very soul. How was she meant to go on? Even now, still being in a prison but without Nia’s immediate grasp, she felt strange. It wasn’t that she had grown attached to Nia but with everything she had been through Nia had been the constant. She wasn’t that anymore. It was a good thing, a very good thing.

But it also felt strange.

Clarke leaned forward, shuffling herself till she was climbing down the small metal ladder of the bunk. The bed screeched at her as she did, and she was almost tempted to shush its nagging.

Raven was on the bottom bunk now, and when she saw Clarke her mouth was already opening ready for its chiding. Clarke beat her to it.
“I’m not going to punch the wall,” Clarke instantly said, and with a huff Raven shut her mouth. She was holding a book, and carefully she slipped in a ripped piece of paper as a bookmark before she put it down.

“So? Ready to do something interesting?” Raven’s eyes glinted with everything to do with trouble. Clarke almost smiled. She was actually about to go with it, about to go with whatever chaos-filled planned the mechanic was planning. But then Clarke remembered what that nurse had said before. Something that she hadn’t felt in a long while swirled in her gut. Nerves.

“I have to go see… Heda.” The glint in Raven’s eyes leaked onto her lips. She grinned, wide.

“Oh?”

Clarke rolled her eyes and strode past her. Really she would have walked straight out the cell, but, unfortunately, she didn’t actually know where Lexa’s office was. Begrudgingly she stopped herself at the entrance of the cell. She threw her head over her shoulder with a sigh.

Raven was still grinning at her, and the bastard had the nerve to cross her arms over chest. Clarke glared at her, not appreciating the cocky display.

Clarke didn’t cave. Her stubbornness had been called impressive on multiple occasions, had also kept her alive on multiple occasions. When Clarke’s glare somehow didn’t waver for a full on minute Raven threw up her arms with a scoff.

“God, you’re no fun blondie,” Raven grumbled. Clarke gave her a small smile. It was only a little apologetic. “You want me to walk you there?”

“Too hard to explain? Or are you too lazy?”

“Funny Griff. Real funny.” Despite her comment, Raven still slid off the bed. She patted down her grey sweatpants, her sight trailing over the cell in a check to see that everything was order. When she saw that nothing was missing, yet, Raven nodded and strode out the cell. Clarke shook her head and followed her.

It turned out that Lexa’s office was further than she thought.

It also turned out that Raven was more popular than she was letting on.

Well, not popular. Respected. As they walked through the halls it would be common for any of the inmates who were leaning against the walls, sitting down on a backwards chair, laughing at someone’s joke, to catch Raven’s eye and offer a little nod. Raven would bob her head back, and the inmates would go on with whatever they were doing. When this happened for sixth time, Clarke’s curiosity finally got the best of her.

“What’s with that?” Clarke asked, Raven trailing by her side.

“What with?”

Clarke gestured to the person behind them, the one huddled with a group of people. “The nodding,” Clarke clarified.

“Oh that, right. Well, let’s say I have a little reputation ‘round here.” She explained vaguely. Clarke just looked at her and it was enough that Raven couldn’t help her chuckle. “Alright, alright. You see, this may surprise you but I do have a little bit of a relationship with trouble. You know, small trouble. Contained chaos, as I like to call it.”
“Contained chaos?” Clarke repeated. Raven grew a dangerous grin.

“Yeah, like time that I was sent to the medical when this girl hit me in the stomach—“

“A girl what?”

Raven waved her off. “That’s not the point. It was a misunderstanding. It was her fault. Anyway, the point is that there just happened to be a tinsy, winsy, explosion in medical.”


“Explosion is too big. Just like, a little bang. A little pop.”

Clarke was stunned silent, her jaw dropped. She had stopped walking, and Raven had to nudge the girl forward to get her moving again. Much to Clarke’s dismay, Raven wasn’t done.

“The sprinklers went off in the entire building and I was chucked into The Pit for a week.”

Clarke couldn’t not laugh in disbelief. And a little in pride.

“Jesus Christ Raven,” Clarke breathed. Raven beamed at her, obviously treating the solitary confinement as something you should pride yourself on. They talked a little more, Clarke learning some of the chaos, sorry, controlled chaos that Raven had reaped on poor innocent officers and inmates. Eventually they reached Lexa’s office door and Raven had to bid goodbye, throwing her one last wink over her shoulder before she disappeared around a corner.

Clarke stood in front of Lexa’s door, her left hand hovering over the doorknob. For some reason, those stupid nerves were still fluttering in her stomach like a stubborn itch. She didn’t understand why they were there, she was only going to talk to Lexa anyway, but still the persistent bastards wouldn’t go away. She hadn’t been anxious like this in a long while, a light kind of nervousness. Normally she has that thick dread, that fear that makes her sweat and breathe hard when Nia shows her face with a smile. It’s not a smile; it's Nia showing her teeth. And it never means anything good.

But this wasn’t like that.

Because she wasn’t really afraid of Lexa, though she probably should be. There’s just this slight anxiousness of seeing her and having to lie about her breakdown. Having to lie about knowing that Wanheda being not dead wasn’t because she just knew the person who was framed for it, but she herself was Wanheda. She had never had trouble with lying about this thing that she had become, but for some reason now she suddenly was. Clarke shut her eyes, slowing counting to five.

She took in one last breath and twisted open the door.

Lexa’s office was bigger than she expected. It wasn’t ginormous, but it also wasn’t small. Metal cabinets lined the walls, no papers sticking out as each bit of storage was neatly aliened, all standing in one straight line. In the centre of the room but pushed slightly to the back was a desk. It was wooden, gorgeously so, with twirling patterns carved into the legs, veins of an oak flower winding around the limbs and extending up to the top, spreading like roots over the surface of the desk. On the desk was a computer, the art of the wood hidden by piles of paper, one stack looking much larger than the other. There were other things too, like a half-cup of coffee next to a mug of pens, a photo that Clarke couldn’t see that was facing away from her, a yellow notepad with scribbled black lines that if she squinted she knows she’d be able to see.

And then of course there was Lexa.
Her head had lifted the moment Clarke entered the room, and Lexa had given Clarke a moment to take in her surroundings. Clarke did, but she took a lot more care in it than she had expected. Her gaze swept over the room like she was taking notes of everything’s exact position and storing that information away for later. Lexa hid her frown.

Clarke was the one to speak.

First she cleared her throat. “You asked for me,” Clarke said, and Lexa gave her a nod. She gestured to the chair in front of the desk.

“Take a seat.” Clarke only hesitated a moment before she did so, hating how loud the chair shrieked as it scraped against the floor. She took in Lexa; saw how her hair was braided back and that this time, without the face paint from before, she could see a whole new depth to her face. The paint made her face sharp and cold, making her look almost like a warrior. And, Clarke supposed that she still did. But right now there was something a lot softer in the lines around her lips.

Not that she was looking at her lips.

Lexa had been typing, but now she had stopped and nudged her keyboard to the side. She lent forward and rested her clasped hands on the desk.

“I wanted to talk with you about what happened this morning.” Lexa said. Her voice was serious, but it wasn’t completely cold. Clarke could hear the hidden concern within Lexa’s words, whether the woman had intended to or not.

“I know, and I want to apologise.” And have us never talk about this again, is what Clarke wanted to add.

Lexa dipped her head, letting Clarke go on.

Clarke’s hands were in her lap as she began fidgeting with them. “I’d just found out I lost someone, someone… very important to me. I was panicked and confused,” and angry, but she figured that wouldn’t be the best thing to add. “And I just wasn’t thinking. I had to… had to do something.” That wasn’t even a lie. She wasn’t thinking, at all, just needed to feel something other than that horrible numbness that she hated felt familiar. Lexa took in her words, nodding once Clarke was done.

Lexa never let her gaze stray from Clarke.

She couldn’t help it, but every time she saw her, saw the black bags under her eyes and slight gaunt of her cheeks it sent off this pang in her chest. Every time she saw those pale eyes she always just somehow knows they aren’t meant to look like that. A part of her knows that her eyes were never meant to look like that. Lexa brought her attention back to the present, ignoring how her stomach clenched when Clarke brought her gaze to meet hers.

Lexa realised something, and she frowned. “When did you find out? That you’d lost someone?”

“This morning,” Clarke answered, hating where Lexa was going. The girl was annoyingly smart, making it so Clarke was going to have to talk about the thing she was trying not to talk about. Great.

As expected, Lexa’s frowned deepened. “How? You went straight to cafeteria didn’t you, there was no time to take a call?”

“I didn’t make a call, no.” When Lexa just remained silent, obviously waiting for Clarke to
continue, the blonde caved with an inward sigh. “I found out in the newspaper. I saw a photo of the person who I’d lost.” She avoided saying his name, scared what it would trigger. She’d put a clamp on her emotions so far, but who knows how long it’ll hold up.

“Where in the paper?” Lexa questioned.

There was no going back now. “The front page, where it said…” she forced herself to take a breath. To be calm. “Where it said that Wanheda was dead, there was a picture of him. His dead body.”

“You friend was Wanheda?” Lexa’s brow rose well above her hairline. Clarke ignored how perfectly Lexa said her title.

“No,” Clarke said, though a part which she hadn’t. “He’s not. He’s not Wanheda.”

Lexa leaned back in her chair, the leather sighing as she did. “So you believe that someone that was caught at the scene and had multiple witness, had a team sweep his apartment and find a secret room with all the murder weapons of Wanheda’s previous kills, plus the fact that when he went missing for a year Wanheda went missing too. You believe, that despite all that evidence, he hadn’t been Wanheda?”

Clarke tried to process Lexa’s accusation. She really did. But her mind had snagged on one of Lexa’s sentences and stuck with her. She felt her blood run cold.

Nyko had been missing for a year.

Before Clarke was in Azgeda Tower, she had seen Nyko at least once every week, maybe two. She would have known if he’d disappeared for a year, he would have told her or she would have noticed. She knows him too well, there’s no way for that fact to be true. Unless, he had gone missing in the year she’d gone missing. In the year that she’d been in Agzeda Tower. For some reason, those tears that she had been trying to summon earlier burned her eyes. She held them back with great effort.

Nyko had been looking for her.

This entire time, he hadn’t stopped. He’d been missing, missing; he’d given a year of his life just in an attempt to find her. Clarke almost smiled at his idiocy, his never-ending loyalty. While she wanted to hug him for it, she also wanted to slap him. He’d been stupid, and if it was true that had done nothing but look, then that would explain why he had been found dead.

Perhaps Nyko had found her.

But Nia had found him.

Clarke realised she had been quiet for two long, and rushed to answer Lexa’s question.

“Yes.”

She could have sworn she saw the girl smile. Or maybe it was more of her lips twitching. “I see,” Lexa finally said. She leant forward again, back to her previous position. Something shifted in her eyes, that almost-smile lightness from before gone like a candle being snubbed. “Griffin, if it becomes clear that you’re unstable, then it would be safer for you, and the other inmates, that you’d be moved to the psych ward.”

Clarke suddenly felt very, very cold. She hoped it didn’t play out on her face, the surge of absolute fear that burst through every bone and vein in her body. It mostly didn’t, and while Clarke had
learnt how to hide how she felt and her immediate reactions out of survival, she hadn’t completely mastered it. Her eyes always gave her away.

Somehow, Clarke kept the tremor out of her voice. But it barely rose above a whisper.

“That won’t be necessary,” Clarke answered. When Lexa was about to sigh Clarke interrupted before she could speak. “But if it does become so, then I won’t struggle.”

That was a complete and utter lie.

She’d have to drag her kicking and screaming.

Lexa could sense this. That while Clarke may have said that she’d be co-operative, there was an edge that voice that spoke otherwise. Lexa knew that should have been a sign in of itself. That this was a sign that she should get a grip on herself and make the call to have her moved. It would be the right thing to do. It would.

Lexa didn’t.

Instead, she bobbed her head. Like Clarke, she kept her voice even as she spoke. Even if on the inside it was nothing short of a war, the never-ending battle between head and heart being reignited with a new flame. It was a wonder her very skin didn’t burn from the intensity of it. And really, her head almost won. For that argument anyway. Almost, did she go back on word and was going to just pick up the radio and make the right decision.

Almost, as Lexa couldn’t.

Maybe it was because of the first time she saw her. Maybe it was because of how she see’s her now. Broken, damaged, surviving. Maybe it was because how when Lexa looked at her she felt something stir within her, a rattling in her chest in which she couldn’t explain. It could have been a number of things that led to Lexa nodding her head and letting Clarke stand up. It could have been anything that made her hand twitch to help when Clarke struggled a moment to get out the seat.

But there was one thing that she knew. Something she knows she should not bring up or talk about. Something that she should just keep to herself and not let bother her, not let hover over her head like a stubborn cloud as it has been all morning. Lexa stopped Clarke just as she was about to leave, calling her name. The inmate paused, turning to Lexa expectantly. Her face held a slight frown, and Lexa was at a loss for why it warmed her chest in a way she hadn’t felt in years.

“Clarke-“ she internally winced. “Griffin, there is something I want ask you.” She should not be doing this. She really shouldn’t.

“Yes?”

Now. Now is the time to stop. Right…

“Why did you have a death sentence?” ...now.

Clarke’s face didn’t fall. It crashed and burned. It slammed into the cold ground so hard that it became the cold itself, ice wrapping around her face like long sharp fingers. Lexa almost reached for the gun at her side, her hand twitching in pure instinct. But she held off on the urge and instead waited for Clarke to speak.

And when she did, Lexa had never heard such controlled anger in anyone’s words.
“I’m not on a death sentence anymore.”

Lexa talked before she could clamp her tongue. “Obviously, as you are here.”

Clarke sucked in a very shaky breath. Her hand was clutching the doorknob, her knuckles bone white with how hard she was pressing. “I’m no longer on a death sentence,” she repeated. Her pale eyes were nothing but sharp, and she was sure she could have cut through the tension in the air with them. With gritted teeth, Clarke nodded her head at the door. “May I leave?”

There was something at the edge of mocking in her tone. Lexa’s own face hardened at the sound of it, but Clarke must have realised her mistake. With an extreme amount of reluctance, Lexa saw Clarke avert her gaze to ground.

“May I go?” she asked again, but it was without the bite from before. It was awkwardly empty.

Lexa figured she’d already ruined this interaction enough for today. “Go,” she said, gesturing to the door. “Thank you for your time.” She said it out of courtesy, but it felt wrong and cringy. Clarke didn’t stay for a second more and greedily took the opening. She twisted open the door and slipped through without another glance back.

The moment the door shut Lexa let loose a slow breath. She shut her eyes, letting her back fall against the door. Her hands came out, gliding over her braids and she cursed that her hair wasn’t free and she couldn’t just her fingers run through it. She brought her hands back to her sides and looked up to the pale ceiling.

Fuck.

- 

The moment the door shut Clarke let loose a slow breath. 

It didn’t quell any of the anger that burned under her skin. Her blood felt like it was boiling, and her fingers twitched in the urge to clench, to prepare for a punch that she would usually be throwing by now. Hell, she almost did. But it would only make everything much, much worse than it already was. So instead Clarke just clenched her jaw and trailed through the halls.

Walk it off. That was the plan.

Whether that would work was still up to debate.

She had almost forgotten about her sentence. It seems silly, ridiculous almost that she could have. How she could have forgotten the moment she heard those words as she sat with chains around her ankles in that stuffy courtroom. How she could have forgotten the claustrophobia she felt, how the walls seemed to bend and after those words, those few, small words, the static that burst in her ears so intensely she was convinced they would bleed.

Somehow, she had forgotten that.

Maybe it was because she forced herself to. So she could get through the days.

It didn’t matter now anyway. With Lexa’s words, it all been retched back up from the dark spots in her mind. That was why she was angry really, why she didn’t see anything as she pushed through the never-ending halls, hating that there wasn’t anything she could hit.

She didn’t want to remember. She tried incredibly hard not to. But now she could, now she was
reminded of that moment, the moment that everything fell.

She remembers the alleyway. The metallic tang in the freezing air that stung her nose, the single blinking yellow street light that sat too far away to offer any illumination to the scene before her.

She remembers the body.

The blood that dripped from her fingers.

Her breathing became ragged, and she forced herself to steel her mind back to the present. She almost did, but her grip slipped from that last ledge of determination like someone had tapped a light hammer to her joints, her fingers being picked off one, by one, by one. And with a painful amount of familiarity Clarke felt herself fall.

It was a Friday. She doesn’t know why she knows that but she does. Her usual get-up, the black leather that offered both the perfect amount of protection and movability felt constricting for the first time since she’s worn it. Her lungs felt tight, like they could barely process oxygen. Her hood hid her face, hid the rings of red that would have exposed how much she had been crying. But the black face paint hid that anyway.

It was thick, and it made her look terrifying.

It covered up a good portion of her face, made the white in her eyes almost seemed to glow in the dark. She was basically a shadow. No one saw her as she sat crouched on the rooftop, her gaze trapped onto the parking lot door. The building was Mountain Corporations. Clarke hadn’t still quite worked out what they do.

She’d gotten the call sixteen hours ago.

She’d identified Jake’s body eight hours ago.

She waited. She was patient, she always had been. She had waited for hours for before, almost leaking in days for some cases; she usually had no problem. Now she did though. Oh, now she had massive problem with waiting. It should have scared her probably, and it would in the future, but right now she was too oblivious. Too caught up in that feeling.

The bloodlust that burned her veins.

The doors opened, a man in a white lab coat strolling out. He was on the phone, he face twisted in displeasure. Clearly, he just wanted the conversation to end, but something kept him tethered to the call. If Clarke wanted she could have listened and heard from her spot, but she didn’t want that right now.

She jumped and landed with barely a sound. A jolt a pain vibrated up her bones from the landing.

Clarke didn’t feel it.

This was the first sign that something was very wrong.

She slipped through the door before it could close on her, and like that, Clarke was in the Mountain Corporations. Well, that wasn’t quite true. Clarke wasn’t here. Wanheda was.

The rest is more of a blur. She can pick out a couple details, like the shine of the white floors, the thud of an unconscious guard hitting the ground and the keycard that she had stolen from his pocket, the closet that she carefully laid him in. It was late, and security wasn’t as tight. There was
a party going on anyway, the Mountain Corp. was celebrating finally getting their hands on a proper specimen. On a confirmed Other’s body.

On her father’s.

It took a great deal of self-control not to slaughter them all. A brief glimpse of humanity reared its head desperately then, a presence that she often found escaping her. It stayed long enough that she walked on past the door with music thumping from inside.

Instead Clarke headed the opposite way. She took out anyone in her way quietly, carefully hiding the unconscious bodies in empty rooms and closet’s. She didn’t kill the guards like a part of her wanted to. It would go against her own moral code, if she even had one at this point. Maybe not a moral code, but more of a rule. Don’t kill innocents. It’s the only thing that gives her the ability to look at herself in the mirror.

Distantly Clarke felt herself knock into someone in the hallway, her head far too deep in her own memories to let her notice her surroundings. Someone shoved her a little with a snarl, but Clarke just turns around and keeps walking. She needs to keep moving. Never stop, just run. Forever running with no destination, her only direction being the guilt and dread biting at her ankles.

The corridors in the Mountain Corp are long, the grey ceiling’s high. The fluorescent lights are obnoxiously bright and she has to force herself to keep looking ahead to avoid looking up at them and burning her retinas. Then, suddenly, she sees it.

Cage Wallace’s office.

She walked in without a second thought. That was one of the many mistakes she had made that night, the biggest one going in the first place. The thing is, Clarke wasn’t expecting anyone. She was just expecting him and no one else. But he wasn’t the only one. There were two other people with him.

It was too late to turn back.

They die quick. It’s the only mercy she can give.

Cage does not die quick though.

She’s out of control; she couldn’t stop this downward spiral of memories if she tried. Which made it a quite a surprise when her sudden spurt of thoughts are stopped when she walked into something. No, not into, through. Her head is snapped back to the present, her body feeling like it was suddenly drowned in a bucket of ice-cold water. She almost sputtered in impulse. The burst of coldness is sudden and disappears fast, and while it’s exceedingly strange it’s only a little familiar. She spun around, her steps almost stumbling as she pulled herself to a stop.

Behind her is a girl.

Her hair was black. It’s a little frizzy, but it didn’t bounce as it should when the girl walked. Actually, it didn’t move at all. It was just there, on her head as if it was a separate piece. Her skin is bordering on bronze, but really that’s not what Clarke takes notice of first.

The first thing she sees is the slight glimmer in her outline.

And like that her despair from moments ago is sucked out of body.

Fuck.
The girl noticed her staring, and she stopped her casual stroll with a frown. She turned to Clarke, and when Clarke stared back her eyes widened in a mix of fear and excitement.

Clarke had to fight the urge to sigh.

It was a ghost.

It suddenly strikes her how young the ghost looks. She couldn’t be that much younger than her. She’d guess around three, four years. The girl, the ghost, glanced behind her to make sure Clarke is actually looking at her and not someone who just happens to be behind her. It happens often, and Clarke can’t really blame the ghost.

The problem is she’s tired and angry.

And spirits always mean trouble.

They’re not that bad. Not really. If she didn’t have this damn glove she could probably she wave her hand and have the ghost moving on and not lingering on this plane like this one was. It happens more often that you’d think. They miss their shot, the usual time-space that they have to leave this realm and jump on to the other one gone. Clarke has the ability to help them move on. Or, at least, she did.

She should just walk away and ignore the ghost. It wouldn’t be that hard, no one else could even see the girl. It was the perfect cold-shoulder situation.

Maybe that was why Clarke trudged over to the girl.

No one could see her except her.

Sometimes Clarke hated what she was.

“There a reason you still here?” Clarke asked. The ghost blanched. It’s a strange sight, considering her form is already slightly opaque. Clarke only felt slightly apologetic for the bite in her tone. She was still a little mad; it was impossible to keep it out.

The ghost opened and closed her mouth, not in that she didn’t know what to say, but more in that she didn’t really know how to talk. Clarke had seen it before. When you’re a ghost, there’s no need to speak, so when the ability is suddenly needed sometimes it takes a bit to actually recall that action. It’s because of this that Clarke waited a little. Only a bit. She wanted out of here, in her cell preferably.

The ghost instead just blinked at her.

Clarke sighed. She craned her neck, seeing no one in the halls that could rat on the girl that was speaking to thin air. Honestly, Clarke didn’t really care if an inmate spotted her and went off telling rumours. Rumours are nothing compared to other things. But a part of her is still young, an exceedingly small and almost gone part, and it’s that part that makes her check down both sides of the hall.

When Clarke brought her gaze back after having spotted no one, the ghost finally spoke.

“Are you talking to me?”

Her voice was scratchy and weak. But compared to some other spirits Clarke had had the misfortune to meet, it’s not that bad.
“I know you’re dead, and that you’re a ghost.” Clarke said bluntly. A part of her recoiled at it, but she was too tired to deal with formalities. Thing is, ghosts and spirits always take a liking to her, so she figured she may as well get rid of this problem now. Normally the dead linger for petty reasons, and all it takes is a good talking to to get them going. “Yes I can see you, no I can’t touch you. No I’m not an angel, yes I can help you move on. Well, I can, I guess, but it’s harder.” Clarke shook her head. “Doesn’t matter. Ignore the last part.”

The ghost stared at her with wide eyes, but they soon harden into something unreadable.

“I don’t want help moving on.” The ghost muttered. Clarke had to fight her frown. She’d never met a ghost that didn’t want to leave before; always the ghost is just stuck and needs a nudge in the right direction. She felt something shift in her mind, as if in a motion for her brain to move out the way, but the feeling passes too quick to properly register.

Clarke took a step toward the ghost. “You want to stay trapped here?”

“I’m not trapped.” the ghost scowled. The surprise was gone now, anger replacing it. Her voice was rebuilding its strength.

“You are trapped,” Clarke retorted. “Once you miss your shot to leave you can’t properly move on.”

The ghost furrowed her brows at her. “I was never given a shot.” The ghost mumbled. Clarke went to sigh, to tell this spirit that there was no point in lying to her, when she felt a sudden sharp pain in the back of her head. It was sharp like a pinch; it felt almost like she was being chided. She felt that shift in her head again, and with an almost strangled breath she heard a whisper from in her mind.

*It’s true.*

The voice only stayed a second more before being shoved out of her mind. A searing pain burst from her gloved hand, and Clarke snatched her hand back with a hiss. The ghost jumped from the sudden movement.

“Sorry,” Clarke breathed. She narrowed her eyes at the leather glove on her left hand. She could still feel the sting. With great effort, she brought her sight back to the ghost. “Why weren’t you given one, a way out?”

The ghost ground her teeth, and if they were solid Clarke’s sure she would have heard them grinding. It was a while before the ghost spoke up again. “I couldn’t leave. I can’t leave. Not yet.”

Clarke tried to keep her voice soft. Her anger from before was slowly fading, and she was suddenly remembering all those times she’d had to deal with spirits before. She had to remind herself they’re dead. And that even if she didn’t know them, she owed them. She was the only one who could see them after all.

“Ghost’s are meant to stay here,” Clarke said gently. She’d thought the change of tone would help, but instead it had the opposite effect. The ghost bristled, stepping back.

“And what are you then huh? If you can see me then you’re obviously dead too.”

“I’m not dead.” Clarke snapped. The ghost grew what could only be a smirk.

“Touchy subject?”

It was going to be one of those ghosts. Because she already didn’t have enough problems in her
life. Clarke screwed her eyes shut, briefly, before opening them with a soft sigh. She was too tired for this. Clearly, this ghost didn’t want her help. There was no point on forcing it.

“Just don’t bother me, and I’ll leave you alone.” Clarke sighed, raising her hand. She made a move to sidestep the ghost, it was out of politeness really, she certainly wouldn’t appreciate someone walking through her, when the ghost spoke up again.

“You were in her office.”

It sounded like an accusation. Stupid curiosity made her stop and turn around.

“Hers?” Clarke thought for a moment. “You mean Lexa’s?”

“Heda’s,” the ghost corrected. Her voice was surprisingly harsh. Clarke had the decency to blush slightly. She never blushed, and the feeling of blood rushing to her cheeks almost bordered on surreal.

“Heda’s. Right.” The title felt weird in her mouth. She preferred Lexa.

Clarke walked through the ghost, and it was slow and scary enough that the hair’s on the back of Clarke’s neck rose. She cursed whatever made this earth that you couldn’t shove ghosts.

The ghost drifted closer to her, and it was slow and scary enough that Clarke felt uncomfortable. She could feel the slight unnatural cold that came with a spirit’s presence.

“You are who?” the ghost said. It was more of a demand than a question. It got on Clarke’s final nerve.

Done with the closeness, Clarke walked through the ghost. The sudden burst of cold was difficult but she pushed through. “I’m your one ticket out of this realm. And unless you want to be stuck in this shithole forever, I suggest you start acting nicer.”

The ghost, after recalling herself from Clarke walking through her, stared at her. It was a hard, long stare. And in the end, it was also a little sad. Painful. The moment it dwindled into those dangerous territories the look was wiped from her face.

“I don’t need you, nor do I want you.” The ghost growled. Clarke had to bite her tongue from growling back. She wouldn’t tell the ghost, but it wasn’t just because of a good consciousness that Clarke wanted the ghost gone. There was another reason that had to do with the mark on her hand. Nyko had told her years ago what the mark meant: Wanheda. His definition actually held some literal meaning.

Ghosts made her uncomfortable. They always set off worms under skin, made her muscles tense. Ghosts aren’t meant here, they’re meant to move on. It’s unnatural for them to stay. There’s also the danger of the longer the ghost stays, the more they’re not a ghost anymore. They drift into someone else, something else.

“You can’t stay here forever.” Clarke said, keeping her voice low. “The longer the stay, the more you toy with becoming a monster.”

The ghost shrugged. “I already am one.” Her voice is soft now, all the anger from before gone. That was the other thing about ghosts.
They’re temperamental.

Clarke took a single step towards the ghost. “Your kind aren’t designed to stay here forever. Now, I can help you,” she really shouldn’t have offered that. “But you have to let me. Your form isn’t made to last. Someone will get hurt.”

“How?” the ghost frowned.

“Possessions are real.” Clarke stated, her voice empty and cold. “Ghosts that stay too long go mad, their form, their ‘body’, quite literally begins to shatter. They jump to the nearest body, but two souls can’t inhabit one body.” She sucked in a sharp breath, shoving away the memories. “The host normally, almost always, dies.”

The ghost blinked.

Clarke glanced at the clock on the wall. She needed to go or Raven was going to get suspicious on what she was doing. Her gaze found the ghost’s once more. She swallowed.

“So?”

At first, the ghost didn’t say anything. Just stared at her with an expression she couldn’t quite make out. A few hours, which were actually minutes, passed like a weak horse dragging an overflowing cart. When Clarke was just about to give up and walk away, she heard the ghost’s quiet, barely there words.

“My name is Costia.”

Her eyes stayed glued to the floor. Clarke, not that Costia could see, offered a small smile.

“I’m Clarke.”

- 

Clarke was dead.

For a few minutes, anyway.

She had only died for a few moments, felt everything disappear and be drowned in an ocean of numbness that sunk so impossibly deep into her bones, before she was slammed back into her body, or it back into her. She can’t really remember. It’s extremely irritating, as she had quite literally crossed the other side, but couldn’t recall anything from it. She just remembered the feeling of her slow breath, singular, as it drew in from her nose and slipped quietly from her lips, all of her gone with nothing more than a puff of air.

She had planned to die.

She hadn’t planned to come back.

Clarke decided this six months into her imprisonment of Azgeda Tower, not that she’d be able to tell you that. She barely had any sense of time. But with six months in, after a particular brutal beating that had her curled on the stone floor, the pain so intense she couldn’t even pinpoint where it was coming from – it was that split second before consciousness fell through her hands like water that she decided.

That, if she was never going to be able to escape Azgeda physically, then there was another way.
She didn’t really want to die.

But she also didn’t have much want to keep going.

While Nia had been prepared for pretty much everything, set up an impeccable security system and team, had done the research for the optimal drugs and pressure points of her quest, it had completely gone over her head the idea of suicide. That Clarke would ever be broken enough for such a thing.

After the incident, Nia implanted new measures for it though.

But it was harder than expected. Clarke realised this with a scowl.

Nia wasn’t a fool, she didn’t leave anything within reach nor touch that Clarke could use, if she drugged her food and water she always put in just the right amount to mess with her head, muddle with her vision and blood, that left her off but never enough to go a step too far. Whether she had intended to or not, there was no easy way to go about it. Except, there was one thing Nia couldn’t have complete control over. Not yet anyway.

The guards.

And Clarke knew just the one.

He hated her. Though she’s pretty sure he hates everything. But it wasn’t that that made her choose him. It was the fact that he had anger in his blood, submerged deep within the vessels, anger so rich and dark that the only way he could control was to never let it out. To hide it, bury it, to push the power that it held as far as it could go. Clarke knew that if she tapped into it, if she released it; he would kill her.

So Clarke waited till it was his turn to wake her up.

She knows the routine. Her cell is small and has a sliver of a gap high up, thick iron bars sitting tightly together across it. But there is a gap, and Clarke knows that just as the first touch of light slips through, that’s when the guard comes. They come in, take her to whichever room they feel like today, and when the day is done and she’s thrown back into her cell, or wakes up in if unconsciousness, the light is completely gone. Occasionally, the routine differs, and she’s chucked in a little earlier. When this happens Clarke greedily takes the opportunity to meditate.

It’s a rare occurrence. Even rarer for it to work.

But she needs something to keep her sane, and her usual way of going about that is pretending like her father is there, and she isn’t in Azgeda Tower, but instead in a park or a forest or restaurant. And they’re just talking. Chatting. Everything is normal and calm, and all Clarke has to do is just talk about her day.

Yes, she’s talking to thin air out loud, which is probably up there on the crazy list. But ironically it’s one thing that keeps her off it.

For that day though, the routine hadn’t changed. The guard that she was waiting for, as they cycle each day, was coming to wake her up.

And Clarke was ready.

The barred door always screeches as it slides open, and at the sound of it Clarke pretends to wake up. She hardly sleeps; the only rest she gets is when it’s forced. But she lied in her bed, if you
could call it that, and when the door opened Clarke lifted her head. She has to bite down her smile from seeing the guard.

It was him. Atohl. The one she had been waiting for.

He strode in with no qualms, ripping the pathetic blanket from her body. It doesn’t offer warmth; unless you counted the heat from the itchiness it gives you. She was lying on her side, and he grabbed her arm roughly to pull her off. Even though she hadn’t been sleeping, her brain is still tired and slow, and the pull is completely unexpected. The yank sent her tumbling onto the floor. Atohl scowled.

With a growl he bent down, gripped her elbow and roughly hauled her up to her feet. Clarke stumbled a couple steps, her vision swaying until finally her mind caught up enough and her legs began their move. The moment they make it out the cell, he shoved her into a wall, snatching her arms back and snapping on the cuffs on her wrists. There’s no leather glove there yet. She’ll get that in another three months.

Atohl leant forward, putting his mouth next to her ear. The feeling of his breath on her neck made her want to throw up.

“Yu na laik tofon deyon?” Atohl whispered. Clarke didn’t really understand what he was saying, but she was slowly picking up the language. It wasn’t that she was learning it of her own will. If she didn’t she just knew the beatings were worse. Or longer. She can clearly remember the moment she learnt this, though shown would be a better word.

It was only a month in. And like all the previous days before, Clarke wasn’t talking. This was before Nia knew of how truly stubborn she was, how resilient she was, and how it was going to be much harder to get what she wanted. Nia brought Clarke to an empty room, save for a metal pillory in the centre. The room was big, the stone walls cold and dull even with the sun’s light spilling onto them, the ceiling being a flat thick glass roof.

At that point, Clarke hadn’t really been tortured before.

But Nia had grown tired of Clarke’s refusal to speak.

There were three guards with them, one of them being Atohl, and it was him who brought her and forced her into the pillory. Before he shoved her into it though, he stripped off her shirt, leaving her top half bare. No one cared for it though, even as Clarke’s heart stuttered and went to extremely dark places, the reality of the situation went to an entirely different one.

Atohl walked over to Nia, and she handed him a whip.

Clarke realised why she was in the pillory then.

She struggled, tried to break out, but the metal was tight and heavy. When she learnt that it was impossible to do anything with her top half, she tried using her bottom. Her legs. She swung them up in front of her, but the moment Nia saw this she snapped something in that language the Tower uses and Atohl was attaching chains from her ankle to the floor. There were two perfect hooks in the stone ground, and they made sure that Clarke was trapped.

Atohl went behind her; Clarke thinks to be around three metres, when she heard the sound of leathers scraping across the floor.

The whip wasn’t just singular, but had multiple leather strings. Clarke almost cried but she managed to stop herself.
That wouldn’t remain true for long though.

When Atohl was in place, Nia moved to be in front of her, the only person in Clarke’s awkward line of sight. Mockingly, Nia had left the doors behind her wide open. The light buried Nia’s form into a shadowed silhouette.

Nia asked the same question she had been asking her every day.

“How?”

And like everyday when Clarke was asked that question, Clarke said nothing. Yet for the first time, Nia didn’t repeat it. She simply nodded her head.

“I see.” She looked over to Atohl, bobbing her head. He readied the whip. Nia’s eyes trailed back over to Clarke’s, and unlike in the future where they were a dull pale blue, Clarke’s eyes now were shining. The blue in them was almost electric, always vibrant and burning.

This was the first time Clarke saw Nia smile.

“Today’s task will be simple Clarke. All you have to do, is count to ten.” Clarke couldn’t help her frown. At the sight of it, Nia nodded. “Just count to ten. But, if you get it wrong, Atohl will lay a single strike against your back for every mistake.”

Now Clarke was even more confused. This was nothing like Nia’s other methods. Though, she hadn’t done anything as drastic as a whipping, she’d mostly just stuck with tying her to a chair and having someone slap her when she bit her tongue at Nia’s questioning. She stared at her, but Nia didn’t say anything more. She watched her expectantly. Clarke let the silence hang for a moment longer, before going on along with Nia’s strange request.

“One-“

The whip hit her back, and pain from the strike bordered on blinding. She tried to hold in her scream from it, all which escaped from her lips being a pained groan. Her eyes snapped onto Nia’s with a burning fire.

Nia smiled. “Oh, my mistake. I forgot to tell you that it must be done in trigedasleng.”

“The hell is trigedasleng?” Clarke seethed, and though she couldn’t see Atohl ready the whip at her words, she did see Nia raise her hand in sign for him to stop. He lowered the whip.

“Trigedasleng.” Nia started. “Is what we speak here. For you to have no understanding of our language, I find it quite rude.”

Clarke chuckled darkly. “Couldn’t hire a tutor?”

At her remark the casualness drained from Nia’s face. All it left was something so exceedingly cold and cruel Clarke had no idea how something like that could be called human. Nia shared a look across the room with Atohl. She turned her steel gaze back to Clarke.

“Count to ten.”

“I don’t know trigedasleng.” Clarke growled, shaking her restraints. The metal rattled. Nia didn’t show any signs of caring.

“Count to ten.” Nia repeated. Her voice was final, tiptoeing at the edge of bored. “If you don’t start
in the five seconds Atohl will begin without you.”

Clarke let out another growl, her tongue just forming her intended insult, when the whip struck her again. Her groan was much louder this time. And when her eyes found Nia’s, they were sparkling. She ordered her again, the same request. Count to ten.

At the start, Clarke just flung at her the coldest insults she could muster, but she gave up quick and instead just tried guessing how the numbers sounded. Every time she tried, she got a strike, and it really just got to point where Clarke knew that if she said anything, she’d get hit.

Then, in complete surprise to Clarke, she said one and didn’t get hit. She had gotten it right.

She got two right too. But on three, her streak ended.

She got another couple tries in before the pain was too much and she passed out. Hours later she woke up in her cell, and she felt something cold on the burning marks on her back. Her top half was still bare, but she couldn’t find the effort to care, and instead gingerly lifted a hand to touch her back. She was lying on her front, and Clarke realised that they had put some kind of ointment on the wounds. She was just lucky that she healed faster than the average human.

This went on for days, and Clarke passed out every time.

And when she finally got it, the happiness she felt, the relief, was enough to let her know that this was only the beginning.

Clarke realised she had been quite for too long from Atohl’s question, and suddenly felt an elbow digging into her back. The wounds from there were mostly healed, but she had had a particularly hard beating a week ago, and the flesh was still sensitive. She shut her eyes tight in an attempt to hide how much it hurt.

“No, no sich.” Clarke muttered, and thankfully he pulled the pressure off her back.

“Yes,” Atohl grunted. He pulled her off the wall, adjusting his grip back to her elbow. With more force than necessary Atohl took Clarke through the many corridors, purposely going the wrong way a couple times in an attempt confuse her. He didn’t know that Clarke knew the layout by heart by now, but Clarke also knew that the chances of escape were close to none.

After trailing down copious amount of halls, they finally stopped. When he pushed open the doors and shoved her inside, it took Clarke only a second to realise where they were.

There, in the centre of the room, was the metal pillory.

You could still see the blood stains on the floor.

Atohl grinned at Clarke’s pale face. Which, for once, wasn’t from the lack of sun. “Thought we’d switch location for today. Try somewhere a little more familiar.”

Clarke wanted to hit him. Hell, she wanted to kill him. But she hated that she wasn’t foolish enough to do something like that, especially since she actually needed him alive and well if her plan was going to work. Although, perhaps she could tick him off by punching him…

Clarke knows that it wouldn’t work. If it did, then those fights that she sees the guards partake in every few weeks would be ending in a lot more dead bodies. No, Clarke knew that to push, to unleash that uncontrollable rage, she had to be smarter that.
Luckily for her Clarke had been preparing for this for quite a while, whether intentional or not.

Her hearing is better than others. Much better.

And Clarke has been listening intently to any conversations the guards have when they think she can’t hear. She’s been remembering, storing as much information as she could about any and all of them. So she had the words, knew exactly what to say that would push Atohl that step too far.

It all came down to family.

He pushed hard enough that she stumbled forward, and she had to bite her lip to stop the groan from leaving her mouth. It didn’t quite work, and when Atohl deliberately hit her in the back, she knew he had heard. And had worked out where the new sensitive flesh was.

Clearly, this was going to be a very bad day. But maybe the world was feeling kind, for a little while anyway, because Clarke could see they were entirely alone. No one could intervene if he went off.

It was perfect.

The blow to her back had forced her to her knees, and Atohl didn’t seem to have a problem with that. He circled around her a few times, something unnervingly predatory in his steps. He walked till his was in front of her, when he stopped and crouched down. They were eye level and Clarke reluctantly brought her gaze to meet his.

His main feature was his black beard, his thick equally black hair long enough that it looked apart of it. It just brushed his back. A slightly faded tattoo trailed down his left cheek, its shape almost resembling a chain. He was a big guy, and as he locked eyes with Clarke, it was impossible not to be the slightest bit intimidated by him.

Except for Clarke, because she knew his torture techniques like the back of her hand at this point. Atohl smiled.

“So. You feel like talking today Clarke? Because, personally, I wouldn’t mind if you don’t. My week hasn’t exactly been the best.”

Clarke let her own smile show, slow and calculated. Atohl didn’t show it, but he always hated when the prisoner smiled. There was something that seemed so wrong about it, something that almost wasn’t human. He of course didn’t let his discontent show, but he quickly moved up in a subtle attempt to put some distance between him and the woman with a smile like that.

“What’s wrong Atohl? Your wife not too happy with your work hours?”

Atohl froze, something dangerous glinting in his eyes.

He took a step forward. “I don’t have a wife.” He muttered through gritted teeth. Clarke would have believed him, if she hadn’t of heard the multitude of arguments he had had with his wife. She knows once he was on the phone with her for two hours. And Clarke had listened the entire time.

“Are you sure? So Denae is just a friend?”

She knew she had said the right thing when a boot found her stomach. Clarke curled into herself, every ounce of air rushing out of her lungs and leaving her heaving. When the air finally came back, a hand was gripping the sides of her face. Atohl’s burning eyes found hers.
“Ha du yu get in bilaik?” Atohl growled. When Clarke didn’t say anything, just gave him that same unearthly smile, he threw her head back. “Branwoda. You asking to get beat?”

Clarke shrugged, her eyes following him as he began circling her once more. “I’m not. But, I do have to wonder. Where did you learn them? All these techniques?” He kept walking around her, but there was a new tension to his steps, his spine suddenly ridged. He didn’t answer, his eyes growing colder, or perhaps hotter, with every second that passed. Maybe a strange mix of both. Clarke just smiled at him, showing her teeth in a way that was more like an animal than a person. There was nothing good in a smile like that.

A smile like that only meant death.

And Atohl didn’t know, but she could feel the tell tale signs that death was coming. For her. The faint whisperings had begun.

*Here, here, here.*

“Have you tested these techniques before? Maybe by accident perhaps?”

“Whatever you’re trying to get across honon, I suggest you shut your mouth. Because I’ve had a very,” his steps stopped in front of her. “Very,” he knelt down again, but somehow a dagger had appeared in his hand. “Bad week.” He finished, whispering the words with a devil’s grin.

Clarke replied with one of her own, one that said she knew who the devil was.

And that he should get off her throne.

“Did she have to go to hospital?”

Atohl, at first, frowned slightly at the question. Clarke leaned forward.

“Was it only the one time? Or have you done it again?”

A few seconds passed until he realised what she was implying. When he did, shit, when he did, a slither of that anger that hid in his veins leaked. With an off calm, he reached into his back pocket, his hand coming back to reveal a small key. He leaned behind her and unlocked her cuffs. The act was so strange that Clarke for a moment was stunned, frozen in her shock.

This was her mistake.

Because the moment her hands were free he grabbed them, brought them in front of her and slammed his dagger through her left hand.

Clarke hissed, the sound halfway between a yelp and a scream. He snatched her other hand, the one without the knife sitting halfway through it, and held it up to her.

“You have a choice,” he muttered low. Clarke tried to even her breathing through the pain. “I can put another knife through your hand, or perhaps take a finger, or you can be a nice little girl, and shut the fuck up.”

There’s always a small part of you that fights for self-preservation. No matter what, no matter how shit you feel, there will always be a part of you that fights to live. In everyday life you probably don’t notice, when you break down you probably don’t notice it either. But when the actual choice, that moment arises, where you have to decide to keep going, there will always be a part that wants that.
Clarke felt it in her chest. And the whisperings in her head rippled because of it.

There’s no going back if she decides this.

There’s also no going forward. There’s no job that she’s been pining for, there’s no coffee dates with that stranger you bumped into and spilled your latte over in your rush, there’s nothing once you’re gone. Does she really, truly want to go? No. Not at all. But what Nia is trying to do, trying to unlock – Clarke can’t let her have it. Clarke knows she’s not invincible. Everyone has a breaking point, a limit. It’s impossible not to.

She can’t afford to let Nia get her to that point.

Because she isn’t human, but a branch of it. Nia is human though, and she wants what she has. She wants the abilities that come with being like this. Clarke doesn’t know if that’s even possible, as she’s pretty sure you mostly just inherent it. But with a will there’s a way, and there’s no doubt the chaos Nia will bring if she gets it.

She’s only in this position because of herself; Nia only has her because of her own mistakes. Of her death sentence that it made it possible for the woman to even acquire her, to do what she’s always wanted to do. But Nia can never have what she has, and even if there isn’t a way, isn’t a way for a human to become an Other without being born one, it’s incredibly dangerous to risk that.

It didn’t help that Clarke isn’t even a normal Other.

Not that she’d let Nia know that.

Atohl was still staring at her, probably taking her silence as answer enough. He smiled, something that to Clarke just looked plain wrong on his face, and leant back. She almost let him, that self-preservation stepping out from the shadows. But Clarke forced herself to shove it back in.

“What I wonder, Atohl,” she kept her words low, quiet. Deadly. “Is that whether you ever went beyond your wife.” His smile dropped from his face. “Whether you ever hit your so-“

A hand gripped her throat. He was strong, Clarke knew that from past experience, but he’d never her hurt like this before. With more than just orders, but intent. At first, he didn’t actually squeeze. Just kept his hand there, as if deciding whether or not to go through it. Common sense finally kicking in.

Clarke couldn’t afford that.

“What was his name again?” Clarke asked, and she felt the tightening around her throat. Her next words came out slightly winded. “Daniel? Drake?” she raked through her brain, and the moment she found it there was something that wasn’t quite human glinting in her eye. “Deka.”

It was like setting off a bomb.

Maybe she had, maybe there was a bomb in his very blood, because he got angry. Very, very angry. His hands moved off her throat and wrapped around the dagger. He forcefully pulled it out, but before Clarke had time to react to this he was on her.

He had never gone this hard before. His hits had never been this sloppy and rushed, there wasn’t that planning and calculation that it would usually hold. Clarke took it, she took it when he switched from hands to feet and forced his shoe into her ribs. She tried suppressing her sounds, biting her tongue so hard it bled, or maybe it was already bleeding, to stop herself from screaming. She couldn’t risk having someone come in and check on her, even if that was highly unlikely.
anyway.

Taking the hits became harder and harder.

It also became harder and harder to pull on that urge to fight back.

Atohl kept going, with his teeth bared and face red, each blow being accented with a shout or a grunt. He kept going, and going, and going. It didn’t take too long before Clarke felt something sharp pierce her from inside. When he kicked her with a roar and a mouthful of blood erupted from her mouth, Atohl blinked and staggered back.

His fists were covered in red.

And when he looked over to the prisoner, he could hear her incredibly labored breathing.

Then, he heard silence.

Clarke was dead. But the moment her soul left her body in search for a new realm, something grabbed it, a hand so cold and ancient it wasn’t even a hand at all, just a part of a being that outages time and existence itself.

Clarke was dead.

But Death didn’t let her be.

- Clarke was ready for the day to end.

Admittedly, it had been long one, and Clarke wanted nothing more than to just curl up on her bed. Whether she’d actually sleep or not was still up to debate, but the idea of getting away from everything and having a few dedicated hours to quiet was enough. With the whole confrontation with Lexa, Nyko’s death and the new addition of Costia, a problem she knows she should have never taken on, the idea of silence had her almost whining for the day to end.

She was in the recreation room with Raven, which was just a couple nailed-to-the-ground tables with a few pieces of paper, a small cup of blunt pencils and a few half ends of a rubber on top. Raven had brought her here just to relax mostly, but the moment Clarke saw the pencils her breathing stumbled and her eyes sparkled in a way that almost, almost, brought the blue back in them. It didn’t take a genius to know genuine happiness like that when you see it. With a sly grin Raven led Clarke over to one of the tables, and though initially hesitant, the moment Raven said that she could completely ignore her and draw Clarke leapt at the opportunity.

Drawing again, with pencils and colours and rubbers and shading…

Her hand shook for the first half hour.

Either in shock, awe, or that weird buzzing in her chest that she distantly recognizes as joy, she didn’t know. All she did know was when she finished, when her hand was physically aching with how much she had drawn, she smiled. God, she smiled, she smiled like she hadn’t in years. She’d filled every inch of the paper that was given, not a single space being spared.

Clarke hadn’t realised, but she was so caught up in her drawing that she didn’t notice Anya’s staring. Like always, Anya kept a close watch on her. Clarke didn’t have a problem; she’d had much worse, so she mostly just shrugged it off. But Clarke had missed how when she had finished,
and when she had smiled, that Anya had frowned.

Because there was no way that a true killer, a murderer, could ever smile that.

Only someone broken could.

After an hour and a half of doing nothing but sitting in the recreational room and sketching, Clarke sheepishly let Raven see what she had done. The girl had been trying not to ogle at Clarke’s obvious talent when she was hunched over her work drawing away, but now that she had a clear view of it, it was impossible not to.

Clarke was good.

Damn good.

Raven wasn’t that surprised. She let her hands gently brush over the little drawings; over the sleeping puppy, over the reaching out hand, over the sun that nearly engulfed the figure standing in front of it, the figure doing nothing but standing tall and stretching out their hands like they could touch the skies themselves. Each small sketch was hauntingly beautiful, and Raven couldn’t help but hand it back with a massive grin. Sure, she had just met the girl, but still she felt the pride swell in her chest for her friend.

Clarke ducked her head at Raven’s barrage of compliments, told her to shut up over and over when she’d point at every little sketch, every little situation, and gave it a new word of praise. Superb, brilliant, gorgeous, glorious, mind-boggling, and, when she was running out, almost-as-good-as-Raven-Reyes.

Now, they were just sitting in the room, idly chatting. Octavia had joined them, and it seemed like the girl was warming up to her like Raven. While for some reason Raven had almost instantly jumped onto Clarke’s friendship, the brunette had been a little more wary. Clarke didn’t blame her, if anything she respected her more for it. But it was obvious that the more they hung around each other the more the tensions eased. The air was light, and Octavia was ranting on a story about her brother, someone who Clarke is learning to be, at least from Octavia’s perceptive, an extremely overprotective ass, when an alarm went off.

Clarke jolted, the sound making her jump up.

But Raven had been expecting this, and her hand shot out to grab Clarke’s shoulder and push her back down gently.

“It’s fine,” Raven promised, but Clarke still looked to her uneasily. Raven rolled her eyes. “Seriously, it’s just the outside bell. Come on, we’ve only got a couple hours.”

Octavia nodded with her, getting up with a loud groan as she eagerly stretched her stiff limbs. “Please, I need to get my run in.”

Raven got to her feet as well, Clarke awkwardly left between sitting down and standing up. Eventually, Clarke just caved and followed her new friends, offered the occasional comment or sass when the opportunity arose as they trailed through the halls and cells. When they reached their apparent destination, Clarke actually stumbled.

She hadn’t really been listening before, didn’t really processed what Raven had said.

Outside. She was going outside.
And there was an open door, and the sun, the goddamn sun, shining through. She’s not sure if her breathing shut off, or if it sped up to the point where it felt like it had. All she could see was the exit, the grass through the open door and that natural light that poured through.

Raven waved her hand in front her face, and it was enough to snap Clarke out of her daze. Raven gave her a look, it was equal parts amused and worried, and Clarke tried to say something to explain what had just happened, what she had just felt, but her jaw just opened and shut with not a sound coming out. In the end, she just shrugged. And Raven replied with a grin, the kind you get when someone tells you they’re trying, that for everything, from everything, they’re still trying.

And though Raven had no clue of Clarke’s past, she could see she was.

Octavia was already outside, too excited for fresh air to stay behind for Clarke’s sudden stop. Clarke forced her legs to start back up again, and slowly she pushed her way to the door.

And when she went through it, she felt the sun touch her face.

She wanted to cry.

She didn’t.

The grass spread under the weight of her foot, and the feel of ground actually dipping as she walked and not just being the same, flat stone, it took considerable effort to hold in her gasp; but what got at Clarke most were the sounds. The sight of it, of seeing completely natural light for the first time in a year - well, Clarke almost fell. Almost, as she didn’t. Incredibly slowly she took her first steps that morphed from a toddlers pace to an excited child’s.

She could hear everything.

Far off she can hear a bird’s call, the light chatter from the inmates who were already outside, the shuffle of the leaves as they swayed in the breeze, the wind not too strong, but just enough to make the leaves glitter in the sun. It was creeping up to autumn, and when Clarke looked over the field she could see the trees sitting behind the metal fence up ahead.

Things like this shouldn’t be allowed to be real.

But it was.

Somehow, this beauty was.

Someone touched her arm, softly, but out of habit she flinched. Raven’s wide eyes looked up at her, and Clarke forced her heart to stop pounding. She’s not going to hurt her. She’s safe.

It felt weird telling herself that.

“You good Griff?” Raven asked, quirking a brow. Her tone was light, or at least trying too. Clarke could tell. But she appreciated that Raven was trying not to draw attention to the fact that Clarke just froze in pure shock and joy at a sight of a couple metres of grass.

“Yeah,” Clarke said. Her voice was tiptoeing at the edge of breathless. “I’m fine.”

Raven looked like she wanted to say more, but she could tell that Clarke was still reeling with emotion. With that foreign burst of joy. It took a bit of effort, but Raven bit her tongue.

“I’m gonna’ go find O before she starts trouble.”
This time it was Clarke who raised a brow. “Not you?”

“Fuck you. I only start trouble when it’s planned.” Raven scoffed. A sudden shout rang out, and both of their heads snapped around to, of course, Octavia, who seemed to have just shoved a girl. Raven sighed, looking over to Clarke. “That’s my cue, I’ll see you soon blondie.” With one last wink, which made even Clarke smile, Raven was gone. Clarke watched her friend’s retreating figure for a few more moments till she stared back out into the field. It wasn’t much of a field she supposed, but to her it was one.

To her it was everything.

She began trailing the edges, seeing how far it stretched. She went left first, hugging the wall till there was no wall at all, a small stretch of grass that ran till it hit the fence. Further down she could see the wall again. Clarke followed it, but instead aimed her feet for the tall metal fence. She walked up to it, as close as she could go. She let her fingers hook through the gaps.

The trees looked so impossibly close from here.

She loved trees. She always had. She loved the very top, where once you perch yourself and lean up above the leaves you can see the world from a perspective so few have. She felt it, that rattling in her bones that urged for her to head those trees that were just so goddamn close.

But she didn’t.

She couldn’t.

Her fingers were still sitting in the chain-link fence, her eyes falling onto her gloved hand. She stared at it for a while. She wondered what she’d do if it wasn’t there, if she’d already be up and over the fence by now, gliding through the grass and relishing in escape. In freedom. Her fingers curled till they were white with tension.

Then she swore and brought them back to her sides.

She followed the fence. She glanced up ten minutes in, expecting to find Anya staring at her with those hard eyes. But the guard wasn’t there. She stopped, her gaze sweeping over the field until they landed on the familiar dirty blonde. She was talking with someone, Ontari, her jaw twitching. Seeing Ontari set off a dangerous array of emotions in her gut, and Clarke forced herself to turn away and keep walking.

She hugged the line as close as she could to the fence. Sometimes, it'd give the illusion like she was on the other side. That if she let her mind wander enough and her senses open a little, sometimes, it felt like if she looked out the fence, like she wasn’t here. It both pained her and overjoyed her.

Every now and again she’d overlap another inmate hanging by the fence line. Sometimes there’d be more than one but a group of them, clumping together like a group of penguins huddling for warmth. It wasn’t cold, merely cooling down from the hard summer months. Clarke wouldn’t have to change her direction though, because the moment she’d get near they’d part like touching her would curse them. Or more accurately, hurt them.

It hurt a bit. But not completely.

She had beaten Ontari on her first day after all.

She wants to defend herself. To say that her mind was still reeling with the change of prisons, the
confusion with whatever the hell Nia was playing at. It still bugged her that she didn’t know. Why was she even here? Clarke shook off her thoughts. No, she wasn’t going to think about her. Not now. Now… now she just wanted to breathe. It was fresh air after all, and just to prove it was real she took a deep breath through her nose.

Oh yeah. Completely real.

Clarke nearly smiled.

Nearly.

She saw that the fence was ending up ahead. Her heart fell. She was enjoying following it, not knowing when it ended made it seem almost never-ending. It was nice. Still, she stuck by it till it made a sudden sharp turn, finishing into the wall of a building. Clarke shuffled by it, but the more the she looked the more she realised that it didn’t actually go into the wall, but went around so tightly that it seemed like it did. It looked like there was a gap you could slip through.

A buzz of excitement sparked her veins, her steps quickening without her noticing. It looked like a good spot. The building next to it blocked off the view of sloping hill where the sun sets, it’s frame cutting off the view and only leaving her with a patch of thick dense trees. Sure, they’re nice trees.

But a sunset.

It was time for one. Clarke could see the pink in the sky, the way the clouds were white like milk and stretched thin. She reached the end of the fence, could see how it wasn’t actually the end but snuck around the wall. The gap was wide enough for her to easily fit. She cast one quick glance out, and when she didn’t find Anya’s scowling gaze, shimmied through.

The patch of grass was small. It was longer than it was wide. She reckoned she could only fit two people sitting down from the wall to the fence, but length wise it ran a little longer. She only noticed these things in the back of her mind though, because the first thing she saw was the sunset.

Or more specifically, the guard watching the sunset.

It was Lexa.

She hadn’t noticed her yet. Or maybe she had but just hadn’t said anything. Either way, it didn’t stop her breath from catching in her throat. Her body was commonly a treacherous thing.

There was no other word for it. Lexa looked beautiful.

The last rays of the sun caught her hair in just the perfect way, and from where Clarke was standing from behind her, it made the edges of her head almost glow. The sun cupped her face like a grandma that hadn’t seen her in years, the slight breeze making the stubborn hairs that stuck out of her braid dance. She was standing, her hands held neatly behind her back. Her left hand held her wrist. Clarke was so caught up in her staring that when Lexa spoke it made her jump.

“This is only spot you can see the sunset from.” She said. Clarke ripped her gaze of Lexa so sharply she almost stumbled. Lexa tilted her head in her direction. “The building’s cut it off otherwise.”

Clarke swallowed. Not that she knew why. “I noticed.” Lexa’s voice was soft Clarke heard, apologetic. Her stomach dropped when she realised why. The argument this morning.

Lexa was still looking at her. “Prisoners aren’t allowed back here.” Clarke’s eyes widened. They
snapped onto Lexa, the Commander, the highest of the high in the prison. Her knees felt weak, but the strength came back as soon as it had left from the slight quirk in Lexa’s lip. “Guard’s aren’t either.”

“I won’t tell if you won’t,” Clarke said. And she could have sworn that quirk almost spread into a grin. Lexa nodded. The movement was barely there, but Clarke caught it.

“I can agree to those terms.” She turned her head back to the sunset. “For just this once.”

Clarke smiled. She wiped it off her face the moment it crept on, but still its remains lingered. Clarke moved till she was standing next to Lexa and not behind her. Her eyes remained on Lexa until the brunette turned to her and Clarke’s gaze switched the sunset. Again, her breath got lodged in her throat. Clarke didn’t see Lexa’s smile.

“This is the only spot you can see the sunset like this.” Lexa said, careful to keep her voice low. She didn’t really have a reason to, but a part of her whispers it’s because she doesn’t want to the ruin the moment for Clarke. She shoved those thoughts away. The dipping sun caught Clarke’s eyes perfectly in this moment. They almost glow like they should.

“I love sunsets,” Clarke said softly. It’s more a whisper. Lexa’s steady gaze stayed on Clarke with a worryingly amount of ease. “There’s something… almost magical about it. It doesn’t make sense how something so beautiful happens every day, and every time is never worse or better than the last. There’s nothing else like that.”

Lexus was still staring at her. She tried to pry her gaze off, but her eyes refused to move. “Sunrises are just as beautiful.” Lexa commented. She saw the slight bend in Clarke’s lip. They twitch, until some invisible battle is won and a soft smile grew. The sight of it, for some reason, knocked the breath out of Lexa.

“The rise and fall,” Clarke pondered. She turned her head to Lexa. “So easily mistaken for each other.”

Their eyes locked. Green melded with blue, and for a long stretched moment, that was all that happened. They stared. That wasn’t completely true though, it was more just staring. For Lexa, she caught another glimpse into Clarke’s soul. And like before, it was empty. Empty and broken.

Except it wasn’t quite any more.

Because now there was something else. Something that hadn’t been there in a long time, so long that it’s presence had become strange and unusual. But it wasn’t unwelcome, as the presence awkwardly hung in the air, but it was there, it was allowed to stay.

Lexus thought it was hope.

But she can’t be sure.

Their stare lasts a little longer, a little longer than it should, before Lexa cleared her throat and her eyes fall to the ground almost shamefully. She tried to summon what she wanted to say, what she needed to say. The words still take a stubborn amount of effort to get out.

“I’m sorry.” Lexa said.

Clarke didn’t say anything.

“It was rude of me to bring that up so harshly.”
She finally found the courage to bring her eyes back up. The travel up slow, spotting the smudged stains of greylead that sit proudly on her trackies. Her eyes found Clarke once more.

Clarke smiled. It’s small, exceedingly so.

But it’s also Lexa’s first time seeing one directed at her. For no reason she could walk out, Clarke dipped her head.

“It’s okay.”

Lexa ignored the relief in her stomach. Instead, she bobbed her head as well.

“Good.”

She turned back to the sunset. The sun was nearly gone now; the alarm would be going soon. They only had a few more minutes. Clarke must’ve realised this too, except she didn’t bring her gaze back to the sunset like Lexa. She was going to, but instead they lagged Lexa. They lagged on how the sun made her brown hair shine, and how it dived into her eyes and brought out an entirely new shade of green. How it made her heart stop and restart. They still till the alarm finally rings.

Lexa tears her sight off the sunset, readying herself to go back.

And Clarke tears her gaze off Lexa.

Chapter End Notes

is that.. fluff? in my fic? smiling?
im trying okay.
anyway, i hope you're enjoying the story so far!! thank you for reading!

Now it's the one and only, ttttranslations! *crowd cheers*
Yu ait, ai laik Heda. En taim don ai yu, ai ai op teisa - You’re right, I am Heda. And if I were you, I’d watch my tongue
Yu na laik tofon deyon? - You gonna be difficult today?
No, no sich - No, no trouble
Os - Good
Ha du yu get in bilaik? - How do you know that?
Branwoda - Fool
Honon - Prisoner
I wanted to get this out for Lexa's death anniversary. I'm still very bitter about it, but it makes me feel better that everyone else is too. Reshop Heda.

well at least I didn't take three months right? I'm actually surprised i got this out so quick, but hey, I'm not complaining. This chapter for me didn't feel up to the usual standard but it turned out alright so I hope you all enjoy it. as always, feel free to leave kudos and comments as they validate me and motivate me to write faster.

(If you want that Full Immersion the song i listened to while writing most of this was Wiretree - Towards the Sky and nothing.nowhere. - letdown.)
Also! warning for violence in this chap.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Her heart was pounding.

This was it. She didn’t dare move, keeping her body dead still as the guard that had just slipped her meal walked away. She would have thought nothing of it, except when he had slid it under her cell door he had caught her eye. Deliberately. He didn’t say anything; he was probably too scared to. But him catching her eye, that was the unwritten signal, the sign that he was the one she couldn’t touch.

Because as she waited with a baited breath for him to get far enough, as she carefully pushed the thin blanket off her and crept over to the food, as she lifted the napkin that hid the food and instead found a small, metal key; she realised with a dangerous grin he was the one she couldn’t kill.

The key stared up at her.

Her back had gone ridged when she saw it. A collision of fear and excitement bursting through her vessel in her body, and all Clarke could hear was the mantra that ran like a siren in her mind. This was it. This was fucking it.

She picked it up with trembling fingers, but when she saw the shaking she forced herself to stop. She closed her eyes, breathed in deep through her nose and out through her mouth. It was what she did before every assassination, before every kill. Clarke opened her eyes, slowly, and not that she could see, but the pupil in her eyes, the black had actually extended slightly. The blue in them flickered, but like always it stubbornly stayed where it was. Clarke could now feel the additional presence in her mind. It was small, probably not bigger than a pinhead, but it was there.

Her hands had stop trembling.

She pushed her face against the bars, seeing no one coming just yet. The guard for the morning
shift wasn’t here yet, on purpose, and it took all of Clarke’s will power not to shout in a primal joy. Like a warrior about to go into battle.

The key went in stiffly, they changed the locks every month, so it didn’t worry Clarke when for a moment it didn’t move how it was supposed too. On the third try, Clarke heard the most beautiful sound she had ever heard in her entire life.

Click.

She eased it open carefully, sliding it slow. It had a habit of screaming if you didn’t handle it right, but Clarke had been planning for this moment for months now. She had spent the time to learn how to close it, and now open it, with minimal sound. The time it took to open was possibly wasteful, but she couldn’t do anything about it, as right now the only advantage Clarke had was surprise. Stealth was the only way she was getting out of this alive.

She kept low to the ground as she snuck out. It felt so strange being out of cell without a guard with her, without a reminder of where, and who, she was. It was like walking through a school at midnight. The authority wasn’t there, you had no place to be, but still you have anxiety in your throat in the fear that someone could catch you. Her cell wasn’t the only cell in this room, though it was the only one that was occupied. She crept over to the corner of the room, finding the oak table she had seen so many times before, the chair where the night shift guard would normally sit, and doze off, in. On top was a discarded dagger, probably steel, and under it a small note. She checked that no one had come in yet before grabbing the note and quickly scanning it.

There were only two words.

Good luck.

She smiled. Clarke took the yellowed paper, stuffing it between her breasts in the wrap that acted as bra. It wasn’t like her jumpsuit had pockets. The dagger was a welcome weight in her hand, and just from the feel it alone she had to take a moment to stop. To feel.

She didn’t let it last for long.

There was a specific direction she had to go down. Roan should have shut off the security cameras for the route she was taking, meaning that she wouldn’t have to worry about being spotted from surveillance. She only had to worry about the guards themselves. Clarke took one last final look at her cell.

There was hardly anything that even showed someone had been in it for nine months. The only signs were the bloodstains on the floor and the carved drawings into the walls.

Everything else was bare.

She left without a backward glance.

It helped that the guards had taken her through the halls so many times. It helped that that when they tried to confuse her and take the wrong routes all it did was give her a better map of the area around her. Clarke moved down the hall, her knees in a crouch and body tight against the wall. Her slippers kept tapping against the stone ground, so with a small frustrated growl Clarke took them off, fighting the urge to throw them against the wall. Instead, she just left the pathetic excuse of a shoe on the ground alone.

There was no one for the first corridor, but as Clarke got to end where it split into two directions her ears caught the sound of guards chatting. She stopped, right before it forked off. She strained
her ears.

Only two of them. From the deepness of one their voices it’d be easy to guess that one was much older than the other, the younger one’s voice so clear and high compared to the gruffness of the other one. It’d be better if she got the older one first.

Pushing hard against the wall, she leaned out, peeping down the hall.

She had to bite back her smirk.

She was right.

Thankfully they were turned away. The older one had barely any hair, and when Clarke narrowed her eyes she saw that instead of hair on his head as a feature he instead had scars. But they were deliberate, black ink stark against the white skin following the line of the marks. The other one was actually taller than the older guy, but his arms weren’t as thick and his posture gave away the clear nerves.

Normally Clarke doesn’t kill guards. They’re just doing their job, someone hiring them. And, when you need money, especially for family; what wouldn’t you do? But these men and women weren’t like that. The people here were here of their own free will. They’re guarding a building, a single prisoner in an entire tower. No, the people here came to Nia in blind loyalty and a sick love of violence.

The two guards in front of her had had a turn of torturing her anyway.

So it wasn’t that hard when she stepped out from her hiding spot. It wasn’t that hard as she took slow steps towards them, and it certainly wasn’t hard when she got close enough and the older guard spun around with a frown, her hand already flicking and sending the dagger flying.

It buried itself into his eye, the man not even able to offer a scream before he was slumping to the ground. The younger guard hadn’t turned around with his friend, and now Clarke had broken into a sprint with one done. By the time the guard had turned around, his eyes widening and jaw dropping at his fallen friend, Clarke pounced onto him. They tumbled to the floor, but Clarke held on to him with a death grip. Now sitting on top of him, she didn’t waste a second to drive her knee into his throat and hold him down.

His eyes bulged, hands coming up and to try and push her off. But it didn’t work, not with Clarke’s strength that wasn’t entirely her own.

The blue in her eyes was gone.

It didn’t take long until his body went still, his arms falling limp to his sides. She waited a few extra seconds just in case he was faking, and when he didn’t make a move even when she moved off him she released a breath she didn’t know she was holding. She knew she couldn’t waste time, so hastily she knelt down by the older guard’s side. With a sickening squelch, she wrenched the dagger out of his eye. She wiped it against his black uniform before palming it again. Before she left she checked both of their bodies, taking another dagger, one identical to the one she already had, and a set of keys.

She was about to keep going, but for a moment her steps lagged. Could she hide the bodies? Clarke supposed she could put them in her cell, buy herself time before she gets found out. After a minute she decided against it. There were bloodstains already on the ground anyway. They’d know they second they saw it, body or not.
Clarke trailed down the rest of the hall, her bare feet not offering a sound against the cold stone. There were cells either side of her, empty like they all were, and Clarke would’ve probably gotten lost if she didn’t know exactly where to go.

She sped up a little, not hearing anyone around. If she could get to guard’s quarters that was undergoing a bit of construction, then she could climb up into the vents and go the rest of the way like that.

That was the plan she had hatched with Roan anyway.

At the end of the corridor she took a left, her heart thumping like a war drum in her chest. She tried to calm it, but her usual methods didn’t work. Freedom was too close; escape for once was more than just a daydream. It was a possible reality.

It was now.

She was so caught up in trying to calm herself down that she went right through to the last hall without checking first. The only reason she stopped was the voice that snapped at her so harshly pain shot right from her skull down her spine.

‘Get back!’ the voice hissed.

She scrambled to, almost slipping as she practically dived back behind to safety. She stayed completely still, Clarke having to try and even her breathing from the sudden panic. She managed to, just barely, although her breathing halted all together as she finally took the time to listen to her surroundings.

“What was that?”

Clarke screwed her eyes shut. She was an idiot. One of her hands felt painfully empty.

She had dropped one of the daggers in her dive.

She could hear the echoing steps as one of the guards went to probably investigate the dagger. She had to think, fast. She couldn’t peek out from her spot without getting spotted, meaning the moment she moves, no matter how small, she had to run. Clarke focused her hearing, finding that they weren’t talking idly like the ones before were. All she could hear was the guard’s steps as they drew closer.

She had one choice left of what to do.

Clarke shut her eyes, letting out a slow breath through her lips. She retreated in her mind, as far as she could go, she scaled inward into finally she felt her own conscious brush against something that you wouldn’t ever want in your mind. A little part was already there, a blink of the full being.

She did the thing she so rarely does.

She called to it.

‘I need you.’

The reply didn’t come immediately, and she was too far into her own head to know if the guard was with her yet. Her chest ached with how hard her heart was pounding.

‘Why?’ The voice sounded bored, and Clarke was so thankful that it even replied that she fumbled
with her response.

‘Because I need your help,’ she rushed out. Jesus she didn’t have time for this. She could feel the interest slipping from the being.

‘And? Your world is plain. I have no need to waste my time there,’ the being sighed. Not that Clarke knew how, did it even have a mouth? ‘I am not here for your beck and call. You are here for mine.’

She didn’t have long left. Clarke could feel it.

‘Please!’ Clarke cried. It didn’t work; she could feel the being started to slip away. Christ, why did monovalent entities have to be so god damn pretentious? She was about to give up and just rush back to the reality, try and fight her way out when an idea slammed into her so hard she almost rocked back. ‘If you help me I’ll give you a soul!’

She felt the being pause. Slowly, way too slowly, it crept back. It didn’t say anything, but Clarke knew she now had its attention.

‘I can give you a soul,’ Clarke repeated, quieter, calmer this time.

_The being pursed its lips. At least Clarke thought it did. ‘You understand I do not forcefully take any normal soul. It must be-‘_

‘I know I know,’ Clarke interrupted. She cringed as she did. It was too late to apologise anyway, she had seconds before the guard would find her. ‘I have someone, thrives off violence, has a love of it. Has killed before.’

At her last words she felt its interest peak.

‘How many?’ It questioned.

‘I don’t know,’ Clarke said and it pained her too. Any moment now she was dead. ‘But he has killed. I know it, I can feel it.’

_The being didn’t say anything for a bit, and Clarke wanted to scream because of it. She stayed back as long as she could waiting for a response, but it was too late now, and her only option was to just fight as hard as her body could allow. She hurriedly crawled through her mind, regaining the feeling in her toes and fingers. Her eyes snapped open with a gasp._

And because the world was feeling cruel, it was then the guard turned the corner and saw her.

_He was instantly charging at her, and though she had enough of her mind to find her feet she didn’t have enough to dodge or throw off his weight. He slammed into it, forcing her into the wall so hard white-hot pain exploded in the back of her head. For a second her world went dark and stars were all she could see, but her vision came fumbling back as fast it could._

_A knife was hovering just above her belly, the steel inches from the soft skin. He gritted his teeth, his arm shaking with how hard he was pushing, and how hard Clarke was pushing back. She managed to force it back enough that it gave her opening, her leg coming out and hooking around his. She jerked it back, but the guard snatched onto her and dragged her down with him. They both fell, each not wasting any second to regain their bearings and find their footing. Her head spun with the sudden change in position but she brought it back._

_Then someone kicked in her back._
It was hard enough that she splayed out onto the ground, her arms taking a second too long to push back up. Someone gripped the back of her head, yanking the hair there and forcing her head back. She was on her knees, a new guard’s snarling face above her. A glistening knife pressed against her throat.

“Yu vou na ron of honon?” The guard spat. Clarke tried to move, but found the knife pressing even harder into her neck. A thin trail of blood leaked down. It was stupid how fast everything had gone wrong. How it was the thought of it all that brought everything tumbling down to the ground. She had been so close. But her mind had betrayed her. The guard let go of her hair he had bawled up in his fists, his hand moving to roughly gripping her arm. The knife stayed at her throat. “Ge op,” the guard growled.

She trudged up onto two feet, taking the chance to see how many were with her. She counted five, including the one currently holding her. If she could get out of his hold maybe she could take them. It didn’t even matter if she could. She had to try.

She wouldn’t go back to the Nia.

She couldn’t.

Clarke didn’t know if it was that thought that triggered the events that happened next. If from that thought alone, everything changed. Maybe it was, or maybe it wasn’t. Really, it didn’t matter. All that did matter was the sudden power that poured through her veins.

Clarke’s entirety froze, and the guard holding her snapped at her because she did. One of the guards was in front of her, his handgun raised and pointing at her, but his aim dropped slightly as he watched prisoner. He furrowed his brows, because suddenly she stopped moving. Completely. Then, in the most terrifying thing he had ever seen, the prisoner locked eyes with him. And he saw black tendrils spread like oil from her pupil.

Clarke’s eyes flooded black.

And she smiled in a way that wasn’t in any way human.

The guard’s grip on her suddenly seemed like nothing. She turned on him, ripping herself away and missing the instinctual dive of the knife. It just missed her neck. She turned on him with a snarl, a literal one that rubbed against her throat. She grabbed him, taking advantage of the clear shock on his face, and spun him around in a sort of human shield.

A burst of bullets buried themselves into the guard’s body, and as the guards fired she pushed with him forward.

“Itod op triplei!” One of the guards’ snapped. They did, and Clarke discarded the now dead body in her arms like a sack. She went for the person closest, and luckily he was still lowering his firearm because she was able to lift and kick out her leg. It hit his hand with the gun with a supernatural accuracy, the weapon falling to the ground uselessly. She rushed at him, grasping the collar of his shirt and lifting him up as if he weighed that of a feather. The sight of her face devoid of any emotion with depthless soulless eyes was enough for him to scream.

She threw him at the other guards and they tumbled like bowling pins.

The rest was quite easy. She snatched the dagger off the ground that had been at a throat not seconds ago, and with an unnatural amount of calm crouched by the guard she had just thrown and plunged into his heart. The others tried to clamber up to their feet and go at her, but she was
already on them before they could. She easily held one of the last guards down with a single hand at his throat, squeezing until his last words were a wheezy curse.

The guards lay motionless around her.

Except for the one that had bolted for it the moment she let the being inhabit body.

The moment she let Death flood her very bones.

She pushed herself to her feet with a growl. She couldn’t see people, only the living and dead. Thoughts of escape were distant, the only direction in her mind being to kill the ones that had killed. Of course, her own mind nudged its new inhabiter in the direction of who to hurt.

Clarke sprinted after him, her speed easily reaching supernatural levels. She caught up to him pathetically easily, and the dark part of her craved for something more. She moved till she was next to him, then slammed her shoulder into the guard till he was pinned up against the wall. Her arm shot out and pressed against his chest, a gun that she had stolen from one of the dead guards digging into his stomach. The man whimpered.

“Please, I’m sorry I don’t-“

“Quiet.” Clarke snapped. It took great effort, but she fought through the haze of her mind, wrestling back for control. The black in her eyes retreated, not completely, but it didn’t infect the entirety anymore. “Where’s Atohl?”

The guard couldn’t help but frown from the name. “Atohl? Why would you-“

She shot his foot. He screamed, but he hurriedly bit in his lip in an attempt to hold on to some shred of dignity. Clarke didn’t say anything, the gun going back to press into his stomach. When he brought the gaze back to her, she only raised a brow.

“He’s upstairs, in his personal quarters,” the guard breathed. Sweat leaked onto his eyes and he had to blink the moisture away. “Up the stairs, third door on the right. Please, don’t kill me.”

Clarke stared at him. Her finger rested against the trigger, and just as she was about to pull it she instead lifted and shoved the butt of the handgun into his head. He clunked to the ground unconscious. Her eyes only snagged on his body for a moment before moving.

The guard wasn’t lying.

She followed his directions, finding the stairs she was meant to be going up anyway. Her blood burned at the idea of what she was about to do. She had wanted to see Atohl dead for so long, and finally, finally, it was that bastard’s time. The door for the second floor was locked, and using the keys she had nabbed from before she shuffled through the set and, when she found the one, slipped in the key and rotated it. The door clicked open, and Clarke had to bite her lip to stop herself from laughing in disbelief.

The hall wasn’t empty, a group of three guards hanging around the end of the hall. They were deep in conversation, one of them acting out a story with the others laughing heartily along. Clarke waited till the one that was facing her direction doubled over from whatever the punch line was, before finally going through the door and keeping low to the floor as she found the door she was looking for. Third door on the right.

She found it; saw the little silver plaque that proudly showed off his name.
The knob turned with no resistance.

It was still early, and as Clarke crept in the room slow her eyes caught sight of the alarm clock sitting on the bedside table. It read six-thirty am. Her gaze swept over the room the moment she was in, freezing when she saw him. His form was still, his chest rising slowly as he snored from in his bed. There was no one else in the room but him.

Clarke let her spine rise. She could feel it from here, the wrongness that burned from in his soul. Especially now, with Death flowing through her blood it was impossible not to see the murdered souls that clung to his own. It was what happened whenever someone is killed, when someone dies from a non-natural death. Their soul gets trapped. It was like a stench, and it made her throat close up.

She was careful to sneak by his side. The only sound was his snoring. He hadn’t even bothered to change out of his clothes, him just sleeping on top the white sheets and blankets. He was lying on his back, and for moment Clarke just stared at him. Stared at the man who had hurt her in so many ways more than physical. The man who had killed her. The man who met no repercussions for what he’d done. The blue in her eyes was easily replaced with black. It spread out from her pupil like veins.

This was it.

She grabbed his arm and yanked, his body sliding off the bed and onto the floor. He yelped, but Clarke put his hand against the chest the moment he was down on the ground. When he finally saw and realised what was happening his eyes widened in an impressive display. The surprise melted into anger quick. Clarke was expecting it, and she adjusted herself so was half sitting on him, her knee digging into his ribs. She clenched her jaw as he struggled, but he didn’t get anywhere further than pushing her up a few millimeters just for her to come back down.

Her hand with the mark rested over where his heart would be.


“I’m not going to ask how you escaped honnon, ba ai nou wan raun deyon.”

Clarke fought off the urge to just kill him. To hurt him like how he hurt her. Instead, she let the presence that had been wrangling for control the moment she entered this room free. She handed over the reigns, and the white disappeared from her eyes completely.

“Yu gonplei ste odon.” She whispered. Her voice wasn’t her own, the sound scratchy and unnatural. Atohl stilled the second he heard it, his struggle to throw her off hauling from the sight of the thing on top of him. He had been told what she was. That she was an Other. But she’d never showed anything, had never displayed any type of abilities or powers. In all honesty, he had just thought the girl had pissed off Nia and she just wanted revenge.

But he could see he was so very wrong.

And that he should have never messed with whatever the hell she was.

Clarke’s left arm began to shake, her fingers curling into his thin shirt. From her hand, small black veins suddenly grew, climbing up her arm slowly. Atohl tried to scream, but Clarke grabbed a random sock nearby and stuffed into his mouth, pushing it down to the muffle the sound. She didn’t gain any pleasure from tearing someone’s soul out, but at the same time as her hand slowly lifted and a black smoke was pulled from where his heart would be it wasn’t that it didn’t hurt her either.
In the back of her mind Clarke felt surprise for how quick it took for the soul to come out.

It seemed Death was hungry.

Atohl writhed, the black veins winding up her arm then under her shirt, curling down her shoulder, until, finally, it reached her own heart. In one last violent tug the dark smoke trapped between Clarke’s hand and Atohl’s chest was sucked through, disappearing into the skin of Clarke’s fingers.

Atohl stopped moving.

For a few minutes, Clarke was completely still. The darkness in her eyes wavered, flickering like a blinking light. She thought she was panting, or maybe she wasn’t breathing at all. Somewhere in the middle. Her hand didn’t move off from where it was pressed against his chest, and slowly Clarke lifted it, as if his shirt were glue. She told herself her hand wasn’t shaking.

Clarke forced herself to take in a breath.

She was fine.

She was.

Wasn’t she?

Clarke blinked, and suddenly her limbs were unlocked from their invisible chains. Her eyes, still lacking their blue but the blackness of her iris surrounded in white, jumped over the room. When she didn’t see anything of interest she pulled herself up, leaning her weight off Atohl’s body. She tried to stop herself. She really did. But the moment she was standing she was glancing down at him. She didn’t know if she regretted it.

Atohl’s face was pale; almost bordering on blue it was so pale. His jaw was wide open, still locked in its silent scream. His eyes were completely white. The pupil was only visible because it was slightly darker than the rest. Small faded black veins spread out like roots around his mouth, tapering off before it reached his neck. Clarke just stood staring at him. It took a while, but, eventually, she bent down. Carefully she leaned forward and shut his jaw. With the same amount of gentleness she reached and closed his eyes.

Then without a second glance she got up and left the room.

The guards were still there, only there were two left now. They were turned away, but one of them was about to turn in her direction. Clarke didn’t wait. She took off at a sprint, her bare feet lightly tapping against the ground as she ran. The sound wasn’t too loud, but it was enough that one of guards stopped talking. When she was just a few metres away, they turned around at the same time, identical creases in their brows. At the sight of an escaped prisoner, they were both fumbling to reach for their guns.

But they were too slow.

Clarke had her dagger, but she also had another that she’d picked off of Atohl. She was only a few steps away now, and the moment she got close enough she flicked out the two knives in each separate hand, and jerked upwards. They went through both of their chins. The two women dropped to the floor. Clarke kept moving, she’d already wasted too much time with Atohl, quickly checking over one of the dead guard’s body and taking her keycard.

There were only a few other guards as she moved through the halls. If she could, she tried to avoid
them. Slipping into a closet and waiting for them to trail by, or like the time when one of them was showing the other a YouTube video on their phone, sneaking past on crouched knees. It still took a painful amount of time to reach the room with the construction.

When she finally found the room she had force herself not to burst through the door in her excitement.

The corridor was empty, and, with careful fingers, Clarke pushed down on the handle. She edged it open slowly. Her back was still tightly pressed up against the wall, but when there was no sound or reaction she dared a glance in. Her shoulder’s slumped. The room was empty. She checked one last time that no one was with her in the hallway before slipping into the room. As planned, there was a hole in the ceiling, but Clarke couldn’t see any vents. She figured she’d just have to climb through the hole.

She walked till she was standing beneath, head tilted up. Before she did anything though she went over to the corner room, wedging herself behind a large wooden wardrobe. She called the strength to her again, and it seemed like Death was feeling generous for once, because it happily lent its support. Pushing the wardrobe forward with her shoulder, she moved it so it was sitting in front of the door, and just for good measure Clarke pulled in a table and a couple chairs. Her arms shook with the power that was flooding through them, and taking advantage of it Clarke adjusted herself so again she was standing under the hole. Then she bent her legs, and sprung.

Her hands flung out, latching onto the stone ledge to keep her self up. With a breathy grunt Clarke pulled herself the rest of the way up, noticing just how little space she had. She had to lie completely down to fit, but thankfully she did, and when she was up and now lying in the incredibly tight area she had she couldn’t help but smile.

She was escaping.

Clarke saw that there wasn’t actually anything else apart from her own body occupying the space she was in. Not even a wire or insulation. The longer she crawled, the quicker it took for her to realise that it wasn’t by chance that she had fit into this area. It was deliberate. It was an actual escape route, but it was for guards. To smuggle the important people out in the event of an emergency.

But Roan had planned for her to take this tunnel right? It couldn’t be a coincidence that in the exact room she was meant to be in that the hole was there.

It couldn’t be.

It couldn’t.

Clarke still sped up. Maybe she was being paranoid, but in this life being paranoid was what kept her alive. The air was stale, and it was getting increasingly hot and humid. Sweat dripped down the sides of her face, her breathing becoming more and more ragged the further she pushed.

She just had to keep moving. She was going to make it out. It didn’t matter if this tunnel was designed for escaping, the cameras wouldn’t have captured her going into that room anyway; there was no way for them to know she was in here. She had made sure to kill anyone who had spotted her anyway. She was safe. She had to be.

Clarke crawled faster.

Her head just touched the height of the tunnel, bumping against it when she picked up speed, her
movements becoming rushed and sloppy. She wasn’t claustrophobic, but a certain panic was setting it; but it was because it was taking too long. She should have been out by now, or at least able to tell.

But the tunnel was near pitch black, and the only reason she could even see where she was going was because of her superior sight. The top of her head ached with how much it was hitting the ceiling. Clarke ignored it, pushing through. She had to be close, she had to be. It had been what felt like about half an hour. She’d felt when the ground beneath her dirty hands dipped, that had to had mean she was getting towards ground. It was getting increasingly difficult to keep her fears at bay.

And then, suddenly, Clarke saw light.

She was half tempted to cry at the sight of it.

With new strength she powered towards as it, as much as you could do anyway in an army crawl. When she got close enough that the thin streaks of light could touch her face Clarke realised she had actually done it. This was the end. She was out of tunnel, and in front of her was a metal sheet, drilled holes letting the light leak through. Clarke let her fingers rest against it before holding her breath, and pushing with all of her might.

The metal was thrown off.

Clarke eagerly shuffled the last of the length through, only partly surprised that her hands still met stone when they out of the tunnel. Thankfully, she had been making sure to try her best at keeping herself in shape; it was extremely hard considering the lack of nourishment and proper exercise. Being completely out of the tunnel, and in nothing but the early morning sun was a surreal experience to say at the least.

But then Clarke really took a glance at where she was. Stone pavement was still below her, and in front was a tall metal fence, and, beyond that, true freedom. She had to tilt her chin up from how tall it was. It didn’t matter anyway, she could get over it; it’d be exhausting, but she could do it. Clarke got herself up to shaky feet, not used to the amount of running and strain she had put them through since she’d been awake.

And suddenly Clarke knew something was wrong.

Because there were sounds, a lot of sounds. Shouting and cursing. They were all coming from inside, from the towering building behind her. They were also getting closer. And when Clarke, the blackness in her eye now completely gone, turned behind her and looked up to the corner, when she saw the camera that was staring at her, the red light blinking; she wasn’t surprised when the alarm suddenly rung off.

She made a move to go for the fence, the hand with her mark glowing a burning white, when she felt something sharp prick her neck.

Then she felt another, and another, and another.

Her eyes stayed on the sun ahead of her, its form just hovering in the blurry sky. The shouting grew louder. Her limbs suddenly felt weak, but Clarke didn’t dare let herself lose sight of the one thing she hadn’t seen in over six months.

A sunrise.

She realised it wasn’t just the sky that was blurry. Everything was, the colours mixing and
blending with each other. For a moment, the world looked like a Van Gogh painting. Then Clarke blinked, but her eyes didn’t open back up.

And just like that the world was ripped out of her grasp.

Like it had been done so many times before.

Clarke still smiled as she fell.

- Clarke woke up with a jolt.

Her eyes snapped open with a strangled breath, somewhere between a yelp and a muttered curse. Clarke blinked rapidly, trying to get her bearings back. She glanced around the room almost skittishly, and when she saw that she wasn’t in a cell but in a room she didn’t recognise panic set in quick, her heart somehow beating even harder than it already was. Had Nia taken her back to Azgeda Tower in her sleep? No, that couldn’t be possible. She’d know wouldn’t she? Sure, she’d slept through an alarm once or twice but never a goddamn kidnapping. Nia couldn’t have her, she couldn’t, she couldn’t be there she just-

“Clarke!” someone snapped, forcing her gaze on her. Her head was spinning too fast for her to actually see the person. The person gently put their hand against her arm, but it only made her flinch and panic all over again. The person instantly raised their hands so Clarke could see, and slowly her mind came back to her.

“Where…?”

“Rec room.” The person answered. “You’re in Polis, Polis Prison.”

At those words Clarke finally got her grip back on reality. She fought off sleep’s lingering fingers, shoved hard at her dream, at her memory, that still fogged her mind. Finally she got through her haze. “Raven?” Clarke mumbled.

Raven smiled in relief. She was just glad Octavia wasn’t with them yet. “Yeah, it’s me. You right?”

“Y-Yeah, I’m fine,” Clarke said, but it was clear she was lying. Her breathing was still too heavy. She forced herself to try and get it back to normal levels.

“You can talk to me Clarke,” Raven said, smiling softly. It was a type of smile she had only seen a few times before. Like it so rarely did, it held no sarcasm or mocking. “When you’re ready though,” Raven added. Because she knew Clarke wasn’t. She could see she was still afraid, on edge from her nightmare. She could also see she was in pain, but a type that never rung physical. Physical would be too easy.

Clarke didn’t smile back, but she nodded. “Thanks.”

“No problem.” Raven grinned. The usual grin, wide and mischievous. Clarke tore her gaze off her, glancing around the room. She actually was in the recreational room; she had just been too dazed and panicked to notice. She spent a good chunk of her time in her cell, and the room was still not familiar enough for her. It was mostly empty now, only a few lingering people around. When she caught one staring at her the woman quickly looked away.

“Did…” Clarke blinked, her mind still rolling too slowly. That memory had shaken her more than
she cared to admit. “Did I fall asleep?” she finally asked. Raven dipped her head, leaning back in her chair.

“Yeah, you were drawing something but you just kept leaning closer and closer to it. Was quite funny actually. I was more surprised it took you that long then that you slept at all.” Raven paused, her voice losing some of its casualness. “You sleep at all last night?”

Clarke had been here for a week now. She’d only slept for two of those seven nights. Both times she had nightmares that her left even more tired the next day. “Not really,” Clarke answered. Technically it wasn’t a lie. “Sorry if I doze off though.”

Raven shrugged. “I’m sorry you had a bad dream.”

Clarke bobbed her head.

If only it were a dream.

- Lexa loved running.

She couldn’t explain it. She just did. She always made sure to at least get in some type of run every day, even settling for a walk if that was all she could squeeze. She could say that it had just become habit, which in breaking it would seem wrong, but she knew that wasn’t it. It was the run itself, that brief bout of freedom and weightlessness she got from it that had her always coming back.

And, you know, it also helped that she had a dog.

He always ran with her. He was a mongrel, a scrawny little thing she’d gotten from the pound. All she knew that he was part German Shepard part… something. Maybe a Husky, or a wolf even. He was big, that was for certain. With him running next to her now, he came just below her hip. Anya had always joked about his size, how she couldn’t believe that a puppy that had been so small had turned into the giant of a thing he was now. Anya complained about him a lot. How his fur got everywhere, how she could never leave food out, and how he had gotten smart enough to stand up on his hind legs and push open doors.

But she also knew that Anya loved him deeply.

Not that her grouch of a sister would admit that.

Technically, you could say she lived in the prison. She lived very close, in the nearby patch of woods in her small little house. It was mostly made of wood, but there was a cobblestone wall with chunks of moss growing in the cracks. Anya lived with her, meaning the house was often left in shreds and Lexa had to begrudgingly keep it clean, always snatching a discarded shirt off the leather couch with a scowl. She’d tried to talk to Anya about it, and she’d gotten through. Sometimes. Every now and again she’d make a proper effort, but she always seemed to time perfectly to when Lexa was getting to her last nerve.

Still, it wasn’t entirely impossible to live with her.

Lexa pushed herself a little faster, her blood thrumming in her ears. Red, her dog, sped up as well to keep up with her. His name wasn’t exactly on the creative side, mostly to do with his mostly dark red coat, streaks of white bleeding on his belly. Still, the once shy dog had taken to the name instantly, so it had just stuck. Anya liked to tease her about it. But Lexa had also heard her mumble
things to Red when she thought she couldn’t hear.

So she had enough ammunition whenever Anya liked to bring it up.

It was always a joy to see her always-fierce sister go beet red at the mention of baby talk.

The trees whipped past her. She didn’t have any music in, not today. Today she just reveled in the sounds of nature. Of nothing. Clarke had been here for a week now, and while so far there hadn’t been any more instances, the blonde, for some reason, was always a common topic her mind liked to return to. Lexa frowned, whether she meant to or not.

Clarke. It had been hard to get her out of her head. The problem was there were too many questions surrounding her, and questions were one thing that Lexa just couldn’t ignore. She liked knowing. She always knew. But with Clarke she didn’t, just about reaching the bare minimum. All she knew was where she had come from, which she tried very hard to ignore, and that at some point she had been sentenced to die. For a crime that she didn’t even know if Clarke committed. There were a lot of questions. A lot more.

But there was one that really bugged her.

Why?
Why did she care? Why was she always the first and last thought on her mind, slipping into her dreams and waking up with her? Some nights she didn’t think about her. But then most she did. And some of those nights her thoughts treaded on extremely dangerous territories. It seemed like her mind enjoyed toying with her, like it was poking a statue in a museum, testing how far it could go.

Sometimes, she thought of Clarke and what she had done, what danger she could be. Sometimes, she thought of Clarke from last week, when they had watched the sunset. She thought of her hair and how the sun’s dying rays made it glow, how when her eyes caught sight of it they brightened so impossibly it made Lexa question how it even was possible. How for a moment, someone could have looked so beautiful.

Lexa shook her head as if she could physically shake those thoughts out. It probably wasn’t the best idea, considering she had been running, and for a moment it threw her off balance. The world bent and the ground came up flying, Lexa’s arm jerking out just in time to save herself from face planting into the ground. Pain jolted up her arms from the impact. Red bolted on ahead, but at seeing, or more hearing, his owner falling he skidded to halt, rushing right back. Lexa swore, bringing herself up to her knees. She checked over herself, seeing nothing gained from the fall apart from a smear of dirt of her legs. They were a little red, her hands too, but apart from that she was fine.

Lexa was just getting herself back up when a weight collided with her.

She was sent back to the ground, backwards this time, the hulking weight of Red above her. She shoved him off with a laugh, Red huffing and whining as she did.

“T’m fine boy just get off me,” Lexa chuckled. Some dog dribble had somehow gotten on her face. “Urgh, you’re disgusting,” she muttered, wiping her face with the collar of her tank top. Red just barked, and Lexa gave him one last playful shove before getting up to her feet. He stared up at her expectantly. She couldn’t resist giving him a little ear rub. She had a sweet spot for animals anyway. “Come on,” Lexa said. Red had been sitting on his haunches but now he scrambled up to his paws, so much energy in his limbs Lexa couldn’t help but smile.
Before she started running again she took a quick glance at where she was. She was still in the trees, but she could see the fence from here. The prison sitting just a little behind it. She checked her watch. It was still early enough; the bell for outside-hours would be going off soon. As long as she made it for around then she’d be good. Lexa lent down, patting Red’s side.

“Off we go boy,” Lexa whispered, deciding to just run ahead. She went opposite the way to her house. Red took off with her, though he sped a little faster. Lexa tried to stop her grin, she really did, but still it spread on her face anyway. Excited and primal. She pumped her own legs faster, until she overtook Red. When her legs passed by his and she threw a look over her shoulder, she could have sworn the dog scowled at her.

It seemed to become a game then. Red let out a bark, his legs working furiously to slip by Lexa’s. They did, but only for a moment, because soon Lexa would return to being in front. He tried a few more times. He almost always had it, just for his owner to crush any hopes that he’d beaten her. Lexa was sweating and her breathing was ragged but she didn’t care. For now, in this moment, she didn’t care at all.

Eventually Red settled for running back by her side. Lexa was internally grateful; she was getting tired. She eased up a bit, slowing her pace, glad when Red didn’t take opportunity to bolt ahead of her. It seemed he had figured out who the big dog was in the relationship. And like always, it wasn’t him.

Lexa finally came to a stop, having to force herself not to bend over and greedily heave in as much air as possible. Well, she did do that, but she made sure she kept her back straight and her lungs free. Her chest rose and fell fast, her throat slightly sore. Her legs pulsed as well, but it didn’t bother her. They were good pains. She checked the time again, cursing when she saw it.

The bell would’ve gone by now. Lexa could see Anya’s face already, leaning against the doorway to the main entrance prison, a single raised brow and a smirk that spread slow and dangerously. Dangerous for her anyway, whenever her sister gave her a look like that it was hard to resist the urge to punch her. Thankfully, she hadn’t done yet. Okay, maybe she had done it once. It wasn’t her fault anyway. She didn’t hit that hard.

Lexa sighed.

Her run was over.

She still felt like she could go more, even if already her feet were aching. But she pulled back on the impulse. She didn’t want to deal with Anya more than she had to already. Lexa let her gaze fall back on the prison. She was on a slight incline, the woods hiding up on the hill, staring over to the towering grey walls in front of her. A bit of sweat leaked onto her eyelashes and she blinked it away. Lexa squinted her eyes. Some of the inmates were already out, snatching at the opportunity to get outside. She didn’t blame them. There were some leaning against the walls, fiddling with the grass and chatting with their mates, two women in the leaning against the fence, leaning suspiciously close.

Lexa let out one final breath through her nose. It was time to start the day. She turned around, not finding Red behind her. Lexa looked back down to her sides, checking both when he wasn’t there either. She frowned. Where had that dog gotten off to?

Lexa almost regretted the question when she found out.
She looked out back to the prison, but downwards, and, of course, there was that bastard dog sprinting for it. Lexa’s eyes bulged as she stumbled on after him. How had she not noticed him bolting? Red had somehow managed to get down the hill without her seeing, his fur as a blur as he ran like death itself was chasing him. Christ, what was he even doing? It didn’t matter, not right now as Lexa forced her feet to go faster, the once soft grass feeling hard as she pushed against it. She just had to get to him before—

“Dog!” an inmate exclaimed, clear joy in their tone. Thankfully they hadn’t shouted the word, so only them and the two inmates with them heard. Lexa then suddenly realised she recogised that voice. She cursed heavily under her breath.

Reyes pushed as hard as she could against the fence, trying her best to sneak her fingers through the gaps and touch the dog. She just about managed, a strained finger just grazing the side of his jaw. The dog barked giddily, jumping up onto his hind legs and resting his paws against the fence. Reyes, somehow, grinned even wider, squealing and muttering ‘who’s a good boy’ over and over as she tried to stroke him through the fence. Lexa finally reached Red, watching Reyes cooing over him and Blake and Clarke standing behind her, a grin that almost matched Reyes’s on Blake’s face. The brunette was trying to pet Red too, but not as much Reyes who clearly wanted him all for herself.

Lexa jogged up to them, and with no collar to grab on to gripped his ruff like she did so often, gently tugging him back onto four paws. He barked in protest, rushing back up to lean against the fence, managing to slip from her grip. Lexa made another move to pull him, but he growled this time.

“You’re making him mad Heda! Just leave him,” Reyes said, trying to reach for him as if her hand could go through the fence. Lexa glared at her.

“He’s not mad, he’s being stubborn,” she deadpanned. Her gaze fell on Red, still desperately trying to push through the fence. It was like he wanted to get on the other side, which was weird, because normally he never wanted that. Lexa actually bothered to pay a bit more attention to him and realised that while Reyes had been the one showering him with praise, he was actually staring past her. She followed his line of sight, and saw that it landed on Clarke. She noticed Clarke was staring back at him, and she didn’t know how, but she could have sworn she could her heart aching from here. Lexa swallowed the lump her throat. “Do you want to pet him?”

Clarke’s head snapped up, jumping slightly. Lexa bit down on the urge to apologise. Her pale blue eyes found hers, and Lexa didn’t understand why her heart decided to speed up at the sight of it. It fluttered in her chest like a bird in a cage. Clarke opened her mouth to speak, but then her eyes detached from Lexa’s own and flicked up and down. Lexa realised with a surprisingly well-hidden blush what she was wearing. A grey tank top and her black sport shorts. Her ‘braided’ hair was probably a mess by now, her body covered in sweat and dirt.

Clarke’s eyes paused on her legs, and then paused even longer when they came back up to her face. It was almost like she looking at her neck. Lexa blinked the thought away.

“Clarke? You good?” It was Reyes, and even Lexa could hear the smirk in her voice. Clarke’s gaze finally left Lexa, turning on Reyes with an impressively hard glare. Reyes must have realised it was impressive too, because she raised her hands in a peace gesture. “I’d say don’t kill me, but I feel like you’d take that the wrong way.”

Clarke’s glare, somehow, turned darker. But then her lips twitched, as if she was suppressing the urge to smile. Reyes saw it too, her hands falling with a slap back to her sides. She swiveled over to Lexa with an obvious dramatic flare. Lexa fought not to roll her eyes.
“So? What’s his name?” she asked, her face expectant. Lexa looked back down at Red, seeing how he was still, for some reason, trying so hard to get to Clarke. She couldn’t stop herself to lean forward and give his head a little scratch. He was nearly as tall as her now, still balancing on his hind legs.

Lexa caved with a sigh. “Red.” It just about made it above a mutter.

“Seriously? Red? That’s his name?” Blake scoffed, shaking her head. “I wonder why you chose it.”

It was probably meant light-heartedly, but Lexa bristled. She knew Blake saw it as well; saw how for a moment she had forgotten just who she was talking to. Blake took a step back, a small one. She averted her eyes. Lexa was still deciding on whether to give her demerit for talking to her like that when Clarke spoke up. The first words she’d said since the conversation started.

“He looks like a Red.” She said. It wasn’t a mumble, but it also wasn’t too clear. All three heads turned to her, and somehow it only gave Clarke’s voice more confidence. She stepped forward, finally reaching forward and letting her fingers slip through the fence. Red eagerly brushed his head against them. “You can tell, if you look into his eyes. He’s Red.”

Lexa stared at her. So did Reyes and Blake. For the first time, Lexa saw Clarke hesitate as she brought her gaze up to her. She saw her eyes flick up and down before settling again. Red huffed, whining when he could only get into contact with Clarke’s fingers and not her full hand.

“You chose a good name.” Lexa thought her voice had dropped. But she couldn’t be sure. Now, Reyes and Blake both turned their stares onto her in eerie sync. Lexa didn’t know why her throat decided to close off, but she had to clear it to speak. Clarke’s eyes were too intense, burning with something she couldn’t name. She could hear her pulse in her ears, feel it in her hands. She nodded. It was all she could do.

Then Clarke gave her something she didn’t expect. A smile. It was a small smile, no teeth shone and the edges of lips hardly even moved really. But it was the warmest smile she had ever been given; so warm that Lexa felt like just from the sight of it, it was enough friction for a fire to set off in her chest. When she could have sworn smoke burned her lungs, Lexa, subtly, smiled back. It released this pressure she didn’t even know was constricting her. She took a deliberate step back.

“I suspect I’ll be seeing you all soon, especially you,” her eyes narrowed on Reyes, who just grinned. “Considering your history.”

“No bombs today Heda,” she mocked saluted. Lexa stared at her, hard. Reyes let her arm fall slowly back to her side. “...Not that I know anything about bombs.”

The fence was still between them, but when Lexa’s gaze turned threatening it was like it was never there. “I’d hope not.” She muttered. Most people made their voice cold, but Lexa was always different in that. Instead of becoming cold, her word’s would become hot. They’d burn, like the letters themselves were somehow made of flames and could set fire to someone’s skin just by her look. Because her eyes, somehow, would burn even brighter. Anya liked to say that she’d glare so coldly it would burn.

Reyes gulped.

“You won’t see anything from me.” She said. Lexa let her shoulder’s relax, the tension easing from the air. She finally took notice that Red had stopped his pestering of the fence from the sudden change in atmosphere, and now was shouldered by her side, his hackles raised. But as she let the tension with them fully go, Red slumped back to his casual stance. Lexa watched him as he caught
one last glance at Clarke, a paw quite literally twitching to run to her. But he clamped down on the urge, and instead turned back to Lexa. She let her hand rest on the top of his head.

“Goodbye Reyes, Blake.” Her gaze fell onto the blonde, and Lexa realised that, if she wanted, she could reach through the fence and touch her from here. It took a surprising amount of effort not to. She opened her jaw, but something stopped her. She closed her mouth. She had to say it; she knew she did. Anya had told her, had reminded her. Lexa finally bobbed her head. “Goodbye Clarke.”

She should have said Griffin.

Clarke stood not moving as Lexa turned around.

For a moment, Lexa just walked backwards, and for some reason her eyes never left Clarke’s own, until finally she fully spun around, her legs quickly falling into a jog. Red didn’t immediately move with her, giving Clarke one last look before he to joined Lexa. She watched Lexa’s retreating figure, watched her sprint up the hill with Red at her side as became engulfed by the trees. When she was truly gone, Clarke let a small sigh pass through her before turning back to Raven and Octavia.

They both had the exact same look on their face. Eyes wide, a smirk that so desperately wanted to break free. Clarke frowned at their strange stares.

“What?” she muttered, stuffing her hands into her pockets. Raven’s jaw dropped, Octavia let out a scoff. Raven gestured wildly to where Lexa had just been.

“What? Really? That’s what you’re going to say?”

“What do you want me to say?” Clarke retorted. They were still looking at weird.

For Raven it seemed like that was the last straw, as the girl just spun around and threw up her arms. Thankfully that seemed to break Octavia’s stare, her eyes falling amused onto Raven. Raven actually looked to her, as if asking for her help. But Octavia just shook her head with a devil’s grin. Raven scowled at her, and it was clear that there was probably going to be some type of punishment for that act later. Clarke easily learned that Raven was a prankster at heart.

“Ohkay.” She turned back to Clarke, as clearly Octavia wasn’t going to help her. “I don’t know how that all just slipped by you,” Octavia’s grin was replaced with a groan. “If maybe you were so bi-ased that the bi-riellance of absurdity just happened just rode past you like a bi-ke but-“

“Raven I swear to god if I hear one more pun I’m going to actually murder you.” Octavia growled, her eyes flickering dangerously. They were standing next to each other, and Raven’s eyes shifted from Clarke’s glaring gaze to Octavia’s. And then Raven smiled.

“Would it be better for you if I got straight to the point?”

Clarke stepped in before Octavia could throw a punch. She wrapped her hands around her fist, pulling it down gently. Octavia blinked. How had Clarke gotten in front of her so quick?

“As much as I’d love to see you punch Raven,” Clarke started, making sure her hand was still enclosed around Octavia’s. “I don’t think it’d be best for right now.”

Octavia stared at her, searched her eyes for any mockery or deceit. But they were clear, that faded blue holding nothing but sincerity. Octavia relaxed her fist, and Clarke took that as sign enough to
release her hand. When it swung limply back by her side, she offered Octavia a small smile. The brunette returned it, and with one issue solved, Clarke turned onto Raven. Raven’s grin fell off her face from the look on Clarke’s face.

“Hey now-“

“You are very lucky I’m not going to hit you Raven. And the only reason I’m not is because I just stopped O, and I’m not in the particular mood to be called a hypocrite.” Raven opened her mouth to interject but Clarke beat her to it. “I don’t wanna’ hear shit about Lexa,” she said, raising a hand. “Her dog ran over, we pet it, we all traded pleasantries and she left. End of story.”

Reluctantly Raven shut her jaw with a grumble. Not for long though. It was Raven after all. “I think we have two definitions of ‘pleasantries’. Maybe you got pleasantries, I got threatened.”

“She didn’t threaten you,” Clarke waved off. Raven scoffed, bringing a hand to her chest dramatically.

“Are you kidding me? If you weren’t there I think she would have finally ended me.”

Clarke just glared at her. “You’re being melodramatic Raven.”

“And? When am I not?”

Clarke sighed. “This conversation is going nowhere, clearly. Can we just go back to what we were talking about before? What our first meal when we get was going to be or something?”

“I think know what yours is going to be,” Octavia muttered into her shirt. It didn’t make a difference; Raven eyes still blew wide, throwing her head with a cackle before Clarke could stop her.

“Really O?” Clarke huffed. “I thought we had just resolved this. Don’t think I won’t punch you as well, because I will.”

Raven tried to say something, but then she looked at Clarke and burst out laughing again. “I’m- I’m sorry Clarke but,” she forced herself to take a breath, a few lingering chuckles escaping her. “Oh that was good O. We’re good again.” Raven lifted hand, and though Octavia at first just stared at it, she caved and they high-fived. Clarke shook her head and turned around.

“I can’t believe out of everyone I could have befriended…”

“Please,” Raven said, catching up to her and throwing her arm around her shoulder. She pulled her in close. “You know you would’ve come back to us anyway.” Raven leant even closer and gave her a very overdramatic kiss on the cheek, an action that Clarke recoiled at. She still couldn’t not laugh from it.

“Oh my god you’re disgusting!” Clarke exclaimed, trying to push her away. It seemed to only inspire Raven more. She tried harder, pushing even further to see if she could get Clarke’s cheek again. Clarke dodged her attempts easily, it was muscle memory, but then out of nowhere Octavia was there too. She sprang up from behind.

“Oh my god you’re disgusting!” Clarke exclaimed, trying to push her away. It seemed to only inspire Raven more. She tried harder, pushing even further to see if she could get Clarke’s cheek again. Clarke dodged her attempts easily, it was muscle memory, but then out of nowhere Octavia was there too. She sprang up from behind.

“I’ve got her!” she yelled, wrapping her arms around Clarke so she couldn’t move. Clarke struggled in her grip, and although she could easily break if she properly tried, she was surprised at how strong Octavia actually was. It made her think for a moment of if they got in a fight who would win. The thought was enough to distract her, so Raven could come back at her. Seeing her and hearing Raven’s horrible muttering’s of ‘come here’ and ‘just one kiss’ was enough for her to
finally break free of Octavia’s grip. She pushed a little too hard, flying forward – but not towards the ground. Raven. Clarke spun away just in time, just slipping past Rave’s own dive.

“Okay, okay! Enough!” Clarke breathed, trying to catch her breath from laughing. Jesus, when was the last time she had done that? Thinking about it sobered her up a little. It had been a long time since she’d laughed like that.

Raven looked like it definitely wasn’t enough, but she sensed that Clarke wasn’t in the mood for it. She frowned slightly, noticing how while Clarke had been almost childish before, there was something that looked like pain in her eye now. Or sadness. All she knew is that when she saw it it made her heart ache. Raven let her arm fall back to her sides, bobbing her head at Octavia.

“Alright, you wanna’ stay out for a bit longer?” Raven asked, steering her gaze back to Clarke.

Clarke gave her a small grateful smile. It was slightly strange how Raven always knew what she was feeling. “Yeah just a bit.”

“I need a run if you’re up for it,” Octavia suggested. Clarke dipped her head. “Yeah that’d be good,” she said. She walked up to Octavia’s side, Raven making a retching noise at the word ‘running’ before stalking off, saying how she’d ‘entertain herself while you two do Satan’s work’. Clarke looked out onto the line of fence where some people were running up and down already. “I love running.”

And that almost wasn’t a lie.

-

Lexa sprinted back to the house.

Red eagerly sprinted with her, but she could tell even he was getting tired from all the exercise. When she burst through the door, slamming her shoulder into it, she was glad that she had left it unlocked. Although she had gone a bit too hard. She’d have to check it later. Lexa quickly slipped into her room, leaping over the black leather couch and just jerking her hip in time to miss smashing into the edge of the brick fireplace. In her room she stripped off her clothes quick, and though she had thought for moment to just get changed and bolt, one sniff to her armpits said otherwise.

Her nose wrinkled.

She almost smelt as bad as Red.

Lexa jumped in the shower, twisting on the water and briefly letting herself just stand still for a moment. The water took a few seconds to warm up, but once it did Lexa couldn’t help but sigh happily at the feeling of the near scalding hot water running against the tense muscles in her back. Anya had always been at a lost at how Lexa seemed to not be phased by what she called the ‘completely fucking boiling’ temperatures she showered in. Anya had stuck her hand in it once to turn it off after Lexa had quite literally stumbled into the shower and stumbling right back out. She had slept in, just making it in time for her meeting. Anya had gone to turn off the water, but had snatched her hand back a moment later.

For now though, Lexa let herself get lost in it. She turned the tap as high as it could go. She cleaned herself, as best as she could do in her time limit, hopping out before it had even been two minutes. She would have preferred to stay in it for hours, but she really wasn’t feeling like getting murdered today. So instead she just dried herself as quick as she could, her hair was a lost cause,
hurriedly slipping into her uniform and braiding her hair. She messed up a couple times, as she had been juggling putting water in a bowl for Red and searching the house for her phone which apparently had decided to wander off during the night.

She finally found it under the couch. Not that she knew how it got there. Plunging her hand under and really questioning whether she should properly clean this place, Lexa bolted for the door.

But then she turned right back around.

She didn’t have enough time for her face paint, but she had enough for what she always wore. The symbol of her status, of Heda. She ran back to her room, finding the small box where it always hid under her bed, quickly, but ultimately delicately putting in its place between her brows. She went back for the door, pausing one last time to make sure she had everything.

Weapons, check. Phone, check. Keys… where were her keys?

“No joking taim,” Lexa cursed under her breath. It’d be fine, Anya had a spare key to her office and she had probably left her own keys in there. If not she could come back here. Maybe. Probably. Making sure that Red had enough food and water for the day, she finally left the house.

It was a lot harder to run with gear.

Her wet hair was being a nuisance, and while braiding had helped a bit, it hadn’t completely. She was just glad she was wearing mostly black. They had a car, but the prison was too close for it. But it was also too far for it to be a normal running distance. It was awkwardly positioned, and Lexa joked, only really half joked, that they should just get a horse. Anya had grinned at that, adding they would get two. Honestly, if Lexa had the money she may even do that. Probably not but it was a nice thought.

For now though, Lexa could only run. It was faster if she ran, in this scenario anyway. So she did. Her daggers and knives thumped up and down against her. She could have been sweating, but she didn’t know if it was just because her hair was wet. She checked her watch as she ran.

Anya was going to destroy her.

With another curse Lexa somehow pushed her legs faster. She wasn’t even sure how she was doing it, but for now she didn’t question it and instead just ran with it. It took what felt like an age, but then it was there. The prison's straight shape emerged from behind the trees, stretching across the grass and grinning at her, that damn metal fence as teeth and harsh stone as jaws. Reaching the first checkpoint outside she threw a nod at the guard stationed there. Thankfully she didn't say anything about Lexa's appearance, panting and flushed. But then again, if the girl had, she didn’t know if she’d be there by the end of the day.

Reaching into her inner jacket pocket she found her keycard, swiping quickly against the reader and hurriedly pushing through the now unlocked gate as the red light blinked green. She rushed to get the door, thanking whatever gods existed when someone was already going out. At the sight of her, of Heda he straightened his back and step aside bringing the door with him.

He bobbed his respectfully. “Heda.”

Leya nodded back at him as she went through. Now in the building, she strode over to the last checkpoint. The moment she had entered the prison the anxiety had finally eased off her chest, allowing her some much needed deep breaths. She was here. In the building. She had made it. Lexa slipped off her jacket, shrugging her pouch daggers off her belt and sides and putting it in a grey
box next to her. In front of her was a metal detector, not that she really needed to go through it. Even if it went off, the guards were all too scared to scold her for it.

But when it did Lexa almost always made sure to go back and remove whatever it was. When she was done, Lexa walked through the barrier, the guard in the corner releasing a breath they thought Lexa didn’t see. Lexa ignored them and put back on her gear. Then, taking just a second to steel herself, she headed for her office.

She glided up the stairs, though her ankles barked at her as she did so. She’d done so much running today, and it seemed like her body was running out of patience for it. Arriving at her floor Lexa slowed her pace when she was back in the halls. She didn’t need to run now; it wouldn’t do to have inmates see that. Though she walked that didn’t mean she had to walk slow. It was a walk that wasn’t-really-a-walk and by the time she had finally, finally reached her damn office door she was impossibly happy. Only taking a moment’s pause Lexa twisted the door handle and went through.

The second she saw that her room wasn’t empty she froze.

Then she felt fire spark her veins.

“Pike,” Lexa said, forcing out the words through gritted teeth. “I wasn’t expecting you.”

Charles Pike, a man built with muscle and dark skin grinned widely at Lexa. There was a patch of light that reflected off his bald head. His dark brown eyes flicked up and down her form, completely different from how Clarke had done it. She didn’t fidget or squirm under his hard gaze though. She’d never give him the satisfaction.

Anya appeared from the corner of the room. If Lexa hadn’t her smelled her obvious perfume, she wouldn’t have noticed. “Heda, I would have you informed you early but…”

Anya let her sentence trail off, not daring to say it. Not here, not in front of the Head of Arkadia Prison. The only prison not in the coalition.

“I’m sure we’ve all had days where we’ve slept in,” Pike said, and Lexa clenched her jaw. Without looking at him she moved over to her desk, where Pike sat in the chair in front of it, leaning back casually with his hands held together. His eyes followed her as she sat down.

“What is it you want Pike?” Lexa questioned, managing to keep some of the bite from her tone. It was a surprise it didn’t come out as a snarl. Pike sighed; clearly disappointed she hadn’t taken the bait. He looked up at her, letting his hands gesture out.

“I’m not allowed to visit one of the most famous prison Head’s in decades?” He leaned forward. “We are of the same rank you know.”

He was reminding her that Lexa had no power over him. It was obvious he was trying to get a rise out of her, he always had a habit of doing so, and so Lexa just let her back fall into her chair. She raised a single brow.

“I have duties to attend to Pike, as comes with looking more than just my own.” From across the room, she caught Anya’s glare in the corner of her eye. Pike had never tried anything stupid, but Anya always liked to hang back by the door, in case he, or anyone really, attempted anything.

“I’m sure you do,” Pike conceded. Lexa hated the smugness that just rolled off him. “Now, since you’re so busy, I’ll address the matter at hand. It is nothing large, just a small request I’m sure you’ll be able to handle.”
Lexa tensed. There was something different. Pike was insufferable, sure, an idiot at times, but he was also impulsive. He went for what he wanted when he felt like it, damming the consequences. What was happening right now felt too… organised. Lexa didn’t like it one bit. “What would you have?”

“Just some updates,” Pike went on, and Lexa’s stomach grew uneasy. It was like she knew what she was going to say before he said it. “It’s about an inmate, a new one who was recently transferred here, Clarke Griffin I believe her name is.”

Lexa stilled. She saw Anya did as well. “Clarke Griffin?” she repeated. There was tension in her tone, something almost challenging. The old Pike that she recongised smiled at hearing it.

“Yes, that’s the one. I assume you know of her?”

Lexa fought not to shift in her chair. “I do. She’s been here a week.”

“Good, I just wanted to ask some information on her.”

“Of?”

“Oh just updates, how she’s doing, how she’s adjusting. If she’s made any friends, things like that.” Pike said, waving his hand when he was done. “Just some information on how she’s going.”

“And you want to know this, why?” Lexa asked, narrowing her eyes. But Pike’s, like always, were calm. Empty.

He smirked. “It’s not of importance… Heda,” her title dripped with mocking. “But if you must know, it’s her mother. She’s contacted the prison multiple times over the past year, and finally we’ve been able to have a proper conversation. She wanted to know how she was doing.”

“And so you came here? For no reason other than that?” Lexa said, just about holding in her scoff. She knew he was lying right through his teeth, but she couldn’t do anything. Legally, officially, she had nothing against him. Lexa just always knew, knew in her blood of the scum he was. She had never trusted him, not even on day one when he had been especially kind to her. It had been a ploy, obviously.

“Of course, I take my people very seriously.” Pike replied. Another dig at her, and this one nearly did it. His words wriggled under her skin like mice. She ground her teeth, could even hear the scraping from how hard she was pressing in her ear. The problem was, they were on some shaky road to bringing Arkadia into the coalition, which would mean all the prisons would be brought together, which is something that had been wanted for generations. She had brought together most of them under a contract, and if she could just get the Arkers, as they liked to call themselves, it’d be perfect. It was the person just under him that wanted in. A man named Marcus Kane, but that didn’t matter now.

Begrudgingly, Lexa nodded. Anya’s glare grew ten fold. “Clarke has settled well.” Lexa said. She didn’t say any more.

“And… friends? Health?” Pike prodded. Lexa pushed out a sigh through her nose.

She went to go tell the truth, but something stopped her. She didn’t know what, but an invisible force strangled her heart and for a moment she forgot how to breathe. For a second, she was breathless, but then it all came back like nothing happened. Lexa cleared her throat, suppressing the urge to shake her head.
“She hasn’t formed any bonds yet, but has isolated herself.” She could have sworn Pike’s face fell. “She had a breakdown but it was taken care of.”

Pike leaned forward. “That’s it?”

“That is all I know.”

Pike reclined back in his chair. He stared at her for a while, as if that could intimidate her. When that didn’t work he got up. “Well, I thank you for your help. It will be remembered.”

She didn’t like how he said that.

“Any will escort you back to your car.” Lexa said, standing up as well. Pike raised a hand for Lexa to shake, but she didn’t even look at it. He let his arm fall back to his side with a shrug.

Pike shook his head. “I’ll be fine.”

“No, it is… my pleasure. Anya, walk with Pike.” She waved her hand, and Anya slipped out from the shadows. Her sister was always good at that. Pike was still looking like he was going to protest, but Lexa didn’t let him. She turned to him, not letting herself stare at Anya for too long and see the obvious anger there. “I hope you found your visit helpful.”

She wanted to hit him when he grinned that same slimy grin. Instead she clenched her fists, hiding them behind her back. “I look forward to meeting you again Heda.”

When he finally left the room Lexa let the snarl she had been holding in out. She waited a few minutes with an impressive amount of self-control, not wanting Pike to be able to hear what she needed to get out. With her eyes glued to her watch, the moment the little hand ticked far enough Lexa spun for the wall and slammed her fist into it.

She only hit it once. Mostly because it hurt like hell but it felt good. Splatters of red now painted the wall, and Lexa, flexing her injured fist got a couple tissues from her desk and quickly wiped the blood off. When there was no evidence of the punch, she walked over to her desk and let her hands catch her before she fell. She lent over her desk, hands tightly gripping the edge and eyes closed. Fuck. Fuck.

Out of all the days she could have been late.

Lexa swore. Then she swore again. She did it in trigedasleng and then in English.

Fuck.

Her relationship with Pike was a rocky one. It was no secret he didn’t like her; he probably even hated her. She hated him too, hated the groups he’d built when he thought she didn’t notice, hated the ‘subtle’ jibes he dug at her, and her allies, whenever he was near. He was one of the few people she’d consider going to prison for murder for, which is saying something, considering she literally works at one.

But the thing she hated most was that she couldn’t touch him.

He’d never done something outright enough for her to do anything, and the bastard knew that if she ever wanted Arkadia to join the coalition then she was forced to deal with him, go along with him. Really she just hoped he’d get fired soon or end up in a mysterious fatal ‘accident’ so Kane could take over. Kane was the man below him, and one of the few who seemed to own a level head. He was the one that Lexa had had meetings with, going through hypothetical plans of if
Arkadia were to join. This was done without Pike’s knowledge. Or at least she hoped so.

She gripped the table till her knuckles were white.

It had weirdly angered her hearing him say Clarke’s name. It didn’t sit well with her, churning in her gut like a nervous snake that couldn’t stay still. And while Lexa did hate him, normally when he ‘visited’ it was because he was bored and wanted to mock her. She could deal with that. She’d gotten used to it.

But today had been different. He’d asked about Clarke.

Why the hell did he ask about Clarke?

Lexa heard her sister’s signature stomp down the hall. Internally she winced, forcing open her eyes. When her sister walked like that it meant she was angry. Really angry. This was not going to end well.

“Steyuj,” Lexa whispered to herself. The familiar words soothed her a bit, like they always do. She released her death grip on the table. Anya’s stomping grew louder, now filled with angry muttering’s as well. Lexa straightened. Well. There was no way she was getting out of this. She may as well just take it.

Lexa turned around at the same time that the door swung open.

Anya stormed into the room, her eyes somehow sharper than her jawline. It was an impressive sight. A little terrifying, but impressive. Her sister slammed the door, her burning gaze snapping onto Lexa’s calm one. Lexa wasn’t in the slightest bit calm, but if one of them didn’t act it then this conversation would probably land in a fistfight. It was one of the rules in the Woods household; someone must always be calm.

So while Anya was breathing hard, fists balled up tightly at her sides, Lexa did her best to stand tall and still, hands clasped behind her back.

“Okay. I’m going to start with that I know why you sent me to walk Pike back to his car.” Anya spat out his name like the word was made of acid. “But why the hell did you make me walk him to his car?”

“You know he’d try something Ann,” Lexa replied softly. “We can’t ever leave him on his own, especially here, and you’re the only one next to Lincoln or Indra I trust with this.”

Anya breathed a harsh breath through her nose, not breaking eye contact with Lexa. It took a bit, but she bobbed her head. “Alright.” It clearly pained her to say that. “You gonna’ tell me why you’re late?”

“I got distracted on my run.”

“Distracted?”

Lexa hesitated. Anya noticed. “I ran too far. It took longer to get back.”

“Nou spich ai op.” Anya muttered. She took a step forward, slow and dangerous, and it took all of Lexa’s willpower not to step up to her as well.

“Fine.” She ground her teeth. “Red ran off towards the prison, I went after him. Some inmates saw him and tried to pat him through the fence. I talked to them briefly before grabbing Red and taking
him back with me.”

“Who were the inmates?” Anya asked, furrowing her brow slightly.

It was too late to back out now. Though that didn’t mean Lexa wasn’t reluctant in saying it. “Reyes and Blake.” She took a small breath. “And Griffin.”

“Griffin. Right.” Her jaw was almost as tight as Lexa’s. She flexed her fists, let her fingers spread. “You know why Pike wanted information on her?”

Lexa relaxed slightly when Anya let it go. Some of tension slipped from the room. “I don’t know,” Lexa muttered. She hated that she didn’t. “Cl- Griffin is… a mystery to say the least.”

“You’re telling me,” Anya mumbled, letting her shoulder’s slump. Lexa’s lowered with hers. The good thing about Anya was that while she got angry easily, it passed quickly too. As long as she just got it out she could go on like nothing happened.

Lexa half sat on her desk, one of her feet still touching the floor. “Something is going on.” Lexa said, looking up at Anya. Her sister nodded grimly.

“You’re right.” She agreed. “This whole thing around Griffin, coming from Azgeda Tower, which should have been shut down, Pike coming in to ask about her…”

“Pike couldn’t have come here on his own, he doesn’t act like this. Someone is using him.”

“Or someone’s collaborating with him,” Anya offered. Lexa nodded, her lips set in a thin line. The tension was back in her shoulders. “But who?”

Lexa sighed. “Could be anyone. Maybe he’s trying to take down the coalition. He could be afraid of its size now, wants to end it.”

“Which would mean anyone could be with him then. They all want the power you have Heda, if Pike is making a move for it he’d find someone.” Anya said, trying her best to hide her worry. She knew Lexa hated when people coddled her, but what was potentially happening was dangerous. Lexa controlled the prisons in the coalition, was the face of them. It was obvious that that wouldn’t go perfectly with everyone. Someone would want the power she had. Lexa hadn’t said anything yet, just staring at her dagger, which she now flipped casually in her hand. Anya frowned. “We could start an investigation…”

“No. That wouldn’t get us anywhere, not this early. It’d just scare them off.”

Anya stepped forward. “Which is what we want. They’d back down.”

“But we wouldn’t find them,” Lexa countered, finally lifting her gaze up. Her fingers wrapped tightly around her dagger. “If we want to find out what’s happening, we need to be subtle. Careful. It’s the only way.”

Anya clenched her jaw, averting her eyes to the ground. “You’re sure this is the best method?” she muttered.

Lexa didn’t say anything at first. Her eyes stayed at her dagger, watched its end gleam in the leaking sunlight. “It’s what we’re doing.” She answered.

“Hey,” Anya set next to Lexa on the desk. She reached out, resting her hand on Lexa’s dagger and stopping her from fiddling with it. Lexa’s jaded green eyes stared up at her. Anya swallowed. “This
may not be anything Lex. We could just be looking into it.”

Lexa didn’t reply.

Carefully, Anya pulled the dagger for hands, resting it on the table. She gently tucked a couple stray hairs behind her Lexa’s ear. “Yu nou laik soulou. Oso ste yuj.” she whispered softly. Lexa lifted a hand, wrapping it around Anya’s that still lingered by her ear. She held it tight.

“All get in Onya.” she offered a small smile. “All get in.”

Anya gave her a smile too.

Sometimes she never understood her sister.

- 

Clarke couldn’t sleep.

It was a common theme. Sometimes it was more she didn’t want to sleep, but then sometimes it was that she couldn’t. Most of the time it was the latter. Clarke rolled onto her other side, now staring at the wall. Though her eyelids burned and her bones sunk deep into the mattress, every time she tried to close her eyes it never got her anywhere. She’d tried a number of things over the recent year, counting sheep, imagining out a story, exercising till her arms couldn’t even move.

They never worked.

She shifted so she was on her back now. She had no trouble seeing in the dark, and Clarke took the time to count the spots in the ceiling. When that did nothing she counted the cracks. Then how many corners there were. Then how many stray marks there were.

It wasn’t working.

She had half a mind to sneak down and go for a quick set. The one thing in Azgeda Tower that was tolerable was that fact that she had had an empty cell. It was bittersweet really. When she was alone, she didn’t have to worry about waking people up from working out at one-am. But then again there was that other fact - she was alone. Completely, and utterly, alone. It meant that Clarke didn’t mind the fact she was bunked with Raven.

Her fingers twitched as if to get up, but she pulled back. Maybe later. She hadn’t meditated in a while, and while the idea was a little appealing, it wasn’t enough.

She was just so tired. So fucking tired.

Tired of feeling like this, tired of paranoid thoughts, tired of being tired.

The problem was it wasn’t a tiredness that could be fixed with rests. If that was true then she’d probably be sleeping any opportunity she got. Clarke shut her eyes, not to sleep. Just to see nothing. For there to be a break, just for a while. She focused on her senses. The most prominent one was Raven’s snoring. The girl had an incredibly loud snore, one of those snores that make you doubt for a moment whether you should call an ambulance. In the darkness, Clarke smiled.

She’d been smiling more. She hardly ever smiled at Azgeda Tower; only when she wanted to scare the guards, get under their skin. They always hated when she did it. They never understood. Why would someone in her position smile? Be joyful in such a situation? It was one of the few things that tipped the balance of power. But after being Polis for a week, she had been smiling for
different reasons.

She’d smile when Raven made terrible jokes. She’d smile when Octavia would start shit with someone just for no reason other than she was bored. She’d smile when Raven would roll her eyes and tell her how ‘O can get herself out of this one’, but then a moment later she would cave, trudging over to the fuming brunette and haul her away before she could do any irrevocable damage.

She’d smile when she saw Lexa smile.

She’d smile when Lexa wasn’t looking, when in the mornings the girl was particular grouchy and would keep her head lower than usual, sometimes a coffee clutched tightly in her hand. She’d smile when Anya would hit the back of Lexa’s head, something she noticed the older sister liked to do if Lexa hadn’t noticed her come up behind her. She was close enough she heard the scolding once.

“If I can sneak up on you anyone can,” Anya lectured, her voice stern. It really sounded like she was telling off a child, and Lexa must have heard it too. Lexa glared, rubbing the back of her head.

“If someone tried to sneak up on me,” Lexa muttered, making sure her eyes bored into Anya’s. “Then they’d find themselves missing a hand.”

Anya scoffed. “Sure.”

Lexa had mumbled some things in trigedasleng, Clarke smiling even wider. They were very colourful words. And when Anya caught one and hit the back of Lexa’s head again, Clarke had to force her gaze away so they wouldn’t see her laughing.

Clarke’s pale eyes fluttered open.

She tried to swallow the lump in her throat, but it got stuck halfway and seemed to expand till it blocked her airways completely.

She had to be more careful thinking about Lexa.

Especially when a small part of her whispered that she shouldn’t.

Clarke let out a sigh through her nose. She could tell her mind wasn’t done. Maybe she should do that set, just a few pushups and crunches. Working out clears her head, somewhat, and right now that seemed like the best thing to do. She nodded to herself. A workout. She could do that. She was about to make the final move to get up, when eyes caught movement. She stilled.

Someone was in the cell doorway.

Clarke let her breathing slow, thankfully it had been calm already. Though she felt a jolt of panic, training kicked in faster, allowing her to relax her limbs. If the person were human, then they wouldn’t notice. Clarke hadn’t met any Others in the prison yet, but she knew they were there. While Other’s were rare, they weren’t completely. It was common knowledge that Wanheda was an Other. If a person believed in the species that is. Clarke didn’t hide it, she used her abilities the best she could. An Other could have found out she was Wanheda, maybe coming to talk to her, meet her. Or kill her.

The person, the woman, was holding a shiv.

She crept into the room slow, not a sound against the ground. The woman knew what she was doing. Which only made Clarke even more worried. She fought not to tense, not just yet, when the
woman who Clarke thought was for her, kept moving, right on past the ladder up to her bunk. Clarke frowned. She adjusted her head very slowly so she was facing her, peeking through half-closed eyelids. They snapped open quick when she realised what was happening.

The woman was here for Raven.

The intruder was completely focused on the sleeping inmate, and it meant that Clarke had a few extra precious seconds to get the jump on her. She let her edge a little bit closer, and then Clarke’s arm shot out, gripped the bunk bed’s bar and she pulled. She vaulted over and the woman hadn’t been expecting it at all, but she did catch the movement faster than Clarke would have liked. She landed just behind her, but the woman was already going for her.

She rushed for her, but it was dark and you could barely see anything. Well, she couldn’t. Clarke could. Clarke could see perfectly.

It made it easy to pin the girl up against the wall.

She slammed her hand into the intruder’s wrist, the shiv falling uselessly to the ground with a clatter. Clarke’s arm was across the woman’s chest, and she pushed hard enough that for a moment the woman struggled to breathe. When she began flailing, eyes bulged and cheeks red, Clarke backed off enough that she wasn’t compressing her lungs anymore. The woman gulped down as much air as she could, as quietly as she could.

Clarke’s hand with the leather glove buzzed, but she ignored it. “Okay, I’m going to ask why you’re here, and you better pray that I like what I hear.” Clarke muttered. She had been suppressing it the moment she saw the intruder, but she couldn’t anymore. She couldn’t hide the deep anger that coiled in her fists.

“Fuck you.” The woman spat, though her voice, like Clarke’s, was a whisper. Without blinking Clarke pulled back, then she buried her fist into the woman’s belly. She doubled over heaving but Clarke gripped her shoulder and shoved her back into the wall.

“Try again.”

The woman blinked, trying to regain her composure. Her dark skin contrasted starkly to Clarke’s pale one. The woman was about to just go for another insult, but for the first time for a long while in her life, staring into the eyes of the girl holding her, she actually felt afraid. No one’s eyes should be able to look that angry, that bright.

Like they had faced death itself and shook hands.

She swallowed. “Her.” She simply said. Clarke didn’t need to further ask who.

“What about her?” Clarke hissed, pushing harder against her. With a slightly strained breath, the woman spoke again.

“I was going to kill her.”

Suddenly Clarke went very still. Then she did something the woman wasn’t expecting at all. She snarled. It was caged to the confines of quiet, but god had the women never heard a sound like that in her existence. It terrified her. By the time the woman had breathed a breath in and out, Clarke had bent down and snatched the shiv off the ground. She let it press into the girl’s neck. The intruder merely raised her chin.

But her eyes betrayed her fear.
“Do not lie to me.” Clarke said quietly. “Or you will not like the consequences.”

Though she had a shiv at her throat, the woman frowned. “I’m not lying I-“

Clarke pushed the shiv in harder; a razor taped to a toothbrush, till a thin trail of blood trickled down her neck. The woman sucked in a sharp breath. “One more time.” Clarke said, pulling the shiv away slightly. “Why?” She knew the girl was lying about wanting to kill Raven, because though the leather glove suppressed her abilities, there were some things that ran too far down in her blood to be stopped. Sensing death, being one of them. People actually had multiple situations in when they could die, for some depending on what they do, they could have over twenty in a lifetime.

She’d hear whispers. Not in her ear but in her head. For her, it’s a warning that someone could die. Typically it’s centred on a place or person, and the closer she got the louder whispers become.

But right now Clarke heard nothing.

There was no way she wanted to kill Raven.

“Hurt her,” the woman finally said. Her voice shook, mostly in fear. She had seen how Reyes had made instant friendship with the new inmate before her. What if she actually killed her? “It was meant to be a warning, she’d stolen some things of mine before, I wanted to scare her. Send a message.”

It was closer to the truth than before. But it wasn’t the truth. Clarke would have questioned her further, but she heard Raven grumble something behind her. She couldn’t let her wake up. “You’re a shitty liar.” Clarke growled. “And you best be glad that I’m not in the mood to beat you to hell right now.”

The woman gulped. Clarke relaxed her grip slightly.

“Get out.” She whispered. “But if I see you again, know that you’ll be dining in hell before you can blink. Understand?”

The woman nodded her head shakily, but Clarke pulled her and shoved her hard into the wall when she did. The woman just bit back her groan. The back of her head pulsed.

“Out loud. I want to hear it.”

“Yes,” the woman rushed out. “Yes.”

Clarke stared at her unflinching for a few seconds longer. The shiv still rested against the intruder’s neck. But, eventually, she let her arm fall and stepped back. The woman was clearly shocked by this. She didn’t move, jaw dropped that Clarke was actually letting her go.

But Clarke wanted her gone already.

“Out!” she snarled, and that seemed to unlock the girl’s limbs. She scrambled to, stumbling out into the hall and, without looking back, disappeared into the darkness.

Clarke stood perfectly still, taking in deep slow breaths.

Raven shifted in her sleep, mumbling something a little more coherent than last time. Not enough to make out the words though. Clarke spun around, creeping up to Raven’s bunk and crouching down. She heard the long and sharp intake of breath from Raven waking up. Her eyes blinked
open, frowning at the sight of Clarke.

“What…?”

“Go back to sleep Raven,” Clarke whispered softly.

“But why are you-“

Clarke hesitantly placed her hand on Raven’s shoulder. She squeezed it through the blanket. “I couldn’t sleep, I just did a quick set. Go to sleep.”

Raven looked like she wanted to protest more, but her eyes fell shut and her argument turned into mumbles. She fell back asleep so surprisingly fast that Clarke was jealous of it. She pulled her hand back to her side with a sigh. She stared at Raven for a little while longer, her fists clenching at the thought that someone had tried to break in and attack her during the night. It made her stomach roll.

Clarke got up and back on her bunk before she could do anything stupid.

She lied down, just lying on top of her blankets and not under like Raven. Like most nights.

She stared at the ceiling. She counted the spots, then cracks, then corners, then marks. She let her eyes close; let her body sink into the thin mattress. She imagined out a story, a story of a girl who had no responsibilities. A girl who played in the grass, spent hours on swings and built towering sand castles. A girl who got her heart broken, who aced a test but failed that other one. A girl who grew up and fell in love, became a famous artist and used the money to buy herself and them a house, as well as one for her parents. A girl who lived in that house until she couldn’t move anymore and, with careful fingers, was gently placed into her grave.

Clarke opened her eyes.

She thought she’d learned from letting herself think.

Chapter End Notes

badass clarke is my true otp
now it's only me that goes over this so if you see any typos that are driving you to arson kindly let me know and i'll fix it up for you

there's so much trigedasleng in this chap ffs
Yu vout na ron of honon? - You thought you could escape prisoner?
Ge op - Get up
Hod op trigplei! - Stop shooting!
Eni las telon Atohl? - Any last words Atohl?
Honnon - Prisoner
Ba ai nou wan raun deyon - But I’m not dying today
Yu gonplei ste odon - Your fight is over
No joking taim - No fucking time
Ste yuj - Stay strong
Nou spich ai op - Don’t lie to me
Yu nou laik sou lou. Oso ste yuj - You are not alone. We stay strong.
Ai get in - I know
Onya - ??? ima just pray you got this one
this shit is actually pretty light angst wise. then again, my version of ‘light’ and ‘dark’ is pretty much like comparing road kill that’s gotten hit by a car to a bus. like sure, the car is gonna do less damage – but that poor fucker aint getting up again.

heyyy! guess whos still alive! i know i know please don't kill me, i kind of got sucked in to my other fics and then just lost all my motivation for this one. then suddenly it hit me all at once and i wrote 16k in 4 days so... yay? also i just want to say that this chapter feels really filler but I still hope you enjoy it anyway. its been a while and im still regaining my footing and all. thank you to each and every one of you whos given this a read and shit. you the real mvp.
(I didn't really listen to any particular song as i wrote this one but id rec: The Neighbourhood - How)

Clarke didn’t mention the attack in the night the next day.

She didn’t mention it the next morning either. She didn’t feel much need for it. The attacker hadn’t come back, nor has she seen anyone eye Raven closely the next day. Although that might have had to do with the fact that Clarke stayed right at her heel the following day, Raven giving her looks because of it. It didn’t stop Clarke from doing it. Whoever had tried to attack Raven in the night hadn’t been there for the reasons they’d said. Meaning that she was left with the infuriating question of why.

Why.

Why did she go for Raven? Sure, the girl had a habit of causing mischief but she didn’t seem the type to land herself in a blood feud of some sort. It just didn’t make sense. Even if Clarke didn’t understand it she still kept close to Raven, kept taking extra attention to the people around them, where their sights lingered. Luckily it seemed like the attacker had taken Clarke’s threat to heart. For now, it seemed no one was going to try anything.

It was dipping into late afternoon now. They had just finished their food and most of the room had emptied. Clarke was trying to hide her smile as she watched Raven standing near where Anya was, leaning against the wall with one elbow. They were doing what Clarke had just discovered as one of Raven’s favourite games to do when she’s bored. Flirt with the guards. The sight was always as fun as it was to play it. Especially when it came to Anya.

You could quite literally see the poor woman’s resolve chip away each second.

And yet, she never actually told her to stop. There were times when it came close, and usually
Raven would back off then, but even if Anya seemed to be Raven’s favourite target, Anya never actually pushed her away. Clarke wasn’t the only one to notice this, and as Raven made another exceedingly cheesy pick-up line and Anya clenched her jaw, she felt Octavia lean in to her to where she was sitting on the opposite side of the table.

“You know, a part of me thinks that Anya actually enjoys Raven’s flirting.” She commented, the edges of her lips pulling into a smirk.

Clarke smiled as watched Anya huff again. “I don’t think you’re wrong.”

Raven let out a dramatic sigh. “Come on, Woods, not even a smile? That one was pretty good.”

“You are insufferable.” Anya muttered in response. But really she shouldn’t have spoken, because now Raven’s face lit up. Anya shut her eyes and Clarke was sure if she could she would have melted into the floor.

Raven beamed. “She speaks!”

Clarke and Octavia shared a smirk.

She was starting to relax more, Clarke found. She was used to a constant tension, that tension only releasing when her body was just far too exhausted to feel it. But here it wasn’t like that. She didn’t really know when, but somewhere in this week and a half, she was starting to slowly feel herself fit in. It was nice, yet not entirely. Maybe she was just being paranoid but she didn’t quite trust it. Nia must have known that transferring her to a place with actual people would have done some good for her.

And Clarke very much doubted that Nia sent her out of the kindness of her heart.

She wondered if Nia even had a heart.

Clarke was pulled out of her thoughts when she caught movement out of the corner of her eye. It was subtle but she’d always had good eyesight and tilted her head in the direction of the movement, a small smile forming without her permission when she saw it was Lexa, the guard not yet coming but just leaning her weight against the doorway. Lexa’s eyes had initially been on Anya but seeming to sense Clarke’s gaze they flicked over to meet hers.

When their eyes met Clarke was glad to see Lexa smiled a little too.

Clarke wondered why Lexa hadn’t yet come in and apparently reading her mind Lexa nodded in the direction of Raven flirting with Anya, the poor guard had her eyes set on the clock across the room probably counting the seconds till her shift was over and she could move, and as Clarke brought her sight back to Lexa and saw her bring a finger up to her lips, she realised what she was doing.

It seemed she wasn’t the only one enjoying watching Anya suffer.

Clarke tried to tear her gaze away. She really did. An admirable effort, if she didn’t say so herself. But… she couldn’t. Not when her eyes were privy to the sight of Lexa showing the briefest glimpse of humanity that she’d been told by everyone didn’t exist. Raven and Octavia, even strangers in passing, always warned her about Heda’s ruthlessness. About how they were sure the girl wasn’t even human.

But that couldn’t be true. How could it when Lexa, in this moment, just looked so damn human. No mask around her eyes, no clench in her jaw. Just a friend watching her best mate playfully
suffer and choosing to instead watch the spectacle instead of intervene. How could it be true when Lexa just looked so indescribably beautiful in this moment?

Clarke was so lost in her staring she jumped when she felt someone tap her arm. Her head whipped around only to find Octavia grinning at her. “You know, this game doesn’t always have to be Raven. You can go and flirt too.”

Clarke at least had the decency to blush slightly. Fucking _blush_. What kind of assassin did that?

In response to try and scrounge up any last scraps of dignity she threw a harsh glare at Octavia. Didn’t really help much as it served _against_ her favour. Octavia’s cheeky grin widened and Clarke couldn’t even speak because Anya had just let out a heavy relieved sigh and Lexa was finally stepping out from her hiding spot. Her eyes followed Lexa’s form, purely for cautionary measures of course (not at _all_ because how great those pants made her ass look), and at the sight of Lexa’s smirk as Anya practically bolted at seeing Lexa – well, Clarke was glad she wasn’t at the end of it.

“Torturing the guards again Reyes?” Lexa deadpanned, but Clarke could still see the subtle smile twitching at the edges of her lips. _God fucking dammit Griffin_ _quit it._

Raven grinned. “I believe it’s quite an honour actually to experience the old Reyes Charm.” Lexa raised a brow at her and Raven’s smile turned a little slyer. “Say, you’re looking quite fine today Commander, been working out again?”

Logically, Clarke knew she meant it as a joke. However, _illogically_, that was an entirely different matter. Her hand that had been casually resting on the metal table slowly curled into a fist. Lexa just gave Raven another look before resuming her position of where Anya had been, her back to the wall and eyes forward. For a second it seemed like they lingered in Clarke’s, but they flickered so fast she couldn’t be sure.

Raven stepped a little closer. “Not even an insult? Come on, we’ve known each other long enough. Live a little, enjoy the danger side for once.” A slow smirk spread on her lips. “I’m sure you’d look even lovelier if you did.”

Clarke didn’t know when she started gritting her teeth but she suddenly realised she was when she felt her jaw ache at how hard she was clenching. It didn’t help that Lexa actually seemed amused with Raven’s flirting.

“If this is an example of your ‘charm’,” Lexa’s eyes flicked up and down Raven pointedly, “then you Skaikru should perhaps try a little harder.”

“Commander!” Raven exclaimed scandalized, dramatically bringing her hand to her heart. “How you wound me!”

Lexa merely shook her head at her and stared back out onto the room, that mask of indifference slipping back into place, and Raven let out a laugh that cut off abruptly the moment her eyes fell on Clarke. Before Clarke could even blink there was suddenly a sizable gap between Raven and Lexa. She would have frowned if her body didn’t still feel like a rubbing band at the verge of snapping.

Raven gave Lexa one last mock bow before striding her way over and swinging her legs over her spot next to Octavia. Clarke only brought her sight to meet the two after her gaze had lingered on Lexa for a moment too long. It was irrational, this out of place anger she could feel, and even if Clarke knew damn well what it was she wasn’t going to admit it till her last breath. Denial had
always been a trustworthy friend.

“Alright, new rules,” Raven said suddenly, Clarke and Octavia’s attention falling onto her. “No flirting with Lincoln, as per Octavia,” Clarke frowned while the pair shared a grin, “and now, no flirting with Heda, as per Clarke.”

If Clarke felt relief at Raven’s words, she shoved it as far down in her as it could go.

Octavia chuckled while Clarke lightly slapped Raven’s arm. “I don’t give a damn who you flirt with Raven,” Clarke instantly defended. She may as well have admitted to the implied crush however as the pair’s smirks widened in eerie sync.

“Clarke,” Octavia started, clearly trying to hold in her laughter. “You looked about one step away from throwing Raven across the room.”

Clarke scowled. “No I didn’t.”

Octavia raised a brow. “No? So you clenching your fist was… for fun?”

In instinct Clarke snatched her hand back, which, must to her dismay, had indeed still been clenched. With cheeks that were definitely not red she muttered the first thing she could think of.

“Fuck off.”

She may as well have admitted it.

She didn’t have a crush on Lexa. She didn’t. So what she found the girl attractive, who wouldn’t? Even a blind man would know beauty like that. Objectively she was an attractive person; the jaded green eyes that always sent a jolt down her spine when they locked; the muscles hidden under her clothes that she could see sometimes straining the confines; the sweat and dirt that had covered shining skin the other day when she’d been running; those full, soft lips that would probably feel like heaven to kiss…

But it was the little things too. The way her smile formed, how it always seemed to be in an internal battle whenever she was surrounded by people, twitching with the want to spread but stubbornness keeping it at bay. But then when she was alone, or like when it was the two them watching the sunset with no outsider eyes, the smile that grew with no resistance. How it bloomed so softly on her face. The way that if you looked into her eyes it’d be so easy to read her, that no matter how hard she tried Clarke always found herself staring into them and getting lost and-

Fuck.

She did have a crush didn’t she?

Fucking wonderful.

Desperate to change the topic and wipe the smug looks off both of her mates’ faces she leant forward. “What did Lexa mean by ‘you Skaikru?’”

If Raven and Octavia both grinned at Clarke’s use of Lexa instead of Heda, Clarke ignored it.

It was Octavia who cracked first. “You know the gangs right? Azgeda, Trikru…” At Clarke’s nod she continued. “Well there’s fourteen prisons across state, and it’s become some sort of unwritten rule that the territories for each of the gangs and people revolve around them. The land, or territory, stretches out from each prison till it reaches the boundary of the other.”
“It used to just be the people in the prisons who counted as ‘Trikru’ or whatever gang,” Raven cut in. “But now it’s really anyone who lives in those lands is designated as that particular gang, or even clan, I suppose. It’s why that even if the guards here are clearly not prisoners, some of them are still Trikru because that’s they grew up in those areas. Here in Polis it’s more a crock pot of clans stacked together,” Raven waved her hand, “there’s thirteen clans but I can’t be fucked in listing them.”

Clarke frowned, absorbing all the information in. She knew the vague basics as she’d had to when she’d been Wanheda and tracked people down. She’d never gotten a proper debrief though, and it was nice to finally have something make a little more sense.

Clarke slowly nodded. “Alright, makes sense.”

Raven offered her a grin and Octavia nudged her arm. “Yeah, nice job on the clan analogy. I like it. Kinda badass.”

Clarke returned Raven’s smile before she glanced around the room seeing that it was completely empty by now. It wouldn’t be long till Lexa would be kicking them out. She noticed her friends glancing around and coming to the same conclusion, so wordlessly they stood up and dumped their trays before leaving the canteen. It was as Octavia shouldered her way through the door that Clarke paused and checked behind her, her breath hitching when she saw Lexa was already staring at her.

It was irrational to think that Lexa would have heard their conversation earlier. They hadn’t been sitting too close to her and Raven at least had made the effort to keep her voice relatively low. Still, there was a part of Clarke that doubted that and it took all of her mental effort to keep her ears from tinting red.

They held each other’s gaze for what was probably more than socially acceptable. It wasn’t entirely Clarke’s fault; Lexa’s eyes were simply far too easy to get lost in. Eventually Lexa gave her a nod, which she returned, unable to stop the quirk of her lips from forming.

Clarke didn’t know what she was nodding for.

Neither did Lexa.

They stopped by Octavia’s cell before going to hers and Raven’s.

Clarke had only seen it once and that was by accident when she’d been trying to find Raven one time. As they passed it now Octavia gave them a little smile before slipping in. Apparently she’d borrowed a book from Raven and had finally finished it - Raven had complained the entire way there how long it had taken Octavia to read it - and so needed to give it back. Clarke was surprised that when they got there another girl was already in the cell. She hadn’t been there when Clarke had been here last.

The woman looked about the same age as Octavia, her hair blond and features soft. She was lounging on her top bunk folding paper with her hands. Clarke squinted her eyes and saw the girl was actually doing origami, there was already a surprisingly well-crafted paper swan sitting on her stomach. Octavia didn’t disturb her as she strode in and began searching under her bunk, only offering a wave in greeting that the girl somehow saw and replicated.

Clarke watched intently as the blond girl carefully folded the paper in her hand with practiced ease, so much so she only noticed Octavia had gotten the book when she stood up with a victorious
‘hazzah!’ a battered book held tightly in her hands.

“Finally,” Raven groaned stepping forward and snatching the book out of her grasp. “Gave you that thing like three months ago.”

“At least I read it asshole,” Octavia defended, playfully punching Raven in the arm. Ignoring Raven’s dramatic wince she turned to her cellmate and tapped the low fence around the edge of the top bed. “Hey, Harper, quit your paper shit and say hi to the Raven’s new roomie Griffin.”

The blond, Harper, even if she narrowed her eyes at Octavia complied and put the folded paper in her hands down. She pulled herself up slightly and gave Clarke a once over before nodding. “Hey.” It looked like she was about to lie back down and leave it at that when suddenly she furrowed her brows slightly. “Hey, aren’t you the girl that knocked the Ice Bitch out?”

Clarke offered her a timid smile. “The one and only.”

“Well then,” with a surprisingly wide smile she brought her hand to her side and picked up the swan Clarke had been eyeing before. “I saw you staring at it. Here,” she leaned forward and handed the paper swan, Clarke only hesitating for a second before giving in and taking the offering. Clarke held the swan delicately. It really was oddly beautiful. Her head lifted up at Octavia’s sudden gasp.

“Hey! We’ve been roommates since I’ve gotten here and gotten more death threats then I can count whenever I ask for one of those, and Griffin gets one after just meeting you?” Octavia questioned affronted.

Harper scoffed. “Blake, you didn’t knock Ontari on her ass. Do that and maybe I’ll consider.”

Octavia scowled, and that scowl deepened at Raven’s snort. She shot Raven a glare. “Shut up Raven. You got your damn book.”

Octavia stomped her way out of her cell, shoulder-checking Raven as she passed. Raven merely offered a delighted laugh in response before following on after her. Clarke lingered a moment and caught Harper’s eye.

“Thanks for the swan,” she said, and she saw Harper smile.

“Anytime. Us blondes gotta’ stick together yeah?”

Clarke smiled back. “Enjoy your origami.”

Harper gave her a playful salute before lying back down and doing just that.

Octavia and Raven hadn’t gotten far when Clarke finally pulled herself out and went on after them. By the time her strides were back to being matched Octavia’s frustration was gone and Clarke wasn’t too surprised to find the two in a bicker again. Honestly, she was pretty sure that the pair resembled more an old married couple than best mates. Still, it was familiar and made Clarke feel at ease, and it wasn’t long before Raven managed to throw an insult her way and she was being included in the bickering.

They got to her and Raven’s cell without really noticing. Clarke didn’t have anything to grab but followed Raven in anyway, Octavia content with waiting just outside. Clarke found herself helping when Raven bent down to put the book under her mattress, her fingers gripping the bed and pulling it up so Raven could slide it under. The girl offered her a surprised but pleased smile when she did that and it left Clarke with the sudden realisation that this was what friendship was like. After a
year of nothing but torture, it left her more shaken than she cared to admit.

Clarke quickly let go of the bed as Raven pulled the book out and turned away, and thankfully, as always, Raven seemed to sense her sudden turn of emotions and stepped back to let her be. Instantly she brought herself up and pretended to check over her bed so she’d have an excuse to not look at her, to not reveal the burning she could feel behind her eyes, the cracking of the dam that held back her tears. It took a few deep breaths, but the tears didn’t fall. If there was anything her time in Azgeda Tower had taught her – it was to bury her emotions.

Feeling ready to move on Clarke casually swept her hand over her bed, except her hand froze when it tripped over a small lump. With a slight frown Clarke focused her sight onto where she’d felt it, spotting a small square hidden under the thin blanket. She glanced out to Raven and Octavia to see if they were watching but they were far more interested in whatever argument they’d just gotten into. She looked back towards the odd lump before carefully sliding her hand under the blanket and feeling her fingers graze against the object.

Paper. And as she pulled it out she realised it was a note. Her throat suddenly went dry, because nothing good ever came with notes, and that was proven true as when she slowly unfolded the tightly packed yellow paper, she saw a letter that made her blood freeze and stomach drop right through the earth.

*You have three calls. Don’t be foolish.*

- N

She stared at the note without breathing. It made her sick that she actually recognised the handwriting, knew that that certain curve of the ‘f’, only Nia wrote it like that. A harsh ringing burst in her ears and the world was reduced to static as her hands began to tremble violently. How could she have ever thought she was safe here? It was Nia who sent her here, how could she have been so fucking stupid to delude herself into thinking she was safe? That she would be okay?

She didn’t know how long she stood staring at the note, but it must have been a while because suddenly she heard Raven ask her something. Clarke spun around at the unexpected voice and instinctively fisted the note and brought it subtly behind her back. She was either quick enough or Raven had asked the question without looking at her, because she didn’t seem to notice the sudden movement. Instead she just furrowed her brows at her.

“You right?”

Clarke forced a smile. “Nah yeah, I’m fine, just,” she let out a shaky breath. “Didn’t sleep well. Bad dream has me off-kilter.”

That wasn’t even a lie. She had managed a good five hours last night, a record, but with sleep came nightmares and memories. A lot of the time she wondered whether sleep was worth revisiting her demons.

Raven eyed her a moment longer before the lines around her face became a little softer. “All good. Come on, outside bell is about to go.”

“Yeah if you hurry it up we can get some laps in,” Octavia added, ignoring Raven’s shudder of revulsion at the idea of exercise.

Clarke let out a shaky laugh but nodded anyway, waiting till the two had turned around before quickly slipping the note under her pillow. With a quiet mutter to herself to just get on with it she
joined the pair and together they began walking in the direction of the closet exit to the outside.

And even if she tried to stop it, all Clarke could think was a single word over and over like a siren.

*Nia.*

- 

She tried to enjoy the outside.

She really did. She joined Octavia in her laps and found some brief relief from it, after all, she was still adjusting to the fact that she could go outside and feel the grass beneath her feet and the raw sun on her face. It was impossible not to wring out even the smallest bit of happiness from that. But she could never enjoy it fully. That doubt, that nagging unease nipped at the back of her head constantly no matter how fast or hard she pushed herself.

She kept thinking about the note.

And if Nia had actually given her the opportunity to call someone.

Clarke had narrowed it down to two reasons of why Nia had left the note. She had already ruled it out being fake or even Ontari maybe trying to mess with her. She knew that handwriting, and there were very few people who knew without a doubt that it was Nia who Clarke had spent the past year with. So, it left her with two reasons. One, Nia was messing with her. Well, it was a given that Nia was messing with her, but she was messing with the fact that there was no chance for calls. She had just sent the note to her to bring her hopes up if only for the sadistic pleasure of crushing them back down to the ground.

Or she was being serious. She had three calls. The words then, of not to do anything stupid, would then be her warning of not to go calling anyone talking about the agony she’d been through the past year. It wouldn’t make a difference anyway. With or without Nia she was in prison, who would she call? Police? As much it was nice to daydream about somehow bringing Nia down with all the fucked up shit the woman had going on, Clarke had no hope in hell of achieving that. She knew that. Had accepted it. Oh, she’d get her revenge, that was for sure.

But not through the legal way.

And if this was all true, and she had actually gone to the effort of letting her be able to call someone…

**Why?**

What the hell was Nia playing at? She was still reeling from being so abruptly thrown from the Tower into Polis. Adding calls into that, what was Nia doing? Why was she doing things that, really, were helping her? Had she grown bored of torture, was she finally done with her refusal to talk? All these thoughts made Clarke want to bang her head against a wall. What the *fuck* was Nia doing?

Maybe she had left the note just to make her question everything.

They were still outside but soon they’d be heading in. Currently they were standing in the grass, content to do nothing but chat idly and let the sun warm their faces. It was a clear day today, and the yearning Clarke had to glide through the grass and feel the wind in her air was overwhelming, her gloved hand curling into a tight fist at the thought. It was the small things she missed really. The sense of completeness and freedom that came with her abilities. Having them cut off felt like a...
Raven and Octavia were deep into some discussion Clarke had zoned out a while ago on. She would have listened, but her brain was much more focused on weighing the pros and cons of giving in to Nia’s note. To see if she could call someone. It was dangerous to get her hopes up, especially if it was exactly what Nia wanted, yet Clarke couldn’t help herself. There weren’t many people she could call, hardly anyone really.

But she could call her Mum. Hear her voice. God, it had been so long. Even if her Mum and her had had their differences she was still her mother, she was still the woman who held her when she was little and brushed her hair at graduation. She hadn’t talked to her for nearly two years. The idea of being able to do that, to hear her, and not just rely on her memories as a way to piece together what she was sure she sounded like…

Clarke clenched her jaw. She had to try. It didn’t matter if Nia was fucking with her, she had to make sure. Already she could feel her stubbornness flaring and it took all of her willpower to not just give in and ignore the possibility of a phone call out of spite. Because a part of her knew that by trying to call someone, it was letting Nia win. Doing what she wanted. And as much as Clarke loathed doing anything for that bitch’s gain – this was something she couldn’t turn away from.

“Hey,” Clarke suddenly interjected, capturing both Raven and Octavia’s attention. They had seemed to sense Clarke’s hesitation for conversation before and had happily let her stare off into space without comment. “Are there phones here?”

The pair shared a look before Raven nodded. “Yeah, I can show you where they are if you want?”

Clarke tried to not nod too eagerly at Raven’s offer, feigning whatever nonchalance she could. But Raven apparently like always could see right through her and just grinned.

“Come on, it’s not that far.”

Clarke took a step before instantly stopping, glancing to Octavia who seemed to be content to stay where she was. She frowned slightly. “O, are you not…?”

“I’ll be right. Gorgeous day, you two can fuck off I’ll chill here.” She said, offering a small smile. “Be back before you know it,” Raven mock saluted, Octavia doing the same. Clarke let out a small chuckle at the action and turned around to follow Raven. After walking back into the prison - Clarke pointedly ignored Raven’s ladies first as she opened the door for her - she soon found herself falling into step with Raven as she led her through the copious amount of hallways that’d probably leave her dizzy if she hadn’t have been wandering through them daily anyway, trying to plan a mental map of the place. It wasn’t because she was planning an escape; she was too smart to not know there was no chance in that, but merely just to pass the time. Maybe she’d been an assassin too long, but memorizing layouts of buildings had become so ingrained into her it felt weird not to.

Raven took her down a path she hadn’t been before. She knew they were at ground level, the level she hadn’t gotten around to fully exploring yet. She watched her surroundings with keen eyes, taking in the placing of the doors and where the packs of people tended hang out, the way they stood and the tattoos on their arms. She was so caught up in observing everything she almost walked into Raven’s back when the girl suddenly stopped.

Clarke would have questioned her but Raven seemed to be one step ahead and just bobbed her head in a direction she hadn’t checked yet. When she followed her gaze she felt her heart falter in its
beats.

A phone. More than one too. There were queues to line up in, they didn’t look too long, and Raven eventually grew bored of Clarke’s staring of the actual phones she was seeing and the possible conversation she was about to have and grabbed Clarke’s arm, dragging her over to the shortest queue. Her pulse was in her hands by the time it was Clarke’s turn at the phone, Raven having to shove Clarke forward so she’d actually move. Clarke shot her a glare at that but Raven just grinned at her and gave her a wave.

“I’m gonna’ go check up on O, make sure she hasn’t done anything stupid within the past five minutes. You right to find your way back?”

Clarke bobbed her head. “Go, I’ll see you soon.”

Raven offered her one last Reyes smile before obeying and walking away.

Clarke sucked in a sharp breath and focused back onto the phone hanging just in front of her. She knew there was a call list and that even if she could actually make a call it wouldn’t help but, if Nia had truly done this, in some whatever fucked motive, had given her this opportunity, she had to try. She had to. Her hand was trembling and for a moment she had to pause to try and calm herself. To try and slow down her breathing that was seconds from spiraling out of control. Briefly she closed her eyes, tried to imagine her father’s voice.

You’re okay.

Slowly she opened her eyes, and then, even slower, brought up her hand and push in the number she’d learnt off by heart years ago. She brought the phone up to her ear, felt her heart stumble and chest twist in anxious anticipation as she heard the call connect and the dull bursts of ringing come out. One ring. Two rings. Three rings. Four rings-

“Hello, who is this?”

Clarke nearly dropped the phone.

Shock and overwhelming joy crashed onto her so intensely she could only breath, and she didn’t even try to stop the silent tears that were instantly rolling down her cheeks. She let out a disbeliefing laugh and at the sound of it she heard a sharp gasp on the other line.

Clarke squeezed her eyes shut and tried with every fibre of her being not to fall apart at her mother’s voice. “It’s me.” Clarke whispered. She let out a shuddered breath, another incredulous chuckle. “It’s me Mum.”

“Oh my god,” she heard her mother breathe. “Oh my god- Clarke. Is that- Is that really you?”

Clarke smiled through her tears. She let her side fall into the wall, leaning her weight against it. “Who else would call you? You got another daughter you haven’t told me about?”

She tried to make a joke, to make this less of the reunion it was after two years of hearing and seeing nothing of her mother. But all she got in reply was a sob and once one came more soon followed and all Clarke could do was hold the phone tight enough it should break as she listened to her mother’s crying.

Her relationship with her mother had been rocky before she’d even gone to prison. They rarely talked, Clarke had moved out the second she was able, and the fault fell on both of them really.
They both chose pride over each other. At the start at least they’d had Jake who always had a habit of keeping them together, or smoothing out their differences when it seemed impossible. But then Jake had gotten pulled into work like never before, and then he’d gotten killed, and any small contact that the pair had tried to keep vanished into thin air.

Before the shitstorm that was Nia, Clarke had been at the Skaikru prison, in a section called the Skybox. They called it that because only people who were going to die were put in there, and the name had come along with the odd lingo for whoever was on a death sentence – floated. Hence, Skybox, a nickname that came with the word. A box in the sky until the day came till you were pushed out. Her mother hadn’t visited her while she was there. She hadn’t called. She was going to, Clarke knew that, as much as her mother was stubborn (she’d inherited it from her after all) she also knew her Mum wouldn’t be able to let her go without speaking to her.

Yet the opportunity had never came, because then Nia had come along, and, well, it was pretty obvious that she certainly wasn’t going to give Clarke a chance to call her mother. Even if for some reason she was letting her now.

Finally it seemed like Abby was able to pull herself together enough to manage out a few words. “Clarke what-“ Clarke heard her mother’s sharp intake of breath at her name. “Clarke what, what happened? Where have you been? I’ve been trying to find you but it was like, it was like you’d disappeared I couldn’t-“

“I’m alright, I’m here. That’s what matters.” She felt more tears fall from her eyes. “I’m here Mum. I’m okay.”

When had lying become so easy?

Abby let out another choked sob, even if it seemed she tried to stop it. “I’ve missed you so much. Baby I’m- I’m sorry for not talking to you sooner. I was just, so afraid and angry and frustrated and I’m sorry I am so, so sorry Clarke.”

They sounded like words she’d been hoping to say for so long but had resigned herself to the fact she probably would never be able to. Clarke only managed to not break down and fall to the floor because of sheer stubbornness to keep upright. “You don’t need to apologise Mum. It’s alright. It’s okay.”

There was a brief pause, and Clarke assumed it was her mother nodding.

Clarke let out a long, broken sigh before muttering out, “I miss you.”

“I miss you too baby.” Abby instantly replied, and Clarke felt a stabbing pain in her chest at the warmth in her words. It had been so long. So fucking long.

“I’m scared Mum.” She whispered.

She didn’t know where the admission came from, but that didn’t make it any less true. Maybe it was because she was hearing her mother’s voice, hearing the familiar sound she thought she’d forgotten, hearing the acceptance in them, the unconditional love. After being cut off from anything even resembling love for so long, the feeling of being able to grasp it once more left her gasping for air she couldn’t find.

If Abby was with her, Clarke was sure she’d be stroking her hair right now. She closed her eyes and tried to remember the feeling. “I know angel, I know. But you’ll be okay. Everything will be okay, you understand me? I’ll get you out. I’ll find you. You’re not alone Clarke, not anymore and-
and I don’t know where you’ve been but I’m coming okay? The call said you’re calling from Polis.” Her mother’s voice seemed to gain confidence as it went on, like a building momentum of a roller coaster dipping and gaining speed. “It’s not too far. Only a few hours drive or, maybe four or five I’m not sure, it’s- Okay. I’ll find out. I can leave now and-“

“Mum,” Clarke laughed, shaking her head even if her mother couldn’t see. She could even picture the frazzled look her mother would always get when she started on something. “I’m not going to suddenly disappear, you don’t have to drop everything now. You can wait till…” Clarke frowned. “You’re calling from the hospital right? You still work there?”

If she listened closely she could hear the faint sounds that she’d come to recognise as a hospital’s constant background noise.

“‘Yes, of course.” Her mother answered.

Clarke sighed. “Yeah so, I know it’s always hectic there and you can’t just, run off like that. Organise it out, yeah? I’m not going anywhere.” At least she didn’t think so. It was true that Nia could probably swoop in at any moment, but she knew how important her Mum’s job was to her. Clarke had never been one to put herself first and she sure as hell wasn’t letting her Mum risk her job for the sake of her.

“I haven’t seen you in two years Clarke.” Her mother stated, and Clarke thought she was going to go on, but apparently just from saying those words out loud her mother was on the verge of crying again.

Clarke was way past the verge. She was falling down the cliff so fast her eyes burned. “I know. I know.” Clarke blinked in some useless effort to get rid of some of her tears. For a few moments she just let herself listen to her mother’s breathing as reassurance. It seemed like her mother was doing the same, and it was so strange being paired with the comfortable silence she had been so used to sharing with mother, to do it over the phone, not in person, but through nothing but a grainy speaker. Eventually one of the guards standing nearby gave her a look and she realised she had to end the call soon. Swallowing down the sudden lump in her throat she pulled herself up, straightened her back.

“Mum I’ve- I’ve got to go. I’m getting eyes from the guards.”

Her mother let out a shaky breath. “Okay.” There was a pause where Clarke had to screw her eyes shut in attempt to stop her sudden flow of tears. It didn’t work. “Will you call? Tomorrow? Give me a time so I can be less- less surprised.”

Clarke squeezed her eyes shut harder. You only have two calls left.

“Not tomorrow. Can you do a week?” she asked.

“A week? Clarke, no. I only just got you back I’m not waiting-“

“Mum.” Clarke slowly opened her eyes. “Please.”

The line went silent.

And then, eventually, she heard her mother’s soft and defeated voice. “Okay.” She whispered. “Okay Clarke. In a week.”

“In a week.” Clarke repeated, mostly just to say it to herself. To try and convince herself that it was the right thing to do to wait. She forced a shaky smile even if her Mum couldn’t see. “I love you.”
“I love you too baby.”

Clarke felt her heart cave in at that. Without being able to say anything she slowly pulled the phone away and put it back against the wall. For a moment all she could do was stare at it, stare at the phone where she’d finally heard her mother’s voice after so long, but then someone was shouting at her and she realised she was holding up the queue. Not feeling like making any more enemies she quickly rubbed her red eyes with her sleeve and pushed herself away, walking in whatever her direction her feet took her in.

She didn’t really have a destination in mind as she walked. She could have gone straight back to Raven and Octavia, but she didn’t feel near enough in the right mind to deal with that. At the very least she needed to find a bathroom and rinse her face out. Try and put the slightest effort to hide the tears that still left wet streaks on her cheeks. It felt like there was a knife in her chest, twisting in her heart, and she couldn’t even tell if it was a good or bad thing. If it was foreign joy at being able to hear her Mum again or worry and dread of what it meant. The events that could happen after.

Was Nia doing this just to make her suffer? Nia may have killed Nyko, but she hadn’t killed her mother. Clarke would have found it surprising, yet after realising that while her boyfriend who Nia had murdered had been a relative nobody, her mother wasn’t. To kidnap her and kill her, that would require effort and risk of exposure she couldn’t afford.

Really Clarke had never been more glad her Mum had become a famous surgeon.

But Nia wasn’t stupid. She would have known that her Mum would be the first person she’d call. Was this all some elaborate ploy? Was she letting her call her mother and rekindle that connection if only so she could snatch her away from her, kidnap her or even kill her, just to fuck with her more?

Clarke blinked when she suddenly found herself at the door of the bathroom. Shaking her head slightly she went in and let out a relived sigh at seeing it was mostly empty. She found the nearest sink and avoided eye contact with the person in the mirror for as long as she could, turning the tap and splashing the water on her face. Her hands gripped the sides of the sink, and slowly, Clarke brought her head up and met sights with her reflection.

It was strange, being able to see herself after so long. There were no mirrors in the Tower. Sometimes if she was lucky she’d catch a glimpse of herself in a window as she was dragged by if the light timed it right. It was so unexplainably unnerving to suddenly see herself so graphically. To be able to see just how deep the bags under her eyes pushed, the paleness of her eyes that she found so hard to label as her own, the dullness of her once shining hair.

She stared at the person in the mirror and found she didn’t recognise her.

She didn’t recognise her at all.

With a shaky breath Clarke pulled herself away, as if she’d been trapped under water and only just managed to break free. She would walk this off. She couldn’t let these feelings linger, this despair in her limbs that dragged like weights, this aching in her heart. Someone had gotten into her cell and slipped a note in her bed. Nia obviously had people working for her within here. To show such an obvious display of weakness, she may as well just roll over and offer her neck to her.

Clarke watched the mirror as she forced her mask into place. Stared as all those things she prided herself as her slipped away. It was how she survived Nia, to never let her see what she was truly feeling, to hide when she felt true fear. She may have been in Polis for over a week and was
starting to let herself feel again – but it would be a long while coming till her first instinct at feeling wouldn’t be to shut down and cut everyone else off.

Because in the end Clarke was lonely. She was so used to having people, having support, and now she was used to having nothing. It had wrecked her far more than she cared to admit, and the dark part of her wondered whether she’d ever find someone, find someone who would be willing to deal with her broken self. If she let herself dream and say she’d somehow get out of this, would there ever be a person who could love someone so thoroughly destroyed? It was foolish to think so. But what was even more foolish was the first person that came to her mind when she had thoughts like these.

A person with eyes so green Clarke could stare at them for centuries and never tire.

Clarke suddenly shook her head, like that would force the sudden thought out. Fuck, how did her mind always one way or another end up revolving around that mysterious girl? How did the few interactions they’d had stick in her memories like glue and beg for constant attention? No matter how hard she tried, how hard she shoved any thoughts like that away - of the way she smiled, the way her eyes lit up when she thought no one was looking - they always came back.

And the worse part was she never wanted them to stop.

She stepped away from the sink with a growl at herself. Enough. There was no point in thinking about her like that when the chances of anything happening were slim to none. Even if she excluded the whole she being a prisoner thing there was Nia too, and if Clarke even showed the barest hint of affection towards her she had no doubt the bitch would pounce at the opportunity to hurt her more. Lexa may be a stranger to her, but there was no way in hell she was letting Nia near her. At least that was something she wouldn’t fight herself on.

Clarke pushed her hand against the door and slipped out, running a hand through a hair without thinking. As much as her mind was an asshole who never let her be, she was feeling the slightest bit better after giving herself some time to breathe in the bathroom. She squinted her eyes as she glanced behind her as she walked. Okay, she knew this hallway. She just had to stick down it for a few more doors then take a right up there, then a left towards the cell blocks…

She was halfway there on her way back to Raven and Octavia when she felt the back of her neck prickle. She felt her muscles tense. Someone was watching her, probably following her. Clarke clenched her jaw before suddenly stopping and spinning around, only a little surprised to see a woman standing a few metres away from her. Clarke stepped back a little. Actually, it wasn’t just one following her. It was a gang of them, if the broad shoulders and tribal tattoos were anything to go by. Long ingrained instinct made Clarke flick her gaze around for the nearest exit.

The closest one nearest to her, a woman with blond hair, gave Clarke a small smile. “There’s no need to plan an escape route, we mean no harm.”

Clarke ground her teeth. “What do you want then?” she asked. She may have been trained since she was a teenager to fight, but in this case she’d be outnumbered fast. However the woman didn’t take another step closer, the other women behind her seeming to follow under her lead.

“I apologise for the sudden interruption but, finding you without Reyes or Blake trailing nearby was harder than previously thought.” The woman said. She gestured to the empty hall around them. “Finally it seems I’ve managed to meet you.”

“If you’re looking for a fight, I’m really not in the mood.” Clarke muttered.
Instead of answering, the woman just smiled. “I’m Niylah. And you, Clarke Griffin, have caught my attention.”

“Oh yeah?” Clarke raised a brow. “And how’s that?”

In response Niylah flicked her hand to the side and a person was suddenly pushing their way to the front of the group. When Clarke saw just who it was there was a snarl already forming on her lips before she could stop it. It seemed like Niylah had been expecting this however and spoke up just as Clarke got ready to lunge at the woman who’d attacked Raven two nights ago.

“Before you do anything regrettable, keep in mind that there was never a chance that Reyes was going to get hurt. And that the woman who you fought off that night had been told to do so.”

Clarke’s snarl died in her throat at Niylah’s words. She frowned. “What are you saying?” she questioned uneasily.

Niylah shrugged. “As I said. You’ve caught my attention.” She gave her what could only be a smirk. “There’s few that’d dare to make an enemy of Ontari, even fewer to openly attack her like that. You walk with no marks, affiliation. Curiosity got the better of me I admit, I sent my best fighter here to see if the stories they say of you are true. And… it looks like you’ve proven me right.”

Clarke clenched her fists. “Who are you? Why send someone after Raven just to get to me?”

“I suppose you could call it a test.” Niylah eyes sparkled. “One that you passed with flying colours. You see, I’ve been in need of people like you Clarke. It’s clear you’ve found quick friendship with Reyes and her group, which is fine, but I merely wonder whether you would like to venture a little further.” She tilted her chin. “I want you with us. With Trikru.”

Clarke was so dumbfounded at the request she could only stare. Out of everything she could have said she hadn’t been expecting that at all. A part of her thought she was joking, but as her eyes flicked over the other women, Trikru members she supposed, their faces were all set and hard. A spike of cold hit her gut. Niylah was being completely serious.

She tried to shove aside the lingering shock in her voice. “If you were wanting to recruit me, threatening my friend isn’t the way to go about it.”

Niylah shook her head. “Reyes would have never been hurt. We do not hurt the innocent.”

Even if Clarke knew of the seriousness of this situation she couldn’t help but snort a little. Raven? Innocent? Pretty fucking unlikely.

“It’s clear you can fight, perhaps even better than anyone here,” Niylah went on. She gestured behind her at the Trikru standing tall. “You would have protection, family, a place to belong. Isn’t that something you want?”

Clarke swallowed. Her hand came out without her noticing to hold onto the waist-length bar beside her. She didn’t know why it suddenly felt like the ground was swaying, but the thought of what Niylah was offering, spoke so freely of; it struck her right down at the core. It had been so long since she’d felt like she had someone she could so surely call family. Even with her mother, she still held lingering resentment for her never telling her of what she was, of what her father was, the amount of calls and emails she shielded from her so she’d never know. Never know of Cage’s constant harassing, of the people that watched her without knowing.

The offer of family… it was so incredibly tempting. But as much as she craved it, that sense of
purpose, of support, she couldn’t take Niylah’s deal. It was her who had to build a family. No outsider, no forced situation would give her short cuts. It was all her.

So Clarke let out a slow breath, before shaking her head.

“You’re asking the wrong person.”

She watched Niylah’s face fall. Clarke prepared herself for all types of backlash, even mentally readied herself of the quickest and safest way to disable enough of the gang behind her so she could bolt if they attacked, when instead, Niylah simply reached a hand to the bar that Clarke had forgotten she was leaning against, and let her fingers curl around it. The zap that suddenly struck her made her jump back from the bar. It had felt like an electric shock but sharper, almost like… like lightning…

Clarke’s jaw dropped as she stared at Niylah.

She was an Other.

Niylah must have seen the realisation in Clarke’s eyes, because a surprised yet pleased smile spread on her lips. “Looks like you’re not as ignorant as Ontari likes to call you.” She raised her chin and took a step back. Clarke could only stare at her in shock. “Goodbye Clarke, take care of that pretty face.”

And with one last wink Niylah spun around and walked away, the Trikru following behind her.

Clarke stood still for another few moments before muttering, “what in the actual fuck.”

She had been in this Tower for four months now.

As much as Nia was one of the most sick and twisted creatures she had encountered, the woman was damn patient. Even if she asked the same question over and over and Clarke never said anything back over and over, she still persisted, still kept her here, chained her here. It was the end of the day now. There were fresh bruises on her ribs and Clarke kept herself still as she sat in her cell, gingerly pressing her hand against her sensitive sides.

Today hadn’t been that bad. Then again, her definition of ‘bad’ had had drastic changes in meaning these past months. By ‘that bad’, she meant compared to some of the worse torture she’d endured, a couple kicks to her stomach and cheap shots at her face were nothing. She let out a sardonic smile. What would her younger self think of this? Nyko had trained her hard, had put her through hours of intense pain. Would her teenage self be proud she’d gotten this far? That she hadn’t broken yet?

Or would she be ashamed. After all, she’s only here because of her own fault. Her own actions.

She could blame Nia all she wanted – she was the one who killed Cage. She was the one her made herself available to Nia.

Clarke sighed and let her head fall back against the stone wall.

She’d survived another day. Tomorrow would come, and she would do the same. Wake up, survive, sleep. Maybe if she was lucky Nia would get down from her high horse tomorrow and she’d be able to see her. If there was one thing that Clarke liked to do when her insomnia kept her up it was plan the insults and words she would spit at Nia. It had been quite a while since she’d seen the bitch. There were some particularly creative places she was looking forward to tell Nia to shove it.
Her eyes fluttered to a close. She didn’t sleep though. Just sat in her cell, the back of her head resting against the wall, simply thinking nothing. There were no sounds in the Tower to distract herself with, never had been. It was always silent. So eerily silent. As someone who’d always been surrounded by constant sound, whether it be her flatmate who had no idea what a reasonable volume of music was, the organised chaos she’d be surrounded with when her Mum brought her to the hospital when she was young, the loud and rough voices of her father’s army mates and the songs and stories they’d shout from the top of their lungs.

It was so unnerving being surrounded in nothing but silence now.

She didn’t know how much time passed, but a good chunk must have because suddenly she heard the sound of feet approaching her. Clarke didn’t open her eyes. She kept them closed even as she heard the screech of a tray being placed on the ground and slid underneath the cell door. She didn’t do anything but stay still and keep her eyes closed. She heard a sudden sigh, the guard who’d come to feed her obviously frustrated with her non-cooperation. Normally Clarke would reluctantly play nice with them, if only so they didn’t bother her, but she was feeling tired and existential. She wasn’t in the mood to play along today.

The guard who presumably gave her the food sighed again. “You need to eat.”

Clarke frowned slightly when she didn’t immediately recognise the voice. Curiosity made her crack open an eye. She tilted her head in the guard’s direction. Except, he didn’t look like a guard. He didn’t wear the uniform; his clothes were far nicer than anything she’d see the guards wear. But the biggest sign really was the lack of a sadistic smile on his lips. Normally whenever she tried any type of resistance the guards would get excited at the opportunity to inflict punishment for an actual reason. Well, as close to a reason as you could get.

And yet this man had nothing like that on his face.

“You don’t work here.”

Though she said it as a statement, she left it open for him to disagree.

The man’s face was all sharp angles and dark brown hair that ran just below his shoulder. “Not quite,” the man smirked. At Clarke’s continued stare he answered the hidden question. “I’m Roan.”

“One of Nia’s lackeys I presume?”

Roan actually snorted. “I’d rather be dead than be that for her.”

Clarke felt her muscles tense. She had been leaning casually against the wall, but now she pulled herself forward. Her eyes narrowed. “You must be close to speak so carelessly of her.” She let her sight take him in again. Now with a closer look there was some vague familiarity between him and Nia. He wasn’t a corrupt politician under her thumb but… those eyes...

Clarke suddenly let out a harsh laugh. “Who would’ve thought, Nia found someone who could actually stand to look at her for more than five seconds.” She shook her head and let her body relax again, falling back against the wall. “She must have been an even worse cunt pregnant. God, can you imagine her with her hormones out of whack?”

“She didn’t expect you to last this long.” Roan said seriously, ignoring Clarke’s words. “Expected you to give in long ago.”

She gave him a sharp smile. “What’s your game Roan? You tryna’ get up in mommy’s good
graces?” Roan clenched his jaw and at the sight of it Clarke’s smile widened. “Do yourself a favour Roan. Fuck off. Don’t waste your time here.”

“She says you’re an Other.”

“Other’s aren’t real.”

“I’m not an fool, Clarke.”

Clarke suddenly lurched forward towards him and plunged her arm through the gap in the bars. She gripped his shirt and roughly pulled him forward till his face was pressed against the metal. Clarke was standing up now, and even though Roan struggled to haul himself out of her grip she could feel the buzzing on her hand and knew her strength was dipping more into supernatural than normal.

And even if their faces were inches from each other and she could so clearly see his wide eyes, his hard breathing, Clarke just smiled and leaned a little closer.

“Let me give you some advice Roan. If I could, I would kill you without hesitating. The guards here know that and never put themselves within arms reach of me. If you’re smart, you’d do better to do the same. Now, you’ll do as I say Roan, and,” She tightened her grip. “Fuck. Off.”

She abruptly let go of him and he staggered back.

Clarke gave an indifferent sigh before she crouched down again and pulled the tray that sat forgotten below her. She scrunched her nose. The slop looked worse than the usual. Nia must have fired the cook again. With a cautionary sniff to see if the food was drugged, relaxing slightly when she found it wasn’t, Clarke walked over and sat crossed-legged on her bed, pulling the tray into her lap.

She glanced up after taking the first tasteless bite, finding Roan to be staring at her bewildered. He blinked at her with a dropped jaw. It was clear he was still reeling from the abrupt change of events. Clarke smirked and gave him a little wave with her hand that wasn’t holding a fork. Then, deciding she’d had enough fun, focused back on her food.

Roan spent several more long minutes staring at the prisoner.

And even if he should have found himself scared, worried, even angry – he instead found himself intrigued.

So oddly intrigued.

- 

She ended up replaying the strange events over and over in her head.

It made it so by the time she actually got to the door to the outside Raven and Octavia weren’t there anymore. They’d gone inside then. With a small sigh Clarke turned around and headed towards the increasingly familiar route up to her and Raven’s cell. There were three places they were probably hanging, either her and Raven’s cell, Octavia’s or the Rec Room. If they weren’t in any of those places then… well, a little more exploring couldn’t hurt.

Walking up the stairs to the third level Clarke briefly wondered when the last time she actually had a proper workout was. What with adjusting to Polis and trying to figure out whatever the fuck Nia was playing at, she hadn’t really let herself fall into any routine while she was here. In all honesty
she was expecting to wake up in the Tower every time she closed her eyes. Some part of her, no matter how much she tried to play it off, thought this was all some dream her mind had made up if only to escape her life with Nia.

When she was young she never thought herself one for exercise. Really she was the type of person to call getting out of bed and stumbling over to the fridge if only to get more food her daily walk, but after the years of training that Nyko put her through she had found a certain solace in working out. In being able to shut every unwanted thought out and just focus on nothing but the weight in her arms, the strain in her muscles. If she truly was in Polis, if Nia had actually moved her here for more than just a few weeks then… then maybe she’d actually do the effort to find routine. To workout again.

Clarke passed Octavia’s cell and she paused, peeking a glance in to see if her friends were there. “Blake is with Reyes in her cell.” Harper said, and if Clarke hadn’t of noticed her in the corner of her eye, nearly completely hidden on the top bunk under a pile of blankets, she would have jumped.

“Thanks,” Clarke said, giving the girl a wave she wasn’t sure she could see. She pulled her head back out and continued on her way to her and Raven’s cell, and after following the path - dodging a few stray bodies as she did - she felt a smile tug at her lips when neared her cell, hearing the unmistakable voice of Raven.

“Listen,” Raven sighed, and from the way she said it seemed like this wasn’t the first time she’d said it. “All I’m saying is it’s logical that the egg came first. Not the chicken.”

Clarke felt her smile widen as she slowly pulled herself to a stop at their cell, crossing her arms and leaning her weight against the cell door. Raven and Octavia were standing in an intense stare-off. Though their backs weren’t towards her, their attention clearly was on nothing but the two of them.

Octavia narrowed her eyes. “Yeah but what laid the egg huh? The chicken.”

“No O, listen. The chicken came from the egg.”

“But then where did a chicken egg even come from? Ah, I got it,” Octavia leaned forward. “The chicken.”

“That doesn’t make sense!” Raven huffed, and Clarke’s gaze flicked with amusement onto Octavia, watching the two argue like a tennis match.

“You don’t make sense!”

Raven threw her arms up. “The fucking egg came first O! Just admit it! It’s fucking science!” Her eyes grew wide with excitement of seeming to find another backer argument. “And who’s the one with a degree here huh? In science. I’m a certified genius O. You cannot argue this.”

“Engineering doesn’t count Raven.” Octavia glared.

Raven’s jaw actually dropped. “Okay, you did not just say that I’m gonna’ fucking-”

“You two done?” Clarke spoke up, grinning when both of them jumped at her sudden voice. Octavia at least offered her a shy smile, but Raven’s face, while initially smiling, turned into a sudden scowl.

“Where the fuck you been?” she questioned, seeming to instantly forget her argument with Octavia.
Clarke sighed. She had been expecting this. She’d decided she was going to go with the truth simply because it had been so long since she had had a friend, especially one like Raven. And lies always had a habit of biting her in the ass. “I got stopped over.”

“By who?” Octavia asked. Clarke glanced between the two of them, trying to hide her tension.

“That Trikru gang.”

Octavia’s eyes bulged. “Trikru?” she exclaimed.

“What the fuck did they want?” Raven said at the same time.

Clarke hesitated before uncrossing her arms and stepping into the cell. She ran a hand through her hair in a nervous tic she could never quite get rid of. “They asked me to join, and I said no.” Clarke said, deciding to just get it out all in one go.

For a moment, no one said anything. Her new friends just stared at her. Clarke fought off the urge to shift foot to foot from their intense gazes. As always it was Raven who spoke first, shaking her head as if that could change what Clarke had said.

“Trikru. The Trikru came to you and… asked you to join them.”

Clarke saw that Octavia’s fists were clenched. “And you said no.” Octavia said slowly.

Clarke nodded. The air felt like a bomb that had reached the end of its minutes and all that was left was those tense few breaths before it’d explode.

“Okay, let me just, process this, alright? Because Trikru don’t just pick up anyone. It’s not an afterschool club you can just waltz in on.”

“Yeah, at the very least there’d be a trial, a test of some kind to see…”

“There was,” Clarke said, ignoring the nerves in her stomach. Both of the girls’ brows furrowed. Clarke bit her lip before finally caving. “Two nights ago… someone broke into our cell. You were asleep Raven and, it looked like the girl was there for you. I saw the shiv and acted out of instinct, disarmed her and,” her gaze shifted to the floor briefly, “knocked her around to bit so she wouldn’t come back. I didn’t know she was Trikru or whatever fucked test. I just assumed she was looking for revenge on you considering, well, you know, all the shit you get up to.”

“Someone tried to kill me in my sleep and you didn’t think to let me know?” Raven muttered, taking a slow step forward.

Clarke stiffened at her tone. “She’s not coming back. You’re safe. If she tried something again then, yes, I’d tell you but-“

“Was this the night when you were there when I woke up?” Raven interrupted. “You told me… you told me you were up doing sets because you couldn’t sleep. But it was odd because you were so angry. That was why, wasn’t it? Because someone tried to kill me?”

Clarke clenched her jaw. “She wasn’t there to kill you. She had no intention of that. And as I said before, it was a test of some sort. For me. There was no chance that you would’ve gotten hurt.” According to Niylah, is what Clarke didn’t add.

Raven scoffed. “That doesn’t change the fact that someone came in here at least pretending to want to hurt me and you didn’t fucking tell me!”
“She wouldn’t dare to come back.” Clarke snapped. “And how would you react if I did Raven? You think I haven’t noticed your sleep has been getting more and more restless? Adding paranoia onto that list wouldn’t help. And what about how you would retaliate huh? You’d end up getting yourself thrown in the Pit.”

Raven blinked, seemingly shocked that Clarke had noticed her worsening sleep.

But Clarke wasn’t done. She stepped forward, till they had barely any space between them. “You are safe. Even if she hadn’t of been there for me, she still wouldn’t come back. No one is going to hurt you, and for any who’d dare they’d have to get through me. I’m not blind. I see how Ontari looks at you, especially for siding for me. And I’ll be damned if any of you get hurt in my name.” She growled.

Clarke didn’t really know she was breathing hard till they were left in tense silence. Blinking, she pulled herself back, swallowing dry air and calming her breaths down. She hadn’t meant an outburst like that but it had launched out of her before she could stop it. It didn’t mean she regretted any of it though. Because it was true, she had seen the increasingly cold looks that Ontari had been growing whenever she looked at Raven, at Octavia. She may have been the one to openly attack Ontari but because of her friendship with Raven and Octavia, they were sure to get drawn into the crossfire.

And there was no fucking way she was letting that happen.

Raven had offered her friendship without question. It didn’t matter if it was slightly strange how quickly the woman had jumped onto it, hadn’t given caution a second thought. Raven’s friendship was one of the few things that was slowly starting to bring warmth back into slices in her heart. She wasn’t letting anything, anyone jeopardise that.

Raven continued staring at her, but the longer it went on the more that initial hardness began to fade away, and in the end her shoulder just slumped, all that tension draining out of her. Clarke was relieved, and Octavia seemed to share the sentiment.

“If any shit like this happens again, you’ll goddamn tell me alright?” Raven muttered, narrowing her eyes at her.

Clarke swallowed thickly before nodding. “Okay.”

“Okay.” Raven let out a sigh. “Well. Now that that’s out of the way…”

Raven glanced between the apprehensive faces in the cell.

“Chicken or egg?”

The next few days were filled with lingering tension.

It wasn’t obvious but subtle, hidden in the slight strain of Clarke’s smile or the awkward silence that’d suddenly come barreling in randomly. It became unofficially decided to not mention the word ‘Trikru’ for a bit, if only to avoid the tension that came with it. Clarke could tell that Raven still held some residual anger at her but Clarke let it be. Now thinking it over, Raven was probably right. She should have told her.

It was true that she hadn’t because she was worried what Raven might do in retaliation. Might cut off friendships with others or interrogate people to the point of making new enemies just to find
one. Clarke was also noticing her increasingly fitful sleeps. She herself didn’t sleep much anyway, so when Raven started to toss and turn in her sleep, she almost always heard it. Once or twice she’d even carefully climbed down from her bunk and crouched by Raven’s sleeping side. With gentle fingers she’d trail her hand over Raven’s arm hidden under her blanket, murmuring soft nothings and feeling relieved when it worked.

Clarke hadn’t told her because she’d wanted to protect her, but with that thought came the striking realisation that that was what her mother had did about what she was.

And finally Clarke also realised why Raven was truly upset.

Because her actions showed that Clarke thought Raven couldn’t take care of herself.

So on the third day Clarke swallowed her pride and grabbed Raven’s arm just as they were about to enter the canteen in the morning for breakfast. Octavia shot her an apprehensive look but at Clarke’s reassuring nod the brunette let her be. Raven gave her a look too, more curious than anything. Her jaw clenched on its own accord, like her body was downright refusing to admit she’d been wrong, trying to shove the words she needed to say back in. Clarke got there in the end.

“I’m sorry I didn’t tell you. I know you can take care of yourself I was just… I was scared. You made friends with me on the very first day and I was scared that if you knew someone had been in there, especially for me, you’d…”

All that tension that never seemed to fade finally faded from her face. “Clarke, it’ll take a lot more than a little cunt trying to hurt me to break that. And anyway, you were the one who actually beat her ass for me. I mean, if I were you I would have told right away just for bragging rights alone.”

Clarke let out her first genuine smile in days.

Raven gave her one back before jerking her head behind her. “Come on. Apple crumble today.” She wiggled her eyebrows and with a laugh Clarke followed on after her.

And for a while, it seemed like everything was going to be okay.

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A week had passed since Clarke’s run-in with the Trikru.

She made on her personal promise of working out again. She started at night, just before they’d go to sleep. Or during if she couldn’t. She was hesitant to do so in the later hours, or extremely early really, but Raven waved off her concerns and told her how she could probably sleep through a riot and would only wake up till someone physically shook her. In the end Clarke caved and so started on sets when her insomnia kept her up.

Thankfully, there’d been nothing eventful this past week. The only thing close was a brief encounter with Ontari. Clarke and Octavia had been talking. As it turns out, the strength she’d felt the girl have when she held her back the other day wasn’t through nothing. She trained hard too, and before she’d been in prison Clarke found out she used to spend hours upon hours at her local gym under a stern gaze of an instructor. Octavia had seemed glad to find someone who she could talk about training with as it was very obvious Raven would rather dive head-first into a bed of rocks then do exercise.

Clarke may have been caught intensely with the conversation, but she had been especially observant and keen of her surroundings the day she was born. She had felt her muscles tense before Ontari had actually walked up to them.
She didn’t linger long. The moment she came into view Octavia had shot her a death glare that left Clarke surprised it didn’t kill her. Ontari’s gaze easily slid from Octavia’s to Clarke’s, and when their sights met Ontari just grew a smile.

“I’ll find you out Griffin. I will.” She promised, her eyes growing a dangerous glint.

Clarke stared at her, expression cold, when curiosity got the better of her and she spoke. “Three calls.” She said, watching Ontari’s expression carefully.

Ontari furrowed her brows slightly.

And that was all confirmation she needed.

Ontari stared at her a moment longer, but when Clarke didn’t say anything more, just shook her head with a scoff and kept on walking. Clarke slowly felt her shoulders relax if only to tense up all over again. So Ontari hadn’t given her the note. It was a little strange, considering she was Nia’s daughter and all. Why wouldn’t Nia use her like that? There was no doubt that Ontari was loyal and desperate for her mother’s approval. She would do anything for her.

Clarke was frowning when Octavia caught her attention once more, letting out a long sigh through her nose.

“Don’t listen to her. She won’t dare do anything more than insult you from afar. Fucking coward.” Octavia muttered. Clarke had finally brought her attention back then, grinding her teeth.

“If she’s anything like her mother, it won’t be her doing the damage.”

If Clarke saw Octavia swallow hard, she didn’t mention it.

She was outside again now. Clarke found herself taking every opportunity she could to get out in the sun and the grass. If she was lucky there’d occasionally be a rough breeze and she could close her eyes and pretend she was flying through the clouds. It wasn’t like that now though. The wind was calm and the skies were cloudy. They weren’t rain clouds thankfully, and perhaps Clarke liked them a little more because they helped trap the heat and keep the day warmer.

Sweat was bleeding down her back and she could feel the shake in her arms. Her breathing was in pants but for now she was gritting her teeth, ignoring the pain in her stomach and body as she pushed herself up for once last rep, her hands touching below her in a triangle shape. She had to screw her eyes shut as she forced herself to push up, her body fighting in its last minutes. When she finally managed to push herself up she let out a relived smile and fell back onto her knees, just letting herself breathe.

It had been an hour since she started, and for now that was enough. Though she loathed admitting it she’d fallen out of shape from Azgeda Tower. It wasn’t exactly surprising but that didn’t mean she was going to admit it. Admitting it then would have showed weakness. Something she can never do. For a moment she tilted her head back and stared up towards the sky, closing her eyes and letting the sun touch her face with delicate hands.

That was one of favourite things that she’d lost when she was with Nia.

The wonderful, wonderful sun.

It took a small while but soon her panting was reduced to her usual calm breaths. Slowly she opened her eyes, and she felt the back of neck prickle when she felt someone’s gaze on her. Frowning slightly she turned her head behind her and saw the person who had been watching her
instantly rip her gaze away as if she hadn’t been. Clarke felt a slow grin spread when she saw who it was.

If she looked close enough, Clarke was sure she could see the pink tinge to Lexa’s cheeks.

Clarke had to bite back her laugh as Lexa determinedly kept her gaze off her. She pulled herself up to her feet, and maybe she was still riding her after-workout high and was feeling a little more daring than usual. With a grin she had no hope in hell of wiping off she turned her back to her and lifted her arms over her head in a stretch. She aimed for as casual as she could, and only once she got the oddly assured feeling that Lexa was watching did she slowly bend down.

Okay, so maybe she was being a little evil. But Clarke was enjoying herself far too much care. She went through the rest of her stretches she needed do, but she did them all purposely slow and dragged out. By the time she was done the sun had dipped a little further and when she turned around this time Lexa didn’t manage to tear her gaze off before Clarke could catch her.

It was obvious this time that both knew Lexa had been caught staring. And yet to Clarke’s wonderful surprise, Lexa actually held her gaze. Her throat had already been dry from working out but somehow it became drier as their intense stare held. In Clarke’s opinion Lexa was much too far away and the urge she had to fuck everything to hell and just ram her up against a wall in a furious kiss was embarrassingly hard to restrain.

Clarke did one last thing to rile Lexa up. She gripped the bottom of her shirt and used it to wipe the sweat leaking down the side of face, never breaking her stare with Lexa. A wicked smirk broke out when even from here she could see Lexa’s eyes dipping down of their own permission staring at her exposed stomach.

Clarke had never been more proud of her abs.

Feeling like she’d tortured Lexa enough she pulled her shirt back down and gave her wink. Lexa in response clenched her jaw and looked away but her response probably had the opposite effect of what she wanted. Clarke was grinning so wide her cheeks hurt, and she was so caught up in letting her own stare trail so unabashedly up and down Lexa’s form that for once in her life she didn’t notice that someone had been eyeing the interaction the entire time.

Clarke decided to go for a short walk around the prison before meeting up with Raven and Octavia. She had scoped most of the area by now, but she hadn’t done a proper mental map out of the details. It was something to do to pass the time so Clarke easily let herself trail down the cellblocks and halls, her eyes snagging on exit signs and doors, hangouts and guards. The one she was in currently was empty, and just as she thought she felt the temperature in the room drop a sudden burst of cold like a bucket of water had been drenched over her made her curse.

The ghost that’d walked through her twisted on her heels and turned to face Clarke with her arms crossed and eyes hard.

Clarke swore again, a shudder going through her at the seriously disturbing sensation of a ghost walking through you. “Was that seriously necessary Costia?” Clarke hissed.

Costia just kept staring at her. Clarke frowned, trying to run through her head if she’d done anything to piss the spirit off.

“I’m sorry that I haven’t talked to you sooner,” Clarke said, hoping that was why the she was
pissed.

Costia tilted her chin. “Who are you Clarke? Who are you really?”

Clarke scoffed. “Interrogation day is it?”

“She’s never let anyone distract her from her job. There are very few who have managed that, and yet you, a prisoner no less, have managed to do just that.” Costia narrowed her eyes. “I don’t trust you.”

“Who are you talking about?” Clarke asked, trying to follow whatever train of thought Costia was on.

But Costia just shook her head, and this time there was less anger and resentment but frustration. Just such frustration. “Why you?” she muttered, and it didn’t seem like a question Clarke was meant to answer. “Why you of all people?”

Clarke sighed. She was far too lost to offer any type of words that would save this conversation. She glanced over her shoulder and found no one behind her so at least it didn’t look like she was talking to thin air. Still, clearly Costia wasn’t going to be cooperative today and Clarke was looking forward to meet with her mates after barely seeing them all afternoon. She sidestepped Costia so she wouldn’t have to walk through her. Costia’s gaze never left her, but she didn’t try to stop her either, so Clarke figured she was free to pass.

It was as she was walking by that she heard a sudden wince from Costia, and even if her glove tried to stop it, a burst of pain from her hand.

Clarke felt her blood freeze.

She whirled onto Costia, and even if the ghost seemed like the type to never back down from anyone the look on Clarke’s face must have scared her shitless to actually make her step back. Clarke tried very hard to keep herself from shouting.

“What the fuck was that Costia?”

Defiance like always trickled in at Clarke’s tone, but there was this weariness, this fear that hadn’t been there before. “Not your concern.”

Anger burst in her chest and her left hand began to shake, her gloved hand buzzing with pain. “You’re damn fucking right it’s my concern.” Clarke snapped. Her eyes flicked over Costia’s form, and when she saw the small glowing white scar on her hand, Costia instantly snatched it behind her. But it was too late. Clarke had already seen and now heart pounded in her chest with such fear and anger it took everything in her not to scream.

“How long?” Clarke muttered, and with the way she said it there was no way Costia couldn’t answer.

Costia swallowed.

When she didn’t say anything Clarke’s lips twisted into a snarl and lurched forward, stopping just a breath away from the ghost’s face. “How long!?!”

“Three days.” She replied, seeming unable to stop it.

Clarke let loose a shaky breath and stepped backwards. She turned around and ran a hand through
her hair. “Fuck,” she swore. “Fuck, fuck, jok, nomajoka joken skrish.” She was so tempted to throw her fist against the wall she had to hold her wrist to stop herself. The mark under her glove burned so intensely her hand trembled violently, but she didn’t care, she couldn’t care.

Because Costia’s ghost form was finally starting to break.

Eventually Clarke managed to calm herself down enough that she wasn’t just cursing repeatedly anymore. When she turned her gaze onto Costia she found the ghost to already be staring at her. “Is it just on the hand?” Clarke questioned, praying to every deity known to man that it was.

Costia hesitated before giving her a stiff nod.

“Show me,” Clarke ordered, and Costia, though looking like she’d very much like to defy her must have sensed the true seriousness of the situation. She paused only briefly before giving in and pulling her hand out from where she’d hidden it behind her. Clarke felt her stomach drop to the floor at the sight of the small cracks on the back of the ghost’s hand. The thickest one spanned nearly the entire spread of her hand, smaller cracks splaying out from it. They glowed white, and Clarke knew that the longer Costia stayed on this plane the more that it would grow, the brighter and wider they’d get. The fact that Clarke didn’t throw up at the sight of it should have called for an award.

It was so strange, seeing those cracks again. The last she’d seen them she was fourteen. The last time she had seen them she had had her best friend before…

“What is it?” Costia asked quietly. Clarke swallowed before slowly stepping back, forcing herself to stop staring at those damn cracks in her skin.

“I told you last time that souls aren’t meant to linger here. Ghosts are meant to move on. They’re not meant to stay. You’re not meant to stay.”

“So, my, my body its…”

Clarke nodded. “It’s breaking. If you don’t move on before it fully shatters then you’ll become nothing. Your soul will wander with no form or consciousness. It’ll just… be.” Her gaze hardened. “You’ll jump to the nearest body and kill them. After that, you’ll be nothing.”

“How long do I have?” Costia asked and Clarke felt her heart twinge at the sheer amount of pain in her voice. It didn’t matter if she barely knew the girl, wasn’t even that fond of, to hear a voice so beyond hopeless; it was impossible not to feel.

Clarke very carefully dug through her memories of how long it happened the last time. It was so very dangerous thinking about it, about the ghost she’d unintentionally met as a kid, watching it slowly deteriorate without understanding and then when its body broke and it-

“I don’t know,” Clarke eventually said, forcing herself out of her memories. She could feel a growing ache in her heart. The familiar grief that she’d thought she moved on from swirled painfully in her gut. “Last time it took a month or so. But I don’t know, it could be quicker or slower.”

Costia tilted her head. “The last time? You’ve seen this happen before?”

Clarke’s glare would have sent normal people running for the hills, but for Costia it did nothing. Then again, it was a hard feat scaring a ghost. Can’t exactly threaten them when their bodies weren’t tangible and they’re already dead.
“Once.” Clarke answered through gritted teeth. She was so hoping to avoid saying it, but it looked like she was going to have to. “She was… her name was Charlotte. The ghost who shattered. Her name was Charlotte.” Clarke’s shoulders fell. “She was so young, twelve. My best friend he- she never meant to, never meant to hurt him but…”

Understanding dawned in Costia’s eyes. “She jumped into his body and killed him. Your best friend’s.”

Clarke couldn’t find the strength to speak then. She just bobbed her head stiffly.

Costia bit her lip when she suddenly hung her head. She shook her head, letting out a sigh that sounded far too old, and as she raised her eyes to meet Clarke’s once more and Clarke saw the pain in them, the regret, it was almost like she knew what she was about to say.

“I can’t leave. Not yet.”

Clarke was suddenly very extremely pissed you couldn’t shove a ghost. “You damn well will be. You cannot stay here. If you don’t leave, someone will die.”

“I’m sorry Clarke.” Costia stepped back. “I can’t leave her. Not yet. Not till I know she’ll be okay.”

“Who? Who can’t you leave?” Clarke asked, stepping forward. She didn’t bother hiding the excitement in her voice at the admission. Finally she was a step closer to finding the reason Costia was lingering. If she could fix that reason then the ghost would leave.

Costia eyed her then, and her expression was unreadable.

“Costia,” Clarke urged. “Who can’t you leave?”

“Most know her as Heda. But it seems you know her as Lexa.”

Why Clarke felt her heart stumble when she heard Lexa’s name, she didn’t know.

The shock must have showed on her face because Costia gave her a smile that was far from warm. “I loved her. Love her. I know my time with her is done, but I can’t leave her, not yet. Not till I know that she is happy again.”

Clarke blinked. She didn’t know what to think of this information. Her chest was a whirlwind of emotions that left it impossible to pick one. The only sure thing she knew was that it was strange to be talking to the dead ghost of the girl’s girlfriend you had a crush on. But as much as she felt that sudden flood of unease, like she was doing something she shouldn’t, she still kept her feet planted and didn’t walk away. Because really Costia needed her. If Costia didn’t move on someone was sure to die when her body shattered, and there was no chance in hell that Clarke was letting that happen again. Not after last time.

So instead Clarke just remained quiet. With a sigh that she couldn’t tell what was filled with she let her back fall towards a wall with a dull thud, letting her head rest against it. She wanted to convince Costia right then and there that Lexa was happy. That she was fine, she was okay, she did her job well and seemed to have the support of close friends like Anya. The girl may more often then not hold a constant emotionless mask, yet so quickly could it fall away, if you timed your glance right, if you said the right words.

But Clarke didn’t try convincing Costia, because she hadn’t convinced herself.
Because in all honesty she didn’t think that Lexa was happy. Perhaps not sad; her eyes sparkled far too much for that, but there was something. Something not quite right that lurked just behind her eyes. A shadow that never quite went away. Maybe Clarke just spent far too much time observing her but she could understand, in some sense at least, why Costia didn’t want to leave her.

If Clarke were in her position she probably wouldn’t either.

Clarke was surprised when she felt sudden goose bumps line her arms, and as she turned her head to the side to find why she saw Costia hovering just next to her, mimicking her position of her back leaning against the wall. Well, not quite. There was the smallest of gaps between her back and the wall itself. Their eyes met and Clarke found herself wondering how easy it would have been for Lexa to fall for this girl. If she were still alive, Clarke had no doubt her beauty would be something others would kill for.

“You’re not happy either.” Costia said quietly.

Clarke held their stare, even if she wanted nothing more than to look away. “No, I’m not.” She murmured back.

The hardness she was so used to seeing on the ghost’s face slipped away. “Your friend, the one you lost to Charlotte… how old were you?”

“Why do you want to know?” Clarke muttered, narrowing her eyes. But Costia didn’t react to her hostility like she normally did. Instead her oddly calm gaze never wavered.

“You carry so much pain Clarke. It lies heavy on your shoulders. Like ash in the lungs.” Costia raised a glimmering hand and Clarke’s eyes couldn’t help but zero in on the cracks. Her hand gently hovered over her heart. “Any spirit across the planes can hear the pain in your soul. It is unlike anything I’ve ever come across. You wouldn’t believe the amount of pain some people come in here with,” she used her other hand to gesture around them. “After all, we are in a prison. But… your pain, yours its…” she slowly withdrew her hand. “It’s both new and old. I’ve never met anyone to hold so much and still stay standing. Still keep doing every day.”

Clarke had to clench her jaw to stop her tears. She turned her head away, unable to hold Costia’s gaze. Costia seemed to understand however and let her be. It took a while, but when Clarke felt more like she could speak again without feeling her insides unravel she finally answered Costia’s question from before.

“I was fourteen.” She whispered. A strangled breath came out of her before she could stop it. “His name was Wells. He was… like the brother I never had. We did everything together, I don’t have a memory of my childhood without him. Losing him was like nothing I’ve ever felt.”

Clarke didn’t need to bring her gaze to feel Costia’s nodding.

“Don’t let it consume you Clarke.” Costia said. “Don’t let the pain win.”

It took an absurd amount of mental prodding, but eventually Clarke managed to meet Costia’s stare.

Costia’s face didn’t change. “I know you walk with Death. I can sense it. But your time won’t be here for a while coming.”

“You have to move on Costia,” Clarke said softly. “You have to.”

“I will. When Lexa is happy.”
Clarke felt the beginnings of a sigh but before she could let it out and try to convince her that it was something out of her control, she blinked and the ghost was gone. Clarke closed her eyes and hung her head. As much as she wanted to tell Costia that wanting Lexa to be happy was something that she just had to let go and move on from, that it was ridiculous to hold on to something so trivial, Clarke couldn’t.

Because really, she wanted to see Lexa happy too.

Chapter End Notes

clarke the Cheeky Cunt™ making an appearance
also I know niylah is a little out of character but there’s literally no fucking grounders left to work with so I had to make do ok! fuck off! i’m trying!
as per usual, if you spot any typos that are pissing you off, kindly let me know and ill fix them for you. its only me that goes over this and my ability to spot typos is fucking atrocious. Id also like to just apologise for how long this took. I’m struggling a lot personal shit wise and writing is just so much harder than it used to. Ill try not let the next update escape me like this one, but I ask that you be patient if you can. As always, thank you for reading and I hope you enjoyed.

translations! (even if its straight(gay) up one fucking sentence)
Jok, nomajoka joken skrish. - Fuck, motherfucker, fucking shit.
The only light that Lexa had was her flashlight, and even if the prison was darker than black at this time of night, she found the lone light oddly comforting. The darkness, even if it tried with all it had could never overwhelm the sliver of light. Perhaps she found a calmness in that, a connection. That no matter what and no matter its small size it never gave in. Never backed down. The sharp light still blasted through and lit up its solitary beam. Perhaps, she should just slap herself and stop getting so philosophical over a torch at one in the morning.

The prison was so quiet at this time of night. Not that she expected any different, but it was still strange every time she was faced with it. The eerie silence that’d hang heavy in the once bustling halls, not even a glimpse of sound; of laughter and curses and shouts. Just nothing, just breathing. Just silence. Was it strange that she found more comfort in sound than silence? Tension was a persistent thing that buzzed her skin and raised the hairs on the back of her neck. The click of her boots against the floor echoed so much louder when left with nothing but this overwhelming quiet.

Normally she didn’t take the night shifts, but her mind been too restless to let her sleep. Not that it ever really did.

But she knew there wasn’t a chance in hell for managing any hours tonight so she’d decided she would patrol the floors if only to give her something to do. The idea of staying alone in her room and being paired with nothing but her thoughts was a game she’d played enough to know nothing good came out of it. So she had taken to instead patrol, to shine her light in each cell and make sure all eyes were closed and breathing was slow and calm.

She was avoiding her problems and she knew it. She should be in bed trying to scrounge up as much rest as she could but, she couldn’t. And she had run out of fucks too long ago to bother trying. For tonight, today, she was going to be selfish. Just this once.

Tomorrow, though technically today, Kane will be visiting. While it was clear he didn’t approve of Pike’s methods and ideologies he was still under his command and it was hard for him to go against Pike, which was something Lexa needed him to do when she met with him. She needed to
find out what Pike was up to and Kane was the closest connection she had to the man. She knew Kane was a good man and they met eye-to-eye on a surprising amount of views, which made this all the more harder. Though Pike lived and breathed for his people he wasn’t one for traitors. And if he ever caught wind of Kane speaking out against him hell would be sure to fall.

But she needed to know. Pike had asked about Clarke for a reason, and she was determined to find out why. Whether because he was finally making progress on his ‘vague’ threats of overthrowing her position Heda, either for himself or someone else, she simply needed to get one step ahead of him. Kane was the first step towards that. Even if the man had been dipping into the territory of trustworthy ally as of late, maybe even possible friend if she was pushing it, he was the bridge she needed to use.

Lexa paused suddenly, tilting her head slightly.

She’d heard something. Furrowing her brow a little she concentrated harder, pushing out every other sound but the out of place one she’d heard. She had always had good hearing, even when she was little. It would bug Anya immensely when no matter how quiet she would mutter her insults Lexa would always hear and throw a retort back. This time when she caught the sound again it came a lot clearer than before.

Whimpering. They were sounds of distress and Lexa’s first thought was someone was hurt. She whipped her head behind her and took off for wherever the sounds were coming from, focusing as hard as she could on the distressed breathing. Her feet were fast against the ground yet still she could hear the whimpering getting worse and worse the longer time went on. There was this feeling of urgency that burst in her chest that she couldn’t quite explain, just such a strange sense of familiarity to the anxious sounds that made her heart pound harder, her legs push faster. Lexa skidded to a halt when she finally found the source of the whimpering.

No one was hurt, thank the skies above. But still her stomach twisted in knots as she stared through the bars at Clarke, her body curling in on itself as she tossed and turned in bunk. She was still letting out those soft fretful sounds and Lexa had never hated so much the locked cell door that kept her out of arms reach.

“Please,” Clarke whimpered, her voice so quiet and broken and tired that Lexa had to physically hold herself back from rushing in and pulling the girl into her arms. “Nou ai laksen.”

Lexa clenched her jaw and couldn’t stop herself anymore. She pulled out her key and slid it into the lock, taking the care to make the least amount of sound as possible. With careful fingers she pulled the cell door open and slipped in, her feet taking her in before she was even done. Instinct took over as she walked over to the bunk bed and the whimpering Clarke and without thinking she reached a hand and gently touched Clarke’s arm.

“Clarke,” Lexa whispered. “Clarke wake up.”

“No, please, don’t…”

Clarke’s movements grew more agitated and Lexa had to ignore the stabbing pain in her heart at the sight of it. She gripped tighter and repeated her name, but when that got nothing and Clarke muttered out another breathless ‘please’ Lexa’s resolve cracked and her fingers found their way gently cupping Clarke’s jaw. She felt a warmth on her shoulder before she leaned forward as much as she dared and willed Clarke will all she had to listen to her.

“Wake up, Clarke.”
Clarke woke up with a gasp and Lexa snatched her hand away like she’d been touching fire. Lexa watched her with wide eyes as Clarke abruptly pulled herself up at the sudden sight of her, panting and glancing around the room like she was trying to work out where she was.

“Do you know where you are Clarke?”

She made sure to keep her voice soft but Clarke’s head still snapped onto her like she’d roared the words to an army. She was still panting and there was sweat leaking down the sides of head. Lexa tried to keep her pounding heart from breaking out of her chest as she raised her hands so Clarke could see. And then, with a slight frown and wonder in her voice Clarke blinked at her in the dark.

“Lexa?” she breathed, and the way she said her name had Lexa swallowing.

Lexa opened her mouth to reply, but it took her longer than she’d planned for. The way that Clarke was staring at her at making it incredibly hard to speak. Even if the cell was shrouded in darkness it was impossible not to see the wonder in Clarke’s eyes, the spark, the dim flicker of joy that stole every breath of air from Lexa’s lungs. Lexa had always prided herself on her ability to see through the dark but now she wished she was terrible at it. Because seeing Clarke look at her like that brought up a sensation in her gut that meant nothing but chaos.

“You were whimpering,” Lexa finally said, managing to work her throat again. “I thought you were hurt.”

Lexa saw Clarke swallow, how her face caved in slightly with shame. Lexa had to fight to urge to tell her there was nothing to be ashamed of. Because she was Heda. And Clarke was an inmate. That was all that they’ll ever be.

“Sorry,” Clarke whispered. She tore her gaze off her and the simultaneous relief and disappointment that bloomed in chest at losing Clarke’s intense gaze left Lexa wanting to punch a wall. “I was having uh, a nightmare…”

“You don’t need to explain yourself,” Lexa replied gently and Clarke gave her that look again that could make stars collapse on themselves.

Clarke stared at her a little longer before slowly nodding. The longer they held each other’s gazes the more Lexa felt herself falling in through Clarke’s eyes and getting lost in the sight of her. Of her heart and her soul. The sheer pain that she carried but also the strength, the resilience – a never-dying fire that could burn the oceans if she ever tried. Eventually Lexa realised that she was still standing close to the bunk, still had her hand resting and curled around the small fence around the top bed. With a shake of her head at herself she quickly released her grip and took a few steps back, clearing her throat. Not loudly, she was mindful of Raven sleeping below them.

And even if Lexa knew that she should go now, she shouldn’t say anything more; she found herself doing it anyway.

“You have nothing to be ashamed of Clarke.” Lexa said, taking a few more steps backwards. Clarke’s eyes followed her movements with bird-like accuracy. “Not a thing.”

Clarke blinked at her. “I-I’m not ashamed,” she said, and Lexa couldn’t help but give her a smile she’d forgotten she was capable of doing.

“You are, it’s obvious. But you shouldn’t be. Whatever… whatever your demons you’re fighting,” Lexa swallowed thickly. “You should be proud. Not ashamed.”

She’d already said too much, so without giving Clarke a chance to reply she stepped outside the
cell and shut the door, making sure it was locked before sparing Clarke one last glance – her jaw midday way open, caught between what to say – forcing each step down and walking away.

She had her jaw clenched so tight her teeth should have broken as she moved away, her fingers wrapped tightly around her flashlight. Walking away from Clarke had been harder than it should be have been. Than she knew it should be. She hated these sudden emotions in her chest, this burning in her lungs. She ignored what it could mean. What it all could mean. And she especially, she especially ignored the words she’d heard Clarke mutter as she walked away, how even if the words were said so quietly and softly it still made her chest crack open and her heart roll onto the floor.

“Thank you,” Clarke had said.

And Lexa had so badly wanted to run back and pull her into an air-tight embrace at the unabashed sorrow in her voice that she picked up her pace and didn’t glance behind her till she was outside the prison and heading towards home.

How could two words make her feel like the earth had fractured beneath her feet?

- 

Clarke didn’t get back to sleep at after Lexa’s encounter.

She did try, but it didn’t work. For once she hadn’t actually dreamed about the past but the future. Of being taken back to the Tower in her sleep, dragged through the endlessly tall wooden doors and thrown at Nia’s feet. That cold, cold smile that no matter how much Clarke liked to pretend it didn’t affect her, it always did. Always sent such a jolt of fear to her gut she would only be able to stare and feel her insides curl. She had been here for a month now, and yet still every time she managed to find herself asleep she always jolted awake and instantly searched her surroundings for where she was.

She did enough sets till her arms gave out and upon finding that she’d still have a few hours till dawn pulled a book from Raven’s collection and sat crossed-legged on her bed, squinting only slightly to see through the dark. It hurt her eyes to strain them so much and at random points sometimes she’d swear her gloved hand would twitch, but her eyesight was doable enough that she could read through the blackness. Though even if she tried to focus on the words she was reading or even the reps she was doing when she had worked out, there was only really one thing her mind was focused on.

Unsurprisingly, it was Lexa.

More specifically it was the way she had looked at her, had spoken so softly to her. And more than that it was that brief, fleeting moment, when Lexa’s hand had been rested against her cheek, gone so fast the absolute second her eyes had snapped open. If she concentrated hard enough she could recall the warmth she had felt from Lexa’s hand. Could recall that flicker of something in her gut. Happiness, joy, or maybe something softer. Something she craved a thousand times more.

Maybe peace.

When the sun finally bothered to turn up and the morning birds began their usual chirping, a rogue scream from a magpie that had Clarke wanting to find the source and clamp its beak shut with her hands, she crept down to the floor and put the book she’d been trying to read away. For a moment or two she let herself linger, leaning against the wall of the cell and small gap near the top where the sounds of the birds were clearest. A smile spread on her lips as she recognised a raven’s call and just as she felt the tickle in her throat as if to replicate it the other Raven shifted in her bed.
Raven was pretty much the opposite of morning person. This was something Clarke had learnt quickly, and meant that she had long since learned that the best way to stay on Raven’s good side was to never be the one to wake the girl up. Meaning, when Raven let out a loud groan and a pillow-muffled ‘I’m going to kill whoever invented birds,’ Clarke only chuckled.

“Birds are far too valuable to kill off Raven.” Clarke said, her lips still set in a grin as Raven reluctantly rolled her head and poked her head out from the bottom bunk, dark hair messed and eyes squinting.

“Oh yeah? And what do the annoying bastards do apart from ruin mornings for everyone?” Raven grumbled.

Clarke rolled her eyes. “Just because you hate mornings doesn’t mean everyone else does.”

“Hey! I don’t hate mornings!” Raven exclaimed. In a surprising show of enthusiasm she suddenly pulled herself up and jumped up to two feet, showing off her usual snarky grin. “Mornings means breakfast.” She gave her a wink. “And why are you defending birds anyway? They’re birds.”

Clarke merely sighed and grabbed her toiletries before walking past her and playfully bumping her in the shoulder. “Says the girl named after a bird. Have you no respect for your ancestors?” She quipped, ducking out just in time to miss the toilet roll Raven piffed at her head. She didn’t however get away in time to miss Raven’s affronted reply.

“You better not be implying my mother is a raven Griffin!”

She went through her usual morning routine, as always avoiding the stares she got when she showered and her scars were on for all to see. When Raven had first seen them she hadn’t said a thing, much to Clarke’s surprise. She had been nervous for it in all honesty, and after forcing her hands not to shake and to finally let her see it had been so strange to have such an anticlimactic response. She simply hadn’t said a thing; that is until night came. Just as they’d gone to their respective bunks and Clarke had readied herself for yet another night of no sleep, Raven had whispered quietly into the dark.

“Was it Nia?”

Clarke had taken a while in her reply. In the end, she’d given in.

“Mostly.” She had whispered back. “Some of them are from when… when I killed people.”

Raven hadn’t said anything more.

Knowing Raven and her love for food meant that by the time she got back to the cell the girl would have probably left already to wake Octavia up and drag her to the canteen. Clarke shook her head of wet hair, letting a slow breath through her lips at the feel of being clean after so long. She was taking advantage of showers as much as she could after having barely anything hygiene wise from the Tower. Every few months or so if she was lucky Nia would make the effort to actually see her and normally she’d always scrunch nose, lips pulling back in disgust. If she was even luckier Nia would give a damn enough to begrudgingly slip a bucket of water at her and soap to make her look and smell less like road kill.

She picked up her pace as she headed for the canteen. For a few moments she had to blink to get the soreness out of her eyes, a slow pulse beating painfully behind them. Her inability to sleep wasn’t doing her any favours, but maybe the worse part was she was actually starting to get more hours than usual the longer she stayed here, so when she pulled her usual all-nighters they hit her
twice as hard. Thankfully she did get a couple hours at least last night. But nothing more.

Jumping out in time at the sudden canteen door swing open and a woman shouldering her way through Clarke narrowed her eyes for only a beat before just shaking her head and going in. She stopped just a few steps in, swinging her gaze around to see if Raven and Octavia were already there. She craned her neck when she thought she saw a flash of familiar dark hair, but her gaze was suddenly snagged by someone else entirely as she searched the room, her heart beating a little faster even if she really wished it wouldn’t.

Lexa stood stiff backed near Anya, a slight crease in her brow as she talked with her in low whispers. Whatever they were talking about must have been intense, because her eyes were locked on Anya’s with a fierce fire, a twitch in her jaw whenever Anya replied with something that clearly wasn’t what Lexa wanted to hear. Clarke let herself get lost a little in the sight of Lexa. The way she stood, spine straight and hands held behind her back, the vein that pulsed in her neck like she was one second away from letting anger consume her. Clarke did try to at least be a little subtle in her staring but, as usual, with Lexa that translated to basically nothing. It didn’t take long for Lexa to sense her gaze.

Her eyes snapped off Anya’s, instantly sweeping over the room to try and find whoever was watching her. When they finally landed on Clarke’s own she felt her breath hitch without her permission. Even if Lexa was far she could still see the subtle relaxing of her shoulders, the slightest softening in her posture. Before Clarke could let herself get sucked in any further with her ogling of Lexa the girl in question tilted her head slightly, a small raising of her brow as if in silent ask. Clarke somehow understood the hidden question.

It was the way her eyes had softened too that gave it away, how the green changed from the harsh edge of a rock to velvet. She was asking her about the nightmare last night, if she was okay. Clarke hesitated for just a second before nodding her head. For a moment Clarke thought she saw Lexa’s body sag with relief but it happened so fast she doubted whether it actually did. They held gazes for a little longer, Clarke unable to not smile the slightest bit at Lexa’s worry over her. When Lexa’s lips twitched like she was going to smile too she tore her gaze away and focused back on Anya.

Clarke lingered a few extra seconds, savouring the sharpness of her jaw that this angle brought her, that by the time she actually bothered to pull herself away Raven was suddenly there beside there and she was jumping back in surprise.

“Fuck, Raven,” Clarke breathed, internally scowling at the fact that someone had managed to sneak up on her. “You gotta’ step out of the shadows like that?”

Raven smirked at her. A bad sign. “Well, I didn’t exactly come quiet. I even called your names a couple times but it seems like you were a little preoccupied.” That damn smirk grew till it showed teeth. “I wonder what caught your attention.”

Clarke rolled her eyes and playfully shoved her. “Fuck off. I’m just tired.”

“While I don’t doubt that,” Raven started, stepping forward and swinging her head around until it landed on Lexa. She glanced back to Clarke grinning. “It wasn’t tiredness that stole your breath.”

“Don’t you have food to eat Raven?” Clarke huffed.

Raven sighed in mock frustration, her sight briefly flicking over to Anya. “I’m trying to eat but it seems she’s far more interested in talking with your girlfriend.”
“For fuck sakes.” Clarke growled, shouldering past her and heading for the cue. She heard a cackle from behind her and grit her teeth, but even with her annoyance she couldn’t stop the tug at her lips at Raven’s infectious laugh. A hand suddenly clasped her shoulder in a drunken sway and Clarke rolled her eyes instead of pushing her off. Raven noticed this and grinned at her again, face so carefree and mischievous that Clarke wondered why she chose to befriend someone like her. So quiet and broken and hurting.

“Hey,” Raven said with an odd amount of softness, as if sensing her change in thoughts. “I’m kidding. She’s not your girlfriend.”

She gave her a wink.

“Not yet anyway.”

This time, Clarke actually did push her off her.

Her and Raven had breakfast like usual together, a suspicious looking yellow blob that could have been eggs. Clarke had had way worse in the Tower so she took it without complaint and Raven didn’t say anything because, well, it was Raven, and as long as the thing was vaguely edible she could probably eat a crowbar if it came to it. But even if their conversations were the same snarky and relaxed comments, there was an underlying sense of apprehension, a nervousness that couldn’t quite be shaken off.

Because Octavia hadn’t come.

But there was also something else.

Nearly everyone had cleared out of the canteen by now and it was pretty much just her and Raven hanging back for a few extra minutes, Raven staring at the door in some vain hope that Octavia would come striding through like she always would. Clarke found it a little strange the amount of nerves and anxiety that Raven was showing. It wouldn’t be too unusual for Octavia not to turn up. It was rare, but it was something that happened from time to time. Either in sleeping in or being held back because she ended up knocking heads with another girl, Octavia not turning up today shouldn’t be making Raven as nervous as she was now.

“Raven,” Clarke said, seeing the look that Lexa was giving her from across the room. They needed to get out. “Come on, we’ve gotta’ go.”

Raven didn’t look at her, her grip tightening from where she was crossing her arms. “She’s coming. Just give it a few more minutes.”

“We can’t Rae, we have to go.”

“A few more minutes.”

Clarke sighed. “Raven.”

It must have been the way she said it, because finally Raven brought her gaze to meet hers.

Clarke gently squeezed her arm. “She’s not coming today. We can go check out her cell, she probably just slept in.”

Raven bit her lip, but, with a frustrated sigh through her nose her shoulders slacked. “Yeah, yeah
okay,” she breathed and Clarke offered her a small smile before nudging Raven in the direction of the doors. As they walked out Clarke couldn’t help but throw one last glance behind her to catch sight of Lexa.

Clarke smiled when she found Lexa had already been watching her.

They took the quickest route to Octavia’s cell, and Clarke didn’t make comment of Raven’s fast pace. It was certainly strange, as Raven was the type of person to only do something even resembling exercise with a gun to her head, and even then, Clarke had no doubt she’d try to talk her way out of it. So the fact that she was actually powerwalking now, bordering on a run – something was definitely wrong.

Clarke would have snatched Raven’s elbow to ask what the hell was up with her, but she realised that they’d suddenly made it to Octavia’s cell.

For once Harper wasn’t up on her bed doing origami, but standing and leaning against the metal bars of the cell, hands gripped tight to her crossed arms in a white grip. Her jaw was clenched so tight Clarke could see the vein in her neck. At their arrival Harper’s gaze shifted from where it’d been staring out to the opposite hall but to them. Instant relief was on her face.

“Thank fuck, I’ve been waiting forever for you two,” she breathed.

Clarke frowned, but Raven beat her to the question they were both thinking. “What happened? Where’s Octavia? Has she already…”

Harper shook her head. “She’s leaving at the end of today. Got pushed back. But you need to go find her, now.”

“Why?” Clarke asked. Raven’s out of place nervousness suddenly made sense then. Octavia was getting out today; Raven had been worried she’d missed it. Missed their goodbyes.

Harper just jerked a finger in the direction she had been staring at. “She went to talk with Trikru. I don’t wanna’ land myself in any shit, but you can fight yeah? Make sure she isn’t getting jumped or something?”

“Did she seek them out?” Raven said, her brow furrowing slightly.

Harper looked confused too. “Yeah. Don’t know why, but all that gang shit always means trouble. Go, before worse shit can happen. She’s a right pain in my ass, but… I owe her.”

Raven nodded and grabbed Clarke’s arm, dragging her away before she could ask any more questions. Clarke snatched her arm out of Raven’s grip with a scowl, but when Raven didn’t even glance at her and kept storming, Clarke quickly caught up to her. A frown replaced her scowl.

“Why would Octavia seek out the Trikru?” Clarke asked. She must have been missing something, because Raven and Harper hadn’t even blinked at the notion that Octavia had called them. It didn’t make sense, what would Octavia have anything to do with them?

Clarke saw Raven hesitate, the way her eyes nervously flicked towards her. “Can we talk after we get her out from whatever situation she’s landed herself in?”

“Why?” Clarke persisted. Raven let out a frustrated sigh, shooting Clarke a glare.

Still, she gave in. They made a sudden sharp turn and just dodged the woman on the other side. “O used to be with them. Used to be Trikru.”
“She did?” Clarke breathed, staring at Raven with wide eyes. Raven nodded without looking at her.

“Yeah. She left them though, so I’ve no idea why she’s suddenly gone to seek them out now. She’s getting out today you know, what the fuck is she doing?”

Clarke didn’t have answer to that, so instead just bobbed her head and stayed quiet, glancing around to see if she could catch sight of where Octavia had gone. It took a few more minutes of wandering around, but it wasn’t the sight of the brunette that had attracted them but the sound, the usual fiery voice that only one girl could make.

At the same time they both suddenly stopped and spun around. Raven was first to hastily stumble out into a hallway and Clarke came in after her a second later, her spine straightening when she saw Octavia a few metres ahead of them – but also the Trikru. Octavia was talking with Niylah, her jaw clenched and anger rolling off the girl in waves and it was like Clarke could just feel the heat of her fury from here like it were a physical thing.

Raven didn’t waste a second before shouting at her. “What the fuck are you doing O?”

Octavia abruptly twisted around, her jaw dropping at the spotting Raven. That anger that had been so burning and suffocating dissipated the second they locked eyes.

“Raven,” Octavia blinked. “What are you doing here?”

“What are you doing here? With them.”

Octavia swallowed, briefly flicking her gaze to the blonde behind her. Clarke noticed that Niylah’s attention wasn’t on Octavia anymore but on her, and with all the willpower she could muster she turned away from her, refusing to meet her gaze. “It’s nothing.” Octavia’s lips pressing into a thin line she turned back to face Niylah. When she saw that Niylah was still staring at Clarke her voice morphed into a growl that could scare demons. “It’s nothing, right?”

Niylah’s eyes reluctantly peeled off Clarke, switching to Octavia’s. She sighed. “Right.” She glanced up to Raven with a smile. “I won’t hold her up any longer. You can have your girl back Reyes.”

And with one last glance to Clarke – Clarke still didn’t look at her – Niylah dipped her head and walked away, the Trikru following behind her.

They waited till they were alone again before Raven stormed her way forward and shoved Octavia backwards. “Are you insane?” Raven hissed.

But Octavia just scowled at her. “I’m sorry if I missed breakfast Rae but-“

“You know that’s not what I mean O.” Raven growled. She let out a humourless chuckle. “You’re getting out today, why would you choose now of all times to play with fire?”

Instead of the relief Clarke had been expecting at being able to go home, Clarke saw none of that in Octavia’s eyes. Instead she seemed to draw herself up more, tension in her back, tightness in her jaw. “I’m not a child, Raven. I can take care of myself.”

“Trikru mean nothing but trouble Octavia.” Raven muttered, stepping close to her.

“I’m fine.”
“Octavia-“

“Fuck you Raven,” Octavia suddenly snapped. For a second it seemed like she was going to push her, but though her arms twitched like they were going to move, her hands remained balled at her sides. “I’m fed up with your babying. Out of all people you should know I don’t need another fucking babysitter.”

Raven blinked at her. “O, I’m not babying you I’m being your friend. You’re getting out and starting shit right now will-“

Without letting her finish Octavia just scoffed and pushed past her, knocking her with her shoulder. Raven stumbled back slightly from the force of it. Octavia’s burning gaze briefly met Clarke’s as she stormed past. It was strange, whatever look Octavia gave her, and before Clarke could even attempt at deciphering it Octavia tore her eyes away and disappeared around the corner.

For a moment they were just left in tense silence. Clarke thought it was mostly just numbing shock, the unexpected turn of events that had Raven just staring forward, like she was still trying to understand what had happened. The minutes dragged on painfully slow, and eventually, like a rope being stretched till it couldn’t hold on anymore, Raven let out a loud shout of fuck.

“Idiot! What a fucking idiot!” With a snarl she threw up her arms and glanced at the wall as if she was going to hit it, and since it was clear Raven hadn’t had near enough training for something like that she jumped forward and grabbed Raven’s wrists.

“Don’t, it’ll hurt like hell and you’ll hate yourself for it.”

Raven growled and snatched her hands harshly out of her grip. “Oh, so you can do it but I can’t?”

“The pain is nothing for me.” Clarke said, ignoring the hurt in her chest. “It won’t be for you.”

Raven glared at her, but there was this softness that she couldn’t seem to keep off her face. Clarke didn’t give in to Raven’s stare, glaring at her right back, daring her to try anything stupid. But thankfully, in the end Raven just sighed.

“I need to go after her.”

Clarke hadn’t known Octavia near as long as Raven had, but still she felt like that maybe wasn’t the best idea. “Just give her a bit to cool down. You may just end up aggravating her further.”

Clarke had been expecting immediate resistance from Raven at the prospect of waiting. Instead, much to her surprise, Raven blew out a long, shaky breath and nodded.

“Alright.” She said quietly. Her sight flicked up towards the ceiling, her eyes closing. “Alright.”

Clarke didn’t know what to do, so instead she just stood there, silently letting Raven know that if she needed to talk she’d be there.

She hoped that Octavia would calm down soon.

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It took Roan four visits till Clarke became willing to talk to him.

The first time he came back, the day after their first encounter, Clarke watched him approach with a scowl. She had been sitting but at seeing him she slowly pulled herself up and pressed her face
into the bars, narrowing her eyes as she watched Nia’s son walk towards her, stopping just out of arms reach. This latter fact didn’t go lost on Clarke, and she couldn’t help but chuckle mirthlessly.

“Well, at least you remembered one thing.” She muttered. Leisurely she put her arms through the bars, letting them hang over. “You deaf Roan? I told you to fuck off.”

“My mother’s quest to find you out has consumed her entirely Clarke,” Roan replied, ignoring her words. “Whatever you have, it must be powerful.”

“You wanna’ know powerful Roan?” Clarke teased, pushing her face further into the bars. She showed her teeth in a way that was more predator than human. “Step a little closer and you’ll see.”

Unfortunately, Roan didn’t take the bait.

Clarke sighed. “Well. If you’re not going to entertain me, you can do what I said yesterday and piss off.”

She suddenly pulled out and stepped backwards, offering him one last cold smile before retreating into the corner of her cell and going back to drawing on the walls with a plastic spoon, using the flat end to sharpen and try and carve light white marks into the harsh stone. She didn’t acknowledge his presence, and when she ignored his question for the sixth time he sighed and finally walked away.

Clarke thought she’d finally gotten rid of him then.

And then came his second revisit.

She was sitting crossed-legged on her bed this time, hands on her knees and with her eyes closed, trying to summon any sense of calm in her body and mind. She felt his presence at the sound of loud boots hitting against the stone. She’d subconsciously drilled it into the head the sound of the prison guard-issue shoes click against the ground as they walked and the sound she was hearing now wasn’t that. This time she only opened her eyes and tilted her head, sighing through her nose when she saw Roan there.

A week had passed since his last visit. Clarke realised now she’d been stupid to think he wouldn’t come back.

“Why are you so afraid of what Nia wants?” Roan asked.

He may as well have spoken to a brick wall, because this time Clarke didn’t even dignify him with a response. Instead she sighed again and turned her gaze back to the front, closing her eyes. Roan said a couple more things that Clarke didn’t answer. She called on whatever traces of patience she had left to pull back on the impulse to slip through the bars and snap his neck. He stuck around longer than last time and Clarke couldn’t work out if she was impressed or infuriated by it. He continued on with a barrage of questions, and some of them weren’t even related. Some of them were lame ones, like what had she been drawing the other time, did she have a life before this; dreams she reached for.

Clarke kept her eyes closed and she said nothing.

Roan didn’t haul open the cell door and drag her out like she thought he’d do. He didn’t even spit a single threat at her, didn’t lay a finger on her for her disobedience. It was because of this that right when he decided he wasn’t going to get anywhere today and stood up, that as he walked away she opened her eyes and watched him move. The moment he was out of sight a frown forming on her face.
The third time he revisited was after a bad beating.

Atohl had her today, and out of all of them he was one of the worst. She was curled up on the floor, pulling herself in as tight as she could go, eyes screwed shut in the determination to not let any tears fall. To show any sign of weakness. Roan came and found her lying there and she even heard his sudden and sharp intake of breath. She would have told him to fuck off again, but her jaw ached with the amount of hits she’d taken today. If she dared to open it she feared the pain that would explode.

Her eyes seemed to crack open of their own volition. She may have been lying in a ball on the floor but her head was faced towards the cell door, and with blood trickling down the side of her head she locked sights with Roan. She stared at him as he slowly crouched down, and, after hesitating for just a second, inching his way forward till he was right up against the bars. Clarke was far too weak to try anything with him for today however so she did nothing.

Roan seemed to have known this. Carefully he reached behind him and revealed an ice pack – Clarke had to blink to herself to make sure it was real – and slowly he put it through the bars and on the ground. He gave it nudge and it slid over to her till it was in arms reach.

At first Clarke just stared at him, but slowly, her eyes flicked down to the ice pack. Swallowing thickly she gingerly reached a hand, having to bite back her wince as it pulled muscles that screamed in protest with pain. Her fingers curled around the pack and with the same slowness she brought it back. She placed it against her ribs where it hurt the most and let out a relieved sigh. For a few minutes she let herself sink into the feeling, only bringing her gaze back to meet Roan’s after she’d heard the shifting of his clothes as he stood up.

He didn’t say a single word to her this time.

He simply nodded, and when Clarke continued staring, he walked away.

The next time he came was a week later. Clarke was lying down again, but it was on her front and she was on her bed. Her shirt was sitting on the floor below her but the reason for that lay in the marks in her back. It had been a whipping day today. This time, when she heard the scuff of boots, she recognised it as Roan’s. Her chin had been resting on her arms folded in front of her but at seeing Roan she lifted her head slightly.

Roan didn’t go as close as he did last time, seeming to realise that while she was clearly hurting, it wouldn’t be enough to stop her from lunging at him if she wanted. Clarke watched him closely as he stood there, just a few steps away from her cell. He was a persistent thing; she’d give him that. The silence hung heavy as they stared at each other until eventually Roan like always spoke first.

“I used to always think there was no one who hated my mother as much as me,” he said. Clarke watched his movements carefully as he crouched down so they were eye-level. “But I’m starting to believe that there’s another person now.”

Clarke didn’t know what to make of him. Maybe that was why her first instinct had been to get him as far away as possible. It was hard to get a read on him, and she still hadn’t yet figured out his intentions. It made her uneasy and on edge, made her shoulders tense and eyes track his every movement, every twitch. But he had shown her kindness the other day, a wordless kind. A powerful kind.

It was true he could be playing her. Trying to gain her trust so she would slip, say something she shouldn’t. But there was something in the way he looked at her, the clench in his jaw when his eyes lingered a second too long on her wounds. Whatever his intentions he was human. More
human than anyone she’d met so far in this godforsaken Tower.

And with four nearing five months of not even a glimpse of such a thing, perhaps that was why she decided to give it a chance. At the start it was a test. Every word was measured, every tic and reaction was watched carefully. Yet as the days leaned into weeks of their continued contact eventually Clarke would end up much further than she’d initially estimated with him. At some point, they’d even wander in the territory of friends – as someone she’d trust.

But for now, in this moment, her guard was up so high it pushed way up through the clouds.

“Then you’re starting to believe correct.” Clarke muttered, and at her words Roan grew a small yet surprised smile.

He suddenly glanced behind him as if to see if anyone was here, and just as Clarke felt a frown form on her face Roan was shuffling closer and pulling something out of his pocket. The shape was rectangular and with wide eyes did Clarke realise it was a muesli bar. He slipped it under the bars and slid it towards her. Despite her reservations about the man her arm instantly shot out from where it had been supporting her chin and snatched the bar off the ground before momentum had even been done carrying it.

She didn’t give a damn if the thing could be poisoned and ripped it open, stuffing it down her throat as fast as she could. She couldn’t even tell the flavor or what was in it, and it was gone so fast that she heard Roan let out an amused chuckle. She hadn’t any thing properly nutritious in months. Wiping the lingering crumbs off her mouth she scrunched up the wrapper into a ball and threw it back to him. It didn’t quite make it out but it got far enough that he could reach through and grab it himself.

Roan gave her a pleased smile. “I know you’re an Other Clarke. Nia knows it as well.” Clarke’s eyes hardened but he continued undisturbed. “I know it’s a lot to ask of me, but you need to keep going. You need to keep fighting. My mother can’t ever know that what you hold is real, of what you can do. She can’t ever know of our kind.”

Clarke had been forced to learn how to keep a blank face during her time here. How to not let a glimpse of emotion through. But even this was such a shock that she just managed to catch her jaw from dropping. Roan stood up, his smile now a smirk.

“Ste yuj.”

And with that, he walked away.

That wasn’t his last visit. He came back repeatedly, sneaking her food if he ever could. It was a dangerous gamble whenever he did so it didn’t happen too often but Clarke was always grateful when it did. One time it was when Nia was starving her, and that apple he’d somehow smuggled in and into her cell tasted like one of the best damn things she’d ever eaten. For the majority of his visits they talk. Mindless things or otherwise. Dreams, hopes, if we’re alone in the universe or ignored.

And sometimes they just sat in silence.

Either when Clarke was in too much pain too speak, or simply just to soak in each other’s presence. Just to know that there was someone there, on the other side, a steady comfort of knowing a soul who could comfort your own if need be. Sometimes one just talks and the others listens and there’s nothing more. As the time went on Clarke found herself looking forward to his visits more and more, so when the day came of her attempted escape and Nia finding that Roan had something to
do it – the moment that she was thrown back in her cell was also the moment she realised that Roan would never visit again.

A part of hoped that he was still alive, somehow.

That now she’s in Polis that he made his way over to her cell in Azgeda Tower, he pushed through the doors and found his usual spot by her cell and finding it to be empty he simply grinned. She hoped, with all she had, that he felt relief that even if it wasn’t in the way they’d planned, she’d gotten out of the Tower.

She hoped and she hoped and she hoped.

-  

Lexa wasn’t pacing.

She wasn’t. Heda didn’t pace, didn’t constantly clench and unclench her fists as she walked up and down the length of her office, didn’t flick her gaze back and forth towards the clock on her wall, counting the seconds till Kane arrived. And she certainly wasn’t nervous or anxious. She was none of those things.

Okay, so she was all of those things.

She did her best on not letting her discontent show though. Yet no matter the effort she put in, Anya, who was sitting on her desk in a blatant display of disrespect that Lexa had fired for less, merely watched Lexa pace with raised brows. She could see right through her like always.

“If you keep pacing like that you’re gonna’ leave burn marks you know.” Anya commented, ignoring the glare that Lexa shot her.

“She’s not pacing.” She muttered.

She continued pacing.

Anya rolled her eyes. “It’ll be fine Lexa, you’re getting nervous over nothing. Kane may be Skaikru but he’s good. Well, as good as you can get. I’d still gladly hit him if you told me to.”

“Please do not hit him Anya.” Lexa sighed, pinching the bridge of her nose.

Even if her eyes were closed she could feel Anya’s smirk. “Hey, I said if you told me to. I’m not going to just jump him when you’re not looking.” She paused, and Lexa opened her eyes because a quiet Anya was a suspicious Anya. “When you’re not looking actually isn’t too bad an idea.”

“No.”

Anya scowled at her. “Oh come on, just one-“

“No.”

“Just-“

“No.”

Anya let out a huff. “Fine, Commander. Whatever you say.”

Lexa narrowed her eyes at her. “You are insufferable you know that right?”
"’Course I do.” She grinned. “Yu ai sis. I’m going to annoy you till my last breath. Speaking of,” Anya suddenly reached behind her and pulled out a lighter, its case made to look like smooth wood. “Here’s your lighter.”

Lexa’s jaw dropped. “You told me it was stolen!” she exclaimed, rushing forward and snatching her favourite lighter from Anya’s grasp.

“Oh right,” Anya breathed out, leaning back. “Yeah I did, didn’t I? I said that when I lost it so you wouldn’t get mad, but I found it the other day. Figured I’d give it back.”

Lexa couldn’t even articulate how incensed she was. “I can’t- You just- This is my favourite lighter, you know this! I’ve had to use fucking matches to light my candles for two weeks! Two weeks!”

“Mate, I respect your candle obsession, I really do. But you have a problem. I’m calling an intervention.”

Lexa raised a threatening finger. “It is not an obsession. It is a liking.”

Anya raised an equally threatening brow. “Otherwise known as an obsession.”

Lexa would have said something more, maybe even challenge her to a brawl of some sort (idiotic she knew but, she tended to lose her rationality around Anya and became the little sister she’d always been) when there was a knock at her door. Lexa jumped and pointedly ignored Anya’s snicker. She blinked. Kane was here.

Despite what they were just talking about, Lexa still couldn’t help but glance out to Anya in search of support. The ever-present snarkiness faded from Anya’s face slightly, her grin softening yet hardening, the type she always did when she wanted to tell Lexa to just get on with it but also that if it went wrong, she would be there. Lexa didn’t even know why she was so nervous.

That was a lie. She knew exactly why.

She just didn’t want to admit it.

Shaking the thoughts of a particular blonde from her head she walked forward and opened the door, subconsciously straightening her spine and letting that emotionless mask, Heda’s mask, slip into place. Marcus Kane was a man that always wore a warm smile, wavy short dark brown hair unkempt but somehow still neat enough that it suited him perfectly. Hazel eyes lit up at seeing her, and despite Lexa’s reservations she offered him a small smile in response.

“Heda, it’s been far too long,” Kane grinned. He presented his arm in the greeting that was traditional for her people, and it made her chest a little lighter to grip each other’s forearms.

“It is good to see you as well Kane.” Lexa replied, letting go. She stepped back in cue for him to follow into her office, and Lexa watched him as he walked, her gaze falling to the guard behind him that had led him here. “Thank you Lincoln,” Lexa said, giving him a genuine smile. “No don sich?”

“No Heda. No won foto tika.” Lincoln answered, smiling slightly. His eyes flicked behind her before he bowed his head. “Heda.”

Lexa nodded at his dismissal, turning around and slowly closing the door. She found herself only a little relieved to find Anya had moved off her desk and was now standing sentry next to it. Her arms were crossed and any of that playfulness she had seen just moments before was gone. Here,
she was Heda’s guard, eyes trained onto Kane and to any and all of his movements. She knew that Anya had been joking before, but if Lexa even just tilted head the right way, Anya would launch at Kane without hesitation.

It made her feel a little more at ease.

“You are free to sit, Kane.” Lexa said, walking her way around her desk. Kane waited till she was at her chair for him to sit down. When they were both eye-level Kane gave her a little smile.

“I was being sincere when I meant that it has been far too long since I last saw you,” he started, genuine warmth behind his words. “I was glad to hear you wanted to meet again. Though… your way of going about it was… odd, to say the least.”

Normally Lexa would invite him the normal way, but that way meant that Pike knew when Kane was visiting. And for this visit she didn’t want Pike knowing she had seen Kane. So she’d sent a messenger for it, had someone slip into his work and pass along a note into his hand, for him to come to Polis without Pike’s knowing.

Kane leaned forward, a worried crease in his brow. “Has something happened?”

Lexa kept her hands clasped in front of her. “We’ve known each other for a while now Kane. I hope to able to call ourselves friends.”

“Of course,” Kane muttered, his face not changing.

“And, as friends, I trust that what we say remains between us. Even to those who stand above you.”

Understanding dawned in Kane’s eyes. “This is about Pike isn’t it?” he murmured, defeat working its way into his voice. Pike was a topic they visited often when it was just the two of them, and it almost always had a habit of making their talks tense and grinding conversation to a halt. Pike had been a good friend to Kane, and while their relationship was becoming strained, Kane still refused to turn against him. Not yet. Not when he thought that he could change his mind, make him better.

Lexa swallowed the apprehension in her throat. “Pike came to me the other day, and while, yes, I will admit that is not strange, his behaviour was.”

“You want to know if he’s been acting strange on my end too.” Kane finished, watching her closely. Lexa nodded stiffly.

“I’m not planning anything against him Kane,” Lexa said, and she meant it. Currently. “But I need to know what the people opposed to me are doing. And I don’t know what Pike is.”

They stared at each other. Lexa didn’t like the tension in the air, the way it tasted like metal on her tongue. But it was unavoidable. Kane was loyal, but in this aspect, he was torn. They had had talks of what would happen if Kane were to be Chancellor and not Pike, but it has always been stressed to be hypothetical, not real, not when Pike, his old friend was in charge. Lexa watched as Kane shifted uncomfortable in his chair. Lexa didn’t feel apologetic for the hard stare she was giving him. Something like this was important.

And she needed to know which side he was on.

Kane seemed to know this too.

Eventually, Kane let through a long sigh that Lexa couldn’t tell what it was filled with. His eyes bounced over to Anya, the way she stood constantly glaring at him, and then back to her. And it
was the way his shoulders fell that she knew he’d made his decision.

“He has been acting different lately.” Kane muttered. He leaned back into his chair, defeat like a stench in the air. “He’s been getting more excited recently and keeping people further away from him. It has been harder to just find him, my friend, than it’s ever been.”

“Do you know why?” Lexa pressed.

He frowned a little as he thought. “I have noticed that… he’s been calling someone. I’ve walked in on him on the phone with someone and he would almost instantly hung up and act like he wasn’t.”

So there was someone working with him. “Have you ever gotten close enough to hear the person on the other line? Any details you could give me?” Lexa asked, trying to keep the urgency out of her voice.

“Once. I caught I few words before he could hang up.”

“And?” Lexa said expectantly

Kane still looked uncomfortable talking about his friend like this, but Lexa’s face didn’t change, and he soon gave in. He sighed, shaking his head and leaning forward. “It was a woman. I didn’t catch any accent, I wasn’t listening hard enough, but I know it was a woman’s.” Kane glanced to his watch. “If that’s all, I have some place I need to be.”

Lexa could tell he was lying, but she let it be because she understood he needed to leave. This meeting was drawing a line in the sand, and while it was easy for her, it wasn’t for him. So she gave him a nod that he gratefully returned and together they stood up. Lexa turned to Anya.

“Escort him to his car, Anya.”

Anya glared at her for being made chaperone again, and Lexa just gave her a sweet smile, mouthing ‘lighter’.

“Thank you for coming Kane,” Lexa said, catching him while he was at the door. “It is greatly appreciated.”

Kane stared at her, his eyes sad. “I know… I know Pike isn’t the greatest man, and that what we’re doing is necessary. But he was once a very good friend to me. And I wish it hadn’t come to this.”

“I told you, I’m planning nothing against him—“

“I know, I know Heda.” He gave her a smile that was full of grim understanding. “That is why I chose you. Even if I wish it could be another way, you’re the one who I’d follow.”

Lexa blinked, and with one last bow at her, Kane left her office. Anya threw her a glance from behind, and Lexa caught the question in her eyes. She gave her sister a reassuring nod and Anya returned before following on after Kane. Only when the door shut close and the room was drowned in nothing but silence did she slowly step back, turning around and letting her hands grip the edges of her desk. She hung her head and closed her eyes.

Pike wasn’t alone. He had someone, a female someone, which narrowed the list down at least. But really she didn’t know if she wanted this information because it was starting to become glaring obvious who that someone was. The interest of Clarke, using Pike, using her – there was one person who could link all of those together. She had thought she had escaped her. She was wrong.

But Nia was nothing now, wasn’t she? She lost her prison to the riot three years ago. Azgeda
Tower held no one now.

No one except for Clarke.

Lexa let out a groan.

Why couldn’t she just own a candle store or something?

- 

Raven and Octavia weren’t talking to each other.

It was strange. Clarke was so used to it being the three of them, and now she was left in the odd position of travelling back and forth, either as a messenger or because she wanted to talk to the other. For the rest of the tense morning Clarke stayed with Raven, them eventually migrating over to the Rec Room. It was increasingly unnerving having Raven be so silent. The anger she held was obvious, made her body seem to vibrate with its intensity, but she didn’t speak. She just glared and clenched her fists and looked about the human personification of a bomb about to go off.

When afternoon rolled around of nothing of this Clarke had had enough. She sighed and picked herself up, her hand briefly squeezing Raven’s shoulder, a wordless promise of support, before she went off searching for Octavia so she could just get the two to talk. As always Harper seemed to know where Octavia was and she had told her of her location gladly. According to her, whenever Raven and Octavia fought it was maddening and unless you quite literally forced them to just work it out they could never do it on their own.

Clarke found her at the library. She had only been in the library a few times, and as she slowly walked through, eyes scanning for Octavia, she thought that maybe she’d come here a little more often. Her search was proved successful when she reached the last row of shelves, Octavia holed up in the corner with Lincoln, the guard standing close but not enough to touch, talking in low whispers with her.

Octavia glanced up when Clarke came into her line of sight. Her face tightened. In response Clarke just sighed through her nose, leaning her shoulder against the shelf.

“If you’re going to ask about why I was with Trikru, you should turn away now. I can take care of myself.”

“I know.” Clarke said. Octavia blinked, seemingly shocked at Clarke’s lack of argument. “I’m here to tell you to talk to Raven. I don’t care what you say, what you have with Trikru is none of my business, but Raven cares for you. And you care for her. It’s your last day O, you owe her.”

Octavia’s jaw clenched, and just as she looked like she was about to argue with her usual fire, Lincoln spoke up, his gentle voice a stark contrast to his intimidating build.

“She’s right, Octavia.” He murmured.

Clarke watched with surprise as the tension instantly bled from her at Lincoln’s words, the softness in her eyes as she glanced to him.

That explains why Raven doesn’t flirt with Lincoln.

Octavia glanced back to her. Her face set into a glare, but it wasn’t too harsh. “Fine. Where is she?”
“You know where she is.”

Octavia narrowed her eyes at her, but it wasn’t a second later that she was nodding anyway, casting one last glimpse at Lincoln before walking towards her and past her. Clarke lingered, knowing she didn’t need to direct her. Her gaze switched from where it’d been watching Octavia’s back to Lincoln, settling on the tension in his form. They stared at each other with equally analyzing gazes.

Clarke lifted her chin slightly. “She’s leaving today.”

Lincoln shifted uneasy under her scrutinizing gaze. “She is,” he said, his back straightening.

“She’ll be free.”

“She will be.”

Clarke watched him. “Nothing to hold her back.” She muttered carefully.

Lincoln didn’t respond to that. She watched him swallow thickly, but he held her stare even if it was obvious he very much wanted to do anything but. She pushed herself up so she wasn’t leaning against the shelf anymore.

“Nou bos op em tombom, o em na nou eno os gon yu.” She hated how easily the threat slipped off her lips, how trigedaslang took less effort than it should have.

Lincoln’s eyes blew wider than planets, and Clarke only offered him a sharp smile before she turned around and walked away from the stunned guard.

She had one last pit stop to make before she could meet back with Raven and Octavia. Well, assuming they would have hashed it out by then. For this person to find it would take a little more effort so it was more exploring than anything that she used to find the woman. She did stop a couple people though, the ones who didn’t see her and hastily spin around. One of them was a woman with dirty blonde hair and brown eyes and seemed to be the only one with the guts to look at her head on. She was the one who let her know where the Trikru tended to hang around.

Clarke found Niylah near one the entrances to the outside, the gang standing together like family – fierce, protective and very much glaring holes in her as she approached them. The outer group all tensed and pulled themselves up at seeing her and Clarke supposed that response was warranted considering her reputation. She didn’t feel like a fistfight though so she stopped a few metres away from them. Despite her short stature, something Clarke really wished she could change, she had way of making herself seem bigger than she was. She saw the nervous glances some of them threw each other, like they were silent asking if it was worth it, who would win.

“I want to speak with Niylah.” Clarke stated, making sure her voice was clear. There was an underlying tension to her words, a subtle hint that if they denied her, it wouldn’t end well.

Thankfully it seemed no fight was going to be needed because Niylah suddenly strode out from the group, her people parting around her.

Her smile was surprised but pleased. “Clarke, I wasn’t expecting to hear from you again. Especially so soon.”

“It’s about Octavia.”
Her expression fell. “Ah, of course.” Though it was clear she was disappointed, she still gave a nod to her people behind her. “This won’t take long. Gwen, yu hedon gon nau.”

A woman with long black hair and slanted brown eyes, presumably Gwen, frowned at the order. “Ai nou de os-“

Niylah lifted a hand, effectively cutting her off. “Gwen.” Was all she said, and that was enough. Her frowned deepened into a scowl, a glare being thrown in Clarke’s direction. But she listened, begrudgingly, bowing her head and stepping back. Niylah walked past her and towards Clarke stopping just a few steps from her. When Clarke didn’t say anything she just raised a brow, gesturing outwards with her hand.

“Lead the way then.”

Clarke narrowed her eyes at her, getting a grin in response.

It wasn’t imperative that their conversation remain private, but that didn’t mean she wanted it broadcasted and having the entire complex hear. She led her to one of the more empty halls. It was one near the canteen and tended to remain like a wasteland till the bell came, then the sea of bodies would roam in and out, but after, like always, would it suddenly become empty again. It was a passing space, not a lingering. Like an airport. It felt strange to meet there with no destination afterwards.

As expected it was empty, and instantly Niylah went to the nearest wall and let her back slump against it. Clarke watched the action carefully. There was no fear in her, not a drip of hesitation or apprehension in any of her body.

“I was not the one who called Octavia, if that is what you’re asking. I know she is getting out today. I have no intention of delaying that.” Niylah started, and there was an odd softness to her eyes that told Clarke that while, yes, her and Raven had walked in on Octavia and Niylah arguing about something, the care that Niylah held in her words for Octavia was real. Clarke must have been frowning, because Niylah somehow seemed to catch on to what Clarke was thinking.

“I know it seems odd,” Niylah went on. “But Octavia was with us. Even if she left, she is still seen as Trikru, and so, as family. I have nothing against her nor do I hope to in the future.”

“Why did she leave?” Clarke asked, her curiosity rolling her tongue.

Niylah gave her a wry smile. “That’s not in my place to share.”

Clarke’s brow creased slightly, but she nodded anyway. That made sense. A sudden sigh was forcing itself from her lips as she brought herself to what she actually wanted to talk about.

“What were you arguing with Octavia about?”

“We weren’t arguing. Octavia was expressing her anger, something that I’ve had practice of getting used to.”

Clarke tilted her head. “About?”

Niylah stared at her, and Clarke could see she was considering what to say, if she should be truthful. This made Clarke tense up and it was that sight alone that seemed to somehow convince her. Niylah looked at her, and Clarke had to blink herself when she thought she saw something
akin to awe in her eye.

“She wanted to know why I asked for you to join us.” Niylah said, that look never leaving her face.

“Why?” Clarke asked, unable to hold it in. It had been bugging her too. The motive for why Niylah had chosen her out of everyone to join them.

Niylah threw a glance over her shoulder as if to check if someone was there before she turned to her again and presented her hand, her palm facing up. Clarke’s gaze switched between her hand and Niylah’s expectant gaze.

“What am I meant to be…?”

There was a sudden crack, a buzzing like electricity, and it was only pride that kept Clarke from lurching back when she saw the sparks suddenly crackling between Niylah’s fingers. Electricity created ropes in her hands, fizzing and splitting and leaving Clarke watching with fascination.

“There are rumours, in the Underground,” Niylah said, keeping her voice quiet, “that Cage’s killer was Wanheda. That the girl who got convicted for it, but then let off, is actually Wanheda. The Other who protects us. Who wordlessly dedicated themselves to keep us safe, someone we could always rely on, no matter what.”

Clarke took a slow step back, her eyes slow to travel up and meet Niylah’s.

“They say that she was sentenced to death because of all she did for us. But when she was due to die, she didn’t. Some say she did. That she did die. And the rest of us… the rest thought that she simply got moved, someone took her, she escaped, whatever – but that she was alive.”

Clarke tried to keep her hands from shaking.

“That… that she lived. That one day, Wanheda would return.”

Their sights locked, and now Clarke understood, the wonder, the awe that burned like bonfires in Niylah’s eyes. Why her gaze lingered, why at times she looked she would kill for her if she so much as whispered the command.

“You’re her. You’re Wanheda.” Niylah let out a breathless chuckle. “Of course I wanted you Trikru. There would never be a higher honour for me.”

“Niylah…”

She shook her head at her, taking a step forward while Clarke inched back. “Don’t deny it. I can see it in you. I can sense it.”

Clarke stared at her, unable to speak.

Niylah seemed to understand what she wanted to know though. “I can see it, faintly, the way the fates centre around you. What you’ve done, it burns like a fire on your back. Anyone with the right Link can see it.”

Clarke didn’t know what to say. Her identity was something she had become so used to hiding, the need was practically engraved in her bones. The fact that someone knew, someone she hadn’t told, hadn’t decided herself – it made it feel like the earth was swaying.

But she kept herself stable. If Niylah had a Link to the fates then there was no way she could lie
her way out of it. It was out of her control. The best she could do was minimalize it, make sure no one else knew. So she straightened her back. She evened her breathing, and most importantly, she let that mask that was Wanheda slip into place. After not using it for so long it felt like coming home.

It was true she had a physical mask, but the real one was the one the struck the true fear.

Niylah actually stumbled back.

“No one can know,” Clarke muttered, keeping her voice low. “No one.”

“It’s really you,” Niylah breathed. Clarke narrowed her eyes and Niylah seemed to suddenly realise the threat that was coming if she didn’t agree. “Of course. It’s… it is an honour. It is honour Wanheda.”

Even after all these years, she still had never quite been able to get used to the way people said her title.

Clarke gave her one last nod in clear dismissal, and just as Niylah walked passed her and Clarke was about to just let her back slump against the wall she heard Niylah’s steps stop, and instead, turn back around. Clarke turned too if only so she could ask her what she thought she was doing, when instead she had to fight to keep her jaw from dropping a she saw Niylah kneeling down on one knee before her.

“When you rise again, Wanheda, know that my fealty is with you.”

And only then, only once she locked eyes with her, did she get up and truly walk away.

Nyko had explained to her once about the intricacies of the mark and how it worked. She had been eighteen, nearing nineteen, right at the verge of when she fully resigned herself to Wanheda.

“Each mark may look random to you, but it’s actually the opposite,” Nyko had said, Clarke hitting a black punching bag with taped fists. The large room echoed with the rhythmic pounding. “Each line or swirl or whatever, dictates what abilities you have.”

“Why?” Clarke had asked, the word coming out in breathless pant.

“Because,” Nyko had continued, “Nearly every Other is… a mix, you could say. Their marks are a mixture of different shapes that attribute to a certain ‘full’ or ‘pure’ mark, a Vessel. When it’s a mix, the parts of the mark are called Links. Because they link to a particular Vessel.”

She had her stopped her hits then, gently holding the sides of the punching bag with her hands. “So, every Other, their mark isn’t one mark but multiple parts of marks, Links, that make up them?”

“Not every.”

She had tilted her head at him.

“The Vessels. They are the only Others with no mix. They are nothing but a single Link. This makes them the most dangerous, because with the usual mark, while you can have a wider range of abilities, they will be weaker and more subdued. They’re lesser versions of their full counter parts.”

Clarke frowned at him. “Vessels are rare then?”
“There are only twelve, and shall only ever be twelve.” He muttered solemnly.

Clarke had blinked, trying to sort through how small a number that was. “Why only twelve?”

He had winked at her then. “Another time. Your posture is getting worse.”

Clarke drew her hands over her face, letting her head fall into her hands. Out of all the Others she could have met, she just had to meet one with a Link to the fates. One that could see the lines of future and past. Because having Nyko wasn’t bad enough. She felt a sudden spasm in her chest.


Nyko wasn’t alive anymore.

Clarke lifted her head, staring out to where Niylah had been. She seemed to be on her side. She had sworn fealty and all. That meant something. Had to mean something. A bitter chuckle escaped her lips before she could stop it.

This day just got better and better.

- 

It was her birthday.

Her eighteenth. Officially, she was an adult. Ready to take on the world by storm, throw her years of high school behind her with a grin and march into a new age built her generation. To find her passion and follow it till her last breath and hopefully live it too. Maybe art if she could, if it ever got her anywhere. Her mother’s incessant nagging that it really wasn’t and that she should just follow into her footsteps of doctor was far from reassuring.

It was her birthday, and instead of all the wonderful things she could be doing, she was in a darkened alley being shoved up against a wall.

Clarke let out a groan at the impact, stars briefly dancing in her vision from the force of the slam. The back of her head pulsed in time with her racing heart and with a low snarl did she shoot her arm out and punch her attacker in the throat. He lurched back with a breathy stuttered curse but Clarke lunged for him not a second later. Her hands wrapped him around him in a manoeuvre Nyko had spent hours throwing her into the ground with, and with a sharp intake of breath she pulled and twisted, the back of her attacker flipping and slamming into the ground.

She jumped on him and forced her knee into his throat. Instantly he was struggling, but the small additional presence in her mind and the buzzing of her hand let her know she was stronger than she should have been. Her face was hidden through a black hoodie and an even blacker kohl mask that made her eyes look that much more terrifying. The man’s face grew red, and she saw the defeat in his eyes, the second he realised that he’d lost.

“Your kind are scum,” he wheezed, and Clarke growled low at him. He flinched from the sound, but still a sadistic smile spread on his lips. “Monsters you all are. And we all know what happens to monsters.”

“He was just a boy.” Clarke snapped. At the same time their heads titled to the side, at the shaking body of a boy only twelve, skin dark and eyes wide and terrified.

The man sneered from below her. “You are the devil’s children. All Other’s will die and burn-“
“You are the monster here.” Clarke snarled. “You and no one else.”

It looked like the man was going to say something in reply, but instead his lungs finally ran out of air and his eyes rolled into the back of his head. Clarke quickly got off him and her lip pulled in disgust at the sight of the unconscious man. She spat a mouthful of blood at his face. He had gotten a hard shot at her face near the start when she’d underestimated his speed.

What a wonderful birthday.

Clarke turned around suddenly, swallowing at the sight of the boy huddled up against a dumpster. The skies were bleeding black and night was sure to fall any second but still she could make out clear as day the fear written into every inch of his skin, every stuttered and heaving breath he puffed out. She rushed over to him and crouched down, raising her hands placatingly and offering a shaky smile.

“Hey, it’s okay, he can’t hurt you anymore.” Clarke said softly.

She had been doing her usual nightly patrol. Her incident last year when she was seventeen and had fought off a bunch of thugs trying mug a woman was the beginning not the end to her now regular hobby. Could you call being a vigilante a hobby? Was she even a vigilante if she wasn’t looking for crime but just for where she could sense a possible death? Whatever her title, it had become a common occurrence to her life. Somehow.

It was the whispers she’d heard first. She had been casually gliding over a building when they had suddenly slammed into her ear, making her stagger slightly. Instantly she had spun around and flown across the ground as fast as she could to wherever the source was. The closer she got the more it wasn’t just whispers she could hear anymore, not just that repetition of ‘here, here, here’ but of whimpering, of crying. Of a slap.

The boy was still shaking, but he wasn’t pushing himself so far back into the wedge of the dumpster anymore. Though there was still traces of that fear there was wide-eyed awe there too as he stared at her. Clarke didn’t know how she felt being stared at with such an intense emotion, but for now she pushed the unease in her gut aside and focused on the kid in front of her.

“Are you hurt?” she asked, keeping her voice gentle.

The boy swallowed before slowly shaking his head.

Clarke gave him a relieved smile. “Okay.” She glanced to the side at the man again. She wasn’t blind to the similar features they shared, even if he was so much bigger than him. She turned back to the boy. “What’s your name?”

He hesitated, and Clarke, biting her lip, carefully reached up her hands and pulled her hoodie down. The boy’s eyes grew as he took in her wild blonde curls, but more importantly, the very human person underneath. Well, mostly human. With a small smile she lifted her hand so the boy could see, and when she was sure he was watching she made her mark glow.

“It’s alright, I’m like you, see?”

The boy continued staring at her hand. After a few stretched seconds he raised his own, hesitantly letting his fingers graze over her mark. At the shared touch she saw the boy’s own mark, a circle with a line cutting through that sat on the underside of his wrist, began to glow too. An astonished smile bloomed on his face and Clarke didn’t understand how anyone could have hurt someone so innocent.
“Leo.” The boy mumbled quietly. He didn’t meet her gaze, instead keeping it nervously fixed on his hands that he’d brought into his lap. “My name is Leo.”

“It’s nice to meet you Leo. Though... I wish it was under better circumstances.” Clarke added the last part in a mutter. Leo, visibly gulping, finally lifted his eyes so they were locked onto hers.

“Are you Wanheda?”

Clarke let out a shaky breath. “Yeah. I am.”

His brow creased. “They said you were a guy.”

“Who said?”

Leo shrugged. “People. I’m not... I’m not meant to, but I can’t help it. When people think loud I can hear it. My friends, the ones I’m not meant to have, they say Wanheda is like us. Is a guy that protects Other’s.”

“Well, I can assure you Leo, I’m not a guy.” She tilted her head slightly. “Although, it wouldn’t hurt to keep up that pretense,” she wondered aloud. When Leo stared at her she shook her head and brought herself back. “I do... protect people, I suppose. But not solely because of what they are. Whether Other or not. Leo, do you have somewhere you can go? Someone you can stay with?”

He ducked his head, fiddling with runners so worn they looked one step away from falling apart at the threads before carefully bobbing his head. “My grandma.”

“Do you know where she lives?”

He nodded again.

Clarke let out a relieved sigh. Okay. She had somewhere to take him then. She should have just left him here, but she knew her heart wouldn’t let her leave him till she was sure he’d be safe. She pulled her hood back down so it shrouded her face back into its darkness. She gently placed her hand over his fidgeting one. His gaze snapped up to meet hers.

“Come on, I’ll make sure you get there safe.”

His jaw dropped slightly. “Really?”

In reply she just gave him a smile.

It took a few long moments, but eventually his small hand intertwined with hers and Clarke stood up, their joined grip not breaking. He was the one that started moving first but only after staring up at Clarke confused when she didn’t instantly start walking. His choice, was Clarke’s silent response. He was to go somewhere he felt safe and wherever that’d be she would take him. She did pause just as they were about to leave the alley though, courtesy of Leo tugging at her sleeve.

“What about...” he pointed a finger at the unconscious body behind them.

Clarke felt a snarl build in her throat at being made to look at the despicable man’s body again, only keeping it in because she didn’t want to scare Leo. “He’ll be fine. His ego will be bruised for a long while coming but... he’ll be fine.”

“Will you be fine?” Leo asked, looking up at her.

Clarke smiled through her cut lip. “Will have a horrible headache tomorrow, but I’ll be okay.”
Leo looked relived from her answer.

Even if night had fallen the streets were still seeable through the dark. The streetlights bathed everything in a hazy yellow glow, pushing out the blackness that nipped at the edges of the road they walked in the middle of. Together, hand in hand, Clarke followed Leo as they walked. She constantly made note of their surroundings as they travelled and at one point after seeing a shifting shadow in the corner of her eye suddenly snatched Leo into her arms and jumped behind a hedge. A moment later a group of drunken teens stumbling across a nearby street and disappearing down another one.

When they finally got to Leo’s grandmother’s house Clarke was relieved. Still, she kept her grip on his hand tight even as they stood at the front door, Leo having to stand on his tiptoes to reach the doorbell. A harmonic jingle broke out as his finger pressed the button, and it didn’t take long for the red front door to suddenly swing upon and a woman with greying hair to grin broadly at them.

“Leo, my sweet, sweet boy!” Leo burst forward and jumped into her arms, the older woman letting out a dramatic oof but wrapping her arms around him in a fierce hug all the same. “What are you doing here, tiger?”

He pulled out from their hug, still grinning widely. With an excited hand he pointed at Clarke who had been standing awkwardly behind him. “It’s Wanheda Grandma! She saved me!”

The grandmother raised a brow at her that Clarke pretended didn’t make her fidget. “Is that so?” she said, her spine straightening. “You helped him did you?”

“I found him when someone was hurting him. They hit him and I intervened before it could happen again.”

The older woman sucked in a sharp breath. “This person...” Clarke noticed her hand was shaking. “Do you know them?”

Before Clarke could say anything Leo spoke up from where he was nestled in-between his grandmother’s legs. “It was Pa.”

The older woman shut her eyes and sighed. Tense seconds passed before she slowly opened them, a simultaneous soft and steely gaze locking with Clarke’s.

“Thank you.” She said. Clarke swallowed the emotions in her throat. “Is he... is he still alive?”

Clarke ground her teeth. “Yes.”

The woman nodded. “Okay. Well, it’s getting late, and I think after a day like this a good nights rest is needed.” She patted Leo’s shoulders and he smiled up at her. Clarke knew a dismissal when she heard one and took a step back, jolting slightly when a sudden hand was at her wrist.

It was Leo. “Will you come back?”

Clarke opened her mouth but didn’t manage to say anything. The sheer hope that burned so brightly in Leo’s eyes made her want to say yes so badly, yet she knew that she couldn’t, she shouldn’t. There were so many dangers if she did.

“You helped my grandson Wanheda,” Leo’s grandmother suddenly said. “You saved him. You will always be welcomed here. You will always be safe.”

Clarke understood what she wasn’t saying. That she wouldn’t hand her over to the police, that her
identity was safe with them.

So it wasn’t that surprising when she sighed. She gave Leo a smile. “Okay. But you have to be good, yeah?”

Leo’s face somehow brightened even more and Clarke’s grin grew at the sight of it.

What a strange birthday.

“Wait, it’s your birthday?” Leo breathed, and Clarke couldn’t help but frown.

“How did…” she stopped herself when she remembered what he had said before.

Leo’s grandmother lightly slapped the back of his head. “What have I told you about reading minds without permission?” she scolded, and Clarke didn’t hide her shock at the woman speaking so nonchalantly of her grandson’s abilities.

“Sorry.” Leo murmured. “I won’t do it again.”

Clarke just shook her head with a disbelieving chuckle and stepped back. “It’s alright. Give me some warning next time though.” Her eyes flicked up and down between the two of them, and she felt her heart twist when Leo’s eyes lit up at her subtle confirmation that he really was going to be seeing her again. Clarke offered a nod to his grandmother, which she returned.

“Be safe, Wanheda.” The older woman said. “And do not listen to the fools who call you a monster.”

Clarke held their stare for a few moments longer before she turned around and glanced up towards the sky. She raised a hand to get a feel for the winds, smiling slightly when she felt the growing breeze play with her hair. She threw one last glance over her shoulder at the pair, finding them to be already watching her, stood in the doorway of a small, rickety old house. With a smirk that showed off her teeth she gave Leo a wink and felt that familiar building sensation start in her stomach till it courses through every vessel in her body.

And just at the mere second before that pressure could explode, she let out a delighted laugh.

What a way to celebrate her eighteenth.

When Clarke passed by the Rec Room after her encounter with Niylah, she found the pair still there, and, more importantly, still arguing. With a sigh and shake of the head she had simply kept walking. On the bright side, at least they were talking now and not just fuming silently about each other. She had done her part. Now it was up to them on what was to happen next.

So that left Clarke where she was now.

Wandering the halls.

Movement was always something that she found to calm her. It helped clear her head when she walked, or ran, or worked out or even sparred – it was the quickest way for her body to switch onto autopilot, for the forefront of her mind to checkout and to just breathe without the rocks in her lungs that tried to drag her down. Her steps were light as they hit the ground, a habit she’d had since the day she was born, and it meant that when she heard harsh clicks against the floor it was clear and blaring. Clarke paused, glancing behind her with a small frown.
She hadn’t really been paying attention to where she was going. With a double take she realised she was in an empty hall. No one here.

But she had heard footsteps.

When she looked to the front of her again a figure was suddenly appearing at the other end of the hall. With one came two and Clarke instinctively took a step back, except as her eyes flicked behind her, she saw more figures filling from there too. Three came in from the behind, the same two at the front. But Clarke’s sight was fixed behind her now. She slowly turned around and locked eyes with the dark haired woman that made Clarke clench her fists in an effort to resist the urge to deck her right there.

Ontari.

Fucking great.

“Afternoon Clarke,” Ontari grinned, smugness dripping from her teeth.

Clarke took note of the people standing next to her and the closing presence of the other two behind her. The women were bulky, masses of muscle that had Clarke already dreading the power that’d be in those fists. She’d be lucky to escape without a broken rib if this fell into a brawl.

Which meant she had to begrudgingly play polite. “What do you want?”

Ontari took a slow step forward and it set off alarm bells in Clarke’s head.

“I think you know what I want Clarke,” Ontari said, eyes shining with a glint that had Clarke wishing she had a weapon on her. Ontari’s people seemed to all take a collective step closer, pressing her in just that bit more, like a pack of wolves surrounding their prey. “I told you before. I want to find you out.”

“There’s nothing to find.” Clarke muttered. Her gaze snapped quickly around her. If she could take out enough of them she could make a break for it.

“But there is.” The arrogance that Clarke had gotten so used to seeing on the girl melted away to reveal bitterness. “You were put in Azgeda Tower, when it should have been shut down. Why was it opened for you?”

“You know my secret, Ontari,” Clarke said, anxiety crawling along her spine.

“No, I know one of your secrets.” Ontari growled. She stepped forward, till they were so close Clarke could feel her breath. “Tell me.” She muttered. “Tell me why Nia opened it for you.”

Clarke blinked slowly when she suddenly realised what this was about. She let out a disbelieving chuckle, which probably wasn’t the best idea considering the Ice Nation members surrounding her looked about one breath away from raining blows down on her. She couldn’t help it though, because it was just ridiculous.

“Seriously Ontari? This is all because of your mummy issues?”

Ontari’s face twisted into a snarl and before she could stop it she was suddenly shoved hard backwards, her quick reflexes the only thing keeping her upright. Instantly she burst forward and stopped just centimetres from Ontari’s tilted chin. There was a challenge in her eye, and as much, as much as she’d like to take it, she couldn’t. She still remembered Lexa’s warning from her first day. Starting another fight would only fuck her over. It felt physically painful to slowly step away,
but it was she did.

She really wished she didn’t when Ontari’s face broke into a smug grin. “Can’t start a fight now can you? What are you, without your fists Clarke? Nothing.” To prove her point her arm shot out again and hit her shoulder. Clarke’s foot was forced back from the hit but she didn’t retaliate. She couldn’t retaliate. But her eyes still burned their hatred.

“Do not test me Ontari.” Clarke warned.

“Or what?” Ontari counted, and when Clarke said nothing that smirk slid off her face, fury that reminded her so much of Nia Clarke felt sick replacing it. “What will you do, seriously? Run to Heda?”

Clarke glared coldly at her. “Walk away. Make this easier for you.”

But Ontari was out of patience now, pushing forward till her face was all she could see. “Or fucking what?”

Clarke’s arm twitched in instinct, just begging her to damn the consequences, let it feel the wonderful sensation of her fist connecting with Ontari’s jaw, when instead the opposite happened and a fist hit her stomach. She hadn’t been expecting it at all and curled over at the cheap shot, all the air being forced from her lungs. Before Clarke could retaliate two of Ontari’s gang jumped her, snatching her arms on other side and shoving her into the wall.

Everything in her was screaming to fight. To just fucking fight.

But she held back. She didn’t. Lexa had warned her not to start anymore fights, and she wasn’t going to. If they happened to her, well, that was a different matter. One that wasn’t her fault. If she didn’t engage, this couldn’t fuck her over.

Ontari was making it very difficult.

“Tell me. What is it? Why does she want you?”

The hands holding her arms were gripped so tight she was sure they were going to bruise. “You already know who I am,” Clarke pushed through gritted teeth. “You already know the answer.”

But Ontari’s features only grew more enraged. She punched her again in the gut, but Clarke had at least been expecting it this time and tensed her muscles in preparation for the hit.

“What does she care for an assassin? That’s not the reason. Stop fucking lying to me and tell me!” Ontari snapped.

“You already know!” Clarke barked back and this time she was rewarded with a slap. Her cheek stung and the pain had her eyes shutting, but what hurt a thousand times more were the memories that came barreling in with the hit. Nia’s face. The cold sting of her hand. The guards. The rooms. The chair. The Tower.

She snapped.

Clarke broke out of the hold her captor had on her, and it was bordering on euphoria the feeling of snatching her arm back and snarling so low in her throat it burned. The sound seemed to be terrifying in of itself because both of the women who’d been holding her lurch back. Clarke eyes snapped onto Ontari and she stormed towards her while Ontari back peddled with surprising speed. It took only seconds for Ontari’s back to hit the opposite wall, Clarke’s snarling face just breaths
Clarke’s teeth were bared and she was breathing harshly, her heart pounding in her chest. Even if the sight would have sent normal people cowering before her Ontari was nothing of the sort, and instead she was actually smiling, smiling, like she’d gotten exactly what she wanted.

“There it is,” Ontari whispered, so close that only Clarke could hear her words. “The animal you are.”

Clarke continued to stare her down. Her fists shook with restraint.

“People like to call my mother a monster. But that’s not true. She isn’t a monster, she breeds them. She creates them. That’s what makes her so powerful, why everyone flinches at her name.” She leaned even closer, till their noses almost touched. “You say you survived her. But you haven’t. You simply passed. Because you’re hers now, you’re her monster. Her creation.”

There was a sudden resounding crack that boomed through the empty hall. Ontari on instinct had shut her eyes, seeming to expect the blow, but when she felt nothing, they blinked open and instead were met with the sight of Clarke’s arm outstretched just a hairsbreadth from her head – fist buried into the wall.

Clarke’s gloved hand burned with pain.

They stared at each other. There was excitement in Ontari eye, and it made Clarke sick to the stomach. Even worse was the nausea, the absolute burning fury that she could feel boiling her blood from what Ontari had said. For a heartbeat, her hand had been aimed for Ontari face. Had been so ready to feel the disturbingly blissful sensation of fist against flesh.

In the split-second before contact she’d changed course for the wall.

“Do not test me, Ontari,” Clarke murmured, her voice so cold it was a wonder ice didn’t spread from her feet. “My hands may be tied now, but they won’t be forever. And I have a very good memory.”

Before she could say anything more someone slipped their arm around her neck and roughly hauled her backwards. Her heels dragged across the floor and Clarke growled low, bucking in their grip but only feeling the pressure at her neck pull tighter, her throat being squeezed out of oxygen. Even if Clarke struggled in her captor’s chokehold her eyes never left Ontari’s. They stayed on her, burning and burning and burning, and Ontari merely watched her with that same smug smile.

Whoever was holding her was strong, because black spots were beginning to dot her vision and it was becoming increasingly harder to fight back. It was right at the second before she would have lost consciousness that there was sudden thunderous bark of hey! and she was abruptly let go.

She instantly fell to the floor, heaving in as much air as she could. Her head was spinning with the lack of oxygen and it took her far longer than it should have to see the guard suddenly standing next to her.

“What the hell is going on here?” the guard snapped, and Clarke found it strange hearing the usual calm voice of Lincoln so angry. Furious, actually. With shaky legs and stubbornness as her motivator she pushed herself up to her feet, refusing to be on lower ground than Ontari.

“I had nothing to do with it,” Ontari instantly said, unsurprisingly. “She attacked her out of nowhere.”
Clarke couldn’t help but frown slightly at how quick Ontari was to throw her friend under the bus, but the bigger shock came when the woman who had been choking her actually played along, even if Ontari had quite literally doomed her to the Pit. She had to stop herself from openly gaping as the woman spat at Lincoln’s feet.

“And she deserved it too, blonde bitch had it coming,” the woman growled, her voice like crunching gravel.

Lincoln faced contorted with disgust and though he grabbed the woman’s arms and pushed her up against the nearest wall, jerking her arms behind her back, his eyes still found hers, squinted and confused.

“Is that true?”

Clarke paused, her eyes momentarily flicking to Ontari. She was watching her, chin tilted up, and she knew then that she had to go along with it. Grinding her teeth, Clarke forced the next words out of the throat with great resistance. “It wasn’t Ontari’s fault.”

Lincoln’s brow furrowed further, while Ontari’s brow shot up.

“Are… are you sure?” Lincoln asked, obviously not believing that Ontari hadn’t been the cause where she almost always was.

Clarke just nodded, and though it looked like Lincoln wanted to do anything but, he clenched his jaw and bobbed his head back. He stepped away from the wall and took the woman with him, cuffed hands making sure she couldn’t escape. Lincoln’s gaze lingered on her for a moment more, a last chance to say something, and when he did that Clarke looked the other way.

She heard him sigh before he gave in. “Fine. Your friend will be spending some time in the Pit, maybe there she can learn the consequences of breathing in the same air as you, Ontari.” With that he gave the woman a rough shove and gripped her arm, dragging her away.

With Lincoln gone but sure to return, Ontari gave Clarke one last smile.

“The fact that Clarke didn’t snap her neck then should have called for an award.

Ontari glanced to the remaining people with her before she locked sights with Clarke again. That gleam was back in her eye, but there was something different about it, something more manic. Like a starved flame that had finally gotten a lick of air.

“This isn’t over.”

“No, it isn’t.” Clarke muttered.

Ontari didn’t glance back at her as she smiled and walked away.

Clarke was slow to get back to her cell.

Ontari packed a harder punch than she thought. With the adrenaline gone it left her with the aching pain in her stomach. She hadn’t held back, that was for sure, and it made Clarke uneasy the overwhelming sense of déjà vu she felt as she slowly and carefully limped her way back to her cell,
how just infuriatingly familiar the process was. Her emotions tended to be explosive things she always had to keep care of, but the box she’d stored all that burning rage for Nia trembled as she dragged herself back.

A relieved sigh escaped her lips when she saw she was coming up to her cell and would be able to just lie down soon. The thought was motivation for her to pick up her pace, even if the pain increased because of it. The second she was within reach she grabbed one of the bars of the cell and pulled it to help bring herself in. Except the moment she was in she was stumbling back, as she hadn’t seen the person that was already in her cell and standing by her and Raven’s bunk.

Clarke blinked when she saw it was Octavia, Raven sitting with one knee up on her bunk.

“Hey, you guys worked it out,” Clarke breathed with a grin.

Her friends’ reaction were very much the opposites of Clarke’s. Raven instantly jumped to her feet, rushing over to her and scanning with her eyes Clarke’s very obviously injured state. Octavia walked up to her too, a hard frown in her brow.

“What the fuck happened to you?!” Raven snapped, making Clarke wince.

“Christ Rae, that was right next to my ear.”

Raven’s eyes bulged. “Right next-? Clarke, did someone slap you?”

She could still feel the sting of her slap on her cheek and realised that it must have left a mark.

“Clarke,” Octavia said softly, and Clarke clenched her jaw at her tone. “Who did this?”

“I’m fine. It’s nothing.”

Raven raised her hand as if to shove her but seemed to think better of it. “This isn’t nothing. Shit mate, did someone jump you or something?”

“I’m fine.” Clarke growled, pushing past her friends. Raven let out an indignant scoff while Octavia remained quiet.

“Why won’t you say who it was?” Raven asked, sounding at a genuine loss.

Clarke’s hand reached for a ring of the metal ladder to her bunk, and though she closed her fist around it, she didn’t move yet. She let out a small sigh. “Because it’s not your problem.” She said quietly. “It’s mine. I’m not dragging you into my mess.”

“It was Ontari wasn’t it?”

Clarke turned her head at Octavia. They locked sights, and Clarke was surprised to see the sheer amount of anger there, considering how softly she had muttered the words. When Clarke remained silent Octavia sucked in a sharp breath through her nose.

Raven was much less calm. “Her?! Oh that bitch. Fucking coward decided to do something then? Well, she’s about to meet some fucking hell because-”


“And just why won’t I do anything after she clearly slapped you across the fucking face?”
“Because then she’ll go after you.”

Raven furrowed her brow at her. “Clarke, just let—“

“No. This is my problem. I’m not dragging you into the crossfire.”

The silence that came then was so heavy it felt like they were underwater.

Clarke glanced around the cell, and though when her eyes landed on Raven and she saw the bitter nod she gave her she relaxed, when they switched to Octavia she tensed up. Raven seemed to pick up Octavia’s uncharacteristically quiet nature too, because the second her sight fell onto her friend beside her she was instantly grabbing her arm and standing in front of her.

“O. O, listen to me. Octavia. Octavia.”

Octavia didn’t say anything. Her gaze stayed stuck on Clarke and Clarke could practically see the flames in her eyes. Raven tried calling her name again, but Octavia wrenched herself out of her grip, jumping back.

And before anyone could do anything more Octavia was storming out the cell.

- 

It was too late when they found her.

They were too late.

They had made the mistake of lingering, of questioning what the hell had happened. After Octavia had stormed her way out her and Raven had just stood there, in an awkward bubble of time, unsure of where to go from there. It was clear that Raven still wanted to give her a piece of her mind of just why it would be a wonderful idea to let her get revenge on Ontari, and Clarke was still reeling that she actually had friends who were willing to do such things for her. After being alone for so long, being told she was alone so long, it was surreal to not have that anymore. But to have friendship. Support.

So they had wasted precious minutes before they’d gone after her.

Which meant that when they did catch up to her, Octavia had already lunged at Ontari.

Her and Raven came around the corner just in time to see Octavia throw Ontari into a wall by her hair. It was a second later when they were both bolting, desperate to deescalate whatever the fuck Octavia thought she was doing – but it was too late. The guards had already seen, and even if it was Lincoln who was sprinting his way over, grabbing Octavia’s arms and hauling her back, it was still too late. Clarke stood numb as she watched Lincoln cuff Octavia. Even so, she did see the way Lincoln faced contorted with pain. Like even if it was Octavia who was one bucking and fighting back it was him who was struggling the most.

Clarke may have been confused and frankly disoriented on what she’d walked in on but she wasn’t blind to the way one of Ontari’s goons was eyeing up Lincoln’s turned back. Thankfully she was close, so when the woman did decide to lunge at him Clarke blocked the woman’s jump and shoved her back hard enough for her to fall to the floor.

“Going for someone while their back is turned is pitiful.” Clarke spat, and she could sense the audience that Octavia had attracted switching to her.
The woman snarled from below her. “He’s a guard, he doesn’t deserve honour.”

Clarke burst forward and the woman scrambled back in impressive speeds. But Clarke didn’t make another move on her. “Everyone deserves honour.” Clarke muttered.

The woman and her stared at each other, but her glare was broken at shouting from behind her and when she spun around she saw why.

Octavia was still fighting against Lincoln’s grip as he pulled her back, but there were cuffs on her hand now, and her efforts wouldn’t get her anywhere anymore. And while Clarke had initially thought it was Octavia who was shouting, it wasn’t – it was Raven. As Lincoln dragged her back Raven walked on after them.

“What the fuck have you done O?! You were getting out! You were going to be free! How could you do this you fucking idiot!”

Octavia had tears down her cheeks, and all she was doing was shaking her head. “I’m sorry,” she whispered, clearly biting back her sobs. “I’m sorry. I’m not ready. I can’t go out. Not yet. I’m not ready.”

Lincoln hauled her around a corner and before Raven could run after her Anya was there, gripping tightly to her arm and shaking her head. At first Raven struggled, but when Anya’s ironclad grip didn’t let up, she just let out a snarl and let her knees sink to the ground. Clarke rushed for her then, and even Anya seemed to realise it was over, because she let her arm go and stepped back. Clarke instantly fell to knees in front of her and pulled her into a tight embrace. Raven almost instantly breaking into tears.

“I’m sorry,” Clarke whispered, rocking her gently as she held her. “I’m so sorry.”

Raven sobbed into her shoulder and Clarke held her tighter.

It was probably midnight now.

Clarke was sitting cross-legged on her bed, back against the wall and head tilted towards the small gap on her left, showing off the smallest sliver of stars. It was enough. She had always had a special love for the stars, but also an odd fear. Dread. They brought up a conflicting whirlwind of emotions she’d never been able to untangle. But still, she took peace out of staring at them. Picking out the constellations her father had shown her when she was little. Her eyes burned sometimes when she let herself think too long on that.

Raven’s snores bounced around the room like always did but Clarke was just glad the girl was finally asleep. It had taken her so much longer than usual because of what happened with Octavia. Anger made Raven antsy, made her pace and huff and mutter curses in Spanish and English. But sad understanding made her quiet. Made her stare at the floor with her head in her hands. For one of the few rare times, not a sound passing through her lips.

When that happened Clarke sat next to her. She didn’t try talking, wouldn’t know what to say, but it was the presence Raven needed. Not the words. Raven had only dozed off half an hour ago, and just before that she’d finally cracked. They were next to each other, both on Raven’s bunk leaning against the wall, knees pulled tight to their chest. In the absolute dark, she’d finally spoken.

“I’m worried for her.”
Clarke had had her eyes closed then, her head tilted up. Her eyes fluttered open and she slowly turned to look at Raven.

Raven sighed and shook her head. “Not for the Pit, for after. She’s so scared. Never had anything different, always been treated as something to hide. When she finally gets out… what if she’s not okay? What if she won’t make it? She says she’s not ready, what if she’ll never be?”

“Octavia can do anything.” Clarke had said, watching intently as Raven heaved another frustrated breath. “She’s a fighter. In every aspect.”

“That’s what I’m scared of.” Raven replied quietly. “She fights. Always. She fights authority, oppressors… herself. If she doesn’t have someone, I’m worried that she’ll fight herself till she loses.” She blinked suddenly, and Clarke made no comment on the wetness of Raven’s eyes. “That she’ll lose herself.”

Clarke was very quiet before she carefully said, making sure her voice was soft, “maybe you’re scared you’ll lose her too.”

Raven finally brought her gaze to meet hers.

Clarke kept going. “Your sleep has been getting worse. But that was because of Octavia wasn’t it? Because she was getting out?”

Raven’s throat bobbed, but with stubborn determination she held back her emotions and nodded stiffly.

“I think… I think she’s scared too. She’s not ready to leave. And maybe she won’t be till you’re able to leave to.”

“She’s the definition of independent Clarke,” Raven said, letting out a laugh that only held a flicker of the warmth it usually held. “She’s not waiting for me. She doesn’t need…”

Clarke gently shook her head. “I know how independent you both are. But this isn’t a question of that. You love her, and she loves you. You’re family I think. And she doesn’t want to leave that behind.”

“She only fought Ontari so she’d get held back. She’s not getting out anymore. Not as soon.”

“You two will be okay.” Clarke said, and with only a small amount of hesitance did she bring up her hand and squeeze Raven’s shoulder. “You’ll be okay. It won’t be easy, and it’ll probably seem like it’ll never be okay until the day that it is. But it will be. You’ll make it, and she’ll make it.”

Raven blinked the tears out of her eyes and averted her gaze, instantly using her sleeve to wipe her cheeks. Clarke didn’t question it and turned from her to offer her some semblance of privacy. For a few minutes they were in that silence once more, calm and vibrating all at the same time. Only once Clarke had closed her eyes again, trying with dwindling degrees of success to thaw out the ice in her heart, did Raven eventually speak up again. Words both soft and fierce.

“I don’t get you.” Raven had said, and it was so unexpected that Clarke opened her eyes and faced her with a frown. But Raven just looked at her and shook her head. “You’re always so sad, so hurting, but you can never tell. You say such nice things, and yet still believe that you don’t deserve such in return. That you’re getting it wrong.”

Clarke felt her heart get ripped out of her chest, but out of practiced habit she didn’t let it show.
Raven chuckled disbelievingly. “Like that, I just don’t get it. It can burn inside of you, like fire, but you’ll never let it show.” She let out one last sigh; giving her a look that Clarke couldn’t read before slapping her hands down on her legs. “Thanks for the talk. I better sleep now though. A girl needs her beauty sleep.”

Clarke hadn’t been able to say anything, so she’d simply nodded numbly and got off Raven’s bed, offering one last mumbled goodnight and climbing onto her own bunk.

The sound of footsteps brought her back to the present. She blinked a couple times as the scuff of boots drew closer, apprehension making her muscles tense. Her eyes flicked around the cell but there were no proper weapons close. Her best bet was the heavy book under Raven’s bed. It was a textbook on some physics mechanical thing that Clarke had no clue on, but the thing was big and could probably knock someone right out if she used it right.

And yet when the owner of the footsteps revealed themselves, Clarke realised she didn’t need the book.

Lexa looked a little surprised that Clarke was awake, but not too much. Though she paused she quickly began moving again, giving Clarke a nod, that Clarke curiously returned, and instead of walking on by like she was expecting she was reaching to her pocket and revealing a set of keys.

Clarke got lost on letting her eyes roam over Lexa’s face. The darkness that hid them made the shadows so much sharper than usual, made her eyes seem that much more vibrant, more burning. More alive. It was an intoxicating sight, and Clarke had never so much wanted to damn the consequences than right now.

Lexa carefully eased the cell door open and snuck in, and since Clarke had been so busy studying the gorgeous woman’s face she hadn’t noticed that Lexa had actually been holding something behind her back. Clarke should have noticed immediately, but instead what stole her attention was the nervousness she could see in Lexa’s eyes. The anxiety. She had never seen that emotion before on Lexa’s face, and even if it was something so small for some reason it felt like something so big. Something that she should take note of, remember. The slight shifting of foot to foot, the constant licking of her lips, dipping of her throat.

“I heard about what happened with Ontari.” Lexa whispered.

Clarke clenched her jaw. “Octavia will be okay.”

Lexa shook her head gently. “That’s not what I’m talking about.”

Clarke blinked slowly. “That’s not what I’m talking about.”

Clarke blinked slowly. She didn’t expect it, to see the anger in Lexa’s eyes. It was strangely beautiful. “It wasn’t Ontari’s fault, as I told Lincoln.”

“I find that hard to believe.” Lexa muttered, narrowing her eyes slightly.

“I find that hard to believe.” Lexa muttered, narrowing her eyes slightly.

“It’s what happened.”

They held each other’s stares. It was obvious Lexa didn’t believe her, but Clarke was stubborn to relent, and even if knowing that Lexa seemed genuinely upset over what Ontari had done – a fact she was definitely going to ignore for now – she didn’t give in. In the end it was Lexa who caved, and like that that anger disappeared as she focused back on the reason she was here.

Lexa let out a shaky breath before slowly revealing her hand from behind her back, and Clarke’s breath was taken from her as she saw what Lexa was holding.

A dream catcher.
“For your nightmares,” Lexa murmured, and if Clarke wasn’t seeing it with her own two eyes she would have never thought she’d see Lexa actually fidget. Clarke stared in shock for a few moments longer, and only once a slow warmth bloomed in her chest and she found she couldn’t contain her smile anymore did she reach out her hand and carefully took the dream catcher from Lexa. She ignored the spark that jolted through her arm when they brushed fingertips.

She had never had a dream catcher before. But even if she had no knowledge of them she could tell that the one she was holding was beautiful. Stringed webbed lines made eye-catching patterns between the white ring of the dream catcher, delicate feathers hanging from the bottom, different shades of brown beads sitting on the strings holding them. It didn’t look new or store bought but owned. Worn. Used.

Clarke eventually managed to tear her gaze away from the dream catcher, meeting sights with Lexa. A bad idea in hindsight, as with the way Lexa was looking at her, Clarke was surprised the earth hadn’t collapsed at its core.

“Thank you,” Clarke whispered, and she tried to convey just how much she meant those two words.

Lexa nodded stiffly at her. “I was concerned your restlessness might affect the offer inmates.” She explained, her body tense. “I… when I was younger, I had a dream catcher. It helped.”

“Do you still have it?” Clarke asked.

Lexa hesitated before answering quietly, “you have it now.”

There were too many implications in that response for Clarke to unpack right now.

Instead Clarke just swallowed the rock in her throat, feeling it scrape all the way down and leave it in tatters, her eyes falling back down onto the dream catcher. With gentle fingers she trailed her hands over it and desperately tried to ignore Lexa’s gaze that she could feel burning into her. Oh, how she wanted to give in, but Lexa’s eyes tended to be like black holes. Fascinating and otherworldly and so so dangerous. Able to tear apart worlds and distort time. Willpower was a shivering thing in her chest, but she held on.

And yet, when she heard the shuffling as boots as Lexa began to walk away, Clarke caved.

She looked up and caught Lexa’s gaze, and her eyes must have somehow been hooks because Lexa’s foot froze like she’d been hauled back. In habit Clarke found herself staring at her, at her eyes and her mouth and her. Just her.

Fear was the first thing that hit her. She wasn’t afraid of what she should have been though, she wasn’t afraid of the shitstorm that would follow with what Clarke recongised as her growing feelings for her, she held none of the fear that should be the source of her pounding heart when her gaze lingered a moment too long. Her fear was in Nia. Because Clarke wasn’t a fool, and she knew that whatever was brewing in her for Lexa couldn’t be stopped now and if Nia ever knew of it, knew of how her heart was slowly beginning to wander out of chest and into Lexa’s hands…

Nia would kill Lexa. She would. She’d kill the damn president if it meant making Clarke talk. The worst part though was that just from the thought alone, losing Lexa made her so impossibly furious and desolate that it wasn’t even a question that she would tear apart the universe to avenge her. It was fact, it was truth – it was the source of her fear.

So she had a choice. Either stop this now, fight it with all she could, or to give in. To just entirely
and utterly give in.

Lexa was still looking at her expectantly, a small crease in her brow that made Clarke’s heart ache.

“Clarke?” Lexa said softly, the way she pronounced her name with the pronounced ‘k’ making Clarke fight off a shiver.

Clarke took in a shaky breath. She gulped, and she gave in like she was standing at a cliff edge and had taken that first step to fall. “Why did you give me this Lexa?” she asked.

Lexa blinked. “I… I told you.”

“But that wasn’t the real reason why,” Clarke said, and she meant it. She had let it pass before, but it was obvious that Lexa hadn’t given her a dream catcher, her own dream catcher, just to stop her from disturbing the other inmates with her nightmares. Clarke knew she could be oblivious about things. Exceedingly oblivious, in fact. But this? This she knew.

And she wanted to hear Lexa say it.

“Yes it was,” Lexa said, narrowing her eyes slightly. There was a familiar streak of stubbornness in her voice that made Clarke smile.

“Lexa,” she started, and it was incredible to watch how Lexa’s eyes softened at her name, how they flicked downwards. “It’s okay.”

And before Lexa could interrupt – her mouth was already opening – Clarke went on.

“I know.”

Lexa took a step back, her jaw dropping slightly. It was obvious that she was understanding what Clarke wasn’t saying. She knew; she knew of how they always ended up staring at each other for too long, how shared touch sent sparks through their fingers, how a single look can send a heart pounding. She knew, because she felt it too.

Lexa must have suddenly realised she was still gaping, because suddenly her jaw snapped shut and she stumbled back a little.

And without another word she stepped out closed the cell door and she walked away.

Clarke let her back slump against the wall. With a small sigh her eyes fell onto the dream catcher in her hands. A small smile spread on her lips without her realising as she looked over to it. Lexa had said she had it when she was younger. Did she have a lot of nightmares as a kid? How was she as a kid? Did she have the same unruly hair, the same wildness that could only be tamed with braids? Was she less guarded, was her heart not something that she kept so closely to herself, so carefully and completely hidden from the world?

She glanced around the cell for somewhere to put the dream catcher, her eyes snagging on the smallest top of a nail that had been pounded into the wall, the paint making it almost impossible to see. Keyword being almost. Clarke shuffled forward and lifted the dream catcher, hooking it on the nail. The nail stuck out enough just to fit and Clarke found herself grinning when it hung near perfectly.

Slowly she laid herself down. Her sight stayed stuck on the dream catcher, tracing over the pattern in the strings with her eyes. She wondered what it would be like to draw one and decided that was what she could do tomorrow. Her thoughts were quick to skip from drawing to the girl who had
given her the gift. Clarke stared at the dream catcher till her body finally felt pity for her and let her sleep. The last thing she saw was the outline of the dream catcher in the dark.

And for once, she didn’t have nightmares.

Chapter End Notes

i hope this wasn't incredibly boring and you actually enjoyed this. also look at me updating ~semi regularly! are ya proud?
also! you may have noticed that i've made this a series now and… yeah i've kinda accidently started mentally planning a sequel to this. which is really bad because now i want to write the sequel and not this one but! do not worry! this’ll get done first. ill probably do another three or four chapters for this one, and then ill let myself start the next.

one stop station for translations:
Nou ai laksen. - Don’t hurt me.
Ste yuj. - Stay strong.
Yu ai sis - You’re my sister
No don sich? - There was no trouble?
No Heda. No won foto tika - No Heda. Not one bad moment
Nou bos op em tombom, o em na nou eno os gon yu. - Don’t break her heart, or it will not end well for you.
yu hedon gon nau. - You lead for now.
Ai nou de os- - I don’t think that is a good-
Hard Fists, Soft Kiss

Chapter Summary

right mates, I suggest ya fucking strap in, because it’s time to speed headfirst into what I like to call, A Fucking Fun Time

Chapter Notes

you all know how much I love a badass clarke, but do you know how much I love an angry lexa? spoiler: it’s a fucking lot.

(as always, for that Full Immersion to: Stars by Sam Airey) (if you’re wondering why this chapter is more poetic than usual its because of this song and its soft guitar) (soft music = soft wording okay fuck off its 5am ive been writing for 8 hours straight im TIRED)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

It was always the sounds that came first.

The shouting, the clashing, the chaos. The destruction that funneled into her ears until it was all she could hear, just nothing but those sounds that made terror set into her lungs like ash, made breathing a feat she had no hope in hell of achieving. Lexa ran faster, panic both far away but present, both muffled and burning in her chest. She was sprinting through halls that some distant part of her mind recognised to be old, halls she hadn’t seen in years. That actually everything that was happening right now; the complete chaos that came with prison riots, that it wasn’t real. It couldn’t be.

But this part of her mind was quickly overtaken with that overwhelming panic.

She couldn’t find her. She had been out when it happened. Had gotten a call from her aunt, had had to sneak outside to that certain patch of grass by the wiring pole, where the reception was better then anywhere else. She could never remember what the conversation was about. She’d tried over the years, in those few therapy sessions Anya had quite literally dragged her by the ear to. But it never came to her. She could never recall it. The only thing she could recall was her face, her screams, her blood-

“Costia!” Lexa screamed, but her voice was muffled for some reason, and no sound came out of her throat. It didn’t matter how hard she screamed. How she could feel the way her throat shook and vibrated and broke as she wailed her name. It didn’t matter. Nothing mattered for what she did. It never made a difference.

There was fire in the corner of her eyes but whenever she glanced towards it disappeared. But she could feel the heat sometimes, feel it lick and hiss at her ankles. Lexa jumped over the sudden body that had appeared below her, but her foot caught on the person’s bent knee and she came
crashing into the ground. The pain from the fall shot up her arms but it was surreal and sharper than it should have been.

Lexa’s sight was slow to travel to body she’d tripped over. Because a part of her already knew, somehow, the face she’d see. Still it rocked her to the core when she saw Anya there, face beaten and bloody and bruised and dead. It didn’t take long before she was heaving her guts out, but the sensation in her throat felt wrong. She didn’t throw up anything but blood. That horrible, horrible red.

With a sob she pulled herself to her feet. She could still hear the chaos around her, the thrash against metal, the poundings of fist against flesh. But she couldn’t see it. She could hear it, hear it like it was happening right next to her.

But the prison halls she was in were empty.

She ignored it and started running again. She had to find her. Find Costia. Get her out. This riot had been ready to burst for weeks now, simmering like a volcano just waiting for the right moment to explode. The violence coming was a given, it was expected, in the times she had visited Costia here at Azgeda Tower she’d always get threats as she walked by the cells. It shouldn’t have happened. Nia should have done something.

But she’d sat back. She had let it brew.

And now chaos rained down on all of them like hail.

Both inmates and guards; there were no sides, there was no order. It was just blood for blood. For everything that had gone wrong in their lives, every spit of saliva that had hit their face, every time someone had shoved them when a guard wasn’t looking, knocked into their shoulder. It was a time for debts to be collected. For taking every opportunity of the age old saying that was now chanted through the halls like a war song. It shook them, made Lexa stagger in her steps.

*Jus drein jus daun.*

She tried to yell her name again, tried till her throat was nothing but bloody tatters. But still there was no sound. It didn’t matter the effort she put it in it meant nothing. It didn’t stop her from trying though. From running through the lack of air in her lungs and sharp pain in the back of her throat, her feet still pounded against the ground with their force as she searched and searched and searched.

And just when she thought her body was going to finally collapse, she saw her.

She was there, standing just a hundred metres away, helping to shoulder some inmate who’d gotten shanked in their side. Even if by no logic should she have heard her Lexa did. Caught the soft words that Costia whispered, gentle and reassuring, the tone she always used when she was trying to calm someone through pain.

“You’ll be okay,” Costia whispered, and Lexa pushed her legs harder to reach her. “You’ll be fine, I promise.”

“Costia! **Costia!**”

“Just hold on,” Costia continued, Lexa’s screams never reaching her. “I know it hurts. I **know.** But you have to hold on, you hear me? You have to hold on. You can’t give up.”

She was so close now. Barely fifty metres away. She was so close, had the smallest amount to go,
if she could just-

And then like always came the bang.

The bang.

Suddenly all those sounds of chaos were gone. There was no shouting, no clashing, no chaos. There was nothing. Nothing but the sway in Costia steps, the quiet trickle of blood from her lip. Her brown eyes bounced to the inmate who’d snatched the gun from out of nowhere, them looking just as stunned as her. Lexa tried to scream again, tried to just get her to hear, to know she was coming, she was there. But no sound came out.

And yet Costia seemed to sense it somehow, because her head tilted in her direction, their gazes catching each other. There was a smile that spread on her lips, the one she always gave her when she wanted to soften bad news, and with it came the blossoming of red at her stomach. Lexa got to her just in time for her to catch her as she fell.

But when she caught her, falling to her knees with her, when those brown eyes she’d been expecting to see turned to face her they were blue. And suddenly those dark frizzy curls were blonde, and it wasn’t Costia anymore, it was Clarke. Blood falling from her lip, that still sardonic smile on her lips.

“I’m sorry,” Lexa whispered, and she didn’t know if she was glad she could suddenly speak now. A sob broke out of her and she squeezed her eyes shut, leaned down so her forehead rested against Clarke’s, gripped her dying body so tight it would bruise. “Ai krei fiya.”

“Remember Lexa, remember. I can’t help her now. Only you can.”

Lexa couldn’t stop her frown, her head lifting slightly if only so she could look down at Clarke from her strange words. “What are you saying?”

But Clarke just gave her same smile. Like she was grinning as the world ended before her eyes. “Wamplei ste komba raun. Sheid em kiln.”

Before Lexa could do anything more, say anything more, Clarke’s eyes drifted shut and she went limp in her arms.

“No, no no no. Wake up, wake up damnit!” Lexa shook her, rasps in her throat and wetness on her cheeks. But she didn’t wake up. Her eyes stayed close. Her shirt remained red. Lexa let out a sharp sob, her head falling against Clarke’s. “No,” she whispered. “No.”

Lexa jolted awake, her breathing in pants and her body drenched in cold sweat.

Her head was still spinning with her nightmare, her memories really, and it didn’t take long till Lexa was pulling herself up and bringing her knees to her chest. She buried her head into her knees and she cried. She cried so hard her entire body shook with the force of her sobs. She became so lost in her own sorrow and the pain that burned like a bullet hole in her chest that she didn’t notice when the door to her bedroom creaked open.

There was the sound of light taps against the hardwood floors, and then out of nowhere Lexa felt her bed dip. She lifted her head to see Red there, her dog, gently nuzzling his large head into the gap between her stomach and her knees. It made her laugh a little her least, her throat sore from
crying, and soon she gave in and stretched out her legs, patted the spot next to her.

“Just this once,” she whispered, knowing the hell that was getting rid of dog fur that was going to drench her bed. “But you better be good.”

His tongue lolled out of his mouth as if in a grin. Red was eager to fully hop up onto her bed, and Lexa internally cringed at the creaking it made when his heavy weight joined hers. But it seemed stable. And it was worth it anyway, when he trundled up to her side and laid his head on her lap, tail wagging lazily behind him.

Lexus mindlessly ran her fingers through his fur and felt a heavy, shuddered sigh escape from her lips.

“Fuck,” she breathed and quickly pushed the palm of her hands into her eyes.

She always hated when that dream happened. She had had it so many times now the sequence was practically engraved into her memory. The sounds, the running, Costia. Watching her get shot, holding her body. That smile.

Except the ending had been different this time. It wasn’t Costia’s body she’d been holding but Clarke’s. Clarke’s. She didn’t know why that happened, or maybe she just refused to admit it, but even stranger was the words she’d said. The warning she’d given. That death was coming. Normally when she dreamed of Costia’s death Costia said nothing. Lexa just held her, just sobbed, and Costia gave her that soft smile. Never had… that changed. That been different.

Except for now.

Lexa pulled her hands away from her eyes. Resumed her position of one threading through Red’s fur. It was true that Clarke tended to be on her mind more often than not. But that was expected wasn’t it? She had to keep note of her after Ontari had cornered her a month ago, had thrown her around. When Clarke had done nothing in response.

She didn’t believe it when Lincoln told her what he’d saw. Only once she’d gone to the security room for the cameras and scrolled through hours of footage just to find evidence that Clarke, Clarke, hadn’t fought back. But had let it happen, let her hit her. And she’d gotten her proof. She had sat there in that dingy chair, watched with muted shock as Ontari shoved her, punched her, even slapped her.

She watched as Clarke did nothing.

It was enough to throw Ontari into the Pit too for a bit at least. But it still didn’t take away the feeling the footage had left her. It had taken her a while to place it, but when she did it had left her more surprised than anything. The sheer amount of rage she felt for her. The urge to retaliate on Clarke’s behalf. To drag Ontari to far worse places than solitary.

The feeling had terrified her. Still did. It was an intense emotion, a dangerous, explosive one that took extreme care to control. But she’d managed it so far. She’d ignored it so far. Ignored the clenching of her heart when she watched Ontari’s fist connect with Clarke’s stomach. Her loss of breath when Clarke burst at her and literally buried her fist into the wall just a centimetre from her head. The overwhelming relief that slammed into her when Lincoln appeared on the tiny screen, Clarke finally safe. For now.

She wiped her runny nose with the back of her hand.

“I don’t know what I’m going to do boy,” Lexa said, her eyes falling onto Red whose eyes were
drooping now. Stuck in those moments before he’d be dragged into sleep’s grasp. “Do you know?”

Red peaked open one of his eyes at her.

Lexa let out a long sigh. “Yeah, guess I was hoping for too much there.”

Her small peace was broken with a sharp ring from her phone, Lexa’s sensitive hearing making her wince. With a scowl she snatched her phone off her bedside table, her hand leaving Red’s fur and gripping her phone with two hands when she saw just who was calling her. Red whined at the loss of contact, and Lexa shushed him softly, gently stroking his head in apology before she accepted the call and brought it to her ear.

Before she could say anything Kane was already speaking. “I apologise for calling so early, but I felt that you needed to know something. Early as possible, too.”

Lexa’s gaze finally shifted over to her alarm clock and saw it was five in the morning. Bleary streaks of early sunlight leaked in through the gaps in her curtains.

“What is it, Kane?” Lexa said, internally cursing at the scratchiness in her voice. Thankfully since Kane had called early she could play it off at being woken up and not because of crying.

It seemed Kane was thinking that too. “Again, I apologise for the early call, but it’s about Pike.”

Lexa straightened her back.

“I’ve been taking extra care of what he’s been doing since our meeting a month ago. At first it was the same, but he hasn’t been calling that woman as recently as before. Barely at all, really. He’s been getting increasingly restless because of it. Snapping at people. Angrier than usual.”

“What’s your point, Kane?” Lexa urged, seriously not in the mood for a detailed conversation right now.

“Right. Sorry. But he called me in just now, and I’m worried.”

“What did he say?”

She heard Kane sigh. “Something about him trusting me. What would happen if he were to… to disappear, to step down. He told me in detail of his roles, of what he’s expected to do.”

Lexa frowned. “He’s preparing to leave?”

“I don’t know. But… there was something off about it. This is out of the blue, clearly, but I know him. I know how dedicated he is to his job, but he wasn’t even sad about his possible take over. He was excited.” Kane sucked in a shaky breath. “I know him. And I know that something is wrong. I don’t know what but… please. Be careful for the next couple of days. Something is coming.”

Lexa remembered the words from her dream.

_Death is coming._

“Is that all?” Lexa asked, forcing out the tremor in her voice. The unease.

“Yes, yes that’s all. For now. I’ll let you know if anything else happens.”

“Okay. Thank you.” Lexa nodded, even if Kane couldn’t see. “Goodbye Kane.”
“Leidon Heda.” Kane replied and Lexa couldn’t stop her smile from his attempted use of trigedas-leng. His pronunciation was terrible, but the effort was appreciated.

“Leidon.” She answered softly.

She hung up the call. With a shaky breath she put her phone back down on her bedside table, curling herself over Red’s body and letting his fur tickle her throat. Red seemed perfectly fine with the impromptu hug and even snuggled up a bit to her. Lexa had never more appreciated his cuddly nature.

What a great start to her day.

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It wasn’t official, but it was assumed that Octavia was getting released from the Pit today.

It had been a month since the Ontari incident. Clarke had never seen Raven so quiet before. This month had been one of the strangest she’d had in a long while. She may have only been here a total of two months, but it was enough for her to settle into some type of routine. Of familiarity. Raven’s snark and inappropriate comments, Octavia’s ability to be one of the few able to reign Raven back in, but also land herself in situations Raven always had to come drag her out of. They would sit together in the Rec Room while she’d draw, or she’d run with Octavia when they’d go outside.

But for this month, they didn’t have that.

And instead it was just uncomfortably silent. Ironically, the start had been easier. At the start Raven’s anger had been fresh. It had been burning and all consuming, flaring up every five minutes either in a snarl or a curse or, like it’d been on the morning after, slamming her tray against the table. She’d gotten into trouble for that last one, but Clarke thought that perhaps Raven got off easier because it was Anya who had seen. And Clarke had seen the sympathy that the usually emotionless guard let slip through.

At the start, Clarke knew what to do.

When Raven would go off on her rants of how stupid and idiotic and plain bat-shit insane Octavia had been, Clarke would nod along with her. She’d sit and she’d listen and she would throw in the occasional word when needed. When she would get a little more physical, kicking at her shoes or clenching or fists or even picking up a book as if she was going to throw it into a wall – those times Clarke would step in. She’d hold her hands, pin her wrists, put the book back where it was meant to be.

But that anger didn’t remain fresh forever. Like any fire it began to burn out. Her rants became less fiery and she didn’t even glance at her book collection when she got upset. Instead, she just became something that left Clarke at a loss of what to do. She had never seen it on Raven, so plainly and obviously and painfully.

Raven became quiet.

She ate less. Which was one of the biggest warning signs, because it was Raven, someone who Clarke legitimately thought could eat the continent of America and be up for seconds. But Clarke saw how her tray would always be left fuller than usual. She’d pick at it, nudge it side to side like that would hide how little had actually managed to find its way into her stomach.

She didn’t make the same type of jokes anymore. Didn’t even attempt at the flirting game that Clarke found to be surprisingly enjoyable to watch. Anya had noticed this too, which Clarke was
less surprised than she should have been about, and once, during lunch, she’d even glanced at her. Frowned at her as the canteen emptied out and how didn’t Raven swagger over to her like she usually did. As much as Anya liked to complain the most about Raven’s flirting, it seemed like she was missing it the most too.

And her sleep wasn’t the same. Clarke had always known her as the type to knock out in seconds. Could sleep through an earthquake and wake up the next day with the floor missing beneath her feet. But it had become restless. It took her hours for her body to finally give out on her, for her eyes to drift to a close.

Sometimes all Clarke had to do was shift in her bunk and the small squeak that came out would wake Raven up.

So it was safe to say that Clarke was very worried about her. She feared what would happen in Octavia didn’t get out soon, and she was beyond excited for the possibility that she was getting out today. That she’d be back and here and the Raven she knew could return. But even if this… new Raven, was different and made her uneasy, she still stood by her.

She made the jokes for her. Brought her up topics that even Raven’s sullen brain couldn’t slink away from, sparking those rants that seemed to written into her very heart. Snuck her food when she wouldn’t, couldn’t eat. She crept down the ladder of her bunk during the dark hours of the night and snuck her way into Raven’s bed, slipping her arms around her and holding tight as she cried. She tried to be there for her, as much as she could.

Because it was Raven. The girl who became her friend the second she met her and never let her go. Who didn’t question her secrecy and her pain, and instead, just helped her through it. She was her friend – and that meant far more than she’d probably ever realise.

It was Anya who tipped them off that maybe Octavia would get released today. As they’d finish breakfast and made their way out the guard had grabbed Raven’s arm, and Clarke didn’t comment on the gentleness that Anya used. It had been obvious that Anya was reluctant to divulge the information out, to bring Raven’s hopes up, but even if she was a guard it had effected her too, Raven’s mood. A lot more than it should have. Clarke saw the constant worried looks Anya shot Raven when she thought no one was looking.

So she’d given in. Had muttered about how Octavia would maybe get out today, the grin that Raven had given had been blinding, brighter than anything she’d shown in the past month. And when Anya’s lips twitched like they were going to smile too, Clarke thought that Anya felt it had been worth it.

Raven was pacing now. Up and down Octavia’s cell. Harper had been considerate, at least, as she knew just how close the two were and had noticed Raven’s behaviour too. She was up on her bunk anyway as usual, paper cranes being carefully folded with her hands. Clarke was on Harper’s bunk too but only because she liked to watch her do her origami. There was something oddly calming of watching the movements. The way the paper creased, the gentle slide of hands.

“How much longer do you think?” Raven huffed out, frustration creasing her brow. Clarke thought it was much better than the blank slate she’d been made to stare at for weeks and so didn’t make comment of it.

“Patience, Reyes.” Harper stated dryly, her focus not leaving her folding. “She may not even be coming.”

Raven shook her head, still pacing, still wringing her hands. “She will be. She will. I can feel it.”
Clarke and Harper shared a look.

“Raven, you have to be prepared for if… if she doesn’t come. I don’t want you raising your hopes and then have them be crushed.” Clarke said carefully, making sure her voice was soft but not so much so that Raven would feel the urge to glare at her.

Apparently she hadn’t been careful enough because Raven glared at her.

“I’m not. I know there’s a chance, a good chance she won’t come back today but…” she let out a sudden sigh, her steps finally stopping. “She’s coming back today. I know it.”

“Oh…”

Raven raised a brow at Clarke’s quick defeat. “…Okay?”

“If she’s coming back, she’s coming back. I’m on your side Raven.” Clarke murmured, and Raven’s face softened slightly at that. The reassurance needed. Raven gave her a nod before she resumed her pacing, but at least now there was this lack of tension in her shoulders. Her nerves were still clearly there, her anxiety, but it seemed to be calmed somewhat now. And in a situation like this that was all Clarke could hope for.

They did nothing for another hour, the sun just approaching the middle of the sky. Lunch would be soon and they would have to go out to the canteen. Clarke worried of the possible struggle that could break out of them trying to get Raven to lunch and not just spend her time waiting in Octavia’s cell. It definitely wouldn’t pretty, that was for sure. Harper must have been thinking along the same lines as well, because when her eyes flicked off where she was doing her origami they landed on Clarke’s. Her lips pressing into a grim line.

Clarke could only offer her a shrug as reassurance. If it came to it, it came to it. She would drag Raven by the arm if she had to. Sure, the girl was like a firecracker and would no doubt not go down without a fight, but Clarke had dealt with people like her when she was Wanheda. Had dealt with worse. She could handle Raven, if came to it.

But she really wished it didn’t.

It wouldn’t end well if it did.

Clarke had just pulled herself up, gripping the rail on the bunk bed and swinging herself over when someone walked into their cell. Her legs landed in a crouch and as she pulled herself up she let free one of the most relieved grins she’d felt in a long time. It took Raven a second of realisation before she screamed in glee and jumped at Octavia, the brunette having to stagger back from the force of it.

“Shit Rae, I’m gonna’ fall over if you don’t get off,” Octavia breathed out, Raven probably hugging her tight enough to cut off her lungs. No matter Octavia’s dramatic wheezing Raven still didn’t let her go for a good minute. But even if Octavia acted like she wanted Raven off it was obvious she didn’t. Because her arms had come up as quickly as Raven had jumped her, squeezing her back just as tight.

Eventually Raven managed to pry herself away, and Octavia’s gaze met Clarke’s. Octavia rolled her eyes when Clarke didn’t move.

“I don’t get a hug from you too?”

“Shut up, O.” Clarke laughed, but she stepped forward and pulled Octavia into a hug anyway.
Even if Octavia was a magnet for trouble, she had missed the girl. Especially their runs together. She stepped out of the hug with a grin. “I’m guessing you just got out?”

“Yeah, ran my way here. Got told off though so I had to powerwalk.” Octavia answered, rolling back and forth on her feet. With the reunion over the tension was quick to creep into the air, especially with the way that that happiness, that joy and relief left Raven’s face and instead it hardened.

Clarke saw Octavia swallow, fiddle with her hands.

“So uh, I’m guessing you… want to talk about what happened?”

Raven continued giving her that stare that could burn entire universes.

Octavia nodded awkwardly. “I guess that’s a yes.”

“If you two are going to rip into each other, could you please do it in your own cell?” Harper spoke up, making Octavia jump. A wide grin was soon on her lips.

“Hey asshole, I disappear for a month and don’t even get a hello?”

“Hello, Octavia.” Harper deadpanned. But her straight face didn’t last long, a small smile tugging at her lips even if it seemed she fought against it the entire way. “Glad you’re back in one piece. Oh, and I guess you did go and knock Ontari on her ass, so.”

Harper reached to the side of her, and Clarke saw it was the paper bird she had spent the majority of the morning making. Unlike the usual scraps of paper for her origami, this one was red.

Octavia took the paper bird from her delicately. The smile that bloomed on her face bright enough to light the sky.

“It’s a phoenix.” Harper mumbled, for the first time since Clarke met her showing nerves. “I’ve uh… I’ve never made one before but, you know, I figured with the fire and all it’d suit you.”

“Thank you.”

They shared a smile that was broken by Raven clearing her throat.

“Well, not that this isn’t disgustingly lovely and all but, Blake, we have some things we need to discuss.” Raven muttered seriously. The smile slowly slid off Octavia’s face, and Clarke felt Harper shift from behind her, leaning over the bunk and towards her ear.

“She called her Blake,” she whispered. “This is going to be bad.”

“Harper’s right, you should continue this not in here. You won’t get interrupted in Raven and I’s cell.” Clarke said, and though Raven clenched her jaw she nodded stiffly. Octavia looked much less agreeable, and the idea that not even a lucky interruption could save her seemed more like a call towards doom than relief.

“Exactly. You two piss off and work out your shit somewhere much quieter.” Harper huffed.

Octavia frowned at her. “And Clarke?”

“She can stay. I like Griffin.”

“Are you kidding me?”
Raven snatched Octavia’s arm. “We’re going Blake. Nothing is getting you out of this, and you better damn hope you have a good excuse for the shit you pulled.” Raven only offered Clarke a glance as goodbye before she quite literally dragged Octavia out the cell storming out of her sight and presumably towards their cell.

Clarke waited a few seconds, taking everything in.

“You really chose the craziest of mates to make, Griffin.” Harper muttered, shaking her head and leaning back down.

Clarke felt herself smile as she tilted her head up. “You’re friends with them too.”

Harper narrowed her eyes at the ceiling and growled. “I know.”

Clarke gave it half an hour before she went to go check on them. Make sure they hadn’t fallen into a literal brawl and she’d have a dead body on her hands. Because that would be entirely much too inconvenient. Depending on who would win she’d have to pick a side, either help or turn them in. Truly, it would be a complete and utter mess. So, Clarke went looking for the pair with high hopes that she’d find two alive bodies in that cell, and not one.

She had spent the past half hour with Harper. She’d spent the majority just watching her fold as always, but halfway through Harper had thrown her a look and asked if she wanted to try it herself. Clarke had never tried it, but she was curious, so Harper ripped off a piece of her apparently never-ending paper supply and handed it to her. They sat together and Harper being a surprisingly good teacher went through it slowly, step by step.

Clarke now held a paper swan that didn’t entirely look like it’d been crushed under a steamroller.

It had definitely seen better days though.

She had just left Octavia and Harper’s cell and was walking for hers. Her eyes always had a habit of drifting to the drop below, the floors of cells below her. The weights at her chest had been lighter recently, her thoughts more coherent, and while at the start she had glanced at the drop with a certain sadness, a longing she’d never admit aloud, she didn’t have that now. Instead she looked down and she saw the people instead.

The rows and rows of cells. Of stories. Entire lives all cramped together like sardines, daughters and mothers and wives and widows. There was a startling difference between lives lived and life itself, and as Clarke strode past, let her eyes fall and survey, she found it so incredibly overwhelming the sheer amount of lives there were.

And yet the lack of life that followed.

Even if she’d been observing the layers below she was still observant of her surroundings, so when she’d caught a flash of a glistening outline, a sickly shining light, her pace stuttered to an abrupt stop and she hastily spun around. It wasn’t a second later that she was powering away from Raven’s and hers cell and instead after the spirit she’d caught in the corner of her eye.

Of Costia.

The ghost didn’t get far till she caught up. She’d chased her into a hallway, devoid of people. In the back of her head Clarke thought that this was deliberate. Despite Costia’s tendency to become randomly hostile towards her, her bursts were becoming less frequent, and more often were the
looks she was throwing her not a glare but concern. Softness. It wasn’t entirely impossible that Costia had gone down this hallway solely because it was empty. So Clarke would fell less tense, able to talk to her.

Clarke pulled herself to a sudden halt as she followed her into the hall. It wasn’t the emptiness that had made stop so suddenly but the one other presence within, the spirit standing still just a few metres from her.

The way there was so many glowing scars in her skin she looked like a cracked porcelain doll.

Costia slowly turned around. Clarke couldn’t do anything but stare numbly at her. Her brown eyes looked smaller than usual, her entire form did. But it wasn’t small in a way that she was wasting away, which, technically she was, because it was different to that. She was small, because she had nothing left. There was no devilish tug at her lips from her smirk. No hard steel in her eyes as she glared. No tension in her shoulders as she pulled herself up like a warrior preparing for war in their lover’s name.

It was just her.

The smallest, and purest form of herself.

“I didn’t think it would happen this fast.” Costia mumbled. Her eyes weren’t on Clarke’s, but staring wistfully upwards, like she could see through the ceiling and to the stars above, hiding billions and billions of light-years away. “Which is on me I suppose. I think a small part of me knew. I only had so long.”

“Costia…” Clarke finally managed to work her throat again, break through the paralyzing fear that strangled her lungs. “You’re...”

Costia’s gaze finally met hers, and when it did she just gave her a smile. The type you gave someone to help soften bad news. She raised her hand, held it out so Clarke could see. Clarke didn’t want to. In instinct she stepped back. But Costia just laughed at that, one that was both full of such warmth and coldness at the same time.

“It’s happening, isn’t it?” Costia whispered, and Clarke forced herself to look at her outstretched hand. Because it was happening. And she owed Costia this.

She still hated it. Hated seeing the scar that she had seen a month before, watching how now there was hundreds more cracks splayed out from it. They ran up her arm, her wrists, glowing that same sickly white. The last time Clarke had seen cracks like that was with Wells. When that ghost, that child, Charlotte, had shattered into a million glinting pieces and all that energy, that whiteness had jumped to the nearest body.

“If you don’t move on…” they met gazes again, and Clarke swallowed dryly at the amount of sorrow Costia had in hers, the pain. The knowing. “You have days, Costia. Maybe less.”

Costia didn’t even harden her gaze like she always would when this topic came up. It was so painful, to watch her slowly waste away, and not just because of the cracks. But to watch her lose her mannerisms, her habits. Her body forgetting how it should act.

“She’s not happy.” Costia muttered. “Not yet.”

“Costia.” Clarke burst forward then, and she would have grabbed her shoulders but her mind kicked in just in her time for her to realise there was no point. “Costia, I’m sorry, I’m sorry that she isn’t and that you can’t find reassurance in that. But you have to leave. Move on, let go, whatever.
Otherwise your body will shatter and someone will die."

"I can’t."

Clarke let out a frustrated snarl. She didn’t hesitate to get up in Costia’s face, but she had to fight not to recoil at the unnatural coldness that came from being so close. “You can. You will. This isn’t a debate.”

But still Costia just gave her that smile again. Shook her head. “She’s not happy,” she repeated, breathing the words. “I can’t leave her.”

“You can.”

“I can’t-"

“You can. Please. Please Costia.”

Clarke very, very rarely begged. It was an action she despised. Yet in this moment it was one of the easiest decisions she’d ever done. The hardness evaporated from her voice and instead became desperation, pleading and begging and petrified. “Please Costia,” Clarke whispered. “Please.”

Costia simply repeated what she’d said before, “she’s not happy,” and not giving Clarke time to continue pleading she turned to her side and strode through the wall, disappearing from Clarke’s sight.

For a second that could have been an age, Clarke just stood there. Stared at where Costia had been. Where the glowing cracks had been. She stared, till burning fury shoved out that numbness, that refusal to adapt to the present, and instead she had to bury her fist into her mouth to muffle her scream. She screamed until she was sure she was going to cough up blood, and only then did she launch at the wall where Costia had walked through and slammed her gloved fist into it.

Her hand was still sore from her confrontation with Ontari a month ago, but she didn’t care. She didn’t fucking care. Her knuckles pulsed with fresh waves of sharp pain but she ignored it and punched the wall again, felt and heard the crack, the bloodied dent. She let her rage fuel her, let it coil in her shoulders and add power to her hit, let it sink in like adrenaline and numb the pain that was sure to greet her later.

Slowly her punches grew weaker and weaker, until, as her fist came for the wall her hand flattened out at the last minute. Her palm laid flat against the wall till a sob broke her throat and her knees sunk down, her hand trailing down the wall, spreading the specks of blood and her fingers curling as if she could hold on to the flat surface. As if it were a shirt to cling on to. Not the cold stone it was.

She didn’t let another sob through. Refused to. Bit her lip so hard that it bled in effort to keep it in. Someone could see, her weakness could be shown and Nia could see like she always could see, could be waiting for her, plotting for her, counting the seconds till she was back in her hands and-

“Hey, hey,” someone was suddenly behind her and grabbing her shoulder, gently turning her around. Clarke blinked up at Octavia, crouching down in front of her. When their eyes met Octavia gave her a small smile. “Hey, you okay?”

No. She hadn’t been okay in years. And she hated that even if she knew that, knew it so horribly surely, she couldn’t change it. Not in the ways that mattered.

Octavia let out a soft sigh before she nodded at her and pulled herself up, if only so she could
adjust herself so she was sitting next to Clarke now, their backs both against the wall behind them. Clarke was still drowning in the storm of emotions pounding relentlessly in her ribcage, but after a few seconds of hesitation Octavia’s hand found its way on her leg. Clarke slid her own into Octavia’s and she used it to help anchor herself from the chaos that made everything spin.

They stayed quiet and together for some time.

It was needed though. Sometimes the quiet was better; spoke more words than voices ever could. But eventually, slowly, Clarke felt herself unravel. The anger for Costia lost its spark and instead Clarke just sat there. Squeezed Octavia’s hand tight, Octavia squeezing her back with equal tightness. Clarke didn’t know how much time had passed till one of them spoke up again.

“I’ve never really been free.”

It was Octavia who said it, whispered the words so softly. They fluttered in the breaths between them. Swaying and full of ache. Clarke tilted her head in Octavia’s direction, but Octavia kept staring forward. Clarke saw her clench her jaw. Watched the vein push from her neck.

“Probably wouldn’t surprise you to know I got into fights as a kid. Because I did, got into a lot.” Octavia chuckled then, but it wasn’t the type you smiled at. “Spent so many of my teen years in Juvie I barely graduated. Had so much anger, you know? At the world. God, how I hated the world. I wished it was a person so badly. Just so I could show it how much rage I had for it.”

“I’ve told you about my brother. He looked after me, you know? Always has. Ever since I could remember. It was only us three, me, him and Mum. But… Mum wasn’t right. It wasn’t good to be at home. When I was kid, I hated it, hated her.” Octavia let out a shuddered breath, shook her head as if it was directed at her past self. “She was always out of her head, always on something. At the start it wasn’t as bad, but the older I got, the worse she got, and it wasn’t us three. It was us two. It was me and Bell. He could make sure I didn’t get into trouble when he was around, but he was in a different year. Couldn’t protect me during school.”

“So I got into fights. I already had so much hatred, so whenever someone even looked at me wrong, I jumped at the opportunity. I got so used to it, Juvie, hiding, having a schedule. When to wake up, when to eat, when to sleep. And I don’t… I don’t think I’m ready to leave. The things that I know. Not till I have a purpose. A reason.” She finally turned her head, so they locked sights. “Do you ever get that? Anchorless? That’s what I need. A purpose. A place. An anchor.”

“Yeah,” Clarke murmured. She swallowed, tried to keep her voice steady. “Yeah I get that. When… When I lost my Dad, I hated the world too. I don’t think I ever want to feel that way again though.” She frowned slightly. “I never thought that I could be one of those people. Who could take another life so readily. Without thinking, without taking in the consequences.”

Octavia stared at her. “You’ve killed?” she asked softly.

Clarke couldn’t keep looking at her anymore and turned her gaze. Her eyes fell on their joined hands. She focused on the feeling of their tight grip. Brought her mind back before it could spiral.

“I always thought it would get easier with each time.” Clarke laid her head back till it hit the wall with a dull thud. “But it didn’t. It just became easier to ignore. But it never became easier.”

“We’ll make it won’t we?”

Clarke closed her eyes at Octavia’s whisper. Her call into the universe.

She tightened her grip on their joined hands. Grit her teeth like she was forcing a blade from her
throat, not making promises to friends. “Yeah.” Clarke breathed, and she tried to make her voice strong, believable. Because when you had nothing but yourself, your word was all you had. Your hope was all you had.

She opened her eyes, tilted her head so they locked sights.

“We’ll make it,” Clarke whispered, giving her a broken smile. “We’ll make it.”

Because to think that they wouldn’t would mean it was already over.

They stay like that together until the lunch bell blares through the prison, and only then do they get up. The moment Clarke was up she was wiping the pain that she could feel bleeding so freely from her heart, she shoved all those thoughts and doubts and wants into a box deep inside and she swallowed the key. Even if the process felt like pushing a boulder up a mountain and like it had taken so long the sun had given out, in actuality it only took a few seconds, and when Clarke glanced over at Octavia, she saw that she’d done the same.

They shared a look then. Understanding, determination.

We’ll make it.

She had told herself that so often at Azgeda Tower. Drilled it into her head if only to help keep her sane, keep alive. Even when she didn’t want to be it. She’ll make it. She can make it. But it was only this moment really, that glance that they shared, that Clarke finally felt herself believe it. The words weren’t a mutter of promise, weren’t a rope of hope to tie around her wrists to keep her steady.

It was fact.

The realisation of that shook her more than she cared to admit, and as they’d been walking together for the canteen Clarke had to pull herself to a sudden stop. Put her hand against the wall to stop her from swaying. Octavia paused at the abrupt halt and turned to her, concern tugging down at her brows.

“You go on. I’ll catch up.” Clarke said, and even though Octavia sighed through her nose, pressed her lips together, she nodded anyway.

“You aren’t alone Clarke,” she whispered, and Clarke ignored the stabbing pain in her heart. “Not anymore.”

Clarke gave her a sad smile. “I know.”

Octavia hesitated a moment longer before caving. She wasn’t as physically affectionate as Raven, didn’t lunge at people with hugs at every opportunity and grabbed shoulders. But it was in the way she looked at her, the way her body didn’t tense around her. That was how you knew her affection. When she’d let her guard down in your presence.

Clarke waited until Octavia was out of sight, tilting her chin upwards in an attempt to hold back the tears. When she was out of it she closed her eyes and let her side slump into the wall. No one had gone through this hall, not yet, and Clarke reveled in the emptiness. The freedom that came with no prying eyes.

She only gave herself a few minutes to collect herself.
All too soon she was shaking her head, wiping her nose with the back of her sleeve and pulling herself up. Straightening her back, rolling her shoulders. It had been getting easier to do so she found. At the start it felt like the task of such proportions it was guaranteed to fail to try. But it wasn’t like that anymore. Somehow, somewhere, she’d gotten to the point where it was all just easier.

With a determined nod to herself she set off the canteen again. She was eager for lunch today. With Octavia back, and hopefully lacking in animosity between her and Raven, they were all together again. They could fall back onto their regular habits and everything could settle down for a little while. Maybe she was being a tad selfish, but Clarke wanted as many calm moments as possible while she was here. She wanted as many bright memories as possible, so when that inevitable day came that Nia dragged her back, she’d be ready. Have something to hold on to.

Clarke felt herself smile a little when she caught sight of the doors to the canteen. She picked up her pace, it seemed she’d missed the main rush of bodies trampling through as there were only stragglers making their way in, but before she could reach the handle someone touched her back. Instantly she whirled around and snatched the wrist of whoever had touched her, but at seeing a dirty blonde staring at her, the one who’d told her where Niylah was when she was looking for her, she quickly let got of her hold.

Before she could say anything the woman was speaking, her voice rushed and words tripping over themselves. Only now she noticed the clear tension in her body, the fear.

Something was wrong.

“Griffin, you need to come quick,” the woman said, her hand already reaching out again and grabbing Clarke’s wrist, tugging her forward. Clarke frowned and snatched her hand back. “What is it?” she snapped, not appreciating being tugged around like a dog.

But the woman just shook her head. “Something’s happened with Niylah, she asked for you. You need to come, right now.”

“I am okay?” Clarke asked, stepping forward. She may not be on the best of terms with her and generally tried to avoid her, but she wasn’t bad person, and if she was in trouble then Clarke wouldn’t hesitate to help her.

The woman bit her lip. That was answer enough.

Clarke cursed, glancing at the canteen door just behind her. She could go get Raven and Octavia. Get them to come with her, to help. But Raven was still sore about anything Trikru, and on already such shaky ground, she didn’t want jeopardise their newly rekindled friendship. She couldn’t bring them. Clarke turned back to the woman.

“What about guards?” she questioned, but a small part of her already knew the answer coming.

The woman shook her head. “We can’t, it would only hurt Niylah more.” She suddenly grabbed Clarke’s wrist again, apparently forgetting her previous reaction. “Please, we have to go, now.”

Clarke didn’t free herself from her grip this time. Instead she blew out a sharp breath through her nose, caught a glimpse of the canteen door behind her as the woman pulled her along. With another curse she picked up her pace, and the moment the woman saw that she let out a relieved breath and began running, Clarke mimicking just a second later.

The woman instantly led them for the stairs, and the sharp clips of their shoes bounced of the walls
around them as they blurred down, Clarke just barely keeping herself from tripping over her own feet. She internally scowled at herself. She was never one for stairs. Much more inclined to flying over them. It didn’t matter much as soon they were on the ground again and sprinting. Clarke thought it a little odd the lack of guards she could see on the ground floor they were now on, but she pushed the thought aside, focusing instead of following the woman’s frantic pace.

They made a sudden sharp turn, barreling into an empty hallway except for a single guard. Clarke in instinct pulled herself to an abrupt halt, her feet skidding on the floor, aware of the punishment for running. She frowned when the guard didn’t even blink twice at their sprinting and how the woman actually kept running. How the guard looked at her, how she was very clearly breaking the rules, and looked away.

She felt a sudden sense of unease as she slowly approached the woman. She’d stopped just by the guard’s side, a little out of breath from their running. She didn’t even spare the guard a second glance.

“Come on, she’s in here,” the woman said, nodding to a door in front of her. Clarke got closer and realised it led to the basement.

She stepped back. The woman creased her brows at the action, but Clarke was getting worried now, and it must have showed on her face, because the guard’s sight suddenly zeroed in on her. She stared at him too, and with closer inspection she noticed the slight ill fitting of his clothes. How his shirt was a tad too small, his pants a little too big. How now looking closer at him how just plain off the man looked.

His skin was dark, his eyes darker, and it took Clarke far too long to realise she’d never seen him before.

And she had scoped out the prison inch by inch.

She lurched back but the guard seemed to be expecting it and lunged for her. His large hand gripped hers in a painfully hard grip, roughly dragging her towards him. Luckily he’d snatched her wrists and she was quick to twist it and be freed from his hold, but the moment it was free his other hand snatched her mane of hair and pulled hard. A knee found its way into her stomach, and just as she snarled and prepared herself to lunge for him his hand jerked to his side and snatched something.

Clarke stood still at the gun now pointed at her head.

“Don’t move.” The guard growled, and the animal in her wanted to growl back. To wrap her hands around his head and twist. “Or you’re dead.”

Her eyes flicked to the woman who’d led her here, and she wasn’t too surprised to see her completely unaffected by the situation. That panic she’d seen on her face before was gone. Now her expression was almost bored.

“You can’t kill her,” the woman sighed, narrowing her eyes at him. “Not yet.”

The guard’s jaw twitched. His gaze, which already was dark as storm clouds, somehow darkened impossibly more. “Just because I can’t kill you at this very moment, do no think you are safe.” He muttered.

Considering how very alone Clarke realised she was, she already didn’t think herself safe.

She didn’t think she’d ever been safe for many years.
"What is this?" Clarke snapped. Her eyes didn’t leave where the guard’s finger rested on the trigger.

The woman gave her a smile that had Clarke fighting off a shudder. "You’ll find out soon enough. I suggest you stay quiet, if you know what’s good for you. There’s no point anyway. This entire floor is empty."

Clarke couldn’t help but hopefully glance around for cameras. The woman noticed and scoffed.

"If you think that anyone is watching us right now, you’re very wrong.” Her gaze hardened and she opened the basement door. It was nothing but darkness, the type that sucked in light like a black hole. "Make this easy for yourself, Clarke."

Clarke grit her teeth. She still had the gun to her head, and since she didn’t want to die, not yet, she relaxed her stance.

"Who are you?" Clarke questioned, fighting to stay still as the guard slowly began to walk around her. The gun stayed pointed at her head.

The question was directed to both of them, but only the woman answered.

"Echo. Echo kom Azgeda." Clarke felt herself pale. Echo grinned at her in response, and though Clarke tried to step away the guard was suddenly at her back and twisting her arm behind her. She only let out a grunt.

The guard walked with her forward, pulling her arm tighter when she resisted at first. The pain was enough to make her begrudgingly go along with it. Echo gave her a smile as she passed her, showing her teeth in a way that was more animal than human, and just as Clarke readied herself for some type of insult at the betrayal the guard shoved her forward, hard, and suddenly letting go of her arm she tripped on the sudden steps below her and fell.

She rolled down them and landed on the cold flat ground with a hiss. Still, she was without a captor now, and instantly scrambled up to her feet. The guard had just reached the last step as he basically sauntered through, a feral grin on his lips as the door closed shut from behind him. She didn’t hesitate to launch at him this time.

She made contact before he could raise his gun. Her hand managed to hit his wrist hard enough he let go of the weapon, and instantly Clarke kicked the pistol away with her foot and side stepped a punch at her front, her hands gripping the guard’s exposed arm and yanking him forward. She had always been better in close quarters, and it was disturbingly easy to recall all that muscle memory, the dodges and swipes and lunges that had become normalcy for her.

The guard snarled at her and went to kick her, but her reflexes allowed her to dodge and grab his leg, twisting so he fell to the ground. She jumped for him, pinning his arms with her knees and raining blows down onto his face. She only had a few seconds of this however when something hard suddenly smashed into the side of her head. Stars blasted in her vision as she was thrown off him from the force of her hit, and for a few painful moments all she could do was blink, crawling on all fours and desperately trying to see through the double vision.

A boot found home in her ribs and kicked her over. A second one soon came, and a third, and by the fifth she just let out a pained groan. She would have felt relief when the guard stopped kicking her, but it never came when he hauled her up by her armpits and shoved her into a chair. Her head was still spinning and she could taste blood in her mouth, but even as she tried with dwindling efforts to launch forwards, snatch her hands back from where she could feel him restraining them,
it didn’t make a difference.

The guard came out from the behind her now that she was tied. He let out a dry chuckle, wiping at his split lip with the back of his hand. And though Clarke should have focused on him, on how he muttered that she’d put up a better fight than he’d thought, her eyes snapped onto the woman who stepped out from the shadows. A baton in her hand. The one that had smashed into her head.

Ontari smiled at her.

Clarke felt her blood run cold.

“Hello Clarke,” Ontari grinned. She twirled the baton in her hands as she slowly circled her, and it reminded Clarke heavily of a fly caught in a spider’s web. “I told you this wasn’t over.”

“What the hell are you doing Ontari?” Clarke snarled. She tried to break through her restraints again, but the rope around them was tight enough to cut off her circulation. When Ontari just smiled at her again, completely at ease, Clarke realised just how exceedingly bad this situation was. How there was a genuine chance that she may not come out at the other end.

Ontari looked at her like she was stupid. “What am I doing? I’d think that was quite obvious. I’m getting answers.” She was in front of her now and before Clarke could offer her a retort the baton came down hard on the side of her leg, and she bit down her scream at the explosion of pain that vibrated up her very bones. “You refuse to.” She muttered. “So, I’d figured I’d help to motivate you.”

Clarke tried to even her breathing through the pain. With gritted teeth she bobbed her head at the silent guard standing just behind her. “And who’s he?” she breathed. “Why is he here? He’s not from Polis.”

“Assurance.” Ontari shrugged. “Your affinity for violence called for some precautionary measures.”

“My affinity for violence?” Clarke repeated in disbelief. “Ontari, I’m going to really fucking hope you see the hypocrisy there.”

But Ontari just smiled at her again. Eerie and wrong. “Desperate times, desperate measures.” It was with great relief that Clarke watched Ontari step back and hand the baton back to the guard. It was short lived however, as soon was Ontari was in front of her again, a look of excitement on her face. And Ontari excited was a very bad sign. “According to my... associate here, he knows the answers I need. What you can confirm. So, I’d figured I’ll help to motivate you.”

It was as Ontari turning around that she abruptly spun and slammed her fist into Clarke’s jaw, whipping her head to the side.

“That’s for getting me in The Pit. And this?” she grinned predatorily at her and buried her fist in the gut. “That’s for threatening me.”

Clarke refused to give Ontari the satisfaction of showing pain. She bit the inside of her cheek hard enough to bleed, glaring up at Ontari so fiercely it was a wonder she didn’t turn into a pile of ash right there. The guard stepped forward as she continued to pin Ontari with her stare, and she only tore her gaze off her when the guard hit her across the face.

“That’s enough.” He snapped. His face was just inches from her own, and without hesitating she spat a mouthful of blood mixed with saliva on his face. The guard chuckled at her, a horrible cold sound that had her soul stiffening, and merely wiped his face with his hand. He stared her dead in
the eye. Still smiling.

“I’m so glad you did that.”

His hand came behind him and revealed something that had Clarke subconsciously pushing back against the chair.

He held up the dagger. Clarke hadn’t really let herself observe her surroundings, what with the fighting and all, but she did notice how the lone light hanging from above glinted off the dagger’s blade. Ontari stood a few metres away, watching her closely, and as she let her eyes scan the room she saw two women standing sentry near the stairs. Guard dogs, clearly.

What was with her and her tendency to land herself into trouble?

He brought the knife to her cheek and Clarke sucked in a sharp breath, turning her face away as the guard brought it closer, let the sharp edge press just enough to cut. A thin trail of blood leaked down and Clarke had to swallow down her panic at just bad everything could go.

“Now, as much as I’d like to get myself properly… acquainted with you, Clarke, I am on a timeline.” The guard gave her that same smile and pulled the blade away. Clarke didn’t let herself breathe a breath of relief. Instead she glared at him. Watching as he stood up, leaned back. “While we’ve certainly had a rough start, the rest of this can go quite pleasantly you know.”

Clarke’s eyes flicked to his dagger. If she could get it somehow, she could free herself from her bindings.

A hand was suddenly grabbing the sides of her face. “You’ll keep your eyes on me, Wanheda,” the guard snarled. At her pale face he roughly let go of her. “Yes, I know who you are. I know what you’ve done. But most importantly…” his eyes glinted malice, a rage so dark and cold it could freeze fire. “I know what you are.”

Clarke lost the ability to breathe.

No.

“Scared now aren’t you?” The guard smirked at her. “You never were humble. It’s basically common knowledge that Wanheda is an Other. Why are you so surprised?”

“Who are you?” Clarke growled.

He slapped her. “Someone you’ll show respect towards.” He snarled. “But I think you know who I am. You’re not the only one with a reputation Clarke. And I’m sure you have a name for me.”

She ignored the stinging on her cheek, the blood she could taste in her mouth. When she didn’t say anything and just continued staring at him, glaring like her eyes were knives and were slicing into his skin, the guard flung out his arms, grinning wide.

“I’m the one who has been hunting down your kind, who’s been looking for you. The top of the food chain. The leader of them all, the ‘protector’ of them all.” Clarke felt the blood drain out of her face. No, he couldn’t be. He couldn’t be the one. The cause of all the disappearances of Others. The one who’d started hunting Other’s down. She had tried to find him for so long and she never had.

But it was obvious. This was him. This was the killer.
“My name is Pike, and I’m going to be the one who kills you Wanheda.”

“We’re not killing her,” Ontari frowned, stepping in.

Clarke’s heart was pounding a war drum in her chest, and she watched anxiously as Pike turned on to Ontari with a growl.

“You brought me here for that very reason.”

“No, I brought you here to make her talk. You said you could make her say anything. Which is what you’ll do.”

Pike’s jaw twitched, and while Clarke would have watched the argument closely, her attention was diverted when she saw a glimmer in the corner of her eye. She sucked in a sharp breath. It took all of her willpower not to whip her head around, but she didn’t want to attract attention. Slowly, so painfully slowly, she dragged her gaze off Ontari and Pike, relief crashing on to her like a wave when she saw Costia, fucking Costia, her cracked form standing just next to her.

The spirit looked almost as panicked as Clarke felt, glancing around the room, at the one exit, her tied hands, Pike’s dagger.

“Do you realise how incredibly stupid you are?” Costia muttered, and the only thing Clarke could do was widen her eyes. She couldn’t say it out loud, but her expression seemed to get the message across.

 Fucking seriously? Right now?

Costia rolled her eyes at her. Rolled her fucking eyes. “You walked into a trap, Clarke. One that you very well may die from. Really? You always tell me not to get into trouble and look at what you’ve gone and done.”

Clarke pushed a harsh sigh through her nose. If she got out of this alive, Costia was the first on her hit list. Well, maybe not hit list. Could you re-kill a ghost? Was that a thing? Shaking her head at herself she directed her gaze at Costia, waiting till she was looking at her until she started pointedly glancing upwards. Costia at first frowned at her, but after the sixth time of Clarke’s looking up, Clarke was honestly about this close to finding someway to punch the girl in frustration, understanding dawned in her eyes.

Costia furrowed her brow at her. “You want me to go find Raven and Octavia?”

Clarke made sure that Pike and Ontari were still arguing till she gave Costia a miniscule nod. Ideally she’d want her to get Lexa, but considering it was Costia of all people, that was probably extremely unlikely to happen. Costia narrowed her eyes. “Just how am I meant to get their attention when they can’t see me? You do realise that I am a ghost, right?”

Clarke stared at her. Once again, her expression speaking for her.

Find a way. Get help.

Costia sighed and Clarke just barely managed to stop herself from screaming.

“Alright. I’ll be back soon, try to stay alive. Probably best not to antagonise him. Did you really have to spit at him?” Costia gave her a disgusted look and Clarke almost snapped at her from it. The only thing that kept her being the whole possibly about to be killed thing. Costia shot her one last look, the cracks seemed so much brighter when she was in a darkened room like this, and with
relief giving her ability to breathe she watched her form float upwards and through the ceiling.

She focused her attention back on Pike. He seemed to be done arguing with Ontari, and it made her relax and tense up at the same time to see the anger simmering between them. Pike stepped towards her and flicked the dagger in his hands. There was new stiffness in his steps that had dread clawing at the back of her throat. He burst forward and Clarke tilted her head back just in time to miss the blade sitting just a breath away from her neck.

“Good reflexes. I shouldn’t be surprised. The stories say you’re quicker than light, faster than you can blink.”

Clarke continued staring at him.

The lightness left his voice, his face darkening. “Some call you a god. Because of what you can do. But I don’t believe that. Because god’s can’t die. Except,” Pike leaned closer, his eyes flicking between hers. “You have quite an interesting relationship with Death don’t you? I wonder, if maybe, just maybe, those stories hold some possible merit. That maybe you’re not a god; but you can be the vessel for one. The Vessel for Death.”

Clarke leaned forward too. It took effort not to recoil at being so close. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Oh you do, probably more than anyone I suspect.” He let out a sigh and leaned back out. Clarke noticed the way Ontari was watching him out of the corner of her eye, glancing at her. The disbelief. The slow understanding. “Tell me Clarke, what’s it like? To be the most powerful of your kind? The apex predator.” He smiled something that wasn’t a smile. “Death itself. I imagine you have to have a lot of self-control. Do you ever think, Clarke, what would happen if you let go? The sheer amount of destruction you could bring?”

Clarke had been tortured before. To the point where she’d begged Death to take her, to save her. But during her entire time in the Tower, their torture was stabbing in the dark. Nia didn’t know what she was looking for. She just wanted something, anything, but with such a lack of knowledge, she didn’t know what to look for. The things that truly scared her. That made her want to claw at her own skin.

But this was different. Because the worst part, the most infuriating, painful part, was that Pike’s words held truth. She always had to keep control. Always. While her glove was something that she hated with every fibre of her being, there was one thing, a small relief that it gave her. That with it she didn’t have to exhibit so much control. She didn’t have that permanent fear that lurked right at the corner of her mind, pacing like a dog. The fear of just what she could do. Of how many she could kill so effortlessly.

It terrified her to the bone.

Maybe that was why Death had chosen her.

“I promised Ontari here answers,” Pike stated, snapping her from her thoughts. “But I think the best way is to show her, don’t you?”

“There’s nothing to show,” Clarke growled, and Pike just sighed at her.

“Let’s not waste time Clarke. Do it. Call Death. I want to see.”

Clarke couldn’t stop the humourless chuckle that broke out of her lips. Pike clenched his jaw. “Death won’t come for no one’s beck and call. Unless you’d like to slit your own throat, which I
won’t disagree to, then it won’t be coming.”

Pike snarled and brought his dagger down, the blade slicing at her chest, ripping the fabric and digging into her skin. Clarke hissed at the unexpected swipe. Her gaze snapped onto his as she stared at him, barring her teeth and eyes burning. Pike wiped her blood off the blade against his shirt.

“Let’s try again shall we?” he harshly grabbed her by her hair and forced her head back, exposing her neck. He lifted the dagger so it settled against her throat. “Show me. Now.”

Clarke felt her heart stutter when she started hearing the quiet whispers, flitting past her ears.

*Here, here, here.*

Well, wasn’t that just fucking great.

“I can’t.” Clarke breathed. She swallowed and winced as Pike pushed the blade in deeper. She felt the sharp pain, the trickle of blood. “I can’t.”

“Why not?” Pike muttered.

Her eyes briefly flicked over to Ontari, who was watching the interrogation with a blank expression. She grit her teeth. A possible death was coming, and it may be hers, so even if she’d spent her entire life not telling a soul of what she was, of how it worked, she found that she had to now. Just to buy time. Enough so help could come. She just had to keep him talking.

“She died,” Clarke whispered, and Ontari’s gaze suddenly turned razor sharp.

She burst forward. “What about her?” Ontari snapped.

“Don’t interfere,” Pike growled, and though it looked like Ontari would very much like to do otherwise, she blew out a sharp breath through her nose and slowly stepped back. Pike focused back on Clarke. “What did she do?”

She just had to buy herself time. She ignored the whispers she could still hear. “I can’t channel Death. Not now. She made it so.”

“So you can then? You can truly become Death?”

Clarke saw how still the room became. Could see how at the start Ontari’s face had been full of distrust, how the others in the room would let Pike’s words pass, didn’t give them thought. But it must have showed on her face, how suddenly *real* this all was. Even if she was the one in the chair, her chest bleeding, her body in pain, her arms tied, in this moment, she was the one with power.

Because this was also the moment that she saw the fear in Pike’s eye.

“No one can become Death.” She muttered, but still, her voice echoed around the room. “You can give it, take it, but you cannot become. I do not become Death. I am merely the vessel.” She felt her gloved her hand buzz and let herself smile. Death had always had an ego. “If you wish to get out alive, you won’t dare killing Death’s link to this world.”

“Do it,” Pike breathed. He let go of her hair and Clarke felt her smile grow. She recognised the way it spread on her lips. It was the one she gave the guards in the Tower. The one they always hated.
“If I could, you wouldn’t be alive.”

“Why? How?”

Clarke laughed. “Nia is a sadistic cunt, there’s no doubt in that, but she’s smart too.” She lost her smile. “You have no idea what I am. None. If you did you never would have come here. Why do you think you were even able to reach me? Why I’m even in Polis?”

Clarke hadn’t still yet worked out Nia’s game for why she was here, but there was one thing she was sure of. That Nia could only let her come here, for whatever her plan, because she was collared. Well, gloved, she supposed. Otherwise she could have escaped the moment she got here. She would have. But without her abilities, it was a lot harder.

“The stories are more true than you want to believe. I am not Wanheda by choice. I am Wanheda because that is what I am. You’ve killed Pike, killed so many,” her voice couldn’t help but soften then, grow sad. Because she could feel it. The souls that clung to Pike’s own. Trapped and lost and in pain. “You do not want Death to come. Because if it did, you would be the first Death would take.”

Pike was staring at her slack jawed, and maybe it was that that let Ontari come forward, stopped him from pushing her back. Clarke switched her gaze to Ontari, watching the tension in her stance. The unease in her eyes.

“That’s why Nia wants you, because of what you can do. Your power.”

Clarke thought she was going crazy when you heard the jealousy in her voice. She scoffed at her. “Ontari, throughout my entire year with Nia, she never once mentioned your name.” Ontari stiffened at that, her lips already morphing into a snarl for no doubt some biting insult, but Clarke wasn’t done. “And you should be damn fucking grateful.” She snapped. “You escaped her attention, and god Ontari you should be grateful. I don’t know what she’s done to you, why she would shun you like this, but I would give anything to be in your place. You want to envy me? Then know what you’re fucking envying. Do you envy the torture I went through? The amount of pain I had to fucking go through?” her voice grew louder, harder and more broken with each word. But she didn’t care. She kept going, kept fighting.

“Your mother beat me till I couldn’t see. Starved me till I could barely move. She drugged me and she whipped me and she took everything, everything, that I’ve ever loved, ever cared for. Do you envy me for that? Do you envy that I can’t sleep without remembering? That I can’t trust my own thoughts? That even if,” Clarke let out a sharp laugh. “Oh, even if, I somehow escaped her, I’ll never truly win? How I will never escape this pain. It will follow me till the day Death feels pity enough to let me go. Tell me, Ontari, is that what you honest to god envy?”

For the first time since Clarke had seen her, Ontari was pale. She stumbled back, jaw opening and closing uselessly. Clarke realised she was breathing hard from her speech. Her heart was sure to crack through her ribcage at any moment. But it was freeing, these moments. After lugging around the sheer amount of pain on her back, not telling a soul, not letting anyone even catch a glance at her burden, being able to force it into the air was like taking a breath of air after nearly drowning.

The quiet was deafening. Burst like static in her ears. But she felt relief when those whispers that been growing louder, that repeat she would hear till her last breath, here, here, here, they were so much quieter now. Not gone, but pushed back. For now. Or maybe her head was still spinning with everything that had happened and she shouldn’t trust her perception of reality right now.

When Pike blinked himself back the door to the basement suddenly slammed open. Everyone’s
head in the room snapped upwards at the burst of sound and light, and just as Pike’s eyes dipped
toward the floor to find the gun Clarke had kicked during their earlier scuffle, she heard the voices,
her friends’ voices. And then they were there, blurring down the stairs, the two of them, Raven and
Octavia, stumbling into the scene around them with wide eyes.

“This better be some kinky shit Griffin and not what I think it is,” Raven muttered, and it was her
voice that seemed to break the pause in the room.

Clarke saw Pike edge his foot in the direction of gun lying on the floor.

She lunged so hard that she fell forward, the chair going down with her. But the moment she was
on the ground she could lift her legs sideways and kick at the seat of the chair, pushing it down
and lifting her arms so they weren’t trapped behind it anymore. The crash of chair against the
ground had been enough to distract Pike thankfully. His sight snapped behind him and onto her,
and clenching her jaw she pulled herself up to her feet. Her hands were still tied. But she could
make do.

“Let me go, and no one can get hurt.” Clarke offered, drilling Pike with her gaze. But Pike looked
far from complying.

“Someone as powerful as you shouldn’t be allowed to exist.” He spat. “It is a danger to humanity
to allow something like you to live. I’m not letting you walk out of here.”

“Oh, she’s coming out of here alright,” Octavia said, spreading her stance. She clenched and
unclenched her right hand. “And you’ll let her.”

“And who are you?” Pike growled, gripping tight to his dagger.

“I’m her friend.” Octavia snapped. Her eyes settled on Clarke’s and she gave her a smile. “She
made me a promise earlier today. And I intend to keep it.”

Clarke tried very hard not to cry.

The moment was ruined with Ontari. Unsurprisingly. “What are you standing there for?” she
snarled. “Go!”

The two women looked to each other before lurching forward at Raven and Octavia. They were the
same ones who’d jumped her a month ago, and Clarke was already dreading the amount of power
they could hold in their hits, what they could do to her friends. What if they came down here for
her, if only to end up getting killed themselves? It didn’t help that the whispers slammed into her a
full blast again. Chanting till it was barely all she could hear.

Here, here, here.

Pike lunged for her before she could at him. She had to force her worries of her friends from her
mind, ignored the fighting that she could hear them falling into. They’d be fine. Octavia could
fight, she was strong. And she wouldn’t let anyone harm Raven. They would be okay. They had to
be okay.

The whispers grew louder and Clarke grew more scared.

But she ignored them and focused on Pike. She backed up from his swipes with his dagger,
ducking and weaving, occasionally managing to throw in a kick at him if she was lucky. But she
knew she couldn’t keep up like this without her hands, and he seemed to too, because he didn’t
stop, he didn’t relent. It was in the midst of their dance that she saw an opening and without
hesitating she dove for it, managing to kicking him squarely in the chest. He staggered back and
Clarke didn’t waste time to burst forward and hook her leg around his, jerking back and sending
him into the ground.

The fall made him lose his grip from his dagger and Clarke quite literally dived for it. He seemed
to realise what she was doing at the same time though, so when she managed to fumble with the
dagger behind her back and finally free herself Pike was already there and tackling her. He
slammed her into the wall, the force of it making her head spin. She threw a blind hit at him to give
her time to regain her bearings but felt something sharp pierce her from her side, making her cry out
and her fist lose its momentum.

Pike leaned forward until his face was all she could see. “You should never have existed,” he
muttered, and the pain in her side grew worse with each lingering second. “You're a threat to
existence itself. I’m sorry. But you cannot live.”

Before she could say anything she caught Raven’s shout burst through the air, full of fear she had
never heard the girl use. “Do it now O! He’s going to kill her!”

She could see Raven was wrestling with one of the Ice Nation warriors, Octavia having one in a
chokehold, her eyes flicking over to her position.

“Are you sure?” Octavia breathed and even if Raven was quite literally fighting to stay alive she
found enough time to throw Octavia a glare.

“Does it look like we have a fucking choice?” she growled.

Clarke felt Pike shift in front of her, and just as she saw the intent in Pike’s eye, the scream of
whispers in her ear, Octavia thrust her hand out towards her and fire poured out from her palm.
Pike’s head whipped behind him in time for a whip of flame to wrap itself around his neck and
roughly haul backwards. The second he was she felt the pain at her side explode and she fell to the
ground from the shock of it.

It took her longer than it should have been. Her eyes kept watching as Pike thrashed in flames that
seemed to be alive, wrapping around his chest like chains and squeezing, making him scream. But
when her gaze dropped to the floor she saw the bloodied dagger there, Pike’s bloodied dagger, and
it only just hit then what the pain was. He’d stabbed her.

Octavia thrust her arms to the side and the flames followed her, throwing Pike’s body with it till he
smashed into the wall, landing with a sickening crack. His body slumped to the ground
unconscious. The woman who’d been fighting Raven gaped at Octavia, at the glow that poked at
the end of her sleeve, before she simply glanced between the two and bolted up the stairs. Clarke
tried to search for Ontari, but she couldn’t find her.

Raven was suddenly in front of her, slipping her hand under her armpit and pulling her up. Clarke
cried out at that at the pain and brought her hand to her side, pushing against the wound she could
feel the blood leaking out of it. Slipping through her fingers.

“Shit, sorry, I’m sorry,” Raven mumbled, and Clarke tried to laugh at her, how Raven was
apologizing after quite literally saving her ass, but all that came out was a wheeze that had barely
any vocal tinge. Octavia suddenly appeared at her other side, taking her arm that wasn’t holding
her side and swinging it over her shoulder.

“Come on, we just gotta’ make the stairs and it's smooth sailing,” Octavia promised. Clarke just
grit her teeth.
It was slow and painful progress getting up them. By the time they managed to the top and stumbled out into the open the world was growing blurry and she was shaking. She felt Octavia shift her grip on her so she supported her more. Clarke would have told her she was fine, but when she tried to take a step forward her leg gave out and Octavia let out a grunt, pulling her back up and helping her walk again.

“You’ll be right, you’ll be okay, just hold on, just hold on Clarke,” it was Raven who whispered the words, offered her a shaky smile with them.

The whispers were blasting in her head like a siren now.

She supposed they were for her.

The three of them kept walking, or more, kept dragging Clarke as she became weaker and weaker in their arms. She could hear Raven’s increasingly panicked words, Octavia’s tightening grip, but everything was starting to feel further away than it should been. She was looking at their surroundings, and how just plain comical it was, how they must have looked. Clarke bleeding everywhere and Raven and Octavia just barely holding her up. The women around them pressed themselves against the walls as they limped past.

“Get help! Get help you fucking cowards! I’ll stuff a pipe bomb down your throat if I don’t you see fuckers running!” Raven yelled at them, and that seemed to get some moving, some sprinting.

Clarke's focus was more on staying upright however.

Her foot slipped again and Octavia just barely caught in her time. Her eyes were feeling heavier, and though she could hear Raven’s distressed shouting, even Octavia’s too, it was beginning to become muffled. Far away. So far away. She blinked her eyes open, trying to see through the blur. Survive. She had to survive. Stay awake.

Later, she would say it was the stab wound talking, but when she saw a guard burst around the corner, saw the brunette hair and the green eyes, Clarke very much thought she was seeing an angel.

Then again, that was probably the blood loss talking.

“What the hell happened?!?” Lexa snarled, sprinting towards them in speeds Clarke thought shouldn’t be humanly possible. She tried to say something to explain, but she only got as far as opening her jaw. Everything felt so slow. So weak. What she would do to just close her eyes.

“She’s been stabbed, please, Heda, you have to help her, you have to-“

“Let go of her.” Lexa snapped. Clarke realised, perhaps a few seconds too late, that they’d stopped walking. When she caught Lexa’s gaze and saw the panic there, the overwhelming fear Clarke frowned.

“S’fine,” she mumbled out, slurring her words. She didn’t like seeing Lexa so scared. “All good.”

Apparently the universe was a right bastard, because it wasn’t a second later that her legs gave out entirely and she nearly collapsed to the ground. Nearly, as Lexa caught her last minute. She snatched her out of Raven’s and Octavia’s hold and held her bridal style and all Clarke could really think at this moment was that Lexa had surprisingly good reflexes. She wondered how she’d be as an assassin.

“You’ll be okay,” Lexa whispered, and Clarke noticed that they were moving again, faster than
before. Lexa was carrying her. “You’ll be fine, I promise.”

Clarke blinked up at her in her arms. Everything was getting dark, but she held on, so she could stay staring at her. Enjoy the feeling of Lexa’s arms wrapped around her.

“How hold on,” Lexa continued, and Clarke let out a sudden groan when Lexa readjusted her grip and it pressed painfully into her side. “I know it hurts, I know. But you have to hold on, you hear me? You have to hold on. You can’t give up.”

“Kigon yo gonplei,” Clarke murmured.

Lexa glanced down at her then, and the look she gave her made Clarke’s heart flutter. “Kigon yo gonplei,” she whispered back, but hers sounded more like a promise. A pleading.

Clarke managed to give her a smile before the darkness caught up to her. The whispers screaming in her head, and Lexa’s face above her, holding her tight, sprinting so fast the world around them was a blur.

And really, all Clarke felt in that moment was ease.

-

Lexa stood stiff backed in medical.

She still hadn’t stopped shaking. Hadn’t stopped for the past two hours. The past two hours she had held Clarke in her arms, felt her grow limp, had burst into medical. She didn’t stop shaking as she watched her, watched the medical staff swarm her and begin barking orders. She stayed and she watched and she couldn’t stop fucking shaking.

Clarke was asleep now, lying motionlessly in one of the medical-issue beds. Lexa stood in the doorway to the room. Where she had been since Clarke had gotten moved here. She had nearly died. She came so close. But she was a fighter, one of their doctor’s had said, and she had caught the slight wonder in her voice as she’d said it. The out of place surprise.

When she had frowned at her she had made haste to explain. Lexa’s face, she guessed, must have been a little terrifying in that moment.

“She’ll be okay,” she’d rushed out. Her face was pale and hair was a blazing red. “It’s just… she’s… very lucky.”

Lexa had narrowed her eyes at her. For some reason she was still too afraid to speak. She hadn’t spoken since she’d whispered those words to Clarke. Had told her to keep fighting. To hold on.

The doctor cheeks had flushed then. “It’s just- her healing, Heda. I’ve… I don’t know what type of genes she has, but she’s extraordinarily lucky. She heals extremely well. It’s strange, a very good thing,” she rushed to add when Lexa found herself glaring at her. “A very good thing. But… it is strange.”

Lexa blinked, bringing herself back to the present. Clarke was still there. Still breathing, slowly, but alive. She didn’t know why she hadn’t left her side yet. She had had to, before, to find out what the actual fuck had happened, and the answer had been in an unconscious Pike in her basement. A bloodied dagger on the floor. A chair. For a whole, dangerous, second, when she’d been alone in that basement, she had stared between the dagger and him and wondered. If she could do it. How fast she’d have to be. What she would lose.
The rest of the guards had arrived in time to halt her thinking.

“She’s still going to be there if you look away you know,” Anya’s voice spoke up from behind her. Lexa had smelt her perfume before she’d heard the click of her boots against the ground.

Lexa took in a deep breath. “Has he awoken yet?”

“Not yet. Whatever got him knocked him out cold.” Anya answered, her words slightly confused. Lexa was confused too, considering the scorch marks that were down there, somehow. How Pike had hit the wall so high and at an angle that shouldn’t be physically possible.

Lexa nodded absently. When her eyes didn’t stray from Clarke she heard Anya sigh from behind her.

“Can we talk, Heda?”

“We’re already talking.”

She didn’t have to turn around to see her glare.

“Really Lexa? Are you twelve?”

Lexa reluctantly peeled her gaze off Clarke, shooting Anya a sharp look. But Anya seemed glad that she was just looking at her.

“Come on, we don’t have to stray far. You can stay near her.” Anya didn’t look like she liked saying the words, but they did manage to convince her, begrudgingly, and throwing Clarke one last worried glance she followed Anya. They found an empty room next door, kicked out the nurse who’d been hanging around with a steely glare courtesy of Anya.

The moment the door was closed and they were alone Lexa was pacing. She didn’t know why she was. All she knew was the shaking, the shaking that wouldn’t leave her. For a second she paused, trying to figure it out. The shock of everything had passed a while ago. And while she was still scared for Clarke, which, logically she shouldn’t be at all, her fear had calmed out a lot. The doctors had said she’d be fine. In bed rest for a while, but fine.

So why was she still shaking?

“You’ve barely left her side since she’s gotten here.” Anya stated, watching Lexa pace.

“An inmate got stabbed, Anya,” Lexa snapped, too caught up in her own confusion at herself to notice the tone Anya had used, the concern in her brow as she watched her. “In my prison. Of course I didn’t leave her side.”

“Why not?” Anya asked.

Lexa’s head shot up, a frown forming on her face. “Why?” she repeated, not understanding.

But Anya seemed to grow more upset at that, pushing herself off from where she’d been leaning against the wall. “Yes, Lexa, why? Why are you letting this affect you like this?”

“Affect me?” Lexa repeated disbelieving. “She could have died.”

“But she didn’t. She’s going to be fine. Yet you still haven’t left her side, you’ve stayed standing in the same position watching her like her breathing is going to give out at any minute.”
“You don’t know,” Lexa whispered. She didn’t know why she whispered. Why so much fear
snuck into her throat. “She was lucky that the blade barely missed her vital organs.”

Anya scoffed. “We were told she’ll be fine, so she’ll be fine.”

Lexa stared incredulously at her. “She got stabbed Anya.”

“And she’ll be-“

“She got stabbed!” Lexa roared and Anya instantly jumped back while Lexa burst forward. “How
could you be so crude? Pike got into my prison under my watch and he found her, beat her, and
then he stabbed her, and now she’s barely breathing and she’s asleep and you expect me to walk
away?”

“Lexa…”

But Lexa wasn’t done. She stepped closer to her, felt her shaking get worse, turn from tremors to
earth quakes. “Clarke nearly died. She stopped breathing. She stopped fucking breathing. I stood,
and I watched and she wasn’t breathing. We don’t even know why, why, this happened, why her. I
stayed by her side, of course I did. How could I not? We don’t even know if Pike was working
alone. If there is someone else waiting to finish her off-“

“Griffin,” Anya breathed, and Lexa couldn’t help but frown.

“What?”

“You said Clarke. You should have said Griffin.”

They stared at each other. And finally, finally, she managed to work out the trembling. The way
she just couldn’t stop shaking. It wasn’t fear. And it wasn’t shock. It was the reason why she felt
so on edge now, had considered raising a fist to Anya in her rant, in her explosion, her slip up.

Because she was angry. She was fucking furious. That’s what it was. That was the cause. The
realisation made the world sway. Because no matter her excuses, what she’d quite literally just
shouted at Anya, she was so much more furious than she should have been. This wasn’t the anger
of what it should have been. It wasn’t that an inmate had gotten stabbed under her own watch, it
wasn’t that she failed her people, their safety.

It was that Clarke had got stabbed.

Not any inmate.

But Clarke.

Lexa reeled back at the revelation, and Anya was staring at her. She was staring at her like she was
seeing her for the first time, like she was finally understanding.

“Oh god,” Lexa whispered, and she turned around. Squeezed her eyes shut. Gripped the bench to
stop herself from collapsing to the ground. “Oh fuck.”

“She’s an inmate Lexa,” Anya murmured, daring a careful step forward.

“I fucking know that Anya.”

“Lexa-“
“I know!” Lexa snapped.

Anya said nothing as they stared at each other, Lexa breathing hard. She slowly turned around. Opened her eyes. Blinked back the tears.

“I know.” She repeated quietly.

Oh god, did she know.

Anya was slow to approach her. She was probably worried for another outburst, if she’d bother with getting physical this time. Lexa genuinely considered the idea as she watched her get closer. But the want passed quick, and instead, Lexa just let out a shaky breath and from it Anya smiled sadly at her and pulled her into a sudden embrace.

They rarely hugged. They weren’t the really the type for physical affection. But it was needed now, it was the only thing keeping Lexa on two feet, literally and figuratively. She screwed her eyes shut to stop the tears and fisted the back of Anya’s shirt. Took a deep breath in of Anya’s hair, her scent, her smell. Let herself drown in the familiarity of it.

“She stopped breathing,” Lexa whispered into Anya’s neck, and a sob broke through before she could stop it. “You can’t… Anya, please you can’t…”

Anya held her tighter. “You are Heda, Lexa.” She mumbled into Lexa’s hair and Lexa squeezed her eyes shut tighter. “But before that, before everything, you’re my sister. Otaim.”

“I don’t know what I’m going to do.”

Anya pulled out of the hug slightly, so she could look her in the eye. “You’re going to do what you always do. You’re going to grit your teeth and wake up and do the day.”

Lexa swallowed down a sob. Anya noticed, for once she looked like she was going to cry too. She lifted a hand and tucked a stray piece of hair behind Lexa’s ear.

“It can never be easy with you can it?” Anya murmured, and Lexa let out a dry chuckle. Rested her forehead against Anya’s.

“No, nowe.”

Clarke woke up in the dark.

Her body felt like it’d been run over by a steamroller. Multiple, actually. She let out a quiet groan as she carefully pulled herself so she was sitting slightly. Slowly her eyes blinked open, glancing around the room, trying to work out where she was. It was with a start that she realised she was in medical, and that her clothes were different too, not the standard prison-issue uniform but a hospital gown. But really, this all did nothing to stop her attention from instantly falling to the woman fast asleep in the chair next to her bed.

Lexa looked so different asleep. No clench in her jaw, hardness in her eyes. It was so strange to see her now. Her face so gentle Clarke was convinced if she touched her she’d fall apart. Maybe her head was still a little hazy on pain meds, she hoped she got given some, everything after Lexa picked her up was a blur, because she reached out her hand as if she was going to do it. Graze her finger across the line of her jaw.
“I wouldn’t do that, she’s a light sleeper.”

Clarke jumped from the sudden voice, but her racing heart calmed slightly at seeing it was Costia. She lost her calm when she was forced to be faced with the cracks in her form again. The knowledge that it was just days now. Days until someone was doomed to die, and she wouldn’t be able to stop it.

Clarke had the decency at least to retreat her hand, look sheepish. But to her surprise, the responding look that Costia gave her wasn’t harsh. It certainly wasn’t warm, but something different, something sharper. Analysing, like she was picking apart her very soul with just her eyes alone. The intense stare made her uncomfortable but she didn’t dare show it.

It took a long while before either spoke up again.

“I don’t think she will be happy by the time I’m ready.” Costia muttered quietly. Clarke had been getting ready to go back to sleep, but at her words she opened her eyes. Costia stared at her again. “I think it may be some time until she is happy.”

“So you’re not going to leave then?”

Clarke’s voice wasn’t even angry anymore. Just tired. Resigned. In her defense though, she did just get stabbed. But when Clarke prepared herself for Costia’s same stiff nod, she instead was met with that analyzing stare.

“I don’t think she’ll be happy by the time I’m ready,” Costia repeated, that look never leaving her cracked face. “But with you, I think that one day she could be.”

Clarke blinked at her. This… this wasn’t a dream was it? Was she still unconscious somewhere, people dissecting her body to keep her alive? Had she died even?

Costia rolled her eyes. “No need to look so shocked. I think I knew it from the start. The second she saw you. Do you know the moment she did, the moment she looked into your soul she just knew, just like that. Hasn’t realised it. She will soon though.” Clarke couldn’t really talk at this point, and so she listened, watched Costia as she turned her gaze onto Lexa. How it softened so incredibly.

“‘You should have seen her Clarke. She was terrified. Absolutely terrified.’ She murmured. Her eyes became so sad that Clarke felt her chest ache. “There was this moment where you stopped breathing. I think she did too. Saw the entire world shatter before her eyes. Then you sucked in a strangled breath, and the way she breathed, the way she just…”

“I’ve spent my years here watching. Her, people, lives. I think I’ve gotten good at being able to tell, when someone cares, when an invisible line is crossed, when the fist is going to come. But when I saw her, when I saw her face after you breathed in.” Costia gave her a smile. “It’s you. I thought my answer would be in watching her finally relax, to give in to happiness, not to shove it away. But I was wrong. It’s you. It’s just you.”

Costia suddenly looked behind her at something Clarke couldn’t see, but at the way her entire body sagged, Clarke thought she knew what it was. Her chance. Her opportunity to finally move on, to leave this plane. Costia stood up from where she’d been sitting. She gave Clarke one last glance, one last grin, and this one, this one was hers. Had her fire and her snark and her hope.

“Take care of her, Clarke. I’m trusting you to.”

And just as Clarke was about to say goodbye, there was a blinding flash of light that had her closing her eyes. By the time she opened them Costia was gone. And not gone by her usual
standards, she was gone. She had moved on. She was at peace. Clarke slowly let herself lean back
down. Her eyes stayed at the spot where Costia been, eventually trailing over till they landed on
Lexa’s still sleeping form.

“I promise.” Clarke whispered into the dark.

- 

It had been two weeks since Pike.

She was finally up and walking again, out of that motherfucking bed. Being made to do nothing but
lie in it had driven her near insane. She had tried to sneak out, multiple times, but somehow Lexa
would always know, would always be waiting down the hallway. She’d just raise her brow, and
muttering a curse under her breath Clarke would reluctantly turn around and go back to that damn
bed. She wouldn’t dare admit it aloud, but sometimes she snuck out for the sole reason of Lexa’s
exasperated sigh when she did. It always made her smile. And well, when she smiled, Lexa tended
to smile too, and Lexa smiling was something she would move mountains for.

Lexa had waited a whole day after she woke up until she asked her on what happened. Clarke was
surprised she didn’t get it the second she regained consciousness, as with the way Lexa kept
sporadically glancing at her and biting her lip, pulling back on the urge before her eyes to rain
down questions on her, it seemed odd to wait. Kind, so very kind, but odd.

Maybe that was why she found it odd.

Eventually she did though, and Clarke stared at her for a whole minute before she’d answered,
whispering the words, “not now.” She had said, and she could still remember how Lexa had
blinked doe-eyed at her. “I can’t tell you now. Later.”

And she only said that because, going against her head’s screams at her, she was going to tell Lexa
what she was. Not who she was mind you, but what. Why she was here. Where she had been the
past year. Why Pike had come after her, and not brush it aside, but seriously address it. Well, as
much as she dared. The mere thought of the conversation she’d forced herself to take had her
stomach rolling. But she was determined to stick to it. To do it.

It was with much argument that Lexa finally agreed to put the conversation off. A lot of argument
that had Clarke feeling sorry for anyone who went against her. She must be a terrifying thing to
face off with. But, like it always seemed to be with Lexa, she caved, and she agreed. Clarke hadn’t
been able to put off her beam in response, the type of smile she hadn’t done in a very long time.

And with the way Lexa had smiled back at her, maybe she thought it was worth it.

Now Clarke was sat up in her cell. Not on her bunk but Raven’s, the pair of friends of both sides of
her. She had only just been allowed back in and the two were honestly such mother hens it was
ridiculous. Whenever she stood up one stood with her as if to catch her and Clarke came this close
to shoving Raven off a cliff when the girl had asked if she’d be right to use the bathroom by
herself.

They still needed to talk. About what had happened. About what Octavia had done, what she could
do, but like her conversation with Lexa, Octavia had told her later. They would address it later.
And not wanting to feel like a hypocrite, Clarke had agreed, though she did gain a tad more
sympathy for Lexa’s argument with her before.

She was midway through laughing at Raven’s joke when Lexa was suddenly at the entrance to her
cell. Her laughter trailed off as she brought her sight to meet hers, and it was in habit that she let herself stare, let herself absorb in the beauty of her features that she surely must have sold her soul for.

“My office. Now.”

And with that Lexa turned around and strode away.

Clarke swallowed the sudden nerves in her throat. Right. Here it was. The conversation she’d been putting off, this was it. This was it.

“If it makes you feel any better, I’m pretty Heda would eat her own arm than ever lay a finger against you,” Raven whispered, and Clarke didn’t hesitate to slap the back of her head.

“Just because you saved me life doesn’t mean you get to get away with being annoying.” Clarke muttered, narrowing her eyes. But her twitching lips gave away her want to smile.

Raven must have noticed, because she just grinned at her. Octavia chuckled from behind her. Clarke turned to her curiously. “Nothing, nothing,” Octavia said, but she was still smiling so widely that Clarke couldn’t help but frown. Octavia eventually gave in with a roll of the eyes. “It’s just I think you one of the only few who get to scold Raven like that and get away with it.”

“Hey!” Raven shouted indignantly, and Clarke took it as her cue to get up and moving. It took her longer than it should have, mostly because Clarke was mindful at her wound at her side, how if she didn’t angle herself right it hurt like hell. At her slowness Raven and Octavia simultaneously paused their bickering and offered a hand which Clarke mumbled a quiet thank you too.

When she was up on her feet Raven shot her another worried look, but Clarke just waved her off.

“I’ll be fine, I can walk.”

Raven bit her lip. “You sure?”

“I’ll be fine Raven.” Clarke promised.

“The last time you said that you wound up in a basement tied to a chair.”

“Will you hit her for me O?”

Clarke turned around after she said the words, but a smile spread on her lips when she heard the telltale sound of a tap against a head and Raven’s dramatic ‘ow!’

It wasn’t too hard to walk. Her body had a habit of healing faster than others, she fought off illness much faster than she humanly should have, and really she’d never been more appreciative of her superior biology as she made her way to Lexa’s office. Trying to ignore the fear in her throat. Apprehension in her gut. It didn’t take long till she was there and there was nothing to put this conversation back anymore. It was happening. It was going to happen. Right now.

With a shaky intake of breath, Clarke brought her hand to the handle and pushed.

Lexa’s office was the same as the last time she’d been here. Lexa had been pacing through the middle of it, but at seeing her there she paused, lifting her head. She gave her a look she couldn’t read before she walked past her.

Clarke stood still, trying to control her breathing as she heard Lexa close the door behind her. She
kept her eyes forward, fighting against the urge to track every twitch of Lexa’s movement, to not let herself get distracted in the way she tended to move. So graceful but lethal at the same time. Lexa slowly came into her view, but only once she was directly in front of her, but still a few metres away, did Clarke lock sights with her.

As always, they stared before they spoke. It was difficult not to with Lexa. No matter how blank she could make her face, her eyes were something that always gave her away, always so vibrant. Drowning in them was an addiction that Clarke had no intent of giving up anytime soon. Then again, that was what had led her into this mess she supposed. Because what she was about to do was very stupid.

So stupid.

And so gloriously selfish too.

“How are you feeling?” Lexa asked, probably to help ease the tension that had slinked into the room like a shadow.

Without thinking her hand came up to her side where the scar of the stab wound sat. Lexa’s eyes tracked the movement, and Clarke wasn’t blind to the way they hardened. Her arms were crossed over her chest. She watched her fists curl into a fist.

“I’ve had worse,” Clarke said, and even if she had said the words with a slight smirk, Lexa didn’t look amused. Instead she sucked in a sharp breath through her nose. Clarke’s smile slowly slipped off her face.

Lexa’s eyes were looking at her with an emotion so intense it left Clarke’s chest feeling like it was caving in on itself. “What happened Clarke? You told me to wait. And I have. Ontari won’t speak, even if she’s in max now. Pike won’t say a thing.” She spat Pike’s name when it came up. “What is it? Why is there so much secrecy around you? Why did you get stabbed?”

Clarke swallowed thickly. She knew this conversation was coming, but she hadn’t expected the sheer amount of nerves she felt. The way her heart was a thundering thing that pounded against her chest like a lion trying to escape from its cage. Roaring and snarling and terrified.

“I’ll tell you. But you need to do something for me first.”

Lexa’s eyes narrowed into thin, suspicious slits. “You are not in a position to negotiate, Clarke.”

Clarke had to bit her cheek to stop her bitter chuckle. She hadn’t been in a position like that for many years. “I know, I’m not a fool,” Clarke said, and it was incredible to watch the tension leave Lexa’s body. The softness that only seemed to creep up around her tugging at her lips, swirling like whirlpools in her eyes. “But if you can’t do this one thing than I can’t say anything.”

Some of that tension crept back in, sunk its claws into her shoulders, but still, her lips pressing into a thin line, she gave her a stiff nod.

Clarke had to fight the urge to beam at her.

Instead, when Lexa raised her brows in question for what she wanted, Clarke just tilted her head to the corner of her office. Those brows fell down and furrowed. When Clarke did nothing but continue to urge her in that direction Lexa’s eyes detached from Clarke’s and looked for whatever she was pointing out. Clarke knew she’d seen it when her jaw clenched.

That she’d seen the camera in the corner.
“That isn’t something to be taken lightly.” Lexa muttered.

It was perhaps embarrassing, how the way Lexa’s voice hardened, become like sharpened steel, didn’t intimidate her but made her swallow dryly because god was it attractive.

“I can’t say anything without it.”

Lexa’s jaw clenched even harder if that were possible. Her arms that had been crossed over her chest fell down to her sides, gripping the edge of the desk behind her. It was rare for Clarke to be caught in Lexa’s glare, but that was what she was in, Lexa’s form looking about one second away from exploding with all its pent up tension. It leaked into the air until it became near suffocating, and only then, when Clarke was sure her lungs were going to collapse from the pressure, did Lexa push herself from her desk and strode over to her.

There was this second, this heartbeat before she edged her foot to the right to get to the camera. This glorious, glorious second, when Lexa’s face was so close all she’d have to do was lean. Just lean. All she had to do, to break all those promises she made in her darkest hours; to ignore every warning and caution her mind threw at her like bricks; to destroy every wall and decision to protect no one but herself.

To destroy her entire world, all she’d have to do was lean.

But then the second passed and Lexa was moving away.

Clarke couldn’t resist this time as she turned her head, watching Lexa as she moved to the corner of her room with the camera. Lexa’s hands rose as if to reach it, but with a scowl to herself she bent back down and pulled in a nearby chair. Standing on top of it her fingers found their way at the back of the camera, and after Clarke heard a series of high pitched beeps, the red light that blinked next to the lens let out a small purr before it disappeared.

Lexa got off the chair, resuming back to its place by the wall.

“If this in an attempt at trying something...” Lexa warned, leaving the end of her sentence trailing off. She walked around her and Clarke’s eyes followed her as she did.

Clarke only spoke up when Lexa was standing in front of her again. “I just got stabbed Lexa, maybe another time.”

Even if she tried to stop it Clarke could see the twitching of her lips. It brought a grin to Clarke’s own, untamed and unstoppable and so wonderfully free. She was still terrified of she was about to do. Her skin still felt like it was on fire and she was sure there was sweat leaking down the nape of her neck. But somehow, this felt right. Like what she needed to do.

And it had been so long since she’d done something for herself.

Something for her.

Just for her.

Clarke sucked in a sharp, strangled breath, tilting her chin up. “Okay. I asked for you to turn off the camera because I cannot risk her finding her out. She has spies everywhere, and I can’t trust that someone will find record of me being in here and what I’m about to say.”

Lexus took a step closer, that previous suspiciousness melting away so beautifully fast. “Who?”
“Nia.”

Clarke hated the immediate hurt she saw in Lexa’s eyes. The fear. She knew it must be because of Costia, of what had happened with her. Just thinking about what Lexa would have had to go through made her heart feel like it’d been ripped out of her chest, but she held on, she couldn’t give in to these feelings. Not yet. Not when she had things to say.

“You know where I was before this. In Azgeda Tower.” It didn’t matter if she tried not to; her voice still trembled when she said its name. She thought that perhaps it would remain that way for the rest of her life. “What you… what you don’t know, is why I was there. What happened there.”

Clarke couldn’t keep holding Lexa’s gaze anymore, the increasingly sympathetic looks she was giving her. So instead they fell to the concrete floor. She anchored herself to the grey, the stone, the cold. Those things she knew at least. Lexa’s iris was something she barely knew at all but felt like she did, and maybe that was why she avoided them now.

“Nia wants what I have. If she ever had it, she would know no one would want what I have. Because it is far from desirable. But that doesn’t matter to her. She wants it so bad she took me to Azgeda Tower, she got me out of my death sentence.” Clarke lifted her gloved hand, stretched it out so it hung between them. In her peripheral she saw how Lexa blinked, the shock of seeing something that should have been impossible to miss.

“What, how long have you had-?”

“I’ve had this since my first day.”

Clarke forced herself to meet Lexa’s gaze. Her jaw was dropped, her eyes jumping between Clarke and her outstretched hand in clear disbelief.

“That’s not possible,” Lexa breathed, but there was this hitch in her breath that gave away that just maybe it was. “I would have noticed. Anyone would have noticed.” Her eyes widened suddenly as she examined the glove closer. “Is it- Is that stitched into your skin?”

“Everyone sees it, Lexa. You have seen it, multiple times. Everyone does.” Lexa looked at her confused, and Clarke in response gave her a smile that felt like she was grinning at oblivion itself. “And everyone forgets. Because that’s what’s it’s made to do. You only ever notice it if it’s pointed out, if you see it directly and it’s made obvious to you. And you’ll only ever remember it if you previously know that it’s there, if you’ve been explicitly told to look out for it.”

“How can that be possible?” Lexa whispered.

And here it was. The thing she’d be so scared for. So terrified of letting out. But she had it let out, hadn’t she? Raven knew. Octavia knew. Hell, even Ontari knew. Lexa was the one person however, that she got to show. That she got to explain to on her own terms, her own words, her own voice. Because that was what she deserved.

“When the leather was made,” Clarke started, keeping her voice quiet. “It was infused with something. A certain type of blood. The blood of an Other. Nia had her son find an Other who’s abilities lied with Seeing, because she didn’t want people noticing the very obvious glove she put on me. And she put this glove on me, because it suppresses my abilities. It doesn’t let me use them.”

Lexa was staring at her, just staring at her. Clarke thought it reminded her of a frame caught on pause.
Clarke pushed on. Fighting the tremors that begged to make themselves known. “I’m an Other, Lexa. That’s why Nia wants me. Why she… why she kept me in Azgeda Tower, and tortured me.” It was those last two words that did it, that made a few tears slip from her eyes even as stubborn determination willed them back in. Clarke couldn’t help the strangled breath that broke out of her. The echo of the sob from the sheer relief that came with finally admitting it out loud. “She tortured me every hour of every day for a year. She’s obsessed, so deadiest on power, and she knows that I have it.”

“Clarke…” Lexa whispered her name so softly and gently that Clarke had to bite her cheek so hard it bled to stop herself from just breaking down. From letting herself collapse in her arms. Idly, she wondered what it would feel like.

“Pike has some vendetta against Others. He knew I was one, and so he wanted to kill me. Ontari… Ontari is one of Nia’s monsters. She didn’t want me dead. She only gave Pike help so she could get to me, but I don’t think she ever had intention of killing me.”

“But…” Lexa’s breath was shaking, and in instinct Clarke stepped forward as if to hold her. To comfort her. She stopped herself before she could. “Other’s aren’t real they’re… they’re a story. A fairytale. They’re the boogieman not…”

“Then how didn’t you notice my glove?” Clarke asked gently. Lexa shook her head, but it seemed to be directed at herself.

“I…” The disbelief slowly slid from her features, and instead it left this shining realisation, burning in her eyes like planetary storms and leaving Clarke breathless. “Can you… can you prove it?”

At that Clarke couldn’t stop the bitterness that seeped into her voice. “You don’t know how badly I want that. But I can’t. The glove covers my mark, and because of what’s in it, it interferes with my access to my abilities. I can’t show you, so easily.” Clarke slowly brought her hand back to her side. “But there are things that not even the glove can stop. I know when Death is coming. I can sense it, I can stop it if I’m fast enough. I can see the spirits that linger on this plane. I can… I can see the trapped souls here, the ones who were murdered.”

Lexa carefully edged herself back till she hit her desk. Clarke didn’t know what she was expecting after this, after putting it out in the air. Mostly she was leaning towards the fear that would come, the terror of what she was – after all, there are few who aren’t scared of death. But she didn’t want Lexa to be afraid of her. Ironically, that was what made Clarke feel fear. That Lexa would fear her.

But when Clarke met gazes with her, she didn’t see fear.

Instead she saw fury.

The numbness that came with the revelation seemed to have passed, and it left this hurricane, this oncoming storm that was Lexa as she stood there. Her voice so quiet and burning and her eyes darker than the blackness that blanketed the sky above. Because when Lexa looked at her then, Clarke knew she wasn’t afraid. Not at her.

And even if Lexa’s fury should have worried her, all Clarke felt was overwhelming relief.

“Nia…” the way she muttered her name had the hairs rising on the back of Clarke’s neck. “Nia tortured you. The entire time you were at Azgeda Tower.”

Clarke frowned slightly at Lexa’s tone, how her hands were shaking. “Yes.”

“Who else knows?”
“Ontari knows now. As does Pike. I haven’t told Raven and Octavia yet.” Clarke let out a shaky breath. “I don’t know if I’ll tell them.”

Lexa’s voice was still terrifyingly calm. “Why not?”

“What Nia did to me…” Clarke had to blink away the burning behind her eyes. “I don’t think I’ll ever be able to repeat it.”

“I’ll kill her.”

The words were like a bucket of ice-cold water, snapping her back to the present so abruptly she almost staggered back. Clarke’s jaw dropped at Lexa’s proclamation. Because, surely she must have misheard, right? Lexa was, well, she was Lexa, she was Heda – there was no way the girl could even consider murder.

But then Clarke looked at her. Really looked at her. And when Lexa met her gaze head on, her chin tilted up, the flare in her eyes that had Clarke fighting the urge to fall to her knees–

Lexa would do it.

For her, she’d do it.

Clarke suddenly shook her head, striding forward and stopping just centimetres from her. “Lexa, no. You can’t. She’s not worth it.”

“She tortured you Clarke. Anya had said she suspected it because of the scars but… but I never thought…” She let out a sudden growl and her arms came up as if she was going to hit something. Clarke’s own hands shot out at that, gripping Lexa’s wrist and pinning them on either side of the desk behind her.

“Lexa. Listen to me. I survived. And in time, I’ll be okay. But she is not, and she will never be worth your life. Nothing is.”

“It is if it’s for you.” Lexa whispered, and with a start Clarke realised that even if Lexa had murmured the words so quietly, so softly, that because of how close their faces were did she hear it. Clarke’s breathing hitched without her permission.

Their faces were barely a hairsbreadth apart. At first their eyes were locked on each others, trapped in that staring match they so often did, holding on to see who would be the first to give in. That defiance like always flickered like flames in the green in front of her, but it didn’t take long till Clarke gave in. Till their closeness was made achingly apparent as her sight dipped downwards. Towards the lips just a breath away from her own.

All she had to do was lean.

The world had dropped away a while ago, and Clarke had no sense of time at all really of how much passed until she spoke again. Even if she tried to tear her eyes away from the sight in front her, the soft lips that she would give up her soul if it meant she could spend her life kissing them, she couldn’t. Her throat was so dry that when she swallowed it felt painful.

But Clarke could sense that Lexa was staring at her lips too. Which meant that if she did it, if she leaned, maybe Lexa would kiss her too. Oh god maybe she’d kiss her too.

“Lexa…” she hadn’t meant to breathe her name so reverently, so full of warmth she’d forgotten she was capable of doing. She watched Lexa swallow thickly.
“I know,” she whispered back. Finally, Clarke lifted her eyes so they met Lexa’s. And Clarke was exceedingly glad that she did when she saw the softness there. But more importantly the acceptance, because Clarke knew what Lexa was really saying. That moment in the dark a month and a half ago, when Lexa had given her that dream catcher. When Clarke had told her she knew – she knew what was happening between them.

Lexa had run away then.

But now, she just whispered the words back.

_I know._

Clarke was still holding Lexa’s hands down at either side of her, and slowly, so slowly did she begin lean. Her lips brushed feather lightly against Lexa’s, a test, a question. To see if she’d pull away, if she’d shove her back. In all honesty that was what Clarke had been expecting. So when Lexa didn’t do that, when instead she leaned forward too, and finally, like she’d just learned the answer to life itself, Lexa kissed her.

Her lips were so much more softer than she’d imagined. The kiss was gentle, so incredibly and _achingly_ gentle. Lexa’s lips were slow to slide against Clarke’s, and yet she still found it was the most perfect of kisses she’d ever had. Because the second that contact of warmth was made Clarke was filled with just a single word, a single phrase that she truly and whole-heartedly thought she’d never feel again. The realisation left her trembling and drowning in the best most brilliant way. Because this thing, this one, tiny thing, meant everything and more.

Because the moment Lexa kissed her, Clarke felt at peace.

The pain that had made home pressing on her back like weights, sinking its teeth into her heart and bleeding her out when she tried to sleep and found nothing but nightmares. Being with Lexa pushed all of that away. It _forced_ it all away so intensely that with her, there wasn’t a thing that mattered but her. But _Lexa._

Lexa pulled out just slightly, taking in a small breath before tilting her head and leaning forward again, her nose brushing against Clarke’s. They connected once more, but there was this doubt that niggled in the back of Clarke’s head like a spread of black ink. So, her heart screaming at her the entire way, Clarke pulled away.

Lexa’s eyes instantly fluttered open, and they blinked like she was trying to pull herself from a daze. It took great effort to ignore the impulse to just kiss her again if only to wipe away the slight hurt that she could see in Lexa’s eyes, the fear.

“I’m giving you one chance,” Clarke whispered, having to swallow the terror in her throat of what could happen in the next few seconds. The _pain_ that could explode. “Because after, I won’t be able to stop. I simply won’t be able to.”

Lexa’s brows pulled into a frown. “Clarke,” her voice had dropped somehow, and it left Clarke fighting off a shiver. “What… what do you mean?”

Clarke sucked in a shuddering breath. “If you say no, right now, I’ll walk away. We can pretend like this never happened, and I’ll never do anything like this for you again. We can… we can forget this, so it can’t affect you, can’t hurt you.” Clarke found a sudden chuckle escaping from her lips, but it was too full of pain and heartache to bring a smile. “It will probably take me a while to get over you. But I’ll do it, I will. If you say no. Right now.” She searched Lexa’s eyes, trying to find the answer before she said it. But they were too clouded, too full of so many emotions Clarke
couldn’t tell which was which.

“Because I won’t give you another chance like this if you don’t say no. I won’t let you go.” Clarke tried to make her voice sound steadier than the chaos she could feel inside. She made sure Lexa was looking at her directly in the eye before she pushed out, forcing the steel in her voice, the strength that wasn’t there. “But you have to say it now.”

Lexa’s lip parted open in their shock. Clarke knew she was going to hate herself immensely if Lexa took her deal. But it would have been far too selfish to not offer it, not give Lexa the chance. Because Clarke may not have a lot to lose. But Lexa did. And it wasn’t fair to not give her the chance, the choice, not with so much on the line.

She continued staring at her, and it infuriated Clarke to no end that for the first time since she’d met her she couldn’t read what was in her eyes. Then again, that perhaps had to do that her head was still spinning with the beyond intoxicating feeling of Lexa’s lips against her own. Even if Lexa did end up saying no, just that kiss, that kiss alone was enough for her to live by.

And slowly, Lexa backed away from her. Clarke watched her throat bob as she carefully eased her hands out from where Clarke had still been pressing against them, keeping them pinned against the desk. Clarke could only stare as Lexa, now with her hands free, softly placed them on her chest, and pushed her away with such gentleness she was sure her heart had already shattered inside and its sharp pieces were lodging themselves into her lungs. It was with pure numbness that she let Lexa carefully push her aside so she could walk past her.

Lexa walked for the door and Clarke just watched her. Felt the coldness seep into her chest, something so much more painful than the torture she’d endured in the Tower. But when Clarke was getting ready to hang her head, to simply let her body collapse to the ground, she saw Lexa pause by the door. Her hand hovered over the handle. Lexa’s head tilted then, just a little in her direction.

“If I don’t walk away now, I could lose everything that I’ve come to call mine. My reputation, my position, my people. I could lose everything.”

Clarke bit her lip in an effort to stop her tears. She should have been expecting this, she should have. She should have never expected Lexa to be selfish, if only for her.

And then Clarke heard a sound that in any other situation would have made her terrified. She heard the door click as Lexa locked it.

Lexa turned around, and finally, finally, Clarke could see what was happening in her eyes. It was damn near earth shattering to see the sheer amount of light there, of brightness and fire and softness. Of a word that was far too early to give name to.

“But I do not think that can compare to what would happen if I lost you.”

And before Clarke could even attempt at deciphering what Lexa’s words could mean she was suddenly in front of her again and her lips were clashing against her own. This kiss was different and Clarke was getting drunk on the ferocity of it, the way it had forced her to knock into the desk behind her, Lexa’s hand grabbing Clarke’s own and pinning them in the exact same position Clarke had done to Lexa before.

Clarke was so engulfed with kissing her the world could have ended beneath her feet and she’d only pull away for air and nothing else. She swept her tongue over Lexa’s bottom lip and her toes
curled when Lexa’s mouth was instantly opening and Lexa’s fucking tongue was in her mouth. Clarke was surprised she didn’t pass out from the sensation.

They only pulled away when oxygen was desperately needed, when they’d pushed their lungs right to its limits. Clarke gulped in greedy breaths, unable to stop her grin when she felt her hard breathing, her pounding heart.

“This is a terrible idea,” Lexa whispered, kissing her not a second later.

“So terrible.” Clarke murmured back. She managed to free one of her hands from Lexa’s grip, and instantly she brought it up to Lexa’s neck and pulled her closer.

Lexa let out a moan at that and Clarke felt herself shudder. “One of the worst idea’s I’ve ever had,” she breathed, and this time Clarke regretfully detached her lips from Lexa’s own, but her regret was short lived when they found their place at Lexa’s throat. Clarke thought there was nothing quite as heavenly as feeling Lexa lean into her like she was the only source of heat in a freezing world.

“The absolute worst,” Clarke repeated, smiling into Lexa’s neck.

“I don’t think there’s ever been something as bad an idea as this.”

“Lex,” Clarke said her name with a laugh, pulling her lips away from Lexa’s neck if only so she could look at her eyes. She was glad that she did, as the way that they were shining now, it was quite possibly one of the most beautiful things she’d ever seen. “Stop talking.”

But at Lexa’s responding smile, the sheer brightness that it held-

Now that was the most beautiful thing she’d ever seen.

And when she leaned back in to the kiss her, it was softer. She could practically taste Lexa’s smile and it left her craving more, so much more till the end of her days. It was a kiss that had Clarke smiling and grinning and most importantly forgetting, completely and utterly forgetting every inch of darkness and pain in her soul. Because she was so happy here, in this kiss, in this type of kiss.

It was the type of kiss that set the earth off its axis. That toppled gods and raised civilisations. A type that could burn the skies, dry up the oceans and collapse stars. One that could both explode universes but also create them, could make the mightiest and most powerful ruler fall to their knees with not an ounce of hesitation – it could change the course of life and history and everything within this universes and possible billions of others. Something so unexplainably soft, and harsh, and fierce, that not even gravity could pull them apart if it tried.

It was the kiss of two people in love.

Chapter End Notes

god that ending was so gay and I fucking loved writing it. anyway, i hope you enjoyed that. if we’re being honest we’ve got that marriage equality postal vote going on down here and i saw a vote no ad the other day and i was just… so shocked at just how incredibly idiotic it was i dove for my laptop with Gay Intent to write some gay scenes for my gay fanfic out of SPITE. but this shit turned out alright, so i’m calling it a job well done. fucking homophobes.
I had to legit google 'what is the safest place to stab someone' so if I disappear suddenly it's because the feds came after me. For any wondering, it's the hand, through the palm. Also the butt surprisingly, but I feel that takes the tension out of the scene.

Anyway, it's 5am. I can't even see my keyboard right now. I'm going to bed.

Translations:
- Jus drein jus daun. - Blood must have blood.
- Ai krei fiya - I'm so sorry
- Wamplei ste komba raun. Sheid em kiln. - Death is coming. Protect her.
- Leidon Heda - Goodbye Heda
- Kigon yo gonplei. - Keep fighting.
- Otaim. - Always.
- No, nowe - No, never
Thunder Storms, Laughter Mourned

Chapter Summary

once again, my affinity for tangents and fucked planning skills means that ive had to split this chapter into two.
because, like always, i am a goddamn fucking idiot FUCK

Chapter Notes

being honest im not really happy with how this turned out but im hoping you lads at least like it. lifes getting a little fucked right now and writings getting hard, but im determined to hold on and get this shit done. would just like to say a special thanks for the love for last chapter. some of you beautiful souls are just too fucking nice and it made me so happy that you enjoyed our two favourite gays finally admitting their love. now, some of you probably know my love for angst and Drama, and how when anything good happens... well...
dont kill me! *jumps into a hole*

(for that Full Immersion then listen to: RY X - Only) (beautiful song to listen to at midnight while staring up at the stars)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

She was an idiot.

Or at least very good at making bad decisions. It was more a spur of the moment thing anyway, which, admittedly, generally tended to be her bad decisions. It wasn’t entirely her fault. He had started it. Mostly. Okay, so sure, she was the one who’d been eavesdropping on a conversation in a bar that she shouldn’t have, but what was the point of superior hearing if not to use it? And yeah, she was the one who’d walked up to him and thrown the first fist, but he was the one who’d in turn thrown her into a wall so hard she had dislocated her shoulder.

And it definitely had nothing to do with the fact that she could sense he’d killed someone.

The fact that she’d only just got herself out of there before she’d ripped it out in front of the whole bar.

Clarke closed her eyes.

She was fine. She was. Totally and completely fine. But still her hands shook, her breaths were trembling and more than once she’d had to use random walls for support, to stop herself from falling. Her arm felt like it was on fire, sure, but mentally, she was okay. Completely okay.

Right?

Clarke forced her eyes open, taking in a deep breath. It felt like she was preparing herself to go to
war, going against everything she believed in for the sake of good, instead of just calming herself down. Trying to anchor herself. The street she was in was dark with only the light of the full moon above as guidance, but she could see fine, and these streets had become more home than her own recently. She kept walking, even if it seemed like there were weights at her ankles, and as her eyes lazily trailed over the brick walls she found a small smile tugging at her lips at the graffiti of a raven.

She pulled herself to parallel to it. The raven was painted within an alley and after glancing around to make sure no one was there Clarke slipped through, curling her hands into fists when they still couldn’t seem to stop their trembling. She made one last check that no one was looking, strained her hearing for any catches of sound, and as her shoulders slumped at nothing, she turned back to the spray paint of a raven. The graffiti was small; it only spanned the length of a single brick. She lifted her hand and pressed it gently against the brick with the raven.

The raven suddenly glowed white, and with one last paranoid glance Clarke held her breath and jumped towards the wall.

It was like being sucked under raging waters. Her body suddenly felt it was being torn apart in all directions, but experience had her ignoring the pain and pushing herself through, and so, a breath later her feet suddenly landed on solid ground. She released her breath and gave herself a few seconds for the roll of her stomach to subside.

She really hated teleporting.

Clarke gingerly brought her hand to her limp arm, wincing at the pain. She’d really been an idiot tonight, hadn’t she? With a sigh that could have been a growl she carefully, but ultimately painfully, shrugged off her leather jacket and threw it at the chair that had no purpose other than to hold her jackets. She glanced around the room she’d come to call home.

The floor was concrete stone, the walls red brick that had mostly been covered in paintings, either her own or favourites, one side art and the other gear that was pinned to the walls. A rack of swords, another for knives. The room was big as this one was her training one. There were blue mats on the ground in one corner of the room, a punching bag hanging by chains from the ceiling. Since it was underground she didn’t have windows, though she’d really love some, and instead the ceiling were panels of glass, warm light flickering on the second she’d walked in.

But really, all her attention was on the man standing in the centre of her room, her home, arms crossed and beard thick. Clarke swallowed thickly, and she pretended it didn’t make her antsy when he did nothing but raise a single brow at her.

“Hey Nyko,” Clarke tried, internally wincing at how lame she sounded. He did not look happy to see her and, well, she didn’t have to guess why. Although she did wonder how he already knew.

“Clarke.” Nyko ground out.

The way he was glaring at her reminded her a lot of a kid being told off for getting caught stealing candy, so schooling her face into a scowl she carefully, but ultimately painfully, shrugged off her leather jacket and threw it at the chair that had no purpose other than to hold her jackets. She glanced around the room she’d come to call home.

“But really, all her attention was on the man standing in the centre of her room, her home, arms crossed and beard thick. Clarke swallowed thickly, and she pretended it didn’t make her antsy when he did nothing but raise a single brow at her.

“Hey Nyko,” Clarke tried, internally wincing at how lame she sounded. He did not look happy to see her and, well, she didn’t have to guess why. Although she did wonder how he already knew. Then again he always seemed to know things he shouldn’t.

“Clarke.” Nyko ground out.

The way he was glaring at her reminded her a lot of a kid being told off for getting caught stealing candy, so schooling her face into a scowl she scoffed and walked past him. She would have knocked into his shoulder, but her arm still hurt like hell, and she knew that she was going to have to end up asking for his help with it anyway. Still, she was stubborn, and so she kept walking, opening the only door in the room and stumbling into the more apartment-area of her apartment.

She walked past the kitchen, which was really just a couple tabletops and oven she’d never used, a fridge standing sentry next to it. Instead she made a beeline to the opposite of the kitchen and let
herself collapse into her couch that had really seen some better days and let out a relieved sigh. She would have closed her eyes but apparently Nyko had been following her and now was suddenly standing in front of her as she lay sprawled out on her sofa.

He was still glaring at her. “What happened to your arm?”

“You can feel the fates Nyko, don’t you already know?” Clarke sighed tiredly, knowing the lecture to come. “Speaking of, can you heal my arm for me?”

“No.”

Clarke blinked. She suddenly pulled herself, hissing at the pain it brought. She ignored it in favour of glaring at him. “Seriously?” she scoffed.

“Yes, seriously,” he snapped, and his sudden hostility had Clarke stiffening. Her eyes hardening.

“What’s your problem?” She snapped right back, but Nyko just threw her the same look. She frowned slightly when she saw the amount of anger in it.

“My problem is that you got into a bar fight for no reason.” Nyko growled, and letting out a huff he began pacing over the worn rug beneath his feet.

Clarke clenched her jaw. “It wasn’t for no reason.”

“No? Then what was the reason? Hm?”

“A pervert, that’s why. If you’d heard the vile things he was saying you would have hit him too.”

“No.” Nyko shook his head. “That my be part of the reason, but it is not the reason.”

Clarke pushed herself to her feet, unable to be on lower ground with him anymore. “And how would you know that? Last I checked, you’re not me.”

He stopped pacing and stepped himself into her space, staring her dead in the eye. It wasn’t the first time that Clarke found herself hating the height he had on her.

“If that was the reason, your hand wouldn’t be shaking right now.”

In instinct she instantly grabbed her own wrists to stop it, but it was too late. He’d already seen.

He leaned closer. “Why are you shaking Clarke?”

“I’m not shaking.” She muttered.

He pushed out a sharp breath through his nose. “You only went for that man because he had killed.” Clarke blinked, taking a slow step backward. “It didn’t matter what he could have been saying, that was why you went for him.”

“So?” Clarke snapped, throwing up her good arm. “So what? He’s a killer. How does it change anything?”

“Because you could have killed him in front of everyone!” Nyko hissed. “Tell me, Clarke, he may have got a good shot at your arm, but what about him? How did he fair?”

Clarke just bit down on the urge to snarl at him like an animal. “He got off way better than he deserved.” She spat.
“And what does he deserve to you? Death?”

Clarke remained silent.

The fire in his eyes dimmed slightly. “Clarke, you cannot let yourself lose control like that. I understand that it can be hard, and I’m sorry that you have to do this, especially so young, but you are not normal Clarke. And you could have killed that man tonight for no other reason than that he killed before.”

“How is it a bad thing if he’s a killer himself?” Clarke said disbelievingly, looking at the man who’d trained her like she’d never seem him before.

“Because life is not black and white.” Nyko muttered solemnly. “For Death it is. It is simple. Those who’ve killed and those who haven’t. But it isn’t like that with people, with life. Say for a woman suffering domestic abuse, if she accidentally kills her partner in self-defense, in a situation where her partner was going to kill her, would you take her soul then to free the one she’d killed?”

“Of course not,” Clarke instantly said. “But that’s different. That’s not-“

“And what about soldiers? Your father’s army friends? Would you kill them, take their souls for the lives they’ve taken?”

Clarke took an unsteady step backwards. “No, that’s not-“

Nyko’s large hands suddenly grasped her shoulders. Her wounded side he held much more gently. “You cannot let what you are control who you are. Death will see it as black and white, as lives taken and nothing else. But it is never like that. You need to learn control. What if you become friends with someone who’s killed? If you don’t learn control, how could you manage to not accidently hurt them?”

Clarke scoffed, pushing his hands off her. “I could never make friends with a killer.”

“It is never that simple Clarke. You must, you must learn control, do you understand?”

“I didn’t do it,” Clarke whispered, losing her defiance. Her fire. “I… I got myself out before I could.”

Nyko gave her a smile that reminded her of her father. “I know.” He said softly. “I know.”

It was silent for a while before Clarke suddenly sighed. “You’re really not going to heal my arm are you?”

In response he just gave her a grin and patted her cheek. “Where’s the lesson learned in that then?”

- 

The night after her first kiss with Lexa Clarke slept more soundly than she had in years.

She didn’t dream of dark stone halls. Of metal bars and sharp blades, the sounds of tassels of whips dragging across cold floors, sadistic grins that made fear coil in her chest till the pressure became so much she was convinced it would cave in. Instead she dreamt of gentle hands and soft lips. Gliding over her skin until she was full of nothing but warmth. No coldness, not the chill she was so used to feeling inside.
Just warmth.

She had woken up crying.

Raven had sensed it somehow, instantly waking up too and making her way up to her bunk, crawling into her bed and wrapping her arm around her shoulder. She had pulled her in a hug, gently resting her chin on her head. In that moment Clarke didn’t even care for the obvious weakness it showed, because there was this lightness in her heart she thought she’d never feel again. Never thought she’d have the luxury of feeling again.

Because she was happy.

And when Raven gave her blinding grin when she finally untangled herself from their sidelong hug, Clarke thought that she could sense it too. The happiness she could feel seeping into her chest. She had smiled back at her, laughed when Raven dived at her with another hug again.

“I knew you’d get there,” she had whispered into her neck.

“Get to where?” Clarke had chuckled bewildered.

But Raven had just held her tighter. “Peace.”

She had gone through the rest of the day in a sort of haze. Not her usual one, where everything was numb and like the world was packed behind thick-inched glass. But a lighter one. Her breaths came easier than they’d ever been, her smiles less strained, less forced. Even Octavia noticed, and like Raven she had just beamed at her. There was no hug with her, but when her hand came out and randomly squeezed Clarke’s own just as they got ready to do their usual laps, Clarke knew that Octavia felt the same.

It was nearing the end of the day now, and Clarke noticed the out of place tension that seemed to be growing as the hours dragged on. The later it got the more it became obvious, how Octavia was constantly grounding her teeth, Raven clenching her hands. Clarke didn’t know what was the cause, though perhaps she had an inkling, as she had worked out enough that this tension only seemed to sink in around her. They had an hour left till lights out and as Clarke sat crossed-legged up on her bunk, eyes closed and hands on her knees, letting her mind relax and the world fall away, she heard a sudden clearing of a throat.

Clarke’s eyes fluttered open, finding Raven standing awkwardly below her, shifting from foot to foot. That tension thicker than it ever had been.

“Hey Griff, you mind coming down for a sec?”

Clarke couldn’t help but frown slightly at Raven’s tone, quite frankly she had never heard Raven so nervous – she didn’t even think the girl could get nervous. But she nodded anyway, letting through a small sigh before pulling herself up and jumping down. Raven bounced back in surprise at Clarke’s blur of movement and Clarke didn’t stop the small smirk that tugged at her lips. Raven must have seen it because she threw her a glare.

Octavia suddenly appeared at the entrance to their cell and it gave Clarke the impression that she had been waiting there the entire time. Just waiting to come in. There was unease that swirled in her gut at the uncharacteristically serious face of Raven, of both of them, but Clarke tried to reassure herself that it was fine. They were her friends, somehow, and she should trust them. She could trust them. Even if it went against every instinct, they had earned it. They had saved her life.

In more ways than one.
“Alright so uh, okay. Do you wanna sit down or something Clarke?” Raven asked, rubbing at the back of her neck.

Clarke tilted her head at her. “Why?”

“It’s fine,” Octavia cut in, standing next to Raven now. “Raven’s just… nervous. Look Clarke, we need to talk.”

“The talk.” Raven added, and Clarke suddenly understood all the tension now. The nerves.

“About what happened,” Clarke whispered, realisation making her nod slowly. Of course. When she’d gotten stabbed, when they’d rescued her and Octavia had revealed her abilities. Even if it wasn’t really a question Raven still nodded at her in confirmation.

Raven and Octavia shared a look, they seemed to have an entire wordless conversation, when Octavia slowly turned to her and pursed her lips. She glanced out the cell to make sure no one was near or looking before she carefully rolled up her sleeve until her entire right arm was bare.

Bare, except for the tattoo that hugged her bicep, black thick lines that twirled around her arm, heavily resembling the shape of fire. It would have nearly made up a pure mark, except there were dots just before her forearm, little black spots that hovered below the thick lines like ash. Clarke couldn’t stop herself from taking a step forward, and with a quick glance of permission, Octavia gave her a small nod, Clarke lifted her hand and gently let her fingers trail over the mark. At her touch Clarke felt her gloved hand buzz painfully, but it wasn’t enough to stop Octavia’s mark from glowing slightly where her fingers trailed over.

In the corner of her eye she saw how Raven’s jaw dropped a bit, Octavia’s own eyes widening at the glow of her mark.

“How are you-?”

“You hid it well,” Clarke said softly, slowly bringing her hand back to her side. She watched with a certain longing in her chest as Octavia’s mark lost its glow. For an entire second Clarke considered the idea to have another go at ripping her glove off, no matter how much it hurt. But it hadn’t worked when she’d tried in the Tower. And it sure was well wasn’t going to work now. “If you hadn’t, it would have been obvious.”

“You can read marks?” Octavia whispered, slight wonder in her tone.

Clarke smiled absently and shook her head. “No, but I was made to learn what the Vessels looked like. It’s easy with yours anyway, it’s so close to pure.”

“Hold on a second,” Raven stepped in, actually moving forward. She stared at Clarke with such confused curiosity. “How did you do that? Make it glow? Did you active it?”

“Only Octavia can activate it. It’s her mark. Her abilities.”

“Then how did you do that?” Raven pressed, and Clarke had to swallow the nerves in her throat. She could trust them. She could. She could do this.

Clarke’s gaze flicked between the two for a few stretched moments before she finally found the courage to speak. “How much did you hear? When you found me with Pike?”

“Not much,” Raven muttered. She shared a glance with Octavia. “We kind of just rushed in, and the time we did spend by the door was more… arguing than anything.”
“Something about death, as well as something to do with Nia.” Octavia answered.

Clarke saw Raven gulp nervously before adding, “And pain.”

Clarke’s gaze dropped the floor. She had told Lexa that she didn’t want Raven and Octavia to know of what had happened with Nia, but she knew that she should anyway. They were her friends. Octavia had revealed herself to her, and that wasn’t something to be taken lightly, not with their kind. So Clarke forced herself to raise her sight. To stare them both in the eye. She could do this.

“Pike had me down there because he knew I was an Other.” Clarke started and she watched as Octavia blinked, while Raven looked far less surprised.

“What are you?” Raven asked, that curiosity back in her tone. Not that it had ever left.

“I was in Azgeda Tower before here,” Clarke explained, avoiding Raven’s question. “As you probably both know. But… I was there because Nia wants what I have. She wants to find a way to become an Other, to have the powers of an Other, without being born one.”

Raven eyes were narrowed at her for not answering her question, so Clarke focused on Octavia, who was frowning. “Isn’t that impossible?” she said, and seeming to remember her mark was still on show hastily unrolled her sleeve.

“Maybe, maybe not. It’s too dangerous to risk it. If Nia ever had that much power…”

“Are you more powerful than Octavia?” Raven questioned and there was more tension in her voice now, unease. Octavia was quick to adapt the tension too, her face hardening.

Clarke didn’t want to reveal herself completely. Not yet. She wasn’t ready, not to for that inevitable fear that would come, the way they would never look at her same. Although she doubted they were going to look at her the same anyway from now on. Still. She sucked in a sharp breath, rallied her inner strength to force the words out.

“I’m a Vessel.” Clarke stated quietly, and the reaction was instantaneous. Octavia actually stepped backwards, her back hitting the wall, while Raven let out a disbelieving chuckle, the most wide and excited of grins plastered on her face.

“No fucking way,” Raven breathed, her eyes flicking between Octavia and Clarke as if she was waiting for them to tell her it was a joke. When it seemed to become obvious that it really wasn’t, that it was all truth, she laughed again, her eyes shining as she looked back at Clarke. “Of what? Can you prove it?”

“I can’t say.” Clarke muttered and it was slightly painful to watch Raven’s face fall. “I’m sorry but… I can’t. Not yet.”

“Can you show us your mark then?” Octavia piped up and Clarke sighed with every ounce of her soul as she brought up her hand and showed her glove.

“I would, but Nia made it so I can’t. It’s why I can’t prove it either. The glove is infused with an Other’s blood, it interferes with my abilities. I can’t use them. Even if I want to.”

Once again, Octavia showed more shock than Raven, and knowing the coming question she explained why Octavia would have never noticed the glove before. Clarke saw how Raven was watching her out of the corner of her eye. She had told Raven on her first day, so Raven had known the glove was there the entire time. But she had never mentioned it, somehow sensing, like she always could, that it was something that Clarke didn’t want revealed.
Octavia shook her head when Clarke was done. “That must be horrible. I could never imagine not having…”

“Yes.” Clarke cut off. She didn’t like thinking about it as much as she already did. “Yeah,” she repeated quieter.

There was a heavy silence, mostly to just absorb everything that had been said, when Raven suddenly huffed, pursing her lips.

“Right, since we’re all sharing, I suppose I shouldn’t bother hiding it anymore.” Raven sighed, and while Clarke furrowed her brows Octavia’s eyes blew wide. It was clear she was surprised at Raven’s words, but Clarke could also see some pride there, relief. Before Clarke could question it Raven was crouching down however, and with a tug she pulled up the cuff of her pants. When Clarke just stared at her Raven rolled her eyes. “Bend down you moron, look at my ankle.”

Clarke hesitated for just a second before she complied. She sunk to her knees and, peering close at Raven’s ankle, she finally saw what she was showing to her. It was a mark. This was one like shaped similar to an eye, but as if it were on fire, the lines wavy and the ‘iris’ the only smooth edge. A perfect circle. Clarke raked through her memory to just try and work out what it meant, but she found herself coming up empty handed.

Luckily, Raven seemed to be one step ahead of her. When Clarke stood up, she caught her gaze, and Clarke saw her pull the cuff back down so it was covering her mark before she faced her again.

“It’s mostly Seeing. I can feel what other people are feeling, like an empath basically.” Raven explained and the realisation was like the slam of freight train.

Because it made so much sense. Clarke had always thought that Raven had just been exceptionally good at reading people, at her, seeming to always manage to know exactly what she was feeling. The second her emotions pulled a one-eighty. Now it was Clarke’s turn to let out a disbelieving laugh. Of course. How had she missed it?

They all seemed to share the same nervous smile, now that everything, mostly everything, was out in the air and with the tension gone there was those moments where no one seemed to quite know what to do. The task was done, and now it was just an after-moment. The awkward stretch of time as the dust settled.

And like always, it was Raven who broke it.

“Well, now that we’ve all revealed ourselves, I have a book to read.”

Their smiles all turned a little less awkward, more genuine, and Clarke for the first time in a long while, let her heart settle. Let herself trust. Trust in them, in her friends. Because Clarke had been right in that they would look at her differently. Clarke could see it now, the way Raven and Octavia were both eyeing her in a new light.

But it wasn’t out of fear.

If anything, it was in understanding.

Clarke had never been more grateful.

- 

The moment the door was shut Clarke’s back was hitting the hall, and she would have let out a hiss
if there weren’t a pair of lips instantly on her own. The wince was fast to devolve into a moan and she felt Lexa smile. It was surreal that she could actually feel it, the spread of lips, as they were still pressed so close with hers. It was surreal and fuck was it addicting. She was pretty sure she was already drunk, somehow, just from the sensation alone.

“We have to be quiet,” Lexa murmured. Clarke’s current ability to think coherently had been thrown out the window the second Lexa had even glanced at her, so it took a perhaps embarrassing amount of time for her to actually understand what Lexa said.

When she did she couldn’t stop her smirk and in a blink suddenly she spun them around so Lexa was pressed up against the wall, not her, and the responding groan she got from it had Clarke smirking wider. Lexa must have sensed it because she let out a growl in reply that had Clarke forgetting how to breathe, nipping hard at her bottom lip.

“We’re meant to be quiet Lex,” Clarke whispered, and even if it meant she got another reprimanding nip it was worth it and more.

Clarke could feel that Lexa was about to say something witty and no doubt snarky in reply, and so before she could Clarke trailed her lips down from Lexa’s own and across her jaw, feeling Lexa’s hands tighten from where they were holding her waist as she began kissing at Lexa’s neck. Lexa’s words got lost in a shuddered breath, arching her neck to her to give her better access.

This hadn’t meant to happen.

Following Lexa into a closet and locking the door while making sure that no one was looking was definitely not meant to happen, especially now, but that apparently was what was happening. And it wasn’t entirely her fault anyway. It had been a few days since their first kiss and they hadn’t had an in-depth discussion yet of how they were going to go about… whatever they were. Really that was why Clarke had sought Lexa out this morning in the first place. So they could talk.

But then she had seen her. Her face and her lips and her hair and yes, admittedly, it had gone downhill from there, but from the way that the green in Lexa’s eyes had instantly darkened to this shade that she’d never seen before Clarke was pretty much powerless in that situation. It was Lexa’s fault, definitely. Completely and utterly hers. If she could just stop looking so damn attractive for one second, then they wouldn’t be here; Clarke leaving hot open mouthed kisses on her throat, feeling Lexa’s hands scrape down her back.

How ironic that the only place they could be together was in a closet.

Raven was definitely never going to let her live this down.

Lexa’s hands were suddenly at the back of her head, tugging her back and towards her lips. Clarke gladly met the request and felt her knees go weak at the sheer intensity that their lips crashed together. Like they were a ship caught in a storm, raging waters slamming against the boat. The water rising, Clarke’s lip caught in Lexa’s teeth; rocks breaking into the hull, Lexa’s hand tangling in her hair. Her skin felt like it was on fire and just as they both seemed to pull back to breathe at the same time, Clarke’s already erratic breathing stuttering even more at Lexa’s blown pupils, there was a sudden crackle of static in the room.

Their sights dropped to Lexa’s waist at the same time, where her radio was. “Please stop doing morally questionable gay things and do your job. Your late for your shift.” Anya’s tired voice crackled through. Clarke felt her eyes blow wide at what she was hearing, but before she could panic Lexa was scowling and snatching her radio.
“Watch your tongue, Anya,” Lexa snapped.

Clarke could practically hear Anya’s eye roll. “Your tongue is the one that’s in trouble right now. Can you stop being such a useless lesbian for one fucking second and relieve me of my damn shift.”

Lexa’s eyes met hers. She bit her lip, which was probably a bad idea, because that suddenly took all of Clarke’s focus. “I’m sorry, she’s… she’s my sister. She would never tell a soul.”

There was practiced doubt that still lurked around the back of her mind, but Clarke felt her shoulders relax anyway. She trusted Lexa. A lot more than she should have. If she trusted Anya wouldn’t turn them in then she was going to have to trust it too.

“It’s alright,” Clarke said quietly, and the relief that she saw in Lexa’s eyes had Clarke leaning forward and pressing her lips against hers again. “I trust you.”

Lexa’s eyes fluttered open at that. Clarke pulled away slightly, having to swallow the sudden desert in her throat. Lexa kept staring at her and Clarke had never seen that green so soft before, full of wonder.

“And I will prove it is not misplaced.” Lexa whispered to her. Clarke felt a sharp pain her in chest, but in habit she just smiled, letting her forehead fall against Lexa’s.

“You already have.”

Lexa’s radio crackled to life again. “Lexa I swear if you’ve gone right back to fucking-“

Lexa leaned back and swiftly brought the radio to her mouth. “Shof op o ai na slash em swela kiln.” Lexa hissed. There was only a brief pause before Anya was speaking again however.

“Well, excuse me for the clit-erference.”

Lexa briefly shut her eyes and sighed.

Clarke reached out her hand between the miniscule distance between them, gently placing it against Lexa’s chest, where she could feel her heart pound against her fingers. Lexa’s gaze fell to meet hers, and Clarke just gave her a soft smile.

“We need to get going anyway. Raven will notice if I’m late for lunch.” When she saw Lexa’s frown, no doubt to argue, she pressed a gentle kiss upon her lips to cease her response. And maybe just because she could. “She’s only looking out for you.”

Lexa gave her a look that made her breath catch in her throat before she raised the radio once more to her lips. “Five minutes.” She muttered.

And not a second later she dropped the radio to the floor and pulled her into a kiss so searing she almost tasted smoke. Clarke curled her fingers from where her hand still rested over Lexa’s heart, gripping her shirt tight. It only seemed to motivate Lexa more, made her movements harder and faster and leaving Clarke wondering what she’d ever done to deserve this. Because she certainly didn’t. Not the feeling of Lexa’s body moving against her own, the sounds that sounded like the songs of the heavens that erupted out of her throat whenever she kissed her just right, the heat that was pooling deep in her gut and vibrated through her entire being.

Lexa kissed her harder, as if sensing her change in thoughts.
And for a moment Clarke forgot of the scars on her back.

They were not, in fact, five minutes.

More like fifteen.

Once again this was Lexa fault. Although, it was perhaps a little of her own. Getting carried away in kissing Lexa, Clarke discovered, was surprisingly easy to do. To get lost in her lips and her heat and let herself drown in the most blissful way. With her lips pressed up against Lexa’s own, it was like the world was shut out. No outside forces, memories or duties could touch her there. She didn’t think of Nia and her plans, of everything that had happened since she’d gotten here, Ontari and Pike and the chaos that followed. She didn’t have to think, not with Lexa. She just got to be.

She had gotten so swept up in the plain addiction that was Lexa, lifting her knee and sliding it between Lexa’s thighs and hearing what was quite possibly the most beautiful sound she had ever heard in her entire life. Clarke had made a promise, in that second, that would try to till the end of days to hear that sound as much as she could. But with it, reality seemed to bleed in a little, and with panting chests they had pulled apart. Somehow. Clarke was still at a loss really of why she’d ever deprive herself of the taste of Lexa.

“So we should stop,” Lexa had whispered, her breathing strained and low and fuck it really didn’t help in anyway to motive Clarke to step away.

“We should,” Clarke echoed. They didn’t move from each other.

Clarke had felt Lexa’s smile at that, still close enough that she could.

“You’re a terrible influence Griffin.” She had breathed, and finally, with that, they managed to pull away. They had given themselves a few minutes to recollect themselves, to adjust their ruffled clothes and plump lips. It wasn’t ideal, but they made do. The greatest challenge really was Clarke calling on all her self-control to not pounce on Lexa again. She didn’t know when she had become such a hormonal teenager again, but after so long of having nothing, having something so suddenly had her gasping for breath. Trying to indulge it into as much as she could as fast she could. Because there was a part of her that was terrified that she was going to lose her at any second.

That she would blink, and Lexa would be gone.

So in the moments that they did have her Clarke liked to savour them completely.

They did end up leaving, timing it so Clarke left first and Lexa waited a few minutes, till Clarke gave her the door a quiet knock when the coast was clear and slipped away, that Lexa would then creep out too. Her head was still spinning a little and she bumped into more that one person with her lack of spatial awareness. Clarke scowled to herself when this happened for the third time. What was she doing getting so caught up by a girl? It was unlike her to become so completely lost without her sudden presence.

Okay. So maybe that was a lie.

When pretty girls came into play, the rules were thrown out the window.

The bell went as Clarke trailed her through the halls so she didn’t bother grouping back at her own. No doubt Raven would be there at the canteen already, probably frowning and mildly panicking with her lack of absence. It had only been three weeks or so since the Ontari incident, and Clarke
had noticed how antsy Raven would get when either of them, her or Octavia, would take too long in doing something. It didn’t help that she’d gotten thrown into the basement when she’d been going to lunch, so her being late now was probably giving Raven grey hairs.

She sped up her pace, only brief stopping by one of the bathrooms to throw some water on her face, double check her cheeks weren’t still flushed, her eyes too dark. She seemed fine, thankfully. Not that it really mattered on the outside signs. Raven could feel her emotions couldn’t she? *That* was what she had to keep under control, not how she looked.

It didn’t help that Clarke could still feel the wisps of desire in her gut.

Why did Lexa have to be *such* a damn good kisser?

It was with slight apprehension that Clarke pushed her way through the canteen doors, swallowing the nerves in her throat and scanning around the room. It didn’t take long till she spotted the familiar head of hair, and with a quiet sigh to herself, Clarke rolled her shoulders and joined the cue. After waiting and leaving and with a full tray she made a beeline for her mates and sat with them on their usual table. As usual it was the three of them, although sometimes Clarke had noticed that Harper migrated over every once in a while. Not today though, which Clarke was a little thankful for. She had a feeling today wasn’t going to go well.

Raven jumped at Clarke’s sudden appearance, a scowl tugging at the lines on her face as she slapped her on the arm. “And just where the fuck have you been?”

Clarke shrugged. “Around. You get up to anything interesting?”

Octavia leaned in from her left. “Actually, yes, so you know Lincoln right-“

“‘Around’? And just what kind of answer is *around*? Are you *trying* to get yourself killed again?” Raven interrupted and Octavia just sighed from it, shaking her head and slumping in her chair. She must have seen the pleading look Clarke had been giving, but she just shook her head again, clearly today she wasn’t going to save her from Raven’s wrath.

“Yes Raven, *around.*” Clarke perhaps stabbed her food a little hard with her plastic fork. “Unlike *some* people, I actually enjoy walking. Exploring. You know, that fabled thing known as ‘exercise’.” She brought up air quotes when she said that, if only because Raven’s scowl deepened. “Abstract concept, I know. But it’s possible.”

“You already know this place back to front.” Raven muttered.

“And I’m not allowed to walk around?”

“You’re lying.”

“No, I’m not.”

Raven leaned closer. “Yes you are. I can tell.”

Clarke leaned forward too, till they were eye to eye. Just about one theme song away from a western stand off. “Can you really?”

“Why are you lying?”

“I’m not lying.”
“Clarke I fucking swear-“

“There a problem there?”

Both of them jumped from Lexa’s sudden voice, and even if Lexa’s words had been harsh and even cold, Clarke felt herself relax as she glanced up at her. Lexa’s hard gaze didn’t stray from Raven however, even if Clarke tried to catch it. She was quite content with this angle anyway. Clarke was pretty sure that Lexa’s jaw was chiseled from actual stone. Though, if it was, it probably wouldn’t feel so warm under her lips. Or her tongue, or really any part of her body that could be pressed up against hers…

Octavia suddenly hit her arm and Clarke jolted back to the present. She blinked a couple times, forcing out the memories of what her and Lexa had just been doing, how beautiful she looked coming undone, and she found herself frowning at everyone’s seemingly expectant gaze.

“What?” Clarke muttered, not liking the attention. Sure, she was the one who’d zoned out, but, once again, that was entirely Lexa’ fault. Not at all her own.

Raven shook her head at her, but Clarke was much more focused on the slight quirk on Lexa’s lip. Seeing it made Clarke feel a tug at her own and they shared a knowing gaze that had warmth bleeding into her chest before Lexa tore her sight off her and issued a glare around the table.

“No more trouble. I already have enough to deal with you alone, Reyes.” Lexa warned, and with one last glower, that absolutely did not soften when it lingered on Clarke, Lexa turned around and continued of her pace around the room. Clarke had about a wonderful four seconds of silence, she counted, and once those blissful seconds passed, Raven turned her full body to her and whispered with surprising intensity.

“What the actual fuck was that?”

Clarke suddenly found herself very interested in her food. “What was what?”

Raven actually grabbed her tray and shoved it to the other end of the table. Clarke’s head shot up at that, her jaw dropping, and before she could even start on her affronted response, Raven was continuing like nothing had happened.

“You did not. You fucking didn’t. Tell me you didn’t.” In contradiction to the anxiousness in her words, there was a wide shit-eating grin growing on her lips that had Clarke fighting the urge to knock it off her face.

“Don’t, Raven,” Clarke warned quietly, but that seemed to only serve as a confirmation.

“Oh my god!” Raven exclaimed immediately jumping to her feet with a squeal. Clarke instantly pounced to her feet too though and roughly grabbed Raven’s shoulders and pushed her back down. The people nearest to them shot them looks, Lexa’s included, and Clarke glared at them till they turned away. Except for Lexa. For her she just shook her head, ever so slightly, and thankfully Lexa seemed to understand that everything was fine.

When Clarke focused back on Raven she could see she was practically vibrating in her seat. “I can’t fucking believe it! You did it! You actually fucking did it!” she whispered frantically, excitement so thick it was like she was going to explode off her seat at any moment.

“Did what?” Octavia cut in, clearly confused about Raven’s reaction. Clarke turned to her to answer but ended up biting her tongue. She was reluctant to admit, especially in a place so open, and with how new and tentative they were, Clarke didn’t know if it was right to suddenly splurge
everything right here and now.

Raven was suddenly speaking up anyway and Clarke couldn’t tell if she was grateful or not. “I felt it O. When Heda came by, when she looked at Clarke… hoo boy is she wound up! Clarke did it! She fucking-“ even Raven seemed to realise that this wasn’t something to shout, because she suddenly leaned in close to Octavia, which meant that she had to lean in front of Clarke, Clarke thought grumpily, whispering the words. “She’s been making out with Heda!”

“Enough!” Clarke snapped and though Octavia abruptly pulled back, seeming to sense the very real harshness in her tone, Raven, like always, was nothing of the sort. She leaned back slow and with a smirk. “Enough.” Clarke repeated, muttering, staring Raven down. “You don’t know what you’re saying. Lexa and I…” she pointedly ignored the grin that Raven shared with Octavia. “We’re… friends.”

“Friends? Seriously?”

“Yes.”

Raven raised a brow at her. “Right. I suppose you are very friendly with her aren’t you? You know, just two friends being friends. Two gals being pals. Yeah just platonically shoving your hand down her pan-“

Clarke’s hand shot out and grabbed Raven’s wrist. Before anyone could blink it was suddenly pinned to the table and twisting, Raven letting out a surprised yelp at the abrupt pain. It was with hard eyes and a blank face that Clarke stared at Raven as she pulled her hand back, and seemed it was only now that Raven was realising just how fucked she was.

“Okay. You’ve been a good friend to me Raven, and I’ll keep that in mind.” Clarke pulled at the wrist hold a little harder, Raven hissing and clenching her jaw. Despite wanting to intimidate her, for Clarke’s standards, it was a pretty loose hold, and if Raven actually put the effort to properly pull her hand back she would let go. Clarke waited till Raven was looking her in the eye before she spoke again, a smile that was far from warm spreading on her lips. “I know you have a habit for not being able to keep your mouth shut, and that’s fine, but when it comes to Lexa,” Clarke pulled just the slightest bit more, “that is the topic you will stay quiet on. And god forbid the day you ever speak against her. Are we clear?”

Raven nodded vehemently and Clarke, perhaps enjoying this a little too much, felt her smile widen, before she suddenly let go and Raven was instantly clutching at her wrist.

“Bloody hell Griffin you could have broken my wrist!” Raven hissed, cradling her hand.

Clarke rolled her eyes. “Don’t be ridiculous.” She smirked at her. “If I wanted to do that then I would have done this-“

Raven lurched out of her seat before Clarke’s hand could reach her. Octavia let out a bark of a laugh behind her and even Clarke couldn’t hide her mischievous grin. Raven, however, unlike moments before when she’d had the upper hand of the conversation, looked very much the opposite of amused.

“You’ve got a sick mind.” Raven snapped but it only made Octavia laugh harder and Clarke smile wider. “Both of you. Fucked in the head, the lot of you.”

“Aw, Raven, come on, you love us,” Octavia cooed, but Raven just scoffed. Though Clarke could see the hint of a smile of her lips. Even if she tried to squash it down as soon as it came on.
“Nope. That’s it. I’m done. You guys can go on without me.”

“Raven,” Clarke chuckled. “Come on. Have a little fun.”

“A little fun?!” Raven exclaimed. “You nearly killed me!”

Clarke barked a laugh at that. “Raven, it was your wrist. And I promise you’ll be perfectly fine.” Her voice became soft then, and Raven seemed to relax. She took a small step forward as if to sit back down with them again, but there was this feeling of mischief that she hadn’t felt in so long, of something so young and carefree that she couldn’t let the feeling pass by. Not when she’d almost forgotten what it felt like. “However, if you don’t listen to my words from before, then maybe you’ll find yourself in a worse predicament.”

Raven threw her arm up in her air with an air of drama that only Raven could do. “Unbelievable. I come into this family, I cook, I clean, and what do I get? Threats.”

“We’re in prison Raven.” Clarke deadpanned.

“And still I’m treated like a nobody!”

With one last flick of her wrist, her good one, evidently, and twist of the heel, Raven stuck her nose in the air and strutted off. Clarke merely watched with raised brows, feeling her chest settle at Octavia’s laughter from behind her. By the time she turned around Octavia was having to wipe away the tears from her eyes from laughing so hard. Lingering chuckles escaped her as she shook her head.

“She’s insane, she is,” Octavia muttered fondly, and Clarke couldn’t help but agree.

“Completely,” Clarke said with equal fondness. “How long you reckon till she comes back?”

“Oh three minutes, max. Patience isn’t a word in her vocabulary.”

Clarke laughed again and it felt so oddly freeing.

When Raven came back storming in, Clarke had finished her food and was merely watching the clock with a lazy smile.

Three minutes exactly.

-

She had a whole three weeks of bliss.

Three weeks where, for the first time in so long, Clarke found herself genuinely happy. Not entirely, she was still in prison of all places, but there was this peace that hadn’t settled into her chest for so long, and to have it now left her wanting to run through the grass and scream out to the skies above. Three weeks, where her smiles managed to reach her eyes, where she even managed to catch some hours of sleep, free of nightmares. They still came of course, but they were coming further and further apart.

Three weeks where she got to kiss Lexa.

They had to be careful. Usually they managed it in the dark confines of closets, a brush of the hand in empty hallways, glances across rooms that always seemed to set off little fires in Clarke’s chest. It was infuriating, on more than one occasion, having to wait to find safe spaces, and Clarke wasn’t
ashamed to admit that one time she had started a ‘fight’ just so Lexa could come get her and drag her to her office to give her an earful. By fight, Clarke had shoved Octavia, and Octavia had shoved her back, and even Raven had contributed with a surprisingly convincing shout of ‘what are you doing?!’ that had the nearest guard storming over.

Lexa had been furious when she’d found them, thinking that after everything Clarke was seriously starting fights again, but when she had thrown her into her office Clarke had shoved Lexa up against the wall right under the camera, the only blind spot in the room, and kissed her fiercely. Lexa like she always seemed to let herself get swept up in the kiss, and only once a good five minutes had passed did she shove her back with a scowl.

Clarke hadn’t needed to say anything to explain. She had just grinned wide and full of mischief and like that Lexa had known she had never really started a fight.

“You’ll be the death of me Clarke,” Lexa had sighed, but she had smiled with it, and not a second later her fingers reached out and grabbed Clarke’s shirt, pulling her towards her.

They’d never gone further than kissing though, if even Clarke had seriously wanted to push it on multiple occasions. They would always pull away when it got that point, panting against each other’s lips. Clarke was semi grateful, really, as she felt that a small part of her wasn’t quite ready. Lexa seemed to sense it, because apparently she could read her like an open book, and she would always give her this smile, full of gentle patience and warmth.

It was one of Clarke’s favourite smiles.

And for three weeks, it was wonderful. After so long she finally found herself feeling stable. She had remembered what Octavia said a month ago, how anchorless she had felt, and Clarke had been very inclined to agree with that at the time. But it wasn’t like that anymore. For once, she felt anchored, she felt right. That given enough time, she was truly going to be okay. It was an incredibly freeing feeling that took off these weights on her chest Clarke never knew had been there – but nothing good lasts forever.

Somehow, Clarke had forgotten that.

It was always so incredibly strange how quick the world was to fall.

- 

It was late afternoon when Anya came.

Clarke was sitting with Raven in the Rec Room, the sharpest pencil she could find in her hands, letting herself get lost in her drawing. It was something she had truly missed, and Raven seemed content to just read her book as she drew. She was drawing Lexa. Unsurprisingly. It was becoming increasingly harder to get the girl out of her head, and so when she had felt the sudden urge to draw, it had never really been a question of what she would draw.

If she saw Raven’s smirk out of the corner of her eye as she drew, she didn’t make comment of it.

She was jolted out of her concentration when she heard her name being barked out. Her head snapped upwards, spotting Anya, her stoic face angrier than usual, harder, standing stiffly and looking like this wasn’t the first time she had called her name. Not feeling like being murdered, and especially not by Lexa’s sister, Clarke jumped out of her seat and strode over to her. Raven got up to her feet too, but Clarke could see the uncharacteristic stiffness in Anya’s posture and put a hand to Raven’s chest.
“It’s alright,” Clarke placated softly, watching Raven frown. “I’ll be fine.”

“She’s furious,” Raven muttered, throwing a glance at Anya. Slowly she brought her sight to meet Clarke’s. She lowered her voice. “She’s terrified Clarke. Something is wrong.”

Now it was Clarke’s turn to frown. She threw a look over her shoulder at Anya, getting a seriously impressive glare for still not coming over to her yet. Clarke swallowed the trepidation in her throat and turned to Raven. “We can trust Anya. I promise you.”

Raven pursed her lips, and that was as close to acceptance as she would get. Clarke stepped back and dropped her hand.

“Go check up on O,” Clarke called to her. “Make sure she hasn’t done anything stupid again.”

Clarke could still see the unease on Raven’s face so she turned around in hopes to avoid it. But she still heard Raven’s quiet mutter, even if she tried not to.

*I don’t like this.*

The moment Clarke was within arms reach of Anya the guard was grabbing her elbow and marching off. She was half tempted to snatch her arm back, but considering Anya was probably the last person she should be pissing off right now, she instead clenched her jaw and kept up with her with quick steps. Clarke frowned a little at the odd route Anya was taking. She had initially thought she was going to take her to Lexa, or at least Lexa’s office, probably for the ‘talk’ that was bound to come.

But they were going the wrong way for that. As time went on and Anya dragged her through halls and down stairs, all the way keeping the same bruising grip on her arm, Clarke could feel anxiety curl like a snake in her gut. She didn’t like it. She may have told Raven that she would fine but it was getting harder to convince herself she wasn’t lying.

Eventually Anya pulled them to an abrupt halt on the ground floor, stopping by a door that seemed to lead into an interrogation room of some sort. Or she would have thought it was an interrogation, except she caught the sign nailed just above the door, reading ‘visitors’. Clarke creased her brow. Anya looked like a bomb about to go off with the amount of tension in her body. “You’ve got a visitor. I suggest you don’t keep them waiting.”

“I have a visitor?” Clarke repeated, and Anya threw a glare at her, roughly pulling her towards the door.

“*In.*”

Since Clarke didn’t feel like antagonising Anya any further she shoved away her confusion and gripped the handle, pushing it open and stepping into the surprisingly cold room. It was empty apart from a metal table in the centre that looked nailed to the ground, matching chairs on either side. Clarke would have walked in and explored in detail a little further, but her attention focused entirely on the one person already in the room, lounging in the one of chairs. At seeing Clarke, the woman grinned wide.

It was in instinct that Clarke lurched backwards, but all she ended up doing was her back hitting Anya, and Clarke could practically hear her growl as she shoved her forward and towards the only other empty chair. Clarke could only stare at the woman, at her tawny hair, the cold smile on her lips that could freeze the sun. Clarke was sure that her heart had stopped beating at the sight of her.
“Hello Clarke,” Nia smiled, and Clarke just barely kept her brain from spiraling at her voice – oh god her voice, how could she have forgotten her voice? – and instead she just forced herself to slowly step forward. To keep her gaze on her, to not show the terror that threatened to paralyze her at any second. “Take a seat, we have much to catch up on.”

Clarke could only stare at her. Was this a nightmare of some sort? Had she fallen asleep while drawing? It had happened before. This couldn’t be real. It couldn’t. Nia couldn’t be here, couldn’t be grinning at her, looking so elated, like a child on Christmas morning. A lion closing in on its prey and knowing so surely that there was no escape.

“Woods,” Nia called, pulling her drilling gaze off Clarke. Clarke used the opportunity to let herself feel the fear that came with the bitter realisation that this was not, in fact, a nightmare. “I thank you for bringing her. You can wait outside.”

There was far too much condescending in her tone to ever convey thanks. Anya must have heard it too, because that anger, that fury that seemed to seethe under her skin rose a bit. Showed itself in the vein that pushed out from her neck.

“It would be safer if I were to stay.” Anya pushed out through gritted teeth. It just barely came out as words and not a snarl.

Nia looked far too pleased with Anya’s ire. “Trust me, there is no need. I’m sure Clarke won’t bother to lift a finger against me.” Nia assured, the slowest of smiles of spreading on her lips, her gaze flicking back to her. The knowing glint in her eye had Clarke fighting the urge to throw up. It was so foolish, to fall into the memories that Nia was clearly trying to tempt her into, but Clarke couldn’t help it. If there was one thing she had never been able to tame, it was her own mind.

She had only ever managed to hit Nia once.

It had been the week after she’d been given the glove. That week still gave Clarke nightmares, some of the worst ones. It was unexplainable really, how it had felt, being cut off from something so intrinsic to her being. Her body had shut down; they had to constantly bring in new buckets because she kept heaving her guts out. That week, those days, was probably the closest Nia came to ever convincing her. Those days, those horrible, dreadful days, was probably the one time, where she had considered giving up.

She had felt like she was dying. Nia seemed to have thought so too, because near the end of that first week she had come down to her cell. Clarke could remember so vividly, that moment, how she had approached her cell. She had been wearing a cloak, a pale white far too immaculate for the dungeon of a place she resided in. Everything in her body felt like it was tearing itself apart. The closest thing she could come to describing it was like it was at war with itself. How constantly, in instinct, it had tried to access her abilities, her soul.

But yet, it couldn’t. And it seemed her biology was just as stubborn as her nature, because it kept trying, even if it failed. It kept tugging and pulling and tearing so desperately to retrieve that Other part of herself. The part she had had the second she was born. For that day, it had been particularly bad, as Death had become antsy too, and was constantly trying to slip into her blood. Obviously it kept getting forced out, but that didn’t mean Death was going to stop trying.

Death was probably the only thing more stubborn than her.

Nia had stood so close to the cell bars that day, watched Clarke as she shook and groaned from the floor, curled over on her knees and trying so hard to remind herself why she was doing this. But it was so painful, like nothing she had ever felt. Nothing compared to this. Nothing. So when Clarke
had looked up, when she had seen Nia that day, grinning through the bars, Clarke had done the one thing she had sworn to herself she would never, ever do. No matter the situation, no matter what, was she to do this.

But there was an anger, a dark rage that Clarke had never felt before as she saw Nia in that moment.

So Clarke, for a blink of a second, had let herself lose control.

For just a single second.

But it was enough. Clarke would never say it out loud; she didn’t know if she could, but there was this part of her, this deep and buried part of her that lurked in her being. Right at the bottom, right where the light will never find. Because it was true that she was the Vessel for Death, she could channel it, her body could take its presence, allow it to use her. But Death cannot touch Life. Not ever. So for her to be the Vessel, there had to be this tiny, tiny part of her, that wasn’t alive.

She still doesn’t know what it is. She just knew how it felt, how cold and wrong it was. How there was so many mental fail-safes that kept it locked up, alarm bells that would go off in her head, in her soul, whenever she got close. To pull back, to resist, to regain control.

But for this heartbeat, Clarke had let it free.

There was this coldness like nothing else that flooded her veins, and even if her gloved hand burned, burned, like she had dipped it in lava and was feeling the flesh peel off, this coldness was enough to block it out. Her eyes melted to a black it had never been before, and she could feel the coldness leaking out of them. The pain was suddenly gone in that second, and so she had lunged for Nia. The bars should have gotten in her way, but her body had slipped through like smoke, and letting out a snarl that was far from human she had managed to land a single hit to her chest, right on her heart. Her hand had immediately flattened out, ready to tear Nia’s soul out right there, even if by no logic should she have been able to, as Nia had never killed. Not with her own hands.

This happened in a second. Then the moment passed, and the control came back, like it always did, and that coldness sunk back into its dormant depths. The guards had rushed at her of course, but that echo of what she had felt was still there, and she had fought back against them like an animal. Had thrashed and snarled and shown no mercy. She had snapped the neck of one of them, and just as she’d gone for the other a third suddenly jammed a needle into her neck, and she had only seconds before she lost consciousness.

Clarke could remember, so clearly, Nia’s expression just before the darkness had snagged her. Had seen the sheer excitement in her eye, the sinister joy that Clarke had prayed she would never see. But she did see it, and in those seconds as her vision faded, Clarke had realised that she had lost.

Even if it was just for a second.

She was snapped back to the present when she found herself being suddenly pushed into a chair, her wrists being cuffed and chained to the underside of the table. Clarke blinked, watching as Anya frowned slightly as she cuffed her, probably spotting glove, but as her gaze lifted up to meet hers the confusion slipped off her face like it had never been there.

“Thank you, Woods. That will be all.” Nia said, waving her hand in dismissal.

Clarke saw Anya clench her teeth hard enough to break, yet, miraculously, she managed to keep herself from snapping like she so clearly wanted to. Instead she took a step back, giving Nia a glare
so burning it took Clarke back a little how much pure *hate* the woman had somehow inflicted into her gaze.

Anya’s eyes briefly flicked over to Clarke, and Clarke tried to plead with her through her gaze alone. She didn’t want to be left alone with Nia. She fucking didn’t. Every time that had happened pain had always come like nothing else. And she was so tired of it, of being terrified and afraid. Of the pain that never seemed to escape her.

But even if Anya’s hand twitched, she brought her sight back to Nia.

“If anything goes wrong…”

“I assure you, Woods, I shall be perfectly fine.”

Anya’s gaze flicked over to Clarke. Drilled her with her stoic stare.

“If *anything* goes wrong, then shout. I will be outside.”

Clarke thought the warning was for her.

She had to hide her relief.

Nia gave Anya a smile that could make flowers wilt, and with nothing left to keep her back, Anya blew a sharp sigh through her nose and slipped out the room. Panic shot hard and fast in Clarke’s chest and it took all of her self-control to not just breakdown right there. To not spiral and unravel and *run* from the hell that was coming. Slowly, so slowly, Clarke directed her gaze back at Nia.

Nia was still smiling.

“Now that we’re finally alone…” Nia leaned forward and Clarke subconsciously pushed back into her chair. “How have you been, Clarke?”

Clarke remained silent. Her mind was spinning too fast for her to catch up to it. What was Nia doing here? What was her game? Even if panic was a merciless thing in her chest, setting fire to her skin and just barely keeping her lungs from giving out, Clarke managed to fight through the haze. To keep her face blank, neutral. To not giving anything away.

But it was too late. She hadn’t been quick enough to hide her fear when she had entered the room, when she saw her so unexpectedly. Nia had seen her fear then, her *terror*, there was no doubt. She already knew that she had the upper hand.

Not that she’d ever lost it.

And with that realisation, Clarke found herself giving in. Just a little bit. Because despite her need to spite Nia at every turn, every opportunity, there was something that she needed to know. That had been playing on loop in her mind during her entire stay here. A constant shadow that niggled right in the back of her head when the world grew too quiet and her thoughts too loud. Clarke bit
her tongue to try and stop her curiosity from spilling out, but, like always, it didn’t work.

“Why am I here?”

Nia raised a brow. Clarke pretended she didn’t see the responding smirk, the victory that danced in her eyes. “Why did I move you here, you mean?”

Clarke didn’t say anything this time. She refused to say something more. She had already fucked up in caving once already. But Nia didn’t seem to mind, as she leaned back in her chair, offered a casual shrug as she reached for something on the ground to the side of her.

“I needed you to do something for me.” She answered, pulling a stack of yellow manila folders and spreading them out on the table. Clarke blinked at her. She just barely fought against the urge to laugh disbelievingly. No matter how fucked up she was, she would never fall low enough to do something for her. It was the one thing that she could agree on with herself no matter what. To never to do anything for her gain.

But unease crawled up her throat at the calmness that Nia had spoken with, the delight. Nia relaxed back into her chair now that the folders were placed out in front of her. There were three of them, one thicker than the others. Something was wrong. Something was very wrong.

“And, I must say, you delivered incredibly. So much better than I could have hoped for,” Nia went on, and Clarke felt her stomach clench.

“I would never do anything for you.” Clarke muttered.

But Nia just continued to smile at her. “Not knowingly.” She smirked. Before Clarke could attempt at refuting her again Nia reached out and carefully spun each of the folders so they were facing Clarke, and, a dangerous glint in her eye, she flipped open the first one.

Clarke frowned as she saw the photographs of someone she didn’t know. It was a man, floppy brown hair and a hard crease in his brow as he seemed to be talking with someone on his phone. That photo looked like it’d been taken from behind something. As if these were photos of him being watched. Stalked. Dread made the world spin, but Clarke held on. Because there was something familiar about him, something that made her lean closer.

“You see, I was wrong about you Clarke.”

She felt her stomach drop through the ground. Her head snapped up at Nia’s words, because there was no way she had said what she said. But at Nia’s same grin, Clarke knew she had. That Nia, Nia, had admitted to being wrong.

Clarke couldn’t breathe as Nia continued. “I thought the way to break you was through you. Perhaps I am too used to poor company, but there are men who would cower the second a blade merely breathes against their skin. I was wrong to assume you were the same. I’ll admit, it has taken me a while to realise, but I understand now. Understand you.”

Nia lost her smile. “You don’t care for yourself. Not enough. You would never choose you over your people. Your stubbornness to which you hold so much pride has helped you, I suppose, in lasting this long. Because for you, you don’t care. But when it comes to others…”

Clarke watched not breathing as Nia pointed to the photo of the man.

“This is Octavia’s brother, Bellamy Blake. Inside you’ll find his home address, place of work, his time table. Where he goes, where he eats.” Slowly, she opened the other two folders, one revealing
an elderly woman with bronze skin and a warm smile, the other, the familiar face of Anya, and Lincoln, and Indra. “This is Raven’s grandmother, and of course, you know the rest. They all hold the same information as before.”

No.

“Some say it’s a strength, to be so selfless. But any strength can be a weakness. You asked why I sent you here; you were sent here because I needed you to give me people to lose. And oh, how you delivered.” Her grin turned feral. “I’m not surprised for your friendship with the inmates, but Lexa? Clarke, you are far too kind.”

“Stop fucking around. What are you getting at, Nia?” Clarke snapped. It was too much to hear Nia say Lexa’s name. But Clarke wasn’t stupid, and really, she already knew what this was. She could feel the numbness that threatened to overwhelm her, the buzzing in her ears that was so close to drowning out every other sound. She fought against it, pushed against it, refusing to get swallowed up. Not yet. Not in front of her Nia.

Nia tilted her chin, straightened her back. “I have been patient with you Clarke. But I am running out. This is your last chance to submit to me.” Her voice somehow turned colder than it already was. “I am tired of your silence. I will suffer your insolence no longer. This is my final offer to you, Clarke.”

“If you do not submit to me, then these people will die. They will be picked off one by one, and you will watch them pass knowing that you are the cause. If in the off chance that your friends do not turn against you, hate you for the pain you caused them, then they will die too. And, when you have no one left, I will come for you.”

Clarke could only stare at her.

Nia held her stare for a painful amount of seconds before she carefully closed each of the folders and pulled them back into a neat pile. Only once she had leaned back down and placed them back into her briefcase, which Clarke hadn’t noticed till just then did Clarke finally speak up. Was able to speak up. Even if she tried so hard not to, her voice still trembled, ever so slightly. Was still a desperate whisper.

“That’s mass murder,” Clarke breathed. It was her only hope of avoiding this. She didn’t care how pleading she sounded; it was her only lifeline. “You would never get away with it.”

“Oh Clarke, your concern is appreciated,” Nia grinned at her. “But do not think that could ever stop me. You would be surprised what money to the right person can buy.”

Clarke’s hands were shaking. She felt just one inch away from being swallowed whole.

“You have till tonight to give me your answer. I will send someone for you.” Nia stood up then, her shoulders slumping with a huff like she had just finished scolding a child, not fucking threatening to slaughter innocent lives. “And please do not bother to try and stop whoever comes for your answer. If they do not give me your answer by tomorrow then I will assume it is a no. And I shall begin.”

Clarke could only watch as Nia gave her one last smile, striding over to the door and pushing down on the handle. Just in the second that Clarke was going to allow herself to collapse, to break, she paused, and Nia turned to her. Her face full of nothing but delight. It was more the grin of a wolf sinking its teeth into its prey than anything human.
Nia’s eyes sparkled. “And I must add, out of everyone you could chosen, of all the things you could have done, Lexa?” she laughed and shook her head. “You never cease to surprise me Clarke. Well, you know what they say. Two birds one stone.”

Nia winked at her, and with nothing more to add, she pushed open the door and strode out.

And Clarke, like always, could only stare. She could feel her mental walls starting to crack, that dam that held everything inside of her losing its strength. It was over. Clarke had always thought she would be the one to trap Nia, to devise some plan to corner her, trap her, finally get her to the place she wanted so she could win. So she could survive. Clarke saw in her peripheral as Anya came in the room, but she couldn’t do anything but stare at where Nia had sat. Where the folders had been. At the lives that were going to be lost.

She felt the walls crumble. The dam break.

Everything stopped.

Clarke didn't feel anything as Anya uncuffed her and grabbed her arm. There was nothing but static in her head, a numbness so deep and all-consuming and familiar that all she could do was let herself be pulled to her feet and dragged out the room. Reality didn't feel real, and if Anya's grip wasn't so tight it was bound to bruise then Clarke thought that she wouldn't have even felt the contact at all. She thought that Anya was saying something too, there was this buzzing in her ear that could be words, but she couldn’t make it out. She just stared at the ground. Stared at the pale white floors. She stared and she wondered, as the very world swirled around her so fast she grew dizzy, how this had happened. How she'd lost.

How she had fucking lost.

Anya let go of her arm but Clarke barely felt it. She continued standing still; she didn't even react when she was pretty sure that Anya pushed her shoulder. She felt her body move backwards from the light hit, how her foot was forced back too, but it was all so surreal, so disjointed. The static was still in her head and everything was spinning and if she didn't feel so disconnected from her body she probably would've felt the nausea too. Was her body shutting down? Was her mind? It had been so long since she'd felt like this.

So completely and utterly helpless.

Because that was what she was wasn't she? Nia had won. She may have given her till tonight to decide, but there was never a choice, not really. Clarke had always worn her heart on her sleeve with a certain pride, but now she despised it. She hated how no matter how badly she wanted to say no, how she had spend an entire year of torture and pain it meant nothing in the end. It all meant nothing. Because she wouldn't risk them. Their families, their hearts. Nia had destroyed her, Clarke had accepted that, but she sure as hell wasn't letting that fucker of a woman touch anyone else.

Nia had won. It was over. Everything she had ever done, every lie and whip she'd taken was for nothing, it was all for fucking nothing. She was going to go to her and go back on her promises that she'd etched into her very blood. If reality didn't feel so fuzzy Clarke thought she would have felt the explosion of pain in her chest, felt her heart ache and burn with the realisation. Nothing. Everything was nothing. And it was her fault. She had gotten close; she had let herself indulge when she shouldn't have. She had failed and now people were going to die if she didn't give up.

It all meant nothing.

Clarke realised with a start that she couldn't breathe.
She suddenly found someone in front of her, whispering soft words and touching her arm. Or at least she thought they were touching her arm, she could just see their outstretched hand and assumed that was what it was doing. Clarke continued staring at the floor as she spiralled. She stared at the person's feet and in the back of her mind she knew they weren't Anya's. But she didn't care. If she didn't give in to Nia, then Anya was going to die. Raven's grandmother was, Octavia's brother was, Lexa's family was, they all would. She couldn't stop the images of their dead bodies attack her vision.

Sudden hands were cradling her cheeks and forcing her to look up. But Clarke still couldn't see. So many were going to die. And it was going to be her fault. Raven and Octavia and Lexa. Lexa. She was never going to see her again, her smile or her laugh or the way her eyes always softened in this impossible way that left Clarke struggling to take in air unless it was shared with her. She had heard the delight when Nia had talked about Lexa. Her death wouldn’t be quick. It would be long and painful and hell and-

“Clarke!” the person's hands had moved to her shoulders and they shook her hard with her name. It was enough to startle Clarke out of thoughts, somehow, and through the blurriness of the world she managed to finally clear her vision enough to see who was in front of her. Who, Clarke now realised, had panic etched in the lines of her skin, those usually calm green eyes burning like the sun. Entirely entrancing and so painful to see.

“Lexa,” Clarke breathed, and she hadn't meant for the shakiness in her voice, the way it barely held itself together like a single beam holding up a mountain. Lexa seemed to calm ever so slightly at her response but Clarke didn't really notice because now that she knew who was in front of her the numbness of shock had retreated slightly. And now all it left was pain. Clarke felt her breathing sputter out of control again, not that it ever really came back. “Oh god, Lexa.” She gasped.

Lexa looked about one breath away from throwing everything she'd ever fought for to the wind. “Follow me, understand? Just watch my steps and follow me.” She muttered the words low enough that Clarke just caught them, caught the fear and agony that made Clarke's chest cave in. Lexa started to move away and Clarke felt her lungs collapse. She couldn’t breathe and she couldn't think she just couldn't. She heard Lexa mutter a sharp curse before coming back to her, trembling hands touching her jaw. “Someone will come down here any minute. I can't hold you, not here, please, please Clarke, I need you to follow me.”

Even if Clarke could see the anxiety in the way Lexa couldn't keep still, how her head kept glancing behind her she only started moving again once Clarke managed a shaky nod. She forced herself to take a breath, tried to scrounge any sense of calm she had to even her breathing, to not look so clearly like her entirety was unravelling into shredded pieces. Follow. She just had to follow.

Lexa walked fast. Clarke lagged a few steps behind, and to keep herself from collapsing to the ground she did as Lexa said and watched her steps. She focused on the word. Follow. Just follow. Don't think, don't breathe, don't feel, just follow; just follow her. A part of her could sense the gazes they attracted, mostly to her. But she was far too swallowed up in her own head, in her own heart and breaking soul that she didn't care. She just had to follow. Let someone else lead, someone else decide. To not be herself, if only for a few moments.

Clarke followed Lexa blindly. She didn't care where she took her. She just needed her. Needed to be able to touch her and feel her and remind herself that she was still alive. She was alive, for now. She was breathing and glaring and alive. She could hear the occasional snap from Lexa, the way her voice was like a whip and sent whoever had been staring at her jumping back and scurrying away. When Lexa pulled herself to an abrupt halt Clarke just kept herself from running into her.
Clarke saw that Lexa's hands were shaking as she shoved down the handle of the door and shouldered her way through, standing in the doorway and instantly beckoning her through. Clarke stumbled in and the moment Lexa closed the door Clarke spun around and she lunged for her.

Lexa held her tight, her arms immediately wrapping around her and Clarke didn't stop the sob that climbed its way up her throat. She buried her nose into Lexa's neck and breathed in her scent as hard as she could. She didn't know how, but Lexa always brought such a sense of safety when she held her, when she caught her smell that was hers and hers alone. It brought on that sense of home and Clarke tried to drown herself in it, staggered out of the raging waters that was her mind and let her heart sink into Lexa's own.

Everything had been for nothing.

Clarke didn't know how long she clung onto her Lexa. It felt like centuries, the way their bodies moulded so impossibly perfectly together, how she was surrounded in nothing but her warmth. It was something she had wanted for so long. Maybe that was why her mind dragged on the perception of reality for her. Maybe a part of her knew, already so surely, of what she was going to give up, and out of pity had decided to offer her these few moments. Lexa holding her as she cried. As she shook and she sobbed and she broke. How she completely and utterly shattered, and Lexa, whispering sweet nothings the entire time, collected the pieces. Hid them in bleeding fists and waited for when she would give them back.

When her sobs slowly began to wither, Clarke realised they were on the floor. She had gotten onto her knees at some point, Lexa sinking with her, and only now did she finally feel something other than numbness. Felt the stone beneath her legs, how it probably was cold when she'd first got down on it, but now it was warm from how long she'd been sitting on it, letting it absorb her heat. Clarke didn't want it to take her heat. She feared how little she had left.

“You're okay, you'll be okay,” Lexa whispered into her ear and Clarke sucked in a shuddering breath. Screwed her eyes shut as another wave of tears came. But her mind was coming back, somewhat. Apparently it was done with this break it had given, this chance at letting herself fall, letting someone else catch her. Reality became a little more real. She started to scent more than just Lexa, but the staleness of the air in the closet. Saw the crack of light through the bottom of the door, the shelves and towers of miscellaneous boxes and crates.

Clarke was slow to pull herself from Lexa. She would have been content to spend forever wrapped up in her arms, but time was coming back to her again, and the shock was passing and instead leaving this pulsing ache in her chest. She needed to decide, needed to know. They rested their foreheads against each other and Clarke eventually managed to control her breathing. To make it calm and slow, to press out the tremors. It took longer than it should have, to blink open her eyes, and when she did she just barely kept her lungs from giving out again.

Lexa was staring at her, and Clarke could see her fear. Clarke had only seen fear a few times with Lexa, really just when she had held her when she’d gotten stabbed, as her vision had swayed in and out and she had stared up at Lexa in her arms. It had been so clear then, the terror in her eyes. How she could feel the shake in her body and way she seemed so close to falling apart at the seams. But there was always this smile, this contradicting smile that came with that look. Her eyes bleed that fear in waves, but she’d smile with it, shaky and trembling, either to convince her or whoever it was directed at.

Lexa had the same look now. The terror in her eyes, and the hopeful smile, like everything was going to be okay.

Clarke saw that Lexa was about to say something, but Clarke beat her to it. She fixed Lexa with a
stare more intense than any she’d ever given, because this was important. This would decide everything. This would decide whether she should go for the greater good or for love, and really, the decision was one she despised with every fibre of her being. Perhaps it was selfish to unknowingly put the choice onto Lexa.

But she was tired.

She was so tired.

And she had fucking lost.

“How much do you love your family?” Clarke whispered, and she wasn’t surprised when Lexa’s brow instantly furrowed. Lexa pulled back slightly, eyes flicking between hers. Clarke let herself drown a little in Lexa’s gaze like she so often did.

“What do you mean?”

“How much do you love them? Anya, Lincoln, Indra… how much do you love those people?” Clarke felt tears slip from her eyes as she said this, because the answer was so obvious, it always had been. It had never been a question. It was blissful to pretend, but really, it had never been a question of whether she would sacrifice herself or hurt Lexa.

It had never been a question.

Lexa still blinked at her, pushed the hairs out of Clarke’s face with such gentle tenderness Clarke felt her heart break out of her ribcage and roll into Lexa’s lap. “They are my family.” Lexa said quietly, and though it was clear from the confusion in her voice that Lexa had no idea why Clarke had asked this, she still answered. Because it was Lexa. It was fucking Lexa. Of course she would answer whatever Clarke asked. “I love them with my entirety. I always will.”

And Clarke just smiled, she smiled and she felt her body sag with the weights that pressed on her chest. She leaned forward and lightly pressed her lips against Lexa’s, tasted the salt of her tears, slowly pulling away and leaning her forehead against Lexa’s once more.

“Of course you do.” Clarke whispered.

It had never been a question.

Not really.

-

Not ever.

-

It had taken a while to untangle herself from Lexa.

Not that she had any problems with that. Because she didn’t. Her chest still felt so painfully empty, and if she didn’t feel the pounding of her heart against her ribcage, she’d be sure she didn’t have a heart at all. Anything it all. The emptiness was so all consuming it was practically physical. Except it wasn’t physical, physical pain was always so much easier to control for her, to manage. She knew what to do at least, knew the steps to help her in healing.

But this wasn’t physical pain. It was psychological.
And psychological pain was a right *bitch*.

She had found a safe haven though, buried in Lexa’s arms. Her warmth wrapped around her as she cried, just *cried* as that emptiness spread right through to the tips of her fingers. Made everything numb and cold and having her want nothing more to retract into herself as far as she could go. When Lexa’s arms were around her, her soft words in her ear, mumbling sweet nothings over and over to drown out the sounds of her sobbing—

The emptiness would recede then. But the pain tended to be like the waves, just because it had pulled back didn’t mean it was gone. The wave would hit the shore once more and Clarke had no doubt that if she could she would search for Lexa’s comfort. It had been a long time since she had anyone like that, and it was so achingly bittersweet to have that person now. Because that was where the problem was, wasn’t it? That she’d found someone, someone that she could just *breathe* with, could just exist with and that was enough.

Clarke thought that Lexa would never know how much she cherished that.

How much it made her chest feel like it was caving in.

Was it possible to be terrified of your own self?

The sun was setting now, and Clarke had snuck to that spot where she’d first been with Lexa, thinking over a choice she hated was her first thought once her mind had come back. It was the spot with the patch of grass hidden behind a building and the only place that you could so clearly watch the light leave the sky, the sun retreating and disappearing like it had never been. The sunset now wasn’t an extravagant one. It wasn’t that type that sucked the air from your lungs, that brought out the lonely to the outside if only so they could catch a glimpse too.

No, this was one was quiet. There were few clouds to turn pink. Enough that it was no doubt gorgeous, but nothing more. The gradient was eye-catching but it was like any other. Perhaps Clarke found a certain beauty in that. How quietly this one went, how simply something so incredible and huge and *breathtaking* just slipped away like it wasn’t what it was. A quiet end for something so loud.

Perhaps, she was projecting and should quit being so philosophical.

She caught movement out of the corner of her eye and she adjusted her head to the side. With a slight crease in her brows she watched as someone shimmied their way through the tiny gap and stumbled a little on a dip in the ground, they let out a muttered curse at that, their shoulders slumping with a huff as they locked sights with her. Clarke had been expecting Lexa, considering this was the space where Clarke first felt that magnetic pull that always seemed to gravitate around the girl, but it wasn’t her.

“You’re hard to find when you don’t want to be found.” Anya said, and her usually stoic mask was different today. Clarke didn’t think it was softer, but there was something off about it, not quite right. Like subtle cracks in a stone that you can’t quite tell if they’re meant to be there.

Clarke felt her shoulders tense. Lexa may have let her off the time that they came here, but there was no way in hell that Anya was. She supposed it was on her for sneaking off anyway. If she got punished, it was deserved.

Anya must have noticed her tension because she let out a chuckle without mirth. “I’m not here to drag you to The Pit. You’ll be right.” She gave her a smile then, and like her face it was different, sharp but not. Warm but cold. She sighed before letting her back fall into the wall of the building.
behind her, mirroring Clarke’s position.

Clarke didn’t bother hiding her frown. She knew Anya had seen it, but the woman just kept looking ahead at the setting sun. Clarke gave it a few more confused moments of staring until she slowly let herself relax again. Not like she had been before, no matter the person being relaxed was always different when alone, but enough so that her shoulders weren’t bunched up. Her hands not subconsciously spreading and waiting for the hit to come.

She managed to peel her gaze off Anya and focused back on the sun. The sky was blood red now, the few clouds looking like they’d been dipped in ink. Idly, Clarke wondered what it would be like to paint such a thing. She hadn’t painted in a long while. She had no doubt she’d be rusty, it would probably take a while until she found her footing again. But she’d probably be able to, if she had the time.

*If she had the time.*

Clarke closed her eyes and tried not to cry.

It was Anya’s voice that brought her back. Still in that contradiction, voice both hard and soft. “Nia tortured you, didn’t she?” she muttered, and it was so unexpected that Clarke’s eyes fluttered open if only so she could stare at her.

When Anya’s face didn’t change, still remained expectant on an answer, a confirmation, Clarke let loose a shaky breath. She probably didn’t have long left on this earth, so fuck it. Fuck it. What was the point in hiding anything anymore?

“Yeah,” Clarke breathed. She had to swallow when she found she couldn’t speak. “Yeah. She did.”

Clarke didn’t see the pity she was expecting to see. Anya just nodded, like that was what she was expecting. Clarke watched her as she sucked in a shuddering breath, how she pulled herself up ever so slightly, brought her hands to her side and curled them into fists.

“When I saw the scars on your first day I knew. They were far too precise. Placed too well.”

Clarke broke their gaze and stared at the patch of grass between them.

It didn’t seem to deter her though. “You have something she wants, don’t you? She visited you today, made an offer. Maybe a threat.”

“What are you hoping I say?” Clarke whispered, clenching her jaw and blinking back the burning behind her eyes. She lifted her head. Stared up into the fading clouds. “What are you hoping to hear?”

“I don’t know you. I don’t know you at all really.” There was something in the way she spoke, the out of place care that had Clarke looking to her again. “But I do know that when Lexa found you after… after Nia came, you asked her how much she loved her family. You asked her how much she loved me, Lincoln, Indra… that’s what you asked. The woman who tortured you came and clearly said upsetting things, and the first thing you ask, the first thing you say when Lexa came to you, was how much she loved her family.”

Anya grit her teeth, and Clarke thought she knew what was coming before it was said. “There are few reasons you’d do that. I think Lexa is far too terrified right now to think clearly. Hasn’t noticed yet. But I’m not scared, not yet.” She raised her chin. “She’s made a threat hasn’t she? That she’ll kill me. Kill her family, maybe even her. And I don’t know you, not really, but I’m not blind to how you will probably never put yourself first. Never entirely. How it’ll probably be a cold day in
hell for you to let her hurt Lexa like that.”

It took immense effort but Clarke managed to blink back her tears. It shouldn’t have surprised her as much as it did, to know that Anya had noticed. She had been a threat from day one, of course she would keep a close eye on her, try to understand her. She had gone and kissed her sister for fucks sake, why was she so shocked that someone had been watching? That someone had known?

Clarke stared at Anya for a long while before, ever so slowly, she let out a sigh so old she was surprised she’d been able to make the sound. She could have easily denied what Anya had said. Could have argued and shouted and wasted her breaths convincing her that there was no way that she was right, she was correct, that everything that Clarke thought she had under control had never been. That while it may have felt like she was beating Nia, she had never been. She had been doing what Nia wanted the entire time.

“You can’t tell her.”

Anya blinked at her.

But Clarke forced the strength into her voice. “She can’t know. None of them can know. Not of what Nia is threatening with.”

“She would help you, you know. She would try to her last breath to find a way out for you.”

“That’s why she can’t know.”

Anya stared at her.

Clarke sighed, her hand coming up and running through her hair. “She’s given me a choice.” She muttered, because really, what was the point in holding back anymore? She needed so badly someone to talk to. Not even respond, she just needed someone to know. “I either give in now or… or she starts.”

“You’re going to give in.” It wasn’t a question, even if it rose and dipped like one. Like everything about Anya in this moment it seemed to be a contradiction.

“There’s a third option. If Nia agrees.”

Anya raised a brow at her. “And what’s that?”

“It’s selfish. So incredibly selfish. It’ll hurt them so much more, hurt Lexa so much more.” Clarke sucked in a trembling breath. “But this is going to be it for me I think. Maybe not, maybe something good will happen. Maybe. But I can’t run forever, and one day, it’ll catch up to me, no matter what. This way no one will die, but god, it will hurt her.”

Clarke had to screw her eyes shut to stop the tears. “But I can’t. I can’t not do it. I want to be selfish, just this once. I want to be selfish.”

“What is it?” Anya asked, and Clarke could hear the conflict in her voice. The urge to protect Lexa fighting over the sympathy she was pretending she didn’t feel. Clarke forced in a sharp breath, and only once she was sure that her heart wasn’t pounding so erratically anymore, her eyes weren’t burning, did she open them and stared up at Anya.

And so she told her. Of the third option. If Nia agreed, that is. Because if she didn’t then there was no choice. She would give in; there was no debate in that, not ever. Whether they’d meant to or not, Raven and Octavia and Lexa had all found places in her heart. They were her people. And she
wasn’t going to endanger them, hurt them, not when she could stop it.

Anya nodded slowly once Clarke was done. Clarke could see the tension in every line of her body, even if the sun was nearly gone now, the shadows long and sharp. It was still so clear that anger that was buried within every inch of her skin.

“You’re right. It will hurt her. All of them.” Anya looked out towards the last rays of the sun, but Clarke thought that that wasn’t what she was looking at that. Maybe just the freedom, the other side of the fence. The grass and the trees and the overwhelming freedom. “And it’s selfish. Incredibly so.”

Slowly Anya dragged her gaze back so it met Clarke’s.

And finally that constant conflict that she had been in the entire time she’d been here seemed to resolve itself. Her shoulders sagged and eyes grew sad and gentle. “But… if it’s needed, I will help you.”

Clarke had to blink a couple times to make sure she wasn’t dreaming. “I’m sorry?” she breathed, having to double-check that she’d heard right.

Anya rolled her eyes at her. “While what you’re doing is selfish… the end result won’t be. And no matter how much I seriously hate it, you made her happy. I know it’s brief, the time that you’ve known her.” Anya shook her head with a grey smile. “But time doesn’t matter. She told herself she’d never love again, not after what happened before, and while she has gone ahead and quite possibly chosen the most difficult person to go and fall… and be together with, you make her happy. You made her remember.”

She pushed herself off the wall so she wasn’t leaning anymore. Slowly walked towards her, clenched her jaw. “I don’t know what you’ve done to land yourself here. But what you’re doing now, I’m going to thank you for it. Because they never will. They’ll never know what you chose for them. That at some point everyone they loved could have died.” Anya stopped just a few steps from her. Clarke pushed herself up too, hid her shaking hands behind her back. “Tell me… if you had the time, do you think you would have ever loved her?”

Clarke didn’t even need to think. “I knew the moment I saw her.”

Anya gave her that same nod, like it was what she was expecting.

“Then you better get moving. She’s got a nose like a bloodhound; no doubt she’ll sniff you out soon. And if she sees us talking then she’ll know something’s wrong.”

Clarke watched as she stepped back, gave one last glance to the sun that was just about gone now. She began walking away but she stopped just before the gap. Slowly, she tilted her head in her direction.

“Hofli yu eno lid yu in non ba chilnes.” She whispered.

And without saying anything more she slipped through the gap.

Clarke stood still in off sense of space for a few stretched moments. Tried to absorb everything that had just happened, what had been said. What was going to happen. How this was it really, her last night, like a flash of lightening and those seconds as you waited for the thunder to crack. The thunder was coming. The storm was coming.

But for now, all she could do was wait.
It was deep into the night now.

Although you could argue that it was also extremely early into the morning. She had lingered only for a few more minutes by the spot behind the wall, trying to even her breathing and tilting her head towards the sky. There was this moment, as she stared upwards, when she felt her gloved hand buzz. She felt that urge that was near painful to not indulge in. Her hand had started shaking, her body had started shaking, and tearing her gaze off the sky she had forced herself to walk away like it wasn’t just a scenic view she was running from.

That she was running from something so much bigger, more terrifying.

Freedom.

Raven had grabbed her the second she came into view. She’d been walking by the Rec Room and even if she had tried to quietly slip by it did nothing. Raven had still jumped up from her seat the moment she’d walked past the entryway, and Clarke had about a whole millisecond before Raven had snatched her arm and dragged her to their cell. Clarke didn’t know why she’d had such a dramatic response, but just as her frown formed Raven was answering the unspoken question anyway.

Apparently someone had seen her follow Lexa, clearly looking distressed. It didn’t exactly help her case that Lexa had thrown death glares at anyone who dared to glance in their direction. Clarke wasn’t expecting to have to lie so quickly, as she knew it was inevitable and she would be doing it right through her teeth tomorrow, but she’d been living under the hopeful impression that tonight she wouldn’t have to. She would have one last day, one last time to savour Raven’s shitty jokes and Octavia’s temper and Lexa’s smile.

She just wanted time.

Clarke had had to force herself to remember that Raven was an empath because without saying a thing her entire face had softened at Clarke’s sadness. She must have sensed it because she had wordlessly pulled her into an embrace so tight Clarke was sure she couldn’t breathe.

Clarke didn’t try to pretend.

She hugged Raven back with equal intensity, and when tears fell from Clarke eyes and Raven whispered about how she was going to kill Nia for the pain she’d caused, Clarke had nearly laughed, had nearly corrected her. That she wasn’t crying for Nia. Not for the sadness that ached like a knife buried in her chest. She was crying because she was going to have to accept that at some point she would never see her friends again. The people she loved again. Not Raven’s shitty jokes, not Octavia’s temper, not Lexa’s smile.

Once again, she was going to lose everything.

And she was so angry.

That this was happening to her. That out of all the shit cards of life she could have drawn, these were the ones she’d picked. Was made Wanheda, was forced to shoulder the burden that came with it. That Nia had broken her in more ways than one. That she’d finally found someone, in the most unlikely of places, that she felt safe leaving her heart with. That even if Lexa knew what she was, mostly, and what she’d been through; she still kissed her. She still held her when she broke. Was still there.
Eventually Raven had pulled out of the embrace and looked her in the eye. She had lifted a hand, rested it against Clarke’s jaw and given her a shaky smile.

“You’re not alone. Not anymore.” Tears had slipped from her eyes then. Her lip wobbling as she held all her emotions in, but also, probably to try and manage Clarke’s own that were mixing with hers. Honestly Clarke had no clue how Raven dealt with it. “You’re going to be alright. We’ll stand by you, I’ll stand by you, no matter what. You’re fucking crazy Griffin. But the best kind.”

Octavia had stopped by just before lights out. Clarke and Raven had separated by then, each on their own respective bunks. It had been so strange, to see Octavia, the fierce warrior girl who was quite literally a firestorm trapped in a human body, to watch her tiptoe into the cell so hesitantly. To glance up at Clarke with such care Clarke was surprised her breathing hadn’t given out.

Octavia wasn’t one for big gestures. Clarke knew that. She had simply come in, walked up to her bunk and raised a hand. Clarke had pulled herself up from where she’d been lying and grasped Octavia’s, and only once Octavia had given their joined grip a tight squeeze did she whisper, “we’ll make it,” and with that, she had offered her one last smile and slipped quietly from the cell.

Clarke hadn’t bothered to try and sleep when lights out came. There was no point, not when she’d end up tossing and turning anyway. Nia’s messenger would be coming at some point to get her answer. She was going to have to convince them to get Nia to hear her deal, because she knew that if they were loyal to Nia they’d probably be highly against doing anything but her orders.

But she would deal with that problem when it arose.

Clarke’s eyes were closed, though she wasn’t sleeping, and as she laid on her back she blinked open her eyes when she heard footsteps coming down the hall. Extremely close, and very soft. They weren’t the steps of a guard. With a sigh through her nose Clarke pulled herself up and carefully made her way down the ladder, making sure that Raven was indeed fast asleep. She was, thankfully. By the time Clarke had gotten down and walked up to the closed bars of the cell the person was already there on the other side. Their face completely devoid of any emotion.

Clarke slowly let her hands wrap around the bars. “I should have known it’d be you, Echo.” She whispered, and really she wasn’t that surprised. Her voice was tired, resigned. Echo must have heard it, because there was a flicker of something in her eye. In the way her brow twitched.

“Do you have your answer?” Echo grunted and Clarke sighed through her nose again. It seemed she wasn’t going to get a chat then. Not that she was expecting any less.

“A proposition.”

Echo narrowed her eyes at her. “That wasn’t what Nia asked of you.”

“I don’t do what Nia asks of me. I do what I have to do, but it is never, and shall never be for her.” Clarke tightened her grip on the bars. “You will tell Nia my proposition. Whether she agrees is her decision, but you will go to her.”

“And why would I do that? I was given explicit orders. If you don’t give me an answer than she will assume it is a no…”

“Do not think that just because you are on the other side of these bars that I cannot hurt you.” Clarke muttered, and in habit she grinned with the threat, the type of smile more resembling a black panther waiting in the dark to pounce. Echo, seemingly without her knowing, immediately took a step back and Clarke’s smile widened.
Clarke watched Echo swallow.

“Go talk to Nia Echo. Tell her it’s for old times sake. After everything… she owes me. Owes me this.”

It took a long while and a lot of staring that would have broken lesser men, but, slowly and eventually, Echo bobbed her head. Clarke took great effort to hide her relief.

“What is your proposition then?” Echo asked, and Clarke loosened her grip on the bars when she heard the slight shake in Echo’s voice. Clarke sucked in a steadying breath before explaining, and when she was done she was treated to the sight of Echo blinking slowly, taking a subconscious step back. “That is all you ask?”

“I don’t know how you ended up under Nia’s thumb Echo, but I’m going to give you a piece of advice. Run. It doesn’t matter where or how, *run*. Nia isn’t human, she’s the most sadistic and ruthless creature I’ve ever met.” Clarke leaned forward till her face pressed into the bars. “That is all I ask, because it is Nia. It’s all I can ask. If I’m lucky she’ll say yes. If not, then you will tell her that my answer to her previous offer is yes.”

They stared at each other for many painful minutes through the dark.

Clarke thought that Echo would definitely have to scamper off soon before the guards came. Because of this she leaned back, let out a shuddering breath and released her grip on the cell bars, taking a few step backwards. Echo lifted her chin, and Clarke knew that it was done. Echo would deliver her ask at least. And she would wait to see if Nia would agree.

And yet, just in those heartbeats before Echo left, she caught her eye. “You are not what I expected.” She said, and with a look that Clarke could only identify as curiosity, Echo turned around and walked away.

Clarke was slow to get back up into her bunk. When she did she lay down again, but she didn’t close her eyes. She stared up at the ceiling and gave herself the privilege to just let her mind spiral for a few moments. To drown in her fears and her worries and the *ache* that never seemed to leave her. She drowned and she drowned and she drowned, and just as she was sure that she was never going to resurface again, she forced her head back up.

Her eyes caught sight of the dream catcher still hanging over her bed, and giving it one last look, a smile spreading on her lips without her realising, Clarke rolled onto her side and closed her eyes.

She didn’t sleep.

But it was nice to pretend to.

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The next morning in the canteen as Clarke went to get her food, Echo caught her eye from across the cue. The stone-faced woman gave her a nod, and ignoring the simultaneous swirl of relief and terror in her gut, Clarke nodded back.

Nia had accepted.

Clarke had never thought oblivion would come so quiet.
its coming up to exam period now so if i disappear for a bit thats why. be a fucking miracle if i pass at this rate. anyway, i really hope you enjoyed the chapter and it wasn't incredibly dull. we're building up to the finale so its hard to keep shit interesting in the meanwhile. thank you for taking the time out of your day to read it. until the next time lads, have a good one.

(next chapter may be shorter than usual as it wasn't originally meant to be a stand alone. then again i initially thought i didn't have enough planning for THIS chapter and i overwrote anyway, so !!!! i aint got a fucking clue what's happening!!)

language isn’t real, but heres some translations anyway:
Shof op o ai na slash em swela kiln. - Shut up or I will cut your throat.
Hofli yu eno lid yu in non ba chilnes. - May your end bring you nothing but peace.
hello!
so, a very kind and wonderful soul (capnvanillawithsprinkles) has offered to continue the final to chapters, since I couldn't write it. I had originally planned what I wanted to happen, and they were kind enough to finish off the story for me. Be sure to show them lots of love and thanks, because they've honestly done such an incredible job and I'm so grateful. Go spam them with love.
so, this story will be continuing for the last two chapters. i hope you enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Wanheda.

Wake, Wanheda. I am hungry.

A resonant soulless voice Clarke recognized called to her through the walls of the prison. Wanheda. Fear clutched at her bones. Death grew tired of waiting. Death hasn’t been fed since the glove. The slithering darkness gnashed its teeth. Death’s desire to consume gnawed at her bones.

Clarke can feel her presence before she arrives. Lexa stepped into her doorway making her evening rounds. “I’m not on a death sentence anymore, but I am a death sentence for others.”

Feed me, or I will take my fill.

I am coming. The sound of feathers pushing against the air filled Clarke’s ears. Death swooped out of her body toward its unwitting victim.

Shivering in the darkness, Clarke sat up. Sweat clung to her. She lifted her hand and inspected the other’s flesh encasing hers. Most moments she hated it; but, at this moment she relished the security it provided. Death did not make such demands. It never had, however, she had never skipped collecting victims for it either. She shuddered thinking about starving, a situation Nia made her understand well. Even though the world believed Death to be vicious, she knew that its essence intended to free the victims from their murderers. Their spirits clung to those who took them.
Death, she had always been kind and loving to Clarke. No matter how dreadful the person she hunted, Death took them as painlessly as possible. Would she do this now? Atohl’s death had been different, but he had damaged the vessel. Death’s fury raged with him.

Nia’s visit had twisted her dreams from days of torture to the fear of what she could do. The glove itched and ached; Clarke’s flesh chafed. Fear for her loved ones rippled beneath her skin as death receded. Clarke inhaled, inflating her lungs to capacity and slowly letting it go; the ritual gave her strength. She needed to share pieces of her agreement with Nia with her friends; she owed them that much. But, her habitual silence meant opening herself to anyone felt like being naked in front of a crowd, even a select one.

“Clarke, you’re grinding your teeth loud enough to wake the dead. Spill it or go to sleep.”

The blonde stayed quiet waiting for Raven to roll over and let sleep overtake her again; however, moments later the latina crawled into her bunk.

“Neither of us will sleep until your brain gears quit clicking. What’s the prob, Grif?”

Much to Raven’s surprise, Clarke chose not to fight her instincts. “Nia’s going to kill me. Soon.” Against her will, the devastating truth dropped into the cell taking all the air with it leaving the two women in deep distress.

Dark hair shook with the movements of her head. “No. We aren’t going to just accept this fate for you.” Anger and determination welled in her eyes. “Maybe Anya or Lexa can help us find a way to protect you.”

“We both know that Nia has servants all over this prison, guards, and inmates. There is no cell outside her reach. I can’t escape it.”

“Not here you can’t. I have an idea. At breakfast, we will get word to Lexa so that all of us can meet. If you can’t be safe here, then we have to get you out. We will come up with something.”
It was strange, Clarke thought how her year with Nia made her lose her sense of time. Because for that year time wasn’t quite real. It elongated. It evaporated. It stretched. It pulled. It vanished. It slipped through her fingers. It stood still. There was no way to tell time. It was just a matter of how many breaths she breathed, how many steps and blows she took. When the reduction of daily routine gave little to no indication of time passing except for a change of light, time became such a strangely abstract construct. Illusory. And maybe, maybe, that was why it hit her so intensely now. When her gaze lingered too long on Raven’s offhand gesture to hold the door open for her, when Octavia wordlessly stopped running the same moment as her for a break in the monotony, when her mind played over like a broken record of the sensation of Lexa’s lips sliding against her own, every single second counted as more precious than air.

Because there was a difference, Clarke realized. In Azgeda Tower, time ceased to exist; it became irrelevant.

And now she had no time.

She had no time at all.

She didn’t know which was worse.

Watching the daily routine playout normally entertained the blonde, but not today. Raven’s daily flirtation with Anya proved more purposeful today. She delivered the message without alerting the canteen. The morning slipped toward noon with no response. Hating to be ignored Octavia’s crankiness came to the forefront. She and Raven bickered then escalated to arguing as the alarm sounded for lunch. Clarke followed the raucous twosome as they neared the line.

“Guys, I am going to go make a phone call. Save me some lunch.” She disappeared from the room as Raven began to poke at Octavia. The feisty woman responded with a poke of her own that escalated into a shoving match.

“Chill or be chilled, Reyes.” The nearest guard sneered in a clipped tone, more vigilant and fearful than usual

“Who got his panties in a wad?” Raven wondered as she pushed Octavia forward. The line had moved, and the girl hadn’t followed. “Where’s Anya? Shouldn’t she be in here?” The naughty brunette searched the perimeter with her eyes.
Ontari and a group of Azgeda women entered pushing through the line to the front of the room.

“Reyes, I don’t recognize a single guard in this room. Wait a minute. When did Ontari get out? I thought she went to maximum.”

Rolling her eyes, Raven turned Octavia toward the exit. “Those two assholes at the door, don’t you recognize them?” She watched the Azgeda gang gathering together. Her brows furrowed. “I always thought she’d slip through the cracks. I’m curious why she is acting like she owns the place.” Raven growled at the disparity in treatment.

“The skinny guard over there talking to Ontari tried to get Lincoln removed because he was ‘compromised. But, he’s looking all kinds of friendly with that group.’”

Octavia froze at the door. Raven grabbed her by the arm. A leaden feeling lodged in her gut. “Do you mean they aren’t part of Lexa’s crew?”

“Nope. They came over from Polis. Something about building a coalition. Linc doesn’t like or trust any of them.”

Doubt and worry permeated both women as they picked up their trays and headed to a table as far back from the growing gang as they could.

Ontari led her group to the front pushing women away from their food and tables. Their show of force went unacknowledged by all the guards, including the man who laughed from his post on the wall.

“Shit. Should we get help or get out of here?” Octavia wondered.

Raven pocketed as much food as she could from the tray they grabbed for Clarke. “None of these screws are as interesting as my favorite cheekbones. I say we track down Clarke and wait it out elsewhere.”

“Maybe.”
A low rumble came through the outer doors of the canteen followed by screams. Noises reverberated off the walls crescendoing into a roar. The women in the line felt the tension explode as the alarms blared to life.

The canteen doors flew open as a prison guard dropped Echo from his shoulder to her knees with her hands secured behind her back. Echo’s tough exterior wilted the moment she spotted her nemesis. Ontari pushed away from the table wickedly grinning at the present that had dropped to the floor.

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It shouldn’t have been a surprise that Clarke was a quiet kid.

She was never one to draw unnecessary attention to herself, and often spent a lot of her time, whether consciously or not, surveying her surroundings. Either people or exits, she had made a habit of always being an observer, even when she was just a kid. It baffled Clarke now, how she had never seen destiny coming. When she looked over her past, clear signs emerged. The way she could never relax around father’s army friends, her instinct to study, learn and search for their weak points. She wasn’t normal.

How was it a surprise when she learned of what she was?

“You’re a quiet one love,” her dad had whispered when she was five, curled up on her bed and knees held tight to her chest. It had distressed her to know that one of her few friends, Wells, had been away for her birthday, and with that, she’d realized that apart from him she barely had anyone else. “But you’ve got a purer heart than I’ve ever known, and I don’t blame you for being cautious with it.”

Even then, even when she was so young and unburdened and free, she had still been able to read the melancholy in his eyes.

“Why are you crying?” she had muttered, a small crease in her brow.

Jake blinked at her before snickering. “I’m not crying, love.”
Her frown deepened at his words, and with a slightly frustrated press of her lips, she raised one of her hands, carefully tapping her finger against this temple. “Crying,” she repeated. She scowled as she tried to find the word, but it eluded her. “Crying,” she tried again, and it gave her relief when Jake finally comprehended what she meant. She had asked why his eyes remained filled with sorrow.

And it was the way that her father had looked at her then, that she should have known.

Because at that moment the weight of his sadness crushed his soul.

She knew now the reason for his bitter grief. She would have been distraught too, to know that your child, that an angelic little girl would be destined to carry Death itself, doomed to take lives. There was no escape. There couldn’t be, the fates wouldn’t allow it.

She should have known then.

“Clarke,” his voice had dropped. For a moment he couldn’t even match her gaze, and she remembered how his eyes had flicked lamentably around the pale blue room. To the crayon drawings on the wall to the spread of Lego mines on the floor to the books packed tight into the shelves. When their gazes met again, Jake lifted his hand and cradled her cheek, and so easily did Clarke leaned into his touch like she always did. He had been her rock; without him she had felt lost.

But with the way he had smiled then, the sheer amount of sorrow that it burned and bled.

She really should have known.

“Will you promise me something, Clarke?”

“Okay,” she had murmured. It had confused her, as even if she couldn’t articulate it, she could still feel the unease that had sunk into the room within the frail hope that tugged at the lines of his mouth.

“Your life… I don’t know how you’ll take it but… I know that, at times, it will be hard. And though I promise you that I will be there for you as best I can, right… right to everything, will you promise that you’ll always try? You’ll never give up?” his voice began trembling slightly.

“That you’ll survive?”
She hadn’t quite understood his words at the time. It must have shown on her face because Jake had smiled that sad smile again and retracted his hand, trailed it down onto her shoulder and squeezed gently.

“Never lose yourself.” He had whispered, and with that, he pressed a tender kiss to her forehead and read her to sleep.

Clarke thought that he had known her future. Not exactly, not the details – but the heaviness in her chest, the rocks in her lungs. He knew with great certainty of the pain to come. That he would know of the day that came where she would doubt whether it was worth it to ignore the souls clung on to her own. The day that doubt, no matter small, would sneak in like an infection and ruin her right at her core.

A hand touched her shoulder shaking her from her reminiscence. It was more instinct than rational thought when she flinched and subconsciously lurched back, held her breath in preparation for the hit to come, for the guard to release his pent-up anger.

But her eyes snapped up instead to meet Anya, and slowly, she let her shoulders relax. The officer placated with the knowledge of her safety resumed her place on the wall.

And it was the way that sadness bled into her chest, how cold it was, how it clawed at her insides in silent screams, which made her realize that, maybe, this was how her father had felt. To know what was coming, of the hell that was coming, the destruction, and to not say a thing. To not be able to. To only be able to sit and watch as her world fractured and crumbled beneath her feet.

How had she never known?

Though Clarke’s back was pressed up against the white wall behind her waiting in line for her turn on the phone, shoved her body as close to the wall as possible. No matter how small and unobvious she was making herself, she knew Anya had her stored away in the corner of her eye. Clarke thought that the guard was keeping an even closer eye on her than usual, somehow, because while there used to be breaks or how she would divert her attention elsewhere, it was clear now that it was staying on her and not budging.

Clarke had kept Anya in the corner of her eye too, so when she lifted her head and finally turned her gaze entirely to her, she noticed how Anya’s entire body stiffened. Clarke gave a quick glance to the line and cocked quickly to the side beckoning. Anya approached as the line beside Clarke diminished. She pretended she wasn’t as scared as she was. The tension in the air increased as many had disappeared into the canteen.
Anya left her sentry post and took up a position beside Clarke letting her back fall into the wall and her gaze casually sweeping over the few people around them. When the terrified blonde spoke, it was without looking at the guard next to her.

“Where’s Lexa?” Clarke murmured, keeping her voice quiet.

Anya didn’t look at her either, keeping her eyes forward. “In her office. She’s trying to find out how and why someone let Nia into her prison without her knowledge. Someone ignored proper channels again.”

Clarke’s brow pulled down slightly, the only indication that the two were even talking.

“That’s twice someone’s gotten in without her knowing,” Clarke muttered. “It can’t be a coincidence.”

“No, osir gada in natrona tiya oso fous.” Anya ground out and even if Clarke was turned away she could practically hear Anya’s teeth scraping together with the force of her anger. But her words made Clarke pause, made her breath get caught in her throat.

“You think someone has betrayed her? One of her own?” Clarke asked, and it was only practiced effort that she kept her voice down, calm and quiet.

Clarke could see the twitch in Anya’s jaw in the corner of her eye.

“There is no other way,” Anya muttered.

Clarke would have said more, except she was right, and she agreed even if the thought was an incredibly unsettling one. If not, even Lexa’s people were unsafe, then where could they go?

“This is worse than I thought. I know you are working on it, but I need you to bring Raven and O to her office after I go. Find some excuse to bring them. Ideally, keep it realistic. I don’t want the rest of the prison talking any more than you do. But, I’m begging you, Anya. It has to be within the hour.”
Anya’s head twitched with the urge to look over at her, probably to shoot her a glare that should have melted her skin off with its heat, but still, they kept their sights turned away from one another. “You are a prisoner, Griffin.” Anya murmured, and her voice just barely kept from morphing into a growl.

Clarke swallowed. “And you promised to help me.”

Anya didn’t reply.

Silence hung between them building its furious desperation. It pushed on her lungs, distorting perception and making time bend and stretch so much longer than it should. It reminded Clarke of those moments before a fight broke out or the whisperings of Death began-- the way there’d be that silence as the victims eyed her misjudging the outcome, or pulled themselves together for the battle to come. But gradually, the tension retreated, and Anya blew a harsh breath threw her nose.

“I will wait for you to finish your call, then give you five minutes to talk to her before I bring in Reyes and Blake.” Clarke could almost hear the creak of Anya’s teeth as they pushed together. “And myself.”

“Daun ste mou den ai na as op gon.” Clarke muttered, and with a last quiet murmur of thanks, Clarke pushed herself off the wall and picked up the phone as the previous prisoner left.

Fear for her friends had lined her skin since her agreement with Nia. Trust never came easy, but with that woman, it would never come at all. A contingency plan could never hurt. Wanting to hear her mother’s voice one last time, and with the hope her mother could offer her friends, Clarke picked up the phone. Slowly she dialed the number that proved to be her salvation as a child. She brought the phone up to her ear, her heart clenched, anticipating the comforting sound of her mother’s tone. The call connected. She breathed deeply praying for an answer. On the third ring, she heard the background noise of the hospital.

“Mum?” Clarke held the phone to her ear dreading and longing to hear that voice one last time.

“Clarke, baby, is that you? Is everything alright?” Warmth flooded her veins.

The lie burned its way from her mind to her tongue. “Great, mum. Things have been good. I have friends here,” she paused, unsure if she should continue her thought. “I’ve found people to care about, but my enemies have appeared too. I’m still scared.” Although her mother had argued with
her over every single thing Clarke did as a teenager, her mother had also been her source of
strength, her independence, her will to do it on her own. Clarke placed her hand on the side of her
head imagining her mother carding her fingers through her curls. What she would give to have that
feeling one last time. She stopped the image playing in her mind and took comfort in the sound of
her mother’s breathing. Making do with what remained available rather than allowing herself to
wallow in what could have been.

“What aren’t you telling me?” Abby let out an angry choked sob, “We’ve never been good at
communicating, have we?”

Clarke swallowed loudly and eyed the guards knowing her time limit. “Do you remember how dad
always taught me to be a good soldier. The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few?” The
memory of Jake loomed. His gregarious smile and sparkling eyes hid a strong heart that sacrificed
himself to save his daughter.

Abby’s gasp on the other end removed all doubt. She understood the game even if she didn’t know
why it happened. “Clarke?” Fear and regret hid in that one syllable.

“I need a favor. I have some friends that have no one on the outside, so I have told them about you.
If someone appears at the hospital and tells you about dad’s nickname for me, please help them
any way that you can.”

“Why--

The claxon above Clarke wailed. The phone line went dead. Protocols for lockdown fell in place as
inmates dashed down the corridor.

“What’s going on?” Clarke shouted the question at the nearest guard. He stared back mercilessly as
his grin broadened.

On the second look, the man’s uniform didn’t fit. “Azgeda is taking the prison from the filthy
Trikru. Nia’s waiting for you.” He held up two fingers and tossed her a key. “I’d get moving if I
were you.”
“If it isn’t momma’s lapdog. You went running to my mother about what Pike and I have been up to. You didn’t think I wouldn’t find out that it was you, did you?”

Ontari put her hand out to the guard against the wall. Without a word, he handed her his bludgeon.

Raven froze grabbing Octavia. “Shit is about to go sideways in here.”

“I’d guess by the screams from outside that it’s already happening everywhere else.” The tremor in Blake’s voice gave away her fear; her face remained the emotionless mask of a warrior.

Reyes eyes tore from her friend to the grizzly scene before her. Like a feral beast, Ontari’s rage pummeled the prostrate form on the floor. Sickening gurgling noises could be heard even at their distance.

Horrified, a large number of women in the room ran for the door sweeping Reyes and Blake along with the wave.

-Jus drein jus daun.-

Flashbacks from another riot flooded Lexa’s ears—the shouting, the clashing, the chaos. Memories and terror stripped her of her strength. She fell to her knees in the yard next to the prison wall. A fire burned where benches had been.

Pike’s maniacal laughter rang out. He held Niylah by her hair. Forcing the strong woman to her knees, he shouted, “Other-lover. Your gang of heathens houses and protects Others. What do you have to say for yourself?”

An eerie smile swept the vulnerable woman’s face. “Not other-lover, I am an Other.” She lifted her left hand and aimed at his torso. White hot light shot from her fingers in quick succession knocking him backward. Another woman from the group placed a hand on an Azgeda guard that had aided
Pike. The man’s eyes rolled to the whites as he fell to his knees seizing.

Niylah and her gang fought the man. The heat emanating from around them hinted an accelerant had been added; an explosion was eminent. This was no prison riot. This was a coup. Azgeda uniforms had steadily appeared in her ranks, but until today she didn’t understand their meaning.

“Lexa, you have to get out of here. If they take you, it’s over.”

Reluctantly, Lexa stood searching the fray around her body for any sign of the trio of women she needed. Anya’s tired eyes met hers. “I will retake the prison, but you need to get your woman out of here. Nia’s visit had consequences. Take her, her friends and go.”

Lexa shook her head defying Anya’s order.

“Ai krei fiya. Leidon Heda” Lexa pulled her sister closer. Touching their heads together, she grasped her sister tightly.

“Kigon yo gonplei. Otaim.”

Teary-eyed and fearful, Lexa sensed her love across the yard more than she saw her. Steeling her nerves, she hugged Anya one last time and sprinted after the blonde hair moving through the smoke. Lexa ran faster, sprinting until she caught them pushing to the service entrance to the prison.

“Stop. You can’t get through there.”

Clarke, relieved to see her, smiled and held up a key. “I disagree.”

Relief flooded both the women as Reyes and Octavia pushed through the crowd of fighting bodies. “Ontari killed Echo in the canteen.” Disgust and sadness plagued the space between Blake’s words. An Azgeda affiliated prisoner wrapped her fingers around Raven’s arm. Without thinking, Blake’s hand flung a whip of flame out from her palm. The fury tore through the woman’s throat leaving a steaming corpse on the ground.
Blake’s eyes flew wide. “Shit. Not again.”

“Octavia, we’ll deal with this later. But, if we are going to survive, we have to leave now.” Clarke urged her friends toward the door she had opened.

Sad brown eyes blinked as Reyes arm wrapped around her body. “Come on Tavia. We will get through this together, just like last time.”

Octavia swallowed hard but managed to push beyond her self-flagellation to allow Raven to guide her steps behind Clarke and Lexa.

- 

They made their way through the underground tunnel. The Trikru had lined the area with escape routes so long ago that Lexa couldn’t answer Raven’s questions about the builders.

Further along, the unending tunnel left the group silent in their exhaustion, only the sounds of rubble crunching under steps filled the void. Concerns from previous events swept through their minds. Raven’s calm demeanor was nothing like the calculating chaos swirling in her head. Clarke’s steps faltered due to worry. As they drew near to the exit, a subtle thrill rumbled through the group, freedom.

“Right, before we make for daybreak, I feel we need to talk about our plan.” Reyes fell back waiting for the others to join her in planning. Teamwork was imperative, without input she would resort to her tried and true tactics.

Drained, Clarke turned back to face the latina, but it was Lexa who spoke up, “Well I would assume we need to keep moving and doing so requires us to be inconspicuous.”

“Thanks for stating the obvious; no wonder you wore the uniform and me the chains.” There was a slightly sardonic tone, but Raven’s eyes teased over the former Heda’s figure. “Then again only a few filled the uniform in all the right ways.”
“I am not Anya, focus Reyes.”

“Indeed you aren’t. Damn, now I have one regret about this escape.” Clicking her tongue with a gentle head shake, she cleared her thoughts, “Anyways, we need transportation. Walking everywhere is only going to single us out.”

“Are you sure you aren’t lazy?” Octavia chimed in.

“Do you want to walk? Because I am fine leaving your arse at the side of the road to draw attention off of us.”

“You wouldn’t.”

“Sure about that? Listen, if you want to do things the easy way, then go ahead.” Rolling her hand out and pointing towards the exit, she waited for Blake’s response.

“Easy way? What the heck are you talking about?”

“Well, I am anticipating a head start, while you do you with the fire stuff and get caught.”

“What does that even mean?!” Scoffing the question she was feeling more appalled how little Raven seemed to care.

“Reyes, I prefer not being burned alive.” Lexa snapped. “Let’s take the bus.”

“I am taking back the smart comment, are you bloody daft, worst suggestion ever!”

“Is it though?” She asked pointedly.

“Guard logic doesn’t work in the real world. Yes, they will check the buses along with other methods of transportation. I have a great idea, but you have to trust me.”
It took less than an hour for the group to end up where Raven’s plan would start. “No.” Lexa stood with her arms crossed.

“Lexa, you aren’t a Lawful Stupid character, remove the stick out of your arse before I shove it out your mouth.”

“We are not stealing a car.”

“No, no, we aren’t stealing, merely repurposing it temporarily with some intention to return it.”

“Reyes, that’s stealing.”

“No, it’s borrowing; read a dictionary sometime.”

“Some intention? Means no intention.”

“Fine then, consider this a public service, if the car is lost his/maybe her insurance will cover the replacement. They probably are paying way more than they need anyways.”

“We are not stealing this car.”

Slinking into sight, Clarke and Octavia gave a weary smile, “We got the plate.” Octavia sheepishly chirped up.

Once the plates were swapped with the car on the street, Lexa started the first shift driving, slowly and steadily making their way through the city she knew what roads would be quickest to travel. “Ever heard of ‘Drive it like you stole it’?”

“Is that a trick question?”

“It’s a 6.2 liter V8 coupe, not a family four-door sedan you take out on Sunday afternoons to impress the neighbors. You don’t have to make do with 550 horsepower, Captain Slow, you have 702.”
“What does that even mean?”

“Cock! You are unbelievable, pull over and let a real woman drive.”

Escaping take two: Moments of arguments later the two unceremoniously switched seats. “When you have a stolen car with this much power at your feet you unleash it, but cautiously.”

With barely a few minutes time the petrol light blinked on, “Cautiously? So now what, Gear Head?”

Pulling off into a partially vacant lot Reyes scanned for the best spot hidden from view of the main road. “Now we hunt and gather, might want to collect the portable tank from the boot.”

Cringing she turned to the partially passed out passenger in the back seat, “Clarke, mind grabbing the canister?”

“No, Heda, it was your idea to draw straws. Give Octavia my regards.” Twisting subtly under Red she found a better position with her sleeping companion.

“Had to be a damn muscle car, couldn’t have been a sedan.” Rolling her eyes, Lexa flicked open the lid meeting an annoyed glare, “Clarke says hi.”

“I can hear every word from in here. Hello Griffin.” Sardonically responding she tossed the plastic container at the brunette and stretched her back. “Leave it open or else.”

Nodding her understanding, she slowly backed away from the danger. Placing the tank at Raven’s feet, she let out a relieving sigh, “Hurry up.”

“Oh, no, you get to do the honors first.” Throwing a bit of hose she procured from the neighboring facility at the brunette, Raven crossed her arms with a knowing smirk. “On your knees and suck.”

“Seriously?”
“Put that mouth to work.”

“When do I stop?”

“You’ll know.”

Catching the mirth in the latina’s tone, she hesitated but realized any arguments she could start would only lose precious moments from their escape. Moments that would add to the risk of being caught. Following orders, Lexa slipped the hose into the car’s tank and drew the air from the line until gas flooded her mouth. The vile liquid burned and caused her to gag leaving her a choking, gasping mess, “Oh yeah you are the gayest they come. Brilliant work, I’ve got it from here. Fetch a drink from the store, and I will fill us up.”

“Money?” Whizzing the question she already knew the answer to she hoped to avoid committing more theft.

“Lucky for you the owner was a blooming idiot. His wallet is on the dash. Don’t use the plastic.”

Lexa opens the car door and plucks the wallet from the dash. Her eyes drift to the two sleeping forms in the backseat. She can’t help but notice that Clarke has been dropping weight for the last few weeks. This escape won’t be making it better. At least they will be safer when they leave the Polis city limits on their way to DC.

- 

They waited for dark to descend at the edge of the forest. Clarke closed her eyes and addressed the group. “I need you to trust me for a little while. Stay here. I need to make sure we can get into my safehouse. If I am not back in an hour, something has gone wrong.” Her last sentenced came out while staring intimately into Lexa’s eyes. Clarke wanted to share so much with her love but needed to wait until they could safely speak without the others hearing everything she needed to say.

She pulled Lexa in for a kiss and disappeared down an alley. Staying in the shadows Clarke’s feet knew the way through the mazework of backstreets, cross streets and alleys until she found the small raven in graffiti on the brickwork. Covering the graffiti with her hand, she waited for
teleportation. But, her mark didn’t activate. For a moment, the glove warmed, and then it waned. The other’s blood had deflected its trigger. In defeat, she turned on her heel and returned to her friends. How could they fix this?

Anxious, Clarke walks back to her friends.

“We may have a problem getting to my hideout.” Fatigue and despair pulled at her shoulders as she took a seat under the oak tree.

Lexa curled her hand around Clarke’s glove as she sat beside her. “What happened?”

The blonde looked away from the others embarrassed by her failure. “I can’t get my mark to trigger it. The glove prevents me from taking you to safety.” She squeezed her eyes shut trying to calm her breathing. Panic seethed under the surface waiting to come to fruition.

“You need to calm down, Clarke,” Lexa whispered in her ear. Her arms wrapped around Clarke as she obviously struggled. Back.

Octavia grinned as she knelt beside her friend. Reaching over to place her hand on top of Clarke and Lexa’s hands, she squeezed her eyes shut as first her mark began to illuminate. Relieved blue eyes popped open as she felt the mark hum beneath the leather.

“O, you are a miracle.”

“No, you’re just an arrogant idiot. Did you think you were the only one who could do that?”

Raven rolled her eyes. “Don’t brag on her too much. The hot head’s gonna do something stupid soon. I promise.”

Octavia whacked her arm lightly laughing.

“Hey, I might resemble that remark, but let me have my moment. At least, I don’t blow shit up.”
Raven’s answering eye roll remained ignored as they grabbed their belonging and followed Clarke quickly. In minutes, they were to the marking.

“Everybody link hands. This will teleport us to where we need to be. Octavia, trigger me.”

The moment she felt the power in her skin, Clarke touched the brick. The familiar sensation of being sucked through a swizzle stick, flushed through a whirlwind and spat out onto a hardwood floor. Clarke heard her friends grumble in pain with the impact.

“Teleport? You gotta be shitting me.” Raven’s mouth spouted as their world dilated.

“God, remind me never to do that again.” Octavia said as she examined a green Raven. All of the women looked nauseous and fearful of their unknown surroundings. Moonlight glowed brightly overhead through the skylights casting a pale glow to the hundreds of weapons lining the walls.

“You people may be okay with traveling that way, but not me. Nope. I prefer feet, thank you very much.” Raven muttered in an attempt to cover her discomfiture.

Lexa dropped Clarke’s hand and stared at her. The blonde felt fear and confusion pouring from her love. Heda’s vision turned away from her in possible rejection as she scanned the contents of the room. ‘I thought you she understood what I had told her.’

“Wow. “ Octavia and Raven carefully stepped to the wall of weapons before them. Row after row of weapons lined the walls. “Seriously. You have a crossbow and a battle axe. Like you could use either.”

The blonde let the anxiety rake over her skin. “The crossbow is useful. The battle axe is too heavy and cumbersome for what I do.” She gulped loudly. “I. I uh. I assassinate murderers. I hunt, stalk and kill them without causing undue suffering.”

“So, you are the vessel for death?” Raven uttered while testing the sharpness of a kukri hanging on the wall. Blood pebbles along her fingertip where it crossed the blade. “Cool.”

A small smile pulled at the blonde’s lips.
“If you aren’t out to cause harm to many, just assassinate the guilty, why do you have so many weapons?” Lexa’s pointed question cut through Raven and Octavia’s obvious fangirling.

“This space, like the weapons in it, has been passed from vessel to vessel across the centuries. Nyko and I took care of them. But, most of these are not for my use. They come from different time periods that we don’t belong to anymore. More often than not I use a small blade. The kukri that Raven appreciated has been useful more than once, but only because my target had too much skill.”

As the trio continued to examine the museum quality gear, Clarke moved through the room lighting candles that lit her treasures; the paintings, poems, and photography lining the walls celebrated life. She hoped the others would grow to appreciate her beliefs and her position. She had so little time to be with the people who mattered to her. She hoped they would grow to understand her choice.

Clarke though unsteady on her tired feet stayed out of the way of the others. “I know it’s late, but I think we should eat before heading to a bed.” She stood at the large window overlooking the balcony and the field below with her back to the room.

“You said ‘bed. As in just one.”

Clarke ignored Raven’s snarky statement as she continued to get food together. As she put plates in front of them, she answered, “Actually, there are two bedrooms. Lexa can have mine. The two of you can share Nyko’s. I’ll take the futon out here.”

Unaware that Lexa had watched rejection roll under her skin and the damage it invoked, Clarke didn’t watch the woman read her poems or appreciate her paintings. An arm wrapped around Clarke’s abdomen, as a kiss fell beneath her ear. “You aren’t getting rid of me that easily. You can enjoy my snoring from up close, not as far as that lumpy mattress.”

Clarke interlocked their fingers. “I don’t want you to be uncomfortable with me.”

“You can’t drive me away so easily.”
Morning light flooded the room. Clarke had slept soundly cocooned in Lexa’s arms. Physically and emotionally drained, the two women had showered together and then crawled into bed. It felt routine despite it being a first. Lexa stroked golden curls and enjoyed the way their bodies fit together. Though Clarke has not told her anything, she knows she is holding back.

“Hey.” Her sleepy rasp speeds Lexa’s heart rate.

“Hi, yourself.” The brunette leaned over connecting their lips gently. The kiss stayed sweet and innocent contrasting starkly with their nudity. Breaking the kiss, Lexa drew Clarke’s left hand up to their faces. “Did you mean it?”

Clarke nodded. “I want to feel you with both my hands. I need to take the glove off to be with you. I can’t be myself, be who I am while I still wear it.”

“Okay.” Lexa sat up and pulled Clarke between her legs. Her peaked nipples brushed along the blonde’s back. An aching sigh escaped. Neither woman knew for sure who had created the sound. With her chin resting on the blonde’s shoulder, Lexa used Nyko’s blade to carefully cut each stitch and plucked the material free using tweezers.

Clarke held her breath waiting for the inevitable pain from where the skin has fused.

“Hm. Your body rejected the material; the stitches aren’t over grown. They look like they went in your skin yesterday.”

A soft kiss landed on a pale clavicle as Lexa gently removed the first edge from her skin revealing pink flesh beneath. Turning the hand over to repeat the process, Lexa’s nose nuzzled in the curls underneath the blonde’s ear. “Thank you for trusting me with this.”

“Always.”

Clarke turned her neck bringing their lips together. Each kiss more heated than the last. “You are the best thing that has ever happened to me. I want you to remember that.”

Lexa hummed her response before resuming her work. Thread by thread, the leather loosens. As
the last stitch is cut, the leather dangles by the thread and drops onto Lexa’s leg still connected to Clarke.

The blonde’s back arched as she feels darkness crawling up her spine.

“No.” She lurched to her feet and stumbled from the room. Her eyes rolled into the back of her head as trips over the coffee table and crashed to the floor disturbing Octavia and Raven’s breakfast.

The pale body repeatedly seized, as Lexa sprinted into the room.

_Wanheda. I’m so very hungry. You have failed me for a year._ Curling into her spine the shadow cascaded through her being filling her with darkness.

‘I didn’t fail you. She stole you away from me. I needed you, and you couldn’t answer.’

Inky blackness eclipsed the green of her eyes and engulfed the whites. Her body shifted as a shadow floated out scanning the room.

_No one here is worthy of me. You didn’t bring me a meal!_

‘I wanted us to hunt together after I reconnected with you. You didn’t give me enough time.’

The shadow ignored Lexa, but slowly stalked toward Octavia only stopping as it reached the end of its stretched tether connecting its ghostly form with Clarke’s supine body on the floor. It sniffed the air.

_She might do nicely._

‘No. She killed in defense. Is that what you want? Life gives you her presents. Each life we devour is a gift from her that we reclaim from their murderers. In turn, we protect her people, the living. Octavia saved us. Her flames fought our stalker. The man named Pike; he would make a tasty meal for us one day if he is still living. But, for now, we need to savor our prey. Will you hunt with me tonight?’
Clark could feel Death vacillating between hunger, longing, and truth. The shadow sniffed Octavia leaving the woman horrified. Death didn’t defile life by taking someone who had not murdered. Death recoiled sensing no life forces attached to hers. She hadn’t killed anyone; she had defended. Clarke knew Octavia would be safe in a moment, but the hunger did call beneath the skin, desperately.

At dusk, we hunt. I hope my love knows that I never intended to reject her gifts.

Clarke breathed deeply as the shadow evaporated in front of her friends. Suddenly, awareness hits. The only clothing on her body is the glove dangling by a string off of her left hand.

“Not that I don’t appreciate the view, but what the fuck was that?”

“How sweet. Death missed me.” Enjoying the eye roll from Lexa, she responded to Raven’s question. “Sometimes Death takes a form. She’s hungry and worried about the gifts life provides. I’m afraid I’ve neglected my duties for more than a year. Come nightfall, I will have to go out for awhile. I have to do my duty. Death must be fed. You know, death comes to us all.”

Her friends stayed in recoil. A mixture of horror and fascination surrounded them. Clarke hoped time, and a little assurance would calm their nerves, but then the other skin-leather scraped along the edge of her leg.

She looked down at the glove dangling. She pulled the remaining suture from her hand and dropped the glove on a display table. Under her skin, feathers tickled her vertebrae. Seconds ticked by as she stared at the glove that had been her prison. Reality and knowledge dawned quickly.

“Oh.” Clarke said. Ignoring her nudity, she flung open the glass door to the balcony and sprinted to the edge. Spreading her arms, she leaped off the side ignoring Lexa’s fearful scream. Air and feathers surged forth, exploding into a loud screech. The wind whipped in her face as joy uncoiled. Windswept feathers encased her form as she transformed from human to raven on her descent downward in a steady spiral.

A great caw heralded her return after what may have been minutes or hours. Three shocked women watched her graceful landing. Clarke preened and cleaned her feathers sitting on the iron railing. None of the others moved. Flying forward, Clarke’s body appeared mid-leap.
“God, I missed that.”

Octavia and Raven sat awe-stricken and silent.

Lexa pulled the naked woman into her lap. “Don’t you ever scare me like that again.” More forceful than angry, Clarke stroked her hand along Lexa’s jaw.

“I forgot that you didn’t know.”

“For God sake, Blondie, put some clothes. The only full moon I want to be seeing comes out at night.”

Clarke rolled her eyes. “Leave it to Raven to ruin the moment, but I did stun her into silence her for a whole minute."

Lexa kissed her neck and then whispered in her ear. “Having an audience ruined the moment for me. Next time you are naked and in my lap, we should be alone.”

A shiver ran down her spine. “I think I’ll go find something to wear.”

“-"

“How does this work?”

Clarke led Lexa down the backstreet heading toward the docks. “I choose my mark several ways.” She paused for a moment gathering her thoughts. This moment would decide if their relationship would blossom into something more. “This is why I became an assassin. People paid me to eliminate dangerous scumbags that the cops didn’t touch. I also have the homicide database for three cities hacked for when jobs are scarce. I get a constant feed of who they are investigating with access to their files. I have a Seer who sometimes sends me information if he thinks it will be helpful. And, then sometimes I do what you and I will tonight.” Her words disturbed the woman beside her. She could feel it hanging between them, a barrier.
“Killing murderers doesn’t make you less guilty, Clarke. It’s still wrong. You are still a criminal.” Though her statements felt unkind, they lacked heat or weight. “Then again, in my line of work, I see a lot of innocent people killed because someone else deems it necessary. I need you to prove to me that this is not you killing for hire or fun.”

A sliver of light bled through a keyhole in Lexa’s wall, Clarke’s lips twitched upward. The only sign of hope she could show as the darkness hid it well.

Lexa’s feet stumbled on debris, but Clarke quickly grabbed her hand to help her balance. “I have profited from killing multiple times, but I promise it was always for the right reasons. I need to show you how this works.” Entwining their fingers as she led them along, a brief chill covered the blonde’s arm as she activated her mark. Lexa flinched in response.

“I felt that. What did you do?”

“I’m calling death to the surface to help me pick our prey tonight. I can’t sense a murderer any better than you can without her.”

Heda’s grip on her fingers tightened. “You are certain that you only kill the guilty?” Lexa sensed the truth, but wanted to hear it anyway. Since the beginning she had only sensed goodness even when Clarke felt broken.

The blonde sighed. “When I first started Nyko helped me make sure that the ones we hunted were guilty. But, I also felt this pull. The closer I get to them the more I can feel it under my skin. I can smell it and taste it. I can hear the souls imprisoned inside their own, locked inside and unable to go over into the light. Life isn’t supposed to be held here once it’s extinguished. The story goes that Life is in love with Death. She sends her presents in the form of the soul she collects. And, when I was a child I thought that myth was silly, but…”

Clarke stopped her movements. The little hairs on the back of her neck thrummed. She squeezed the hand in hers leading her into the bar on the corner. “I’ve learned that the research isn’t necessary. Being a vessel means listening to what your body tells you. Death speaks to me all the time in little ways. The one she wants is at that bar. I may know it when I get close to him if our eyes lock across the room. One time I brushed shoulders with a woman and I saw the last moments of her son before she suffocated him with a pillow.”

Her feet stopped at the door. The neon lights lit Clarke’s face eerily. “Your eyes have gone black.” The warmth of Clarke’s hand dissipated leaving icy cold fingers.
“I apologize. She should have warned you that I step forward in due time.” Death squeezed Lexa’s hand and tilted Clarke’s head to the right. “Our quarry is around the corner. I can hear all the crying souls from here.”

Lexa should have been alarmed, but she sensed a comfort in Death’s presence. Her darkness meant strength and safety, not horror.

A loud whimper followed by a slap broke the night’s stillness. Her instincts took over; Lexa pulled her hand away and sprinted around the corner. She felt Clarke/Death’s presence behind her as she skidded to a stop. A brawny man had a tiny woman against the back wall by the throat. She didn’t wait to understand what was happening, Lexa did what she would have done anywhere; she did a spinning side kick with her foot landing in his kidney efficiently dropping him to the ground. The woman slumped over against the wall struggling to breathe.

“Take care of the woman. He’s mine.” Lexa glanced at the darkened irises and nodded. She gulped down her fear. Turning her back to the other two, she focussed on the battered woman.

“Shh. It’s okay. Are you hurt?”

“Not really. He said he’d kill me if I didn’t do him here. But, I’m not a call girl. I don’t do these things.” Lexa tried not to judge people, but this one’s clothing proved her a liar. But sensing the truth didn’t change the fact that all women deserve dignity and respect.

“Whether you are a working girl or not, he shouldn’t have put his hands on you without permission. Let me help you up.”

Tugging the woman’s hands, she helped her take steady steps away from the battle raging outside of the light. Clarke had let loose on the man. She had heard him shout in agony several times so far. Once the woman had turned the corner to go to the entrance, Lexa chose to lean against the wall and wait. She knew the man would be dead in seconds or minutes depending on how hard he fought. But, after what she had seen she had no interest in being involved. Life was too precious to waste on the wicked.

An angry, scratchy voice rasped out. “Yu gonplei ste odon.” Lexa gaped in response; that voice did not belong to Clarke. It didn’t sound human. Her feet led her to where Clarke tossed the man flat to the ground. Against her will, Clarke’s left arm ripped apart his button-down shirt. Herpale palm flattened against his chest as blackened tendrils exited his flesh and entered hers creating long
black streaks that traveled up her arm and under her clothing. Curiosity overtook Lexa, as the smoke pooled around the white palm and fingers in its oily blackness before being absorbed, she flipped the side of Clarke’s shirt up. Lexa’s hand covered her mouth as tears flowed. Inky stains marbled the skin gathering around the blonde’s heart like veins.

“How is it that I can feel many souls going to rest? He’s only one man.

“You feel more of them too? How curious.” Death smiled as Clarke’s skin blanched again. Her dark eyes turned to Lexa. Her hand cupped Lexa’s cheek. “You are someone we’ve longed to meet.” A pale thumb appreciated her sharp cheekbone. Eye to eye, Lexa watched sparkling blue emerge from the void.

Their return to the safe house had been quiet. Clarke’s fear that she had lost Lexa by her seeing the truth made every step harder. When they reached the mark of the raven, she fully anticipated the brunette saying goodbye. She did not expect warm lips to devour her own. They fell through the portal wrapped around each other. Together they snuck down the hallway to their shared bed littering the hallway with clothes along the way, hot burning kisses gave way to exploration and caresses.

An hour later sated and content, the lovers used the moonlight to open up their pasts.

An olive toned finger traced the edge of a scar on a pale shoulder. “That one came from falling out of a tree.” A gentle kiss and air blew across the abrasion.

“What about this one?” Clarke could hear the smile she couldn’t see since woman straddled her naked back.

“Nia’s favorite whipping boy gave me that one.” A tongue traced down the long stretch of scar tissue.

Lithe fingers traced five finger width scratches above her right butt cheek. “I wish that one had a cool story. I fell on a rake.”
“See. Not all your stories are bad.”

“No. No, they are not.” Clarke reached an arm behind her and grabbed a wrist, pulling Lexa to the bed beside her. “I’m getting sleepy. I want to play big spoon.”

Lexa hummed, “That sounds like a great plan.” She yawned as fatigue rocked her body. “Thank you for trusting me with your other half.”

Clarke poked Lexa in the shoulder feeling rough skin and snorted. “Bad pun. Silly woman. We’ll talk in the morning. Close your eyes. I am not going anywhere.”

She waited until the woman in her arms breath evened out before feeling the scar at the edge of her shoulder. Moving into the light so that she could memorize it, the crescent-shaped burn mark had a star hewn into its side. Sadness overwhelmed her as she realized, she would not be alive for the day Lexa met her own Other. But, to what? She pressed her lips to it and prayed that someone would be there for Lexa the way Nyko had been for her. Being a vessel meant so much more than having special skills.

Chapter End Notes

another massive thank you to capnvanillawithsprinkles for writing this. and also a big thank you from me to you readers too, i wasn't able to reply to every comment on the note chapter but i read each one and the support and understanding kinda blew me away. you're all incredible people, so thank you.

translations:
Daun ste mou den ai na as op gon-That is more than I can go agains
No, osir gada in natrona tiya oso fous-No, we have a traitor among us
Jus drein jus daun- Blood must have blood.
Ai krei fiya. Leidon Heda- I’m so sorry,Goodbye Heda
Yu gonplei ste odon- Your fight is over
Kigon yo gonplei. Otaim- Keep fighting. Always
Our story draws to a close as Clarke submits herself to Nia's cruelty. This time she has a family that cares to do something about it.

I would just like to say a massive thank you to everyone who has followed this story. It wasn't a bump-free journey, but we got here in the end, and I'm very grateful that we did. I sincerely hoped you enjoyed, and whether you loved it or hated it, thank you at least for taking the time of reading it. Also would like to issue a very sincere thank you to capnvanillawithsprinkles for finishing this story. I'll always be grateful. Lastly, a special shoutout to: SnobbyDragon, Yu_Gonplei_Nou_Ste_Odon, blueskkies, Jayenator565, lettheflamebegin, lostintranslation and ephemeral_epiphany and more, for your constant support and comments. Your motivation kept me writing at times. Thank you.

This is the capnvanillawithsprinkles saying thank you for allowing me finish this beautiful. And, I would like to say I appreciated all the encouragement I received as a response.

Ten days later

A furious cadence of hits and kicks struck the heavy bag. Clarke fought for breath as she continued to rain her anger and frustration down on her practice dummy. Her knees gave out, and she collapsed to the mat. Angry tears fell as she choked back sobs that had been fighting to escape for days.

We will make it. The words taunted her from where Octavia had written them on the wall. These words of encouragement each of them had mumbled, whispered, screamed and shouted at each other over the past few days.

She thought back to last night’s hunt and how Death had lingered. The spirit enjoyed Lexa’s presence.
She is more brilliant than the moon and the stars. However, did you convince her to love us?

Clarke smiled and squeezed the hand in hers while they traipsed through the darkness. Tonight’s hunt had proven easy and dissatisfying. But, Lexa didn’t appear to mind. Letting go of the blonde’s fingers, she had stepped out from under the trees into the middle of an open field and pointed up. “Look it’s Orion’s Belt.”

“Yeah. My dad showed me the constellations when I was little. I had been trying to sell him on the idea I needed a dog. He said the sky had my dogs. That is Canis Major. And, that little one there is Canis Minor.” She laughed at the memory. “He didn’t like it too much when I pointed out that we were the only ones without dogs because even the stars had some.”

Clarke could feel the shadow slip from her body toward the brunette. At any other time, she would be alarmed, but the darkness caressed olive skin in fondness and hope.

I believe you are correct. She carries life. We won’t know until the vessel is filled. But, I swear I can smell my love on her skin.

“Clarke, Love why aren’t you in bed?” Lexa’s voice brought her back to the here and now. Wiping her tears on her sweat soaked shirt, she hoped that the brunette couldn’t see her distress.

The blonde glanced at her lover leaning against the doorframe with sleep-tousled hair and a robe struggling to cover her nakedness. Clarke’s mouth went dry; guilt wracked her frame while she enjoyed the adorable site. She appreciated every curve, angle, and slope. Lexa’s beauty could rival any goddess even at five in the morning.

“Couldn’t sleep. The need to fight her burns in my veins even when my eyes close. I have to keep pushing myself to be stronger, faster, better. Between the lack of sleep and getting stabbed at Polis, I’ve lost a lot of muscle I have to get back.”

Green eyes squinted in confusion. “Nia doesn’t know where you are. You’re safe. You can let go now.”

“While she’s alive I can never rest.”

Although Clarke’s response felt reasonable, doubt niggled its way through Lexa’s thoughts. “I feel
like you aren’t telling me something important. You are pushing me away. You don’t mean to, but you are.”

The beautifully vulnerable nature of her lover tore at her heart. ‘How much longer can I hide this from her?’ “Go back to bed. I’ll be there when my body can’t take any more abuse. I’m rather weak; this shouldn’t take too much longer.” The phrasing that provided hope for her lover broke Clarke. ‘How can I defeat Nia when I didn’t train the way I should have for a year? I’m fucked.’ Despair and acceptance gripped her. When the time came for her to appear at Azgeda Tower, she wouldn’t be returning alive. Defeating Nia and surviving were not in the cards she was dealt. Clarke promised herself that the last thing she would see before she closed her eyes forever would be Nia lying dead on the ground.

Sunkissed brown hair flung about wildly in the morning wind. Clarke drank a coffee while watching Raven daydream and toy with the bracelet in her hand. The bronze chain appeared around the feisty latina’s wrist a few days before they left Polis. Though Raven had adamantly denied it, Clarke remembered the tiny pendant dangling from Anya’s wrist. Anxiety had eaten at the smaller woman for the last three days. No news filled all of them with dread, but everyone else had found some semblance of hope.

Clarke’s empty cup thumped down on the table startling Octavia who sat at the table cleaning one of the crossbows. Lifting a finger to her lips, she silenced any underlying protest. In four great strides, the blonde snatched the flimsy woven metal from Raven’s hand and swooped over the railing. A combustive pressure wrought furious wings. The black bird flew in a figure eight with the latina at its center.

“Give it back!”

In an instant, Clarke landed beside her with the bracelet hanging from a finger. “No. You have to try to take it.”

As soon as Raven’s fingers enclosed around the metal, black feathers tickled her arm. She flinched which allowed the raven to taunt her further. The bracelet moved from claws to beak as the large raven flew above the terrace and dropped the trinket from ten feet above its owner. The brunette stepped back to prepare for the catch. Again, her fingers touched the chain for a millisecond before the raven snapped up the bracelet in its talons. The resounding caw resembled a peel of laughter.
“Damn it, Clarke. It’s the only thing I have from her. Please, can I have it?”

The plaintive nature of her friend’s beseeching brought an end to her games. Blonde hair and pale skin landed inches behind the frustrated woman. Both arms wrapped around the latina as a chin dropped over her shoulder.

“I wasn’t going to keep it, silly.” She dropped the bracelet delicately in her friend’s palm. “Do you want to tell me what’s got you staring at the horizon so pensively?”

“Do you want to tell me why every minute with you seems like the warmest of goodbyes?”

The grin vanished from the blonde’s eyes even as her mouth held it in position. She glanced back briefly before carefully closing the doors to the terrace.

“What gave me away?”

“Everything. You are packing a lifetime together into a handful of days. Lexa might not see that you are spending as much time as possible with her. Seriously, how many times did she scream your name last night?”

Clarke sighed guiltily. “She deserves more than I can give. I want to give her the world, but all I can do is make sure she has a long life.”

“That’s it, isn’t it? You traded your life for hers.”

Sad green eyes awash with tears met hazel then tore away to the horizon line. Clarke cleared her throat before she spoke thickly. “It’s more like one for five, but you more or less have it. My life in exchange for all of you, mom included, that is the deal.”

Though Clarke didn’t look at her, she heard Raven swallow her fears. “You would do that for me? Us? Really.”

Turning to her friend again, she gave a pained smile. “Yeah. I would and did. Don’t thank me yet. I’m giving you my mother too.”
Raven laughed heartily and rolled her eyes. “Mama Bear Griffin is adopting us; no way.” She looked down at the ground and then back to patient blue eyes. “How long do you have?”

“A day or two. I have a long way to travel to get there.”

“For what it’s worth, you have been a great cellmate and a better friend than I expected.”

Azure eyes glinted in the sunlight, but no mirth sparkled. “Why did you choose to be my friend anyway?”

Slowly shaking her head in a sad, gesture, all spunk left her limbs. “I don’t know. You looked like such a lost little soul. You needed a friend. So, did I. Simple really.”

Warm fingers lingered on soft skin and delicate scar tissue. The blonde purred enjoying the attention even though she knew the angle of the sunlight highlighted each piece of marred flesh. Lexa’s deft fingers outlined another series of long white lines, one at a time. “This one must be another one from the tower. What did she do to give you this one?”

“God woman, you are such a romantic.” Clarke huffed, but then she turned her head so that she looked at her lover’s face as she spoke. The two wore matching sated grins even if they were tinged with sadness. “She wanted me to learn to speak their language. She gave an asshole a whip and told me to count to ten. If I got the number correct, I wouldn’t get hit.”

“How far did you get before you made a mistake?”

“One.”

Lexa’s eyebrows climbed higher than Clarke had ever seen them.
“In my defense, I didn’t grow up hearing it. I’ve led a sheltered existence away from Trigedasleng and all of its variations. I can’t even tell you how many hits I took from Atohl before I accidentally screamed the right word. I don’t remember making it to ten. I might have. I don’t know. But, I will give her credit. The methodology worked. I knew their language better than most of my guards before I left.”

Lexa kissed her forehead before her finger found a more extensive and angrier scar. The vibrant red resembled a smiling mouth wearing lipstick. “Remember ‘we will make it.’ Now, tell me about this one.”

Their eyes locked, but Clarke’s mouth hung agape. “Are you sure you want me to tell you about this? It’s one thing to know I was tortured. It’s another to know the particular details. Could you be happy knowing that she starved me, drugged my food so that I stayed ill, deprived me of natural light? I didn’t shower or bathe for the better part of a year; I was only given that luxury when my smell offended her sensibilities. Isn’t knowing that enough?”

Tears escaped green eyes. “I need to know everything about you, the good and the bad. Niron, what did she do to you?”

“Babe, I will share them with you if you are sure. But, if you think it would hurt you to know I need you to say it now.”

Lexa’s hand flattened over the scar following it around her side and over her abdomen. “Flip over and tell me.”

“Yes, ma’am.” She rolled over and tucked Lexa’s body around hers. The tanned arm traveled the length of her torso while its hand continued to trace the scar tissue. “I refused to give Nia what she wanted. She’s trying to steal my power. Any Other she comes across will have a similar fate. She doesn’t want to destroy us; she wants our skills. She doesn’t mind that killing us happens to be part of that process. I tried to escape several times only to find I couldn’t. I managed once to almost get out of the prison grounds, but they caught me. A different time I pushed Atohl while he beat me. I used his anger against him. The harder he hit, the more I antagonized. I died for a moment. But, Nia didn’t stay dead. The scar you are touching is only one she gave me personally. On the top floor of the tower, there are three cells, an office, a lounge for the guards and two torture chambers. One deprives you of all sound and light. The only hint of anything is when they would slip food through a slit at the bottom of the door. Being locked in the dark hurts, but not like this.”

Pale fingers joined the olive skin across her stomach. “I dangled for hours from shackles in the other room. My shoulders ached from bearing my whole body weight for such a long time, and
then she stormed into the room with her lips in a tight, line. Anger radiated from those cold blue
eyes; the eyes of corpses hold more warmth than hers. She demanded I show her my power. I think
I ignored her. She rammed a hunting knife through my side. I bled out in front of her while she
patiently waited for me to defend myself. She believed I would lose control. I did make that
mistake with Atohl later, but this happened before that. The most disturbing thing about that night
was that she enjoyed my fear and pain. I knew at that moment that no matter what happened to me
I could never allow her to have my powers. I will die before she gets it."

Warm lips traced the soft skin of Clarke’s jaw. “She doesn’t have you. And, you aren’t going to
die.” Blue eyes closed as Lexa’s greedy tongue found the sweet spot under ear while the blonde
hated knowing what her love would learn in the morning.

‘I wish you were right.’ Clarke’s melancholy grew knowing that her leaving will be a form of
betrayal, an unavoidable one.

Clarke stepped through the portal and rubbed her hand against the rough brickwork. Knowing this
would be the last time she went through, she performed the grounding ritual Nyko taught her and
kissed the stone surface. The scratchy surface of the bricks against her fingers nullified the
dizziness and eliminated her nausea. The kiss reminded her that it protected those she loved. It had
always been worse leaving than entering, a curiosity she pondered many times. Today, she thought
about it for entirely different reasons.

She checked the alley for witnesses before sprinting off in the direction of her stowed motorcycle.
She hadn’t seen it two years, but she doubted anyone had stolen what looked like a derelict piece of
historic junk.

By the time the wind whipped in her ears, she had quit praying her friends would understand her
sacrifice. She knew Raven would. But, O? Lexa?

Raven had kept her promise for the day, but when night had fallen the hazel eyes had watched her
with a focus they hadn’t since her first days in Polis. If she had stayed longer, the truth would have
come out not by Clarke’s doing, but by Raven’s. Her former roommate cared too much about too
few.

The sun broke over the horizon in a bright red display. Clarke’s brain filled in her father’s voice.
Red skies at morning, traveler take warning.

She braced for the wind and the rain which would inevitably fall knowing that would be the least of her troubles.

Long tanned arms stretched across the cooling sheets of the large bed in search of her partner. She pushed her body up on an elbow surveying the room. A single lily lay where Clarke’s head belonged. Dread and sadness welled in her stomach.

“Damn it!” Octavia yelled in another room. The loud crash of what had probably been the kitchen table flipping.

“Chill. There’s got to be…” Raven’s response didn’t breach the wall.

She’d been trying to pack a lifetime into a few days. Realization struck hard. A tear squeezed out from under her lashes and rolled down her cheek; it dropped onto the empty pillow and vanished. In the back of her mind, Lexa knew the blonde had sacrificed herself for her loved ones. She allowed herself a few minutes to cry before she donned her commanding attitude. The blonde deserved better than her weakness; Clarke deserved her support and her strength even in her asinine attempt to save her friends. She wouldn’t ignore the selflessness or love that the blonde had been willing to give even if she hated her more than a little bit for the same reason.

Someone knocking at the bedroom door pulled her away from her quiet grief. Throwing a robe around her naked form, she opened the door. Octavia, devastated but still standing, held up a handwritten note at eye level. “What the fuck is this supposed to mean?”

Lexa wrapped her arms around the shorter fighter as she wept against the commander’s shoulder. Dark unruly hair absorbed Heda’s tears; the note drifted to the floor. Raven hung back watching one woman fight valiantly to stay in control as another shattered before her eyes.

You’ll make it. Lexa picked up the note from the floor. She folded it neatly and secured it in her pocket.
The tires had swallowed the miles in a little more than a day. Crossing the countryside had been easy. She had parked to rest and eat several times while watching the local wildlife. She found it refreshing and odd that the closer she got to Azgeda, the fewer travelers appeared on the road. When the light disappeared, she had slept under a blanket in the remnants of an old border crossing. The guard housing had been warm with a few canned goods that allowed her to sleep with a full belly. She would present herself in front of Nia in the strongest condition possible in the time she had left. Clarke refused to cheapen her sacrifice by breaking her body for the evil bitch.

“We aren’t going to sit around for until the end of the fucking world. Let’s find her, Raven. She doesn’t have to protect us. We can fight for her. She needs us.”

Lexa followed behind the two arguing women agreeing wholeheartedly with the hot head’s thoughts.

“She gave herself up for us. Why can’t you understand that?”

Heda interrupted. “I don’t think it’s a lack of understanding. She’s trying to say that Clarke doesn’t need to give her life up for ours. We can make the same sacrifice and maybe we will all walk away from it together. For once, I completely agree with everything Octavia has said. Nia attacked my prison, my family, and my love. I am not going to sit on the sidelines for her to kill her too.” She pointed at a winterized jeep. “This time we shouldn’t need to stop for gas as often, and Raven drives. I want to get there sooner rather than later.”

“Where’s there?”

Lexa dropped her bags in the trunk. “If she went to Nia, they are in Azgeda. I don’t doubt that for a second. I think I can get us there, but I haven’t been there before; but, Costia had been there several times. She gave me directions years ago in case something happened to her.”
Silence descended on the group. Although Raven and Octavia didn’t know who Costia had been to Lexa, they both could make an educated guess.

Octavia’s heart ached for the woman who lost two people to Nia Queen.

In the morning, she had stretched, eaten and resumed her frantic ride to stop Nia from having an excuse to attack her friends. She ate every few hours but made consistent progress. The motorcycle flew up the winding road on the ice-covered mount; cold air bit at the wind-chapped skin of her chest and neck.

Death slid beneath her skin without being called. Her body’s anxiousness must have triggered her.

*I do not understand your willingness to acquiesce to lesser beings. You should not be submitting yourself for your end.*

Nearing dusk, the entrance to hell opened its gate as she forced her bike not to slow from the highway speed she had maintained. Showing fear and discomfort would not do. She sped her way past the employee parking and beyond to the drive used for death row inmates who went directly to maximum security in the skybox. The portcullis opened as she slowed to a reasonable twenty miles per hour to take the final twists and turns. Just beyond the prisoner entrance, she stopped and put her feet to the ground. She kicked the stand into place and removed her helmet. Each movement remained precise and devoid of anxiety; she pulled her gloves tighter and ignored the group of guards that surrounded her. Throwing a leg over her bike, she stepped forward. One of the guards she recognized charged at her with his baton swinging. She wrenched it from his grip and then smacked it sharply into his hip dropping him.

“She asked me to come willingly. I’ve done that. Now, are you going to lead me to her or am I going to have to destroy you one at a time?”
The guard shack they used had been cramped for the three women, but the shelter and rest would do them good. Lexa slowed her breathing while doing her cool down stretches. While the other women slept, she had chosen an early morning run to rejuvenate after her fitful sleep. Exercise had always been part of her daily routine.

With Clarke, their hunting had added a new level of awareness to the strengths and weaknesses of her body. It spurred her on to work harder, be stronger for her confrontation with the Ice Queen’s guards.

She quietly opened the door hoping to return without waking the women, but Octavia had already risen. The angry girl glanced her direction but continued to do burpees with no acknowledgment of her presence.

Raven continued to snore soundly on the bed in the corner.

Using the sink, Lexa pulled the shirt off her head used the cold water to clean the seat from her body.

“Lex, were you burned as a child?”

Octavia touched her shoulder running a finger down her strange birthmark.

“No. I’ve always had that. Clarke thought it was something else. What does it look like to you?”

Octavia tossed Lexa’s damp shirt onto a sleeping Raven. “Ray. Check this out. I think she’s one too.”

Lexa turned to meet their eyes. “One what?”

“If Clarke said you are an Other, we agree.” Raven touched the crescent shape and followed it with her finger. An electric hum resounded in the women’s skin.

Octavia’s grin grew larger. “Maybe we will get to be there the first time your power shows. Wouldn’t that be something? No one witnessed mine. I’ve always felt there should be some kind of celebration when we come to our power. Maybe we can be there for yours?”
Uncomfortable and feeling shy, Lexa shrugged her shoulders. “What makes you think it will still come to me? I’m older than you. Shouldn’t it have presented by now?”

“Maybe you are a vessel. I’ve heard most of those are late bloomers. Clarke’s an exception.”

Heda’s mouth dropped open in shock. “How could I possibly know?”

Raven took a bite out of an apple she had brought and sat silently. Lexa could hear the woman’s brain cataloging the information. “So, when you were a kid did you do anything weird? Talk to snakes? Talk to ghosts? Did plants bloom on command?” The fiery personality failed to hide her charged wit, not even an ounce.

“No. Not really. It’s difficult for someone to sneak up on me. I sense them from a distance. That’s true of animals too.”

Octavia shook her head in disbelief. “God. I don’t know what any of this shit means.”

Lincoln stood in the darkness removing the hood from his ghillie suit and breathing fresh air. His daylight position had given him the perfect view of Clarke’s arrival. His eyes had strained to see as the woman had dropped her knees and been shackled willingly. He sprinted toward their encampment to report.

When he arrived, Anya sat in council in the main tent with the rest of the leadership group. “Lincoln, any news?”

He unzipped the ghillie suit and laid it out to dry across the table leaving him in long johns. “Yes, Wanheda arrived today. Clarke broke a man’s hip and then let them chain her. I don’t understand what happened or why she did it. But, she went willingly into the base of the tower.”

The group nodded. A bear of a man spoke next. “My intel said that Clarke bargained with her
before they left Polis. She was given a few days of freedom and the safety of her friends, but she promised to turn herself over within a set number of days. No one could agree on how long she had.”

A growl erupted from Anya. “Why didn’t you mention this earlier?”

The man stared into her eyes. “You never asked about Wanheda. You only said that we needed to attack Azgeda. After we killed Ontari and found Pike in pieces, the Azgeda representatives in prison gave conflicting stories. Some said that Ontari took the prison without her mother’s consent; she did it to save her skin. Other’s said that Nia sent Ontari and Pike to distract us from Clarke’s escape. No one knows the truth.”

Anya shook her head. “I am afraid I have to disagree with you. Nia isn’t stupid enough to send Pike in with Wanheda present. She wanted her alive. Pike wanted her dead. The attack came from Ontari.”

“If that’s true, why are we here?”

Anya’s tired eyes glazed over then burned in fury. “We’re here because blood must have blood. And, the Azgeda left Polis. “

The group responded. “Jus drein jus daun.”

-

Led by ten guards, two men drag Clarke to Nia. Bound and gagged, Nia bent over her captive.

“People with hero complexes are predictable. You are always willing to sacrifice yourselves believing it will save everyone else. You should know by now that once I get what I want from you, I will enjoy using death to suck out the soul of each of your friends one at a time. I will do it slowly so that they know you failed them.”

The smugness of her grin should have annoyed her captive, but cerulean eyes remained stoic.
Clarke tried calling to Death in her head. She had answered when she packed, but now in this stark room, she felt more alone than ever.

“Hook her to the pole. I want her tenderized before we play.” Nia gave a command and tossed a cat o’nine tails to a grey-eyed woman in front. “Make her scream, won’t you dear?”

The steel door slammed closed as stiletto heels marched away.

Blood dripped down Clarke’s back as she sat back on her knees. She shrugged her shoulders in a circular motion trying to revive the blood flow and relieve the screaming muscles. She looked around and recognized the steel slab of a bed and the wall of bars. “Shit. Guess, I’m home.”

“That you are.”

Nia stepped into the light from the hallway. “You’ve been out for hours. What a disappointment, you used to be tougher than that.”

Clarke’s lips tipped up in a challenging smirk. “I’m afraid when Pike gutted me he stole some of your fun. Take it up with him.”

The younger blonde watched fury ripple through pale grey eyes. “Who let that nut job near you? Heda has too many people that I want within her walls for a man like him to be able to waltz in and harm prisoners.” Each word growled out gave Clarke a clearer picture of Ontari’s betrayal.

“I’m afraid you need to take that up with your daughter. Ontari, not only let him in but had Echo trick me into meeting them in the recesses of the prison. I came close to dying. If it hadn’t been for my friends, I wouldn’t be here.”

Shock gave way to rage. “Echo answers to me, not Ontari!”
Clarke threw her head back and laughed. “God, you are funny. Echo must have answered to Ontari at least once even though you held her chain. But now, she answers to nobody because Ontari killed her the day I escaped. My friends watched it happen.”

Nia charged over and wrapped her hand around Clarke’s throat and squeezed. Her air flow constricted in her display of power. Clarke activated her mark and called to death. ‘Take the bitch. She is responsible for more deaths than Hitler.’

The shadow slipped from Clarke’s skin as her eyes went black. Nia smiled as the beast known as Wanheda made itself known.

Laughter barked out of the Azgeda Queen. “Oh, it’s delightful. I will own you. Death, you will serve me to the end of days.”

She reeks of evil, not murder. She has no souls but her own. I won’t take her.

Nia used her free hand to stroke through the apparition trying to make contact only for the particles to vaporize around her skin. With every movement, less of death corporeal body remained.

‘She killed my father. She is killing me. Every person that has died within these walls died on her orders. She murdered Costia, and God only knows how many more. Take her.’

The dissipating shadow sniffed at Nia and recoiled. Slipping beneath the surface of Clarke’s skin; Death refused her.

Nia excitement withered. “Where did it go? Bring it back. I want to see it. It’s mine for the taking. Bring it back, now!”

Clarke eyes rolled back in her head, but croaked out, “Death said no.”
Anya paced in her tent waiting for her guards to return. The earlier report of a vehicle parking in the trees had her worried. Had they been spotted?

“Get your mother loving hands off me you asshat!”

The agitated voice brought the only genuine smile to the warriors face that she had worn in days.

Throwing back the tent flap, she stepped out to see Octavia tackling Lincoln. She scanned the area trying to locate the feisty latina. Missing her, she took several strides forward. Her calm demeanor began to unravel as she spotted Lexa, but Raven still hadn’t appeared.

“Miss me?” The voice appeared in her ear startling her.

She turned around and embraced the tiny woman without another word. She buried a hand in dirty brown hair and directed the woman’s lips to hers. “God, you are still alive.”

She lifted the latina and wrapped her legs around her waist. “Where the hell have you been?” Anya continued to berate the woman with questions between kisses as she stalked off toward her private tent and away from command.

Lexa’s stressed grin didn’t go unnoticed. “Heda, would you like to be caught up to speed?” Indra inquired from the tent’s entry.

“Yes, please.”

The next time Clarke awakened, food sat on a plate next to her head on the floor. Rising to her knees, she considered the possibility that Nia had resumed her games, but realized this time the woman had seen her spirit. She knew that killing Clarke would mean losing her chance. Taking a gamble, she ate the sandwich like it might be her last meal. Wanheda savored every bite knowing it meant more strength.
The telltale sound of footsteps echoed off the walls.

“Well, well. Look who we have here.”

Her eyes burned as she remembered. “Hello, Tristan. How’s the hand?” She smirked at his snarl.

He kicked his leg out aiming for her ribs, she wrapped an arm around his leg above the knee and jabbed him in the groin. Shocked and in pain the man dropped to the floor.

“Didn’t anyone ever tell you it’s bad manner to kick someone while their down?”

He grabbed his nuts and curled into a ball. “You bitch!” He howled drawing attention to the cell. Soon other guards joined. One pushed her face down on the floor, while another went for her chains. The younger guard tripped over the contents of his arms landing beside her.

She sprung into action taking advantage of the situation and snatched the nearest cuff and slapped it closed around the guard, and then quickly closing the other around Tristan’s wrist. The third man panicked and ran from the cell.

“Give me the key.”

“I don’t have it. You have it.”

“I thought you had it.”

Clarke watched the men argue, and then slowly slipped back toward the door. Stepping through, she closed the men inside the cell and charged for the stairs. The map in her head blinked to life as she changed floors looking for the hatch in the floor leading to the service tunnel. She had no chance of making down using the elevator or the stairs, but the service tunnel wouldn’t be guarded. Would it?
Alarms blared to life. Lincoln waved Anya over and handed her the binoculars. “This doesn’t look like a drill.”

“No, it doesn’t. But, I can’t see why they are scrambling.”

“What do you want to do?”

Anya signaled for the leaders to meet in the command tent.

A few minutes later, the troops assembled with weaponry poised and ready for action. Two men stepped forward and began clipping the wires of the fence.

The Trikru warriors formed a line along the fence and waited. The Azgeda guards ran in unit searching the exterior of their buildings. Every few minutes it appeared that the grid widened to include a larger area and more of the buildings.

A manhole cover 100 yards from the fence flipped open. A blonde head peered out. She waited for four men to sprint passed her before climbing out. Her eyes scanned the scene looking for an exit.

A wolf whistle sounded.

Clarke’s head turned to see her friends on the other side of the fence. Her heart burst with pride then horror. Her sacrifice had been in vain after all. Lexa raised a hand either in greeting or warning.

“There she is!”

Men shouted not far from her. She ran as fast as her legs could carry her across the ice concrete, but bare feet numb quickly on ice. She lost her footing as a man barreled over her, knocking her to the ground.
“Get her out of here. Nia wanted her returned to her cell in chains.”

He cuffed her hands roughly behind her back.

“Come on. Move.”

The nameless, faceless soldier gave her orders from behind, yet kept his pistol pressed into her spine.

They crossed the yard as more people flooded in from outside the fence. Death had ignored her when she tried to trigger it, but she hoped given time she would change her mind.

She heard a round hit her captor; the force dropped him on top of her. Face down in the ice and snow she began to wiggle out from under his body. As soon as she managed to free herself, she twisted to lie flat on her back and worked her hand down her legs to pull them in front of her. She flipped the dead man over and rifled through his pockets searching for the keys. Without gloves and a jacket, the icy cold numbed her extremities. Her fingers closed around the key clumsily. She dropped it on the first two tries.

“Fuck it.” She fumbled the lock.

Trying again, she managed to get one hand free when a hand buried itself in her hair.

“I’ve got you, you piece of shit.” She spun on her heel and kicked her attacker to the ground and straddled the woman’s torso. Again, she called to death, but this time she felt the shadow slither beneath her skin.

Yes, she’ll do nicely. Can you hear all the souls she’s collected? My, my she has been a busy girl.

Clarke’s left hand shot forward onto the woman’s chest as her back arched.

“Yu gonplei ste odon,” Clark whispered as Death accepted her offering. Eyes still blackened Wanheda surveyed the fighting. She searched for her friends in the fray. She ran closer to where a large group fought in close combat.
Shots fired. A sharp pain hit her thigh. She stumbled.

“There you are.” Tristan stood beside her. “On your feet. You know how this is going to go.”

A sinister smile crossed her lips as his widened when their eyes met. “Just how many have you killed Tristan?”

She inhaled. “Ooo. And it’s been recently too. I can smell them on you. Wanheda wants her souls.”

Her left hand vibrated with energy as she touched his chest. “Yu gonplei ste odon.”

His eyes opened wide as the shadow cascaded out of her body into bountiful haze surrounding them in the dusk. Soul after soul flowed from his body.

*Today, we feast. Wanheda, how I have missed you.*

A clawing bite hit Clarke’s back. Blackness overwhelmed her.

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Nia sat in a chair much like a throne looking at the people she acquired. The blonde still lay unconscious, but the taser would wear off soon. The woman’s sinister grin fell into place as she watched the three women on their knees before her. Carefully, she stepped down from the dais and slowly paced toward them evaluating the women with every step.

“I wanted one Other and yet I have three. I can’t thank you enough for how you burned Pike. That demonstration of your power clears up what you can do,” she said pushing Octavia’s chin up, so their eyes met. “However, I don’t know what you can do. So, what is it? Are those little explosions of yours a power or is it something simpler like seeing through walls? Can you heal people? Talk to animals? Can you read minds?” Although Raven fought not to react, she must have because Nia’s smile grew wide. “Oh, you can, can you? What am I thinking now?”

No one spoke.
“You have a point. That was a stupid question. Everyone here knows that I am ecstatically happy that I will take your powers right after I take hers,” Nia pointed at Clarke who stirred.

The beaten blonde rubbed her face before groaning. “It’s bad enough that someone fucking shot me, you had to hit me with a taser too,” Clarke complained.

Even as her body weakened, Clarke felt her heart stutter when she started hearing the quiet whispers, flitting past her ears.

*Here, here, here.*

Lexa couldn’t help the relieved smile that appeared for a millisecond, a mistake she regretted instantly. “And, it appears Heda has a soft spot for Wanheda. How cute. Tsk. Tsk. Tsk. Didn’t anyone tell you that telling the enemy who you love is foolish?” The feel of warm velvet swept under her skin, Lexa’s brow furrowed in confusion.

Nia paced before the women but stopped to push her foot against Clarke’s injured thigh. The woman whimpered slightly but refused to scream. “Wanheda, it’s time to quit playing. Give me your power or I will kill your friends.”

“I can’t. I don’t know how.”

Lexa’s head turned listening for a howl that resounded in her head, but she couldn’t understand why she did. Her eyes landed on her lover. The light within the woman dimmed slowly like a light guttering. Everyone else’s flame stayed constant, but Clarke’s life force ebbed away.

The older woman rolled her eyes. “Figure it out. Do you need proof of my seriousness?” Nia pulled a knife from its sheath on her belt. Tossing it in the air and catching it with a casual taunt. “Tick tock. Give me a way, and I won’t hurt one.”

Lexa’s blood quickened. Her eyes glowed silver.

Clarke groaned as she triggered death. Clarke fought to keep her body in control; Nia isn’t aware that the younger blonde’s lifeforce faded. White spots had begun to appear in her vision. The world lost its sharp focus. *The bullet must have struck an artery. I don’t have long. Please take her. If you don’t one of us or all of us will die. But, I will die first. You won’t get fed after that.*
A guard stepped further away from the wall. “Mrs. Queen, I believe that if we don’t give Wanheda medical attention soon, you will lose her.”

*You know that isn’t how this works. She doesn’t carry souls. She isn’t mine to take.*

“Put a tourniquet on her leg; slow the process.” He crouched down and removed his belt. Fearing for his own life, he motioned for the other guards to come closer. He wrapped his leather belt around the bleeding leg as the others watched silently. Octavia’s anger glowed beneath her skin. She watched and waited for Nia to get close enough again to unleash her rage on a target she could reach, but doubted it would be enough. The evil woman had survived for too long to be an easy kill.

Clarke laughed as her body fell to the side in an uncoordinated heap. Death slithered beneath the surface of her skin appreciating the scents coming from the man helping them.

*He has a fair few attached to him. And these others, well...*

*Anyone they killed was by Nia’s order. If the medic should die for healing or not healing who he’s told, then she should too.* Clarke could feel death’s want increasing. The medic had killed many. The men around her stank of blood and torment. Death would gorge herself on them. She hoped they would provide the distraction she needed.

*Wanheda you know what you ask is forbidden. She’d never forgive me if I took one she didn’t offer.*

*Would she forgive you if you couldn’t collect her gifts at all?*

A heavy pressure accumulated in her chest akin to that of her raven, but Clarke knew her death knell rang loudly. She had to act now. Placing one hand around the medic’s ankle and the other lifted in the air.

“Nia, you must come closer for it to work. When I die, it must have someplace to go. You must be closest to me.” The calculated lie flew from her tongue. Raven’s concerned features faded from Clarke’s view as she fought to control her dying body. Wanheda whispered the words she had said hundreds of times in her ritual. She’d never hated it until this moment.
Not far from where the blonde lay, she could hear Lexa whispering a song, but couldn’t make out the words.

"Yu gongplei ste odon." The shadow enveloped both their bodies as Death took its fill. Then, by command Clarke expelled the shadow to suck the souls of the nearby soldiers. As Death ravenously devoured them, Nia stalked closer hoping for the transfer. When the evil woman drew near, Clarke released the medic’s ankle and grabbed Nia’s forcing Death to take her. She consumed the woman’s foul soul in one last swallow.

*Betrayal Wanheda! I told you Life doesn’t allow us to choose who we want. She sends gifts. You’ve forced me to take one that wasn’t ours to give.*

Clarke’s body seized as Death seethed with anger and pain. Her vessel had broken the covenant and taken a life unmarked. One last caw slipped from Clarke’s lips as feathers sprung from her left arm. Her eyes closed.

*You do not get to do such things.*

The black cloud that had enshrouded the three lifted Clarke, tossing her against the far wall in a loud meaty smack. A bloodstain marked where she had landed. Her broken body in a crumpled heap.

“No.” Heda stood to throw back the one guard who had remained. She could hear the flame crackle and snap behind her as Octavia dispatched him. When she found Clarke, her blue eyes opened but held no focus. Her last breath rasped and rattled. The low rumble growl of old wolf mutated into a voice in her head.

*She isn’t leaving us. Breathe into her.*

*She isn’t yours to save.*

While Life and Death argued around her, Lexa lifted the broken body of her lover. She wrapped her arms around her and cradled her head in her hands. Tears dripped onto the pallid face. “I just found you. Please don’t leave me.” She sobbed and prayed.
You killed her because you said we wouldn’t want you to take a life we hadn’t chosen. Would you want to see me lying there bleeding out or would you rather I was at your side? That is the choice you are leaving us. Your vessel fought for our interests, but you in all your lonely arrogance forgot that I awaited her as well as you.

Lexa blew white sparks from her breath into Clarke’s slackened jaw. Her skin grew silvery in the low light.

Forgive me, Love. She’s my vessel, but she forced me to kill an innocent. It wasn’t her place.

No, it wasn’t. But, that woman was far from innocent, and you know this.

I’ve ruined her for an evil woman. I can’t save. I can only kill.

Be happy that I love you because I refused to let her go.

A loud gasp escaped the blonde as her eyes opened. Cerulean blue met emerald green. Both women blushed in happiness. Lexa brought their lips together in a languid kiss.

“When I put you in a hospital bed, you damn well better stay in it this time.”

“Does this mean you are going to shower me with your love and care?”

The cheesy line made Heda’s grin large enough that her dimples appeared. “Of course it does. Right after I kick your ass for leaving all of us behind.”

–

Five Years Later
Lexa sat in Clarke’s lap looking over the balcony to the valley floor below.

“How did Tris like your wolf form?”

She felt the eye roll more than seeing it. “If our daughter can deal with you turning into a bird… Besides that, how often has she asked for one? She says I’m a pretty dog, but she still wants a puppy.”

The blonde’s laugh never grew old. Heda captured her wife’s lips appreciating every touch. Beneath their skin, both women could feel their spirits enjoying their closeness as much as they did.

translations:

*Jus drein jus daun.* - Blood must have blood.

*Yu gonplei ste odon* - Your fight is over

*Niron* - Loved one; lover

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