Over the Obstacles

by Cajdachan

Summary

Lapis is a professional horse rider competing in show jumping. Later she meets Pearl who is completely terrified of horses, but the longer they know each other, the stronger their love becomes and Pearl's fear then starts to vanish.

Human AU

Notes

Well thanks to you guys, I decided to write another fanfiction, but this one will have an actual story and some chapters. :D :3
So hope you will enjoy! ^^

PS: I can't speak perfectly english, so please don't eat me because of that. xD
And also sorry for these > „“ <, I'm from Europe... :D
„Come on, girl. One last fence.„ Lapis whispered aloud, holding the reins firmly. She gently pulled her right hand against her body, causing the horse to turn to the right side toward the last obstacle. At a reasonably fast pace, the mare approached the double oxer, the last combination of the jumping course. With great time and no penalties Lapis couldn't afford to make any mistakes. From an absolute victory she shared only a few meters, a few moments.

There was complete silence in the hall and Lapis lost her breath. Her heart was beating so wildly that she felt like every present audience could feel her nervousness, see her shaking jaw and her trembling hands. The only thing that was calming Lapis down was clattering of her horse's hooves which the damp sandy surface absorbed into itself.

The girl especially cared to correctly calculate how many jumps were needed to reach the optimal distance from the obstacle and to overcome it without a mistake. Slowly, and quickly at the same time, they were approaching the hurdle, there was no escape now.

It's time. Lapis clenched her teeth, a blue veins appeared on her temples, the veins of maximum concentration. She stared straight ahead, concentrating on the double oxer that had divided her from victory. Once she was at an ideal distance, she released the reins, squeezed the horse's sides, and stood in the stirrups. She leaned forward against the back of her horse's neck, then pressed her arms against her chest with the reins she was holding. The mare bounced off of the ground with her hind legs, and then she and Lapis were suddenly in the air, just above the obstacle.

It was all about seconds, millimeters, accuracy. For a moment, Lapis never felt like that only a few moment could last that long. She felt the drops of cold sweat rolling down her forehead, she felt her palms completely wet as she was holding the leather reins tightly.

Lapis closed her eyes. They had been hanging above the hurdle for a long time now. Now this was the perfect time for landing safely and faultlessly on a solid ground. It was all just about luck.

In the middle of an infinite unpleasant silence, Lapis suddenly heard quiet tap of a hoof that softly brushed against the wooden beam, the vibration of it moved from the hooves straight to her own feet.

„No!“ Suddenly, a wave of adrenaline flooded her. She felt a great wave of sweat that washed her as she started to be afraid of hearing a disappointed „ooh“ in a short time. But it did not happen. The mare landed with her front legs, safely and almost without an impact, on the ground, and with that it was followed by her rear legs. Lapis spurred the horse for the last time and ran straight to the finish line.

Suddenly a loud cheer could be heard from the tribune, followed by almost deafening clapping and whistling.

In a few short moments, Lapis with her horse cantered whole circuid of the arena, and then she let the horse go to trot. She quickly glanced over at the scoreboard, which was above the entrance to the arena. Her time was incredible and zero in the „penalization“ box added the result even more to the beauty. Her final score eventually got her a first place in the overall ranking with time 51.20, which was her best personal time so far in a competition like this.
She was really happy on the inside, and a beautiful frank smile appeared on her face. She stood in the stirrups, loudly grinning. She enjoyed the clapping and celebrated the joy with all the people, who's hands slowly started to tiredly fall down from the clapping. Lapis waved and triumphantly brandished her fist in the air as her horse was still happily trotting.

„We did it, Blue!“ She reached out to the mare and patted her several times over her strong neck. „We kicked their asses!“

While the rider and her horse were still trotting around the hall, the words were taken up by an enthusiastic commentator and then he actively portrayed what a pleasant performance was shown on today’s show jumping and what a show was prepared for them by young Lapis Lazuli with her five years old mare. As the spectators began to rise from their seats, the commentator didn’t forget to add that none of the equestrian sport lovers should leave the race grounds and miss a close winner’s announcement and award ceremony.

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„Finally! I'll sneeze here for the last fifteen minutes.‘‘ A girl with the light purple mane exulted poisonously and then pounded deeper into the seat. Two girls, one with a dark skin and the other with a pale one, sitting on her right side, looked at her.

„We voted. Would you rather go to women’s football?‘‘ A woman with a dark curly afro asked with an uninterested voice.

„Pff.‘‘ The pudgy girl hissed instead of a reply. „I still don’t understand how could I just bend it. Me, who has absolutely no relationship with animals, Pearl, who’s scared as shit of horses and you, Garnet?“

The slender pale-skinned woman straightened and cleared her throat softly, grasping the edges of her seat. „From a reasonable distance they kinda don’t seem… Scary.“

„Then the program for next Thursday is on you, Amethyst.‘‘ Garnet leaned forward to see the girl sitting next to Pearl.

„No problem.‘‘ She sighed, threw her leg over her other leg and crossed her arms. Garnet leaned back against her seat and brushed her eyebrows. She wondered if she should go and buy some drink, somewhat it was dry in her throat.

Pearl gripped her palms between her knees and with interest she watched the blue-haired rider as she was joyfully trotting around with her horse between the obstacles. She smiled as she caught sight of her cheeks that shone with happiness.

She watched her for a bit. She watched every little detail, every hand wave, every blink of her eyes. She scanned each of her graceful movements. She watched as each strand of her cyan hair waved in the wind, as her hair locks, that were protruding out of her helmet, lined her freckled cheeks.

„Hey, P.‘‘ Pearl heard from her left side, but she ignored it. She was still staring at the horse and its rider.

Her palms started to sweat, her cheeks slowly becoming hot as she stared at the young Lapis, who was just passing the tribune where Pearl and her two friends were sitting. As the horse passed them, a light breeze of sweet spring perfume passed through them. Pearl lost her breath. She froze.

„P!“ Amethyst yelled at her. Poor confused Pearl turned to her, her hands started to tremble.
„What's wrong?“ She bit her lip.

Amethyst rolled her eyes. „You mean, what's wrong with you.“ She furrowed her eyebrows and leaned forward, elbows on her knees.

„Nothing… N-Nothing’s wrong…“ She swallowed nervously, blushing even more.

„Dude, you're blushing! And you're telling me that nothing’s wrong?“ She pointed at Pearl's cheeks, but she was currently trying her best to avoid the eye contact with Amethyst at the moment. She glanced back to the arena - at Lapis. She didn’t want to, but at the same time she longed for their eyes to meet, yet she was certain that it was for ninety-nine and nine tenths percent impossible.

Amethyst sighed again and looked at the same direction that Pearl was looking, perhaps to find out why was she acting so strange.

„Oooooh.“ She raised her eyebrows in astonishment, apparently understanding the reason of Pearl’s behavior. „I didn’t know that you were on blueberries.“ She grinned.

Pearl’s eyes widened in surprise and then she turned to her friend as quickly as physically possible. „Amethyst!“ She hissed through her teeth.

„I caught you, P! Admit it!“ She said triumphantly, folding her hands behind her head.

„Pff! And what should I admit?“ She tried to hide her red cheeks, biting her pale lip again.

„Come on, P.‘ Her friend addressed her and put her hand on Pearl's shoulder. „You're red as a radish. Say that you like her.“

„No!“ She barked in defense.

„You won’t admit it or you don’t like her?“ She raised her eyebrows.

„Hey you two.“ Garnet said abruptly. „Enough.“

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Lapis and her horse headed to the paddock, while their audience’s clapping was slowly vanishing behind their backs. They walked through a short dark corridor and then entered the training arena full of coaches and riders with their horses. There were also waiting two members of Lapis’ family, her aunt Agate and Lapis’ younger sister Pearl, who was Lapis usually addressing her by her second name – Deedee.

Lapis smiled for herself. Gazing at her sister, she squeezed a pommel, then pulled both of her feet out of stirrups and dismounted her horse. Her younger sister ran straight to her and Lapis offered her arms.

„You did it!“ Deedee smiled widely and hugged her sister. Aunt Agate approached them both and joined the group hug.

„We're so glad you did it, Lapis!“ She squeezed her niece tightly so they almost couldn’t breathe. „Your mother would be so proud of you.“

Lapis’ smile then almost all dissapeared. „… Yeah.“ She whispered, half-strangled by her aunt’s squeeze, but she didn’t care about that at the moment. Suddenly she froze.
She remembered her. She remembered the last day she saw her mother. Her tearful face, but still with a warm smile on it. She remembered the words she said to them – her daughters, she remembered the number on the door of her hospital room and how she always brought her mother a great bunch of beautiful flowers and pictures of her and her favorite horses from their stable, she remembered how her younger sister sang for her when they were sitting next to her bed. It was almost five years ago, but still it was really hard for Lapis to deal with the fact that she, her sister and also nobody else, will never see her again. Never. ‘… Ever.’

Hot salty tears appeared in a corners of her dark blue eyes, but no one noticed them so far. She knew that she should be happy, she won the World Cup! She shouldn’t by crying about her mother right now.

„–Lapis?“ Deedee gently rose sister’s chin with her slender fingers. She knew that something was wrong, she always knew. She recognized the look on Lapis’ face.

She softly dried Lapis’ cheeks as a few tears rolled down on them. „What is it?“

Lapis sniffed quietly, holding on her sister’s hand that cupped her cheek. „I wish mom was here.“ She then looked in her eyes.

„Oh, Lapis…“ Deedee sighed, smiling at Lapis a bit, then she stroked Lapis’ cheek with her thumb. „She is…“

„Yeah, I bet she’s somewhere near us and she’s watching you.“ Aunt Agate added, hugging her niece tightly again.

Lapis smiled. She was really glad that these two were here with her right now. She wiped her eyes and stepped back. She fixed her riding jacket and cleared her throat, looking at her younger sister. Even if she was younger, she was about a half a head higher than Lapis. Lapis had also noticed the strange shade of her sister’s blue hair, thanks to the bad hall lighting. „You should dye it again. The color is pale.“ She half-smiled.

Deedee shifted her long fringe a little upper, looking at its color, so she could consider her sister’s judgment. A beautiful turquoise eye flashed from under her fringe. She always had her eyes hidden deep under the fringe, it was almost impossible to see them. If anyone have seen them, it probably was their lucky day.

„True.“ She whispered with a smile. „It’s not like it used to be. “

Pearl’s voice was one of the prettiest voices that Lapis have ever heard in her entire life. She loved Deedee’s voice. She sang the most beautiful songs with the sweetest voice that could someone hardly just imagine. Once, she used to sing in a choir in local church near their house, but one day everything changed. After a loss of their mother, Deedee’s voice broke. She stopped singing, she stopped dancing, she stopped smiling and laughing. And since that day she only whispers, her voice is cracked and she’s even scared of singing just to herself.

The older sister smirked. Soon after, she heard a quick, downy steps. A loud, slightly raspy voice came from behind her back, a strong hand gripped her shoulder. Lapis turned around.

„Lapis! I knew you could do it! You both were awasome!“ A middle-aged man with long gray hair gratulated her.

„Greg!“ Lapis grinned, hugging the man. „We wouldn’t do that without your help.“

„Oh, come on.“ His cheeks flushed as he accepted the compliment. „Talent is in a rider, not in a coach.“
All of a sudden a young mare leaned her head over the man’s shoulder and loudly snorted right into his ear, as if she wanted to remark something. Greg jumped into the air in a surprise and glanced over at her as both sisters and aunt started to laugh.

„And, in a horse, of course.“ He finally added, rubbing his nape. „Here, I brought a blanket, she should have it.“ He said, reaching out for the horse’s blanket that was thrown over the open gate of the mantinel, which delineated the training arena. He took the blanket and tossed it over the hannover horse’s back, then he zipped the velcro so it won’t fall down of the horse. He walked around to the mare’s left side and waved towards himself, smiling at Lapis. „Come on, you don’t want to miss the winner’s round.“ He said to the young rider and offered her his joined hands instead of the stirrup. Lapis accepted the offer and mounted the horse again.

„Thanks, coach.“ She thanked him and raised her riding helmet. She asked her horse to walk and headed back into the arena.

„I’ll see you later!“ Greg waved, soon after joined by aunt and young Pearl. Lapis looked back and gave them all a grateful smile.

Accompanied by the clinking of horseshoes against the ground, Lapis and her horse walked through the dark corridor again. Lapis took a deep breath and stopped right in front of the entrance to the arena. She glanced over to see her family for the last time, but aunt and Lapis's younger sister were already gone. ‘Hmm. They probably went to the tribune.’ She thought to herself.

It didn’t take long and there was a loud clapping and cheering once again when her name was mentioned on the radio. Lapis felt a slight tingling in her stomach. And even though she knew that she doesn’t have to be afraid of anything anymore, the nervousness had washed her. Yet she was happy. It was her first big race that she won.

„Hya.“ She squeezed both of her horse’s sides and ask her to gallop, then they ran straight into the arena. Lapis was immensely enjoying the applause that echoed from all sides. She stood up in the stirrups and joyfully waved her fist in the air. She had never seen so many people in the arena, so many fans, so many people who enjoyed the victory with her.

In the middle of the arena, a few organizers and several other people were waiting for her with a colorful sashes, flowers and medals to hand over. Lapis and her horse walked directly to them and stopped in front of them in a reasonable distance. There were five more names mentioned on the radio, five riders who got first five places right after Lapis. All six riders, after arriving in the arena, congratulated each other and then placed their horses next to each other in one row.

First they headed to the young blue-eyed rider, shaking her hand, and pinning a beautiful blue-gold medal on her horse's blanket. And they didn't forget to devote Lapis a bunch of flowers that perfectly complemented the medallion on the left side of her hannover horse.

The organizers congratulated the other riders and invited them to follow the winner in a winning round along the arena.

Lapis enjoyed the whole ceremony, she was almost weeping. She stroked and slapped her horse’s neck, praising her and hugging her. This was the most beautiful thing that happened to her in her life so far. This was actually the first time she wanted time to stop. But all day long, she was looking forward to have a cold shower and get some sleep.

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Darkness covered the whole city. People dissapeared into the night after the end of today's show.
jumping, and Pearl with Garnet and Amethyst headed to Pearl's old pickup to get home. Pearl sat on the driver's seat and safely delivered all of them to their homes. In the car, they happily talked about what happened today, saying today's day was over, they looked forward to the next together Thursday.

Pearl laid onto her bed, slowly pulling the blanket up to her chin, and sighed deeply. She stared at the ceiling, illuminated by the street lamp, thinking about everything that happened today. There were thousands of thoughts in her head. Every word she heard today, every single car that honked which none of it was routed to her, she counted all the red lights that she had to stop at the crossroads, how many times she had to fix her right sock that was always slipping off of her leg, how many times she had asked herself today to re-dye her hair roots, how many times she saw a number on a digital clock that was in a hour and in a minute box the same, how many times today Amethyst said the word „dude“, how many times Garnet rubbed her eyebrows, she wondering if she will ever see the charming smile of the young girl who won the show jumping World Cup today.

Everything was silent. Only a fly that was hitting the plastic window, through what it wanted to fly out of, and a street lamp that was loudly buzzing, there was nothing to hear. Yet Pearl heard voices. She heard her thoughts, which silenced everything else around her. Today there was more of them. More than usual. Her head was full of the only thing, full of one person. She tried not to think about her, trying so intensely that every new thought multiplied, and the thoughts were growing and growing. She saw a blue color, lots of freckles, lots of honey sweet smiles, lots of…

„Damnit!“ She cursed and hid under the blanket. She shook her head several times, but it almost didn’t help. She clenched her teeth and closed her eyes. „Why is this happening… It even wasn’t anything big. Surely I will never see her in my life again, so why am I even making any wishful thinking?“

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Lapis won her first gold in show jumping
• Garnet, Amethyst and Pearl decided to participate the show
• Pearl can’t admit to herself that she has a crush on Lapis
Accidentally in Your Arms

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

„It’s really coming down.“ Pearl remarked, looking out of the window, watching the lightning sky.

„You’re lucky you have your ass in my apartment right now.“ Amethyst laughed, urgently searching for something in a fridge. „Maaan, there’s nothing in here!“ She growled and slammed the fridge door. „I should’ve bought that food before the storm started.“

„Didn’t I tell you?“ Asked Garnet, slowly sitting down on a couch, smile on her dark face. Amethyst just breathed out deeply.

Pearl glanced over at Amethyst as she climbed up the kitchen unit and opened the cupboard, trying to find something to eat. „Well, I could take my bike a buy something after the storm is over.“ Pearl offered, still watching Amethyst.

„Oh yeah, could you even imagine a sleepover without any food?“ The pudgy girl laughed ironically and jumped back down. „It’s a shame you didn’t bring your car, P, that would be quicker.“

„If only I knew that a weather like this will happen, I would bring the pickup for sure.“ She locked her mouth in a tight line, she turned back to the window and leaned forward to her elbows against the window sill.

„None of us saw that coming.“ Garnet nodded in acceptance. She shifted her glasses a little upper on her round nose.

„Says the right person.“ Amethyst snorted and sat down on a couch next to her. „Oh! I have an idea!“ Amethyst added suddenly.

Pearl turned around again, looking at her. „And what is it?“

„You could take your bike and bring us some cake from the confectioners that’s behind the city. And me and Garnet could take a walk to the store which isn’t that far from here. The confectioners is way farther than that and it would take us a little longer to get there and back, ya know?“

Garnet hummed at that. She rubbed her chin and then she nodded. „That’s a good idea.“

„I know right! I’m a hidden genius.“ She smirked, her chest puffed in pride. „Man, I’m really hungry for a cake.“

Pearl giggled and cupped her mouth with her hand. „Alright. I’ll bring us something sweet to eat after that storm stops.“

„Sounds great.“ Garnet smiled at her.

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Lapis was sitting on a bale of hay in the attic of a giant barn with little stable dog in her lap, listening to the sounds of thunder that were loudly storming outside.
She could perfectly see whole barn interior from there. This view was one of many views that she really liked. Also this was the most favourite place of hers to spend alone times in. She dared say that she spent more time in there than in her own room. She really loved being there.

As the lightning bolt flashed the sky, followed by the thunder sound, young puppy started to bark and tremble. Lapis squeezed it tightly and softly hushed it.

„Calm down, girl. It’s just a thunder.“ She hugged that fluffy ginger puppy and stroked its soft head. „I’m here. I promise that it won’t hurt you."

Raindrops were falling down fast, wind was blowing from side to side and sometimes Lapis could hear horses loudly neighing from the stable that was adjoined with the barn in what she was sitting in.

The floor plan of the building was designed to a „T“ shape, so the longer part of it were stables with stalls, a tack room and a wash stall, the corridor then led to the minor part with a storage and feed room where, if there wasn’t any hay laying on the floor anymore and they needed to feed the horses, they had to climb up the ladder to get it from the attic.

Lapis loved every part of the whole area, including all the extensive meadows, the training grounds, the attic of course, and also she loved the horses, her friends and spending time with them.

Suddenly Lapis recognized a familiar footsteps that were coming from the open entrance to the barn on her left side. Those footsteps were slowly approaching her.

Lapis looked down at the person, but she haven’t noticed her yet. Lapis giggled and barked at the person with a laughter. „Yo, you’re wet!“

A young girl with short messy blond hair and glasses on her nose jumped in the air, all horrified, goosebumps all over her bare arms. „Jesus Christ! Lapis!“

Lapis started to laugh hardly at that. „I gotcha, bae!“ She snorted loudly, still laughing and squeezing her belly. „Where’d your umbrella go?“

„Ha-ha…“ The girl rolled her eyes, trying to dry herself somehow. She was all soaked to the bone without any warm clothes on.

„Hey, how was the Big Apple anyway?“ Lapis asked when she finally calmed down.

„Yeah, great. Lots of people.“ The blonde raised an eyebrow. She thought. „What are you doing up there?“

Lapis looked around like if she was looking for the answer somewhere in the hay, then she looked back down at her friend. „Dunno. Sitting? Since it’s my fav spot.“ She shrugged her shoulders.

„Huh, I see.“ The other girl grinned and then she glanced over around the barn, looking for something. „Where’s Pumpkin? Haven’t seen her for a while."

„Oh, she’s here with me.“ Lapis smiled triumphantly.

„What?!“ The blonde yelled. „How did she even get there?“

„I brought her here. She was scared of the storm, tho.“ She then took the puppy in her arms and smiled at it.
The girl stared at her misunderstoodly. „Have you even thought about how’re you gonna get her and your ass down?” She asked, eyebrows furrowed, arms crossed on her chest.

Lapis froze as she was holding the puppy. She swallowed. „Eh… No?” She then slowly dropped the dog down, trying to avoid her friend’s probably bad looking expression.

„Gee.“ She sighed, rubbing her temple, arms still crossed. „Have I ever told you that you’re a genius?“

Lapis searched in her mind for a while. „Yeah… Several times actually.“

„Then I didn’t mean it.“ She rubbed her temple again, although she was smiling. „Have you fed my horse yet?“

„No, I-I didn’t.“ The blue-haired girl looked down at the other one and tossed her legs over the attic edge. „I knew that you were coming, so.“

„Oh, alright then.“ She blinked. „Anyway, thanks that you looked after Percy. I’m gonna ride that horse until his hooves burn.“

„Yeah, right.“ Lapis grinned, thinking about how to get back down with the dog. She scanned the ladder from top to the bottom. „… You know, I can’t even imagine being without Blue for so long.“

The blonde watched Lapis with interest while she was trying to get down with Pumpkin, resting in her arms. It kinda horrified her when Lapis didn’t climb down the last few steps and jumped them instead. She dropped the puppy calmly down. The dog looked around, maybe to make sure that there won’t be any lightning bolts anymore and then it immediately ran straight to the blond-haired person.

„We’re going for a ride with Blue, wanna join?“ Lapis asked.

„Thanks, but I’m bussy today.“ She answered and kneeled down to greet the small ginger puppy. „Maybe tomorrow?“

„Sounds good to me.“ Lapis blinked. „By the way, nice to see you again, Peri.“

„You too, Lapis.“ The girl smiled. „And… Congrats to your victory last Thursday.“

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„So, see you later!“ Pearl waved, standing in the door.

Garnet waved her back. „Be careful, Pearl. The road might be wet."

„I’ll be fine.“ She giggled and grabbed the door handle, closing the door.

„Hey, P!“ Amethyst managed to address her before Pearl closed the door entirely.

Pearl looked back at her. „What is it?“

„Don’t forget to buy yourself a blueberry pie!“ The purple-haired girl snorted.

Pearl blushed deeply at that and then angrily slammed the door behind herself, still hearing Amethyst laughing.
Pearl sighed heavily and leaned her back against the door. She hid her face in her palms and stayed like that for a while, breathing slowly, but deeply.

„Not again…“

Pearl took a deep breath and walked to the corner where her bicycle was standing, she then called the elevator and with her cycle she walked it. After a short ride downwards, she walked outside and jumped on her old bike, heading straight to the confectioners.

It was cold outside after the storm and Pearl forgot to put on her sweater. But still she was glad that the confectioners wasn’t that far away from Amethyst’s place, at least when she had her bike, so she knew that she will be back shortly.

It was exactly one week ago when she saw that charming girl with sky-blue hair for the first time. And Pearl was still thinking about her, every day, every night, every minute, wondering what she might be doing right now.

There was a hill under her, right in front of her nose. It seemed really steep, but Pearl knew that she had to conquer it. She then clenched her teeth and stepped hardly to the pedal, slowly moving forward.

The road was wet, just like Garnet predicted, so Pearl was trying her best not to let her bike slip off of the road, yet it was really hard. She was holding the brakes so tightly and because of it her hands started to hurt. And as she was squeezing the brakes, her cycle was still uncontrollably speeding up. It was almost unstoppable. Pearl was getting more and more nervous while the bike’s speed kept growing and growing. The calm ride suddenly turned into a terrifying horror.

„Come on, come on! Slow down!“ Pearl pleaded like if the cycle could hear her. But it was still speeding up. She couldn’t stop it. She thought for a moment if the brakes weren’t broken. But that hardly mattered. It was too late.

All of a sudden her bike’s front tyre went to a quick and an unpleasant skid. Pearl pannicked and squeezed the handlebars as tightly as she could, screaming, but none of it helped her at that moment. Her bike slipped off of the road and Pearl, with a few painful tumbles, fell down right into a deep ditch and hit her head really hard against the ground.

Her bicycle stayed laying half on the road and half in the air, its wheels were still rolling, and it all happen in a few most terrible seconds of her life.

Pearl was resting on the bottom of the ditch, lying in a freezing cold stream of water that was flowing down the hill. Her vision was blurred, she couldn’t hear anything. Her head hurt like if a steam roller just ran over it. She was freezing. Her whole body was trembling and hurting, she couldn’t move, she couldn’t feel almost any part of her body. She didn’t know what to do.

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Lapis picked up a riding saddle with a saddle pad and headed to her horse’s stall. She opened the gate with difficulty, but entered it in the end.

„Hello, baby.“ She addressed the horse. The mare turned its head and greeted Lapis with a loud snort.

„Missed me much?“ Lapis giggled, lifting up the saddle with saddle pad and tossing it over the horse’s back. She took the girth, lifted up the saddle flap and attached the girth straps to the first and the third strap on the saddle, tightening it. She walked back to the tack room and brought the bridle. She then got her right shoulder under horse’s neck and put the reins over it, and then she
took the headpiece to her right hand and pulled it up to Blue’s forehead and with her left hand she put the bit in horse’s mouth. And finally she put Blue’s ears through the bridle and attached the throat latch to its other side.

„Here we go.“ She smiled widely as her job was done. She searched in pockets of her warm waterproof jacket and pulled out two sugar cubes. The mare noticed it and immediately approached her owner.

„Here, baby girl.“ She stroked her dark mahogany-colored neck a gave her the cubes. „You’re beautiful, you know that?“

The mare neighed at that like if she agreed. Lapis couldn’t stop herself from giggling and stroked the horse’s strong neck several times again.

She walked the horse outside the stable and mounted her. She softly squeezed her sides and asked her to walk. After a moment they walked outside the area and headed to the crossroads along a loamy forest path lined with lots of tall trees with lush foliage.

The sun finally appeared in the sky and it was beautifully shining through the leaves, the sunbeams were making them prettily goldish and fresh. After Lapis and her horse passed that amazing forest path, they stopped on the crossroads.

„So, where would you like to go today?“ Lapis asked, patting mare’s neck. There were so many possible ways to go, so many paths. But the mare choose the path which led to the city. Lapis wasn’t for one hundred percent sure about that, but she shrugged her shoulders and let her horse the lead.

This path was shorter than the other ones and led to the main road, where even wasn’t any traffic very often. The maximum number of cars which passed this road was four per day. But still, Lapis preferred the dirt-surfaced soils and nature like forest or meadows. But yeah, today’s decision made someone else and she respected it.

Shortly they made it to the main road and continued down the hill. Blue’s horseshoes were loudly clapping against the asphalt and Lapis really liked the sound of that. It was always calming her down, the sound of hooves when they touched the ground, rhythmically and harmonically, over and over again.

They walked maybe for like ten minutes when Lapis looked at the sky again. Dark storm clouds almost faded away and the sun continued its way down to meet the horizon. The sky was colored to the most beautiful gold-orange color that Lapis have seen in a while. There were lots of large meadows and fields, which were surrounding the road from all sides. Its golden ears were slowly moving in a wind, birds were sweetly singing, zephyr was calmly blowing, stroking and caressing Lapis’ freckled cheeks, making her feel absolutely relaxed and happy.

„Look at that view, girl.“ She smiled widely. „Isn’t it beautiful?“ She sighed dreamily.

Suddenly her horse sharply stopped and started to shake its head quickly, up and down.

„What, what is it? What happen?“ Lapis pulled the reins back against her body, trying to calm her horse down, but the animal was still nervously stepping on a spot.

„What’s wrong, girl?“ She finally stopped the horse from what was it doing. Lapis looked straight ahead to find the reason why was Blue acting like that. Maybe just a rabbit ran across the road, or a goose flew over it.

The rider winked her eyes and then she saw something in a distance, something shiny that was
lying on the ground. Lapis spurred the horse and tried to canter there as quickly as possible.

„Huh? A bike? What is that doing here?“ She wondered when she approached it. Then she glanced over and searched for eventual owner, but she couldn’t see anyone.

Blue started to step on a spot again, snorting even more aggressively.

„Whoa, whoa, girl. Calm down.“ She pulled the reins again and stopped the animal.

Lapis grabbed the pommel, jumped off of the saddle and glanced over again. „Hallo?“ The blue-haired girl made a few steps forward, towards the ditch right next to the road.

Blue neighed as Lapis approached it, but she hushed her and continued forward. She looked over the edge of the road and nearly screamed. She saw poor young lady lying on the bottom of the ditch in a stream of water. She wasn’t moving at all. Lapis hoped that she was at least breathing.

„Oh my god. Miss?! Hallo?! Can you hear me?“ She screamed, kneeling on the edge of the road, her horse then started to neigh again.

„Hallo? Miss?!“ Lapis made a decision and carefully she slidown the ditch to its bottom, the horse neighing after her.

„Miss, are you okay?“ Lapis kneeled down next to her and shifted her body a little upper so she wasn’t sitting in a cold water. She took the girl into her arms and pulled her peach-colored fringe away from her closed eyes. She had a few scars over her pale face and her thin arms, but luckily she wasn’t bleeding anywhere. And even if she was a little bit battered, she was very beautiful. Lapis caught herself blushing a little. She shook her head.

„Hallo? Can you hear me?“ She asked softly. She cupped the girl’s cheek and stroked it gently, just to wake her up and not to hurt her. Then Lapis heard her horse neigh from the top again, but she ignored it.

Lapis scanned the girl from top to the bottom, just to make sure that she’s breathing and that she might be able to move. She stroked her tender cheek again, worriedly staring at her.

Suddenly Lapis felt like the girl changed her breath. She was breathing more deeply than before. She little shifted her body and snuggled to Lapis’ chest, slowly she started opening her eyes.

Lapis breathed out a sigh of relief as the girl started to move, and she was really glad that she was okay. At least a little bit.

„Can you hear me, miss?“ Lapis asked again, still cupping the pale soft cheek.

The girl let out a cracked sigh. She tried to look up at Lapis, but her vision was still blurred and she couldn’t see almost anything. „Where am I?“ She spoke weakly.

„I suppose that you fell from the wet road to the ditch.“ Lapis answered calmly, still holding the girl in her arms. „Here, you must be freezing. How long have you been here?“ Lapis took off her jacket and tossed it around the girl’s body to keep her warm.

„I… Don’t know.“ She whispered, trying so hard to bring herself back to earth. „What time is it?“

Lapis thought and looked at the sky. „I don’t know. About 7 PM maybe.“ She looked back down after that. „Are you okay? Can you move?“
„I–“ Pearl suddenly hissed in pain when she tried to sit up. „I think so.“

„Okay, just slow down. I’ll get you out of here.“ Lapis promised. She slowly stood up and helped the other girl to get on her feet. „Is that okay?“

She hesitated, but nodded. She took a rim of a jacket that Lapis gave her and squeezed it tightly on her chest, trying to warm herself. She was really cold, trembling. She was weak, but still she had the strength to walk. Her vision was still blurred, she couldn’t even recognize who her savior was, although something seemed very familiar to her.

Lapis held the girl around her waist and helped her climb up the ditch. Once they made it to the edge of the road, Lapis let the young lady sit down and rest.

She kneeled next to her, supporting her back with her arm, and watched her.

The girl wasn’t moving, she was just staring down at her lap, breathing deeply. She seemed really confused. There was no doubt that she hit her head really hard.

„Are you okay?“ Lapis asked softly, looking worriedly in her swollen eyes. A slow nod was the answer.

„What’s your name?“ Lapis asked again.

The pale girl turned her head to her, looking Lapis in her dark blue eyes. She could see a little bit better then before, but still she couldn’t recognize her. She swallowed heavily. „… Pearl.“

Lapis blinked several times, just to make sure that she wasn’t dreaming. This girl was so beautiful, even if she’s been hurt, battered. Lapis tried her best not to blush and get caught by her, but that hardly mattered. She wasn’t probably even perceiving.

„Okay… Pearl. I have no idea for how long were you sitting down there in that freezing water, but I have to take you to the stables, so we can call a doctor.“ She was talking slowly, so Pearl could understand her.

„Wait, what stable?“ Pearl’s eyes widened, and suddenly she felt a wave of hot breath that slowly rolled down her back. She froze for a moment, then she glanced over her shoulder and expected the worst.

„HORSE!“ She screamed and immediately got on her feet and made several steps backwards. Lapis quickly followed her and took the girl by her hand and stopped her from falling down to the ditch again. She was trembling much more than before.

„It’s okay, it’s okay!“ She tried to calm her down. „She’s here with me. She won’t hurt you. “

Pearl gasped and stepped back again. „I-I… Get that thing away from me!“ She cried, Lapis was still holding her hand, she stepped between Pearl and the horse.

„Calm down, calm down, it’s okay. “ She said calmly. „… But how am I gonna take you to the stable then?“ She asked confused.

Pearl was shaking, staring at that enormous animal standing in front of her right behind Lapis. „You… You won’t make me get on that thing.“ She pointed.

„Don’t worry, it’s safe. “ Lapis assured her, but it didn’t make Pearl change her mind.

„No, it’s not!“ She barked and made another step back.
Blue was standing there still like nothing was happening. She snorted at the horrified girl and she then jumped in fear.

„Okay, just please…“ Lapis tightened her squeeze. „Do me a favor, don’t fall down to that ditch again, okay? We will figure it out somehow. “

Pearl moaned at response, still shaking.

„Pearl. “ Lapis turned to her, holding her hand. „Can you walk?“

Pearl wasn’t responding for a moment, while she was uninteruptedly staring at the horse, but in the end she nodded.

„Alright. I’ll take you to the stable. We’re gonna walk slowly, it’s about maybe one kilometer far. Can you do it?“

„To a stable?“ Pearl interrupted her staring. „Stable full of horses?!“

Lapis rolled her eyes. „You don’t have to be afraid. I won’t take you to the center of it, just to a porch. I promise. “ She then looked deeply in Pearl’s eyes and took her by her shoulders. After a moment she realized that she probably shouldn’t do that. She blushed and she didn’t even want to. She was blushing really bad, even Pearl noticed that and blushed herself.

’Those are such a beautiful eyes…‘ Lapis thought. But then she made herself stop and she looked aside. Pearl did the same and they were standing silently on a spot. But all of a sudden a neigh of Lapis’ horse broke the silence and they came back to themselves.

„We should be going.“ The blue-haired girl objected, but forgot that her hands were still resting on Pearl’s shoulders.

Pearl glanced over. „But… What about my bike?“

Lapis looked at it, mouth locked in a light line. „What happens to your bike is completely irrelevant right now. I’ll come for it later, okay?“

Pearl turned back to Lapis and agreed.

Lapis took the bike and moved it away from the road, so it couldn’t harm anyone while passing it. She then put her left arm around Pearl’s waist to support her and in her right hand she held Blue’s reins. Lapis walked between them and made sure that the horse won’t hurt Pearl somehow, even if she knew that Blue wouldn’t hurt anyone.

They slowly walked to the stable, together.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Lapis meets her friend Peridot after a week being in New York
• Pearl was sent to a mission; to bring something from the confectioners
• Lapis found Pearl, who had an accident and fell to the ditch
“Wait here, I’ll be right back, okay?” Lapis led Pearl to a wooden bench, which was standing next to the entrance to the barn, and helped her to sit down. Lapis knew that she have to be perfectly quick and that she can’t leave there Pearl all alone for so long, since Lapis was almost sure that Pearl was terrified of horses.

Pearl was too weak to protest, so she just sat down and leaned her back against the wall, firmly squeezing Lapis’ jacket that was tossed over her bare shoulders.

Lapis took Blue’s reins and led her to her stall, pleading someone to untack her. Then Lapis ran to the barn and climbed up the ladder. From the attic she took large soft blanket in which she sleeps when she spends a night in there. Carefully she climbed down the ladder and then ran straight to Pearl.

At least it wasn’t that much cold outside, but still Lapis felt bad for Pearl who must’ve been freezing. Damn, Lapis hoped that Pearl wasn’t sitting in that water too long. She was worried about her health.

Quickly she wrapped the blanket around Pearl and then sat next to her. „Is that better?“  

Pearl nodded, still feeling a little dizzy. „Yeah.“ She lifted her legs and hid them under the blanket, pressing them against her chest and trying to warm herself a little faster.

Lapis stared at her for a moment, watching as her skinny body was shaking under her blanket. She even noticed a few straws that were protruding out of it.

„Oh, sorry. There might be few straws on it.“ She apologized and carefully she dusted them off. Few of them were still on Pearl’s chest, but Lapis didn’t dare touch her there, so she just pulled back after that.

„It’s okay.“ Pearl answered slowly.


Pearl turned to her and smiled a little. „Tea would be nice.“ She blinked.

Lapis nodded and immediately ran somewhere to the stable, Pearl’s eyes on her back.

Pearl really felt like something wasn’t right, but she couldn’t find out what. This girl was so strange and yet so familiar to her at the same time.

She sat there in silence, not moving, calmly breathing, with her eyes closed and head leaned against a wooden wall. She heard birds singing, wind blowing through the trees, crickets chirping and sometimes horse neighing.

She was slowly warming up thanks to Lapis’ comfortable blanket and quite warm wind blowing. Pearl wasn’t much prone to health problems and she hoped that everything will be okay later. Maybe she might get a cold, but that was absolutely nothing that could harm her.

After a moment she heard footsteps again, quick, hard, but not annoying. Pearl turned her head
aside and half opened her eyes, lips slightly apart.

The blue-haired girl approached her with optimal speed, calm and quiet steps. She handed Pearl a mug with green tea. Pearl took it and thankfully nodded, cupping the mug with her cold thin fingers, holding it tightly.

Lapis sat down on the ground in front of Pearl and watched her for a bit. She watched her as her thin lips touched ring of the mug, slowly taking a sip of a hot fluid in it, and then putting it back in her lap.

„How do you feel?“ The rider asked carefully. Pearl looked at her, not moving her head

„... It’s not the best, but... Not the worst either.“ A warm smile appeared on her face and Lapis couldn’t that easily miss that, her freckled cheeks were becoming hot again.

She shook her head and looked aside, just to avoid the girl’s gaze and hide her red face.

They were sitting there for a few moments, in silence, not speaking. Just breathing and sometimes looking at each other and then awkwardly looking away.

Even if Pearl really didn’t prefer places like this, farms and stables, she had to admit that she started to like this place. It felt really nice, peaceful and calm around here. So quiet and harmonic.

„Haven’t we... Seen each other somewhere before?“ The skinny girl asked finally. This question was spinning around her head for too long.

Lapis snorted quietly at that, rubbing her nape awkwardly. „I doubt it.“

„You... Really remind me of one person. “ She admitted with honey sweet voice, fishing her memories from bottomless depths of her mind.

„How so?“ Lapis grinned.

„... Your hair...“

„And what about them?“ Lapis teased, smirk on her face.

Pearl blushed a little at that and bit her lip. „They are... Blue.“ She said, watching them. She scanned every single hair lock, the way it lined girl’s freckled cheeks. She scanned Lapis’ beautiful blue eyes carefully, its wide black pupils that were staring at her. She watched as Lapis’ brown freckles were contrasting with her slightly tanned skin and shone like a lighthouse at midnight. Pearl then looked at the curves of Lapis’ dark thick eyebrows, her long eyelashes. She didn’t even have a makeup, mascara or eyeshadows, her whole face was naturally really enchanting and beautiful.

Her gaze then slidown to Lapis’ heart-shaped lips which were slightly apart. They seemed to be so sweet, so soft... So warm.

Pearl lost her breath, and she didn’t even notice that. The only thing she noticed so far was that she was totally melting because of the other girl’s beauty.

She blinked several times to clear her mind full of thoughts. She took a sip of her tea and then shyly looked down at Lapis again. „May I... Use your phone?“

„Hmm?“ Lapis raised her eyebrows as if she missed her question, but she responded. „Oh, yeah. Sure. I almost forgot to call the doctor!“ She quickly stood up.
“No, it’s fine! It’s not necessary, really.” Pearl remarked quickly. “I’ll be fine.”

“Oh.” Lapis sighed. “Okay? I’ll... Bring you the phone then.”

“Thank you.” She smiled as Lapis blinked at her and left.

Lapis was back in a minute and handed Pearl her phone, then she disappeared in the stable again.

Pearl unlocked Lapis’ phone and saw a very beautiful woman, maybe about thirty-forty years old, with long white hair, standing in the middle of a large sunflower field with dark brown-coated horse. That woman was smiling, hugging the horse around its neck. She wore long blue dress and earrings with a pair of blue diamonds. Her smile was warm and honest. But Pearl felt like there were hiding lots of pain under that wide smile. She wondered who this woman was.

She tapped Amethyst’s phone number on a little keyboard, since she knew that Garnet doesn’t pick up unknown numbers.

The phone was ringing for maybe ten seconds and soon Pearl recognized her friend’s voice.

“Yo, who’s that?” The girl seemed to be annoyed.

“Amethyst?” It’s me, Pearl.” She introduced herself.

“Pearl?!” Amethyst yelled, although it sounded kinda happy. “Dude, we called you at least for like thousand times! Why didn’t you pick that up? You were gone for like two hours! We thought that something happened to you. Why aren’t you calling from your phone? Where are you right now?”

Pearl sighed heavily, just to absorb that quantum of questions. “I had an accident and now I’m sitting on some ranch with horses.” She explained.

There was a creepy silence on the other side of the phone for a moment, but Amethyst then spoke again. “What?! Wait… Weren’t you scared of horses just like two hours ago? What the hell are you doing there?”

Pearl moved the phone aside from her ear, because of Amethyst’s loud voice, but answered. “Some girl found me when she was passing me with her horse probably, so she took me here to rest. I’ll be back soon. As soon as I’ll be able to walk normally again.”

“Alright... I’ll tell Garnet. Man, thank God you’re okay.” The girl let a sigh of relief escape her lips. “Should we pick you up?”

“That’s okay. I’ll take a bus.” Pearl took another sip of her tea.

“Gee... Okay, just be careful, do you understand?” A serious question was asked.

Lapis appeared in Pearl’s view, with light smile on her lips. Pearl froze for a moment, but Amethyst calling her name brought her back to herself.

“Oh... Y-Yeah. I’ll be fine.” She assured her, but still watching Lapis with a corner of her eye and paying attention to what Amethyst was saying just in a half way.

“See ya later then, P.”

“See... You...” She dropped the phone, hypnotizing Lapis as she came near her, with hands
hidden in her trouser pockets.

„... I asked my friend to bring your bike. He’ll be back in a few minutes.“ Lapis announced and sat down in front of Pearl again.

Pearl blinked several times. She thought that she realized something by staring at the girl.

Since she hit her head really hard, her thinking was kinda slow, but still she was coming to herself by every minute and always a little bit more. She could see almost perfectly now, she could hear how she used to hear before that horrible accident happened.

„Wait...“ She broke her train of thoughts and shook her head. „Aren’t you that girl from the show jumping World Cup?“

Lapis smiled widely. Knowing that the girl was absolutely right, she didn’t plan to answer her.

„Lapis Lazuli?“ Pearl asked nervously and a bit unsure.

„Wow.“ Lapis raised her eyebrows in surprise. „It really surprises me that you can remember my whole name.“

‘God really must hate me…’ Pearl thought to herself, eyes widened. She immediately froze, staring at Lapis unbelievably.

„Is… Everything alright?“ Lapis asked a little worried, but Pearl didn’t respond. „... Pearl?“

The girl cleared her throat when a sweet voice called her. „... I-uh... Y-Yeah... Everything’s... Fine, I ju... I just...“ She started to feel unpleasantly dizzy again, her head was spinning. She wasn’t sure if all of that was happening because she hit her head before... Or was is something else?

Her eyes rolled and her body started to fall aside. Lapis noticed that and immediately got on her feet, catching Pearl in time.

„Pearl?! What happened?“ Lapis took the mug from Pearl’s hands and dropped it on the other side of the bench. However Pearl wasn’t responding, she just laid into Lapis’ arms and let her head fall down on her shoulder. Poor Lapis had no idea what was happening to her. She kept calling and calling the girl’s name, but she wasn’t reacting.

„Pearl!“

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‘Pearl? Pearl! Pearl?!’ Echoed in her head, over and over again. That honey sweet voice. Ah, that voice... ‘Lapis?’

She opened her eyes and hissed in pain, trying to sit up, but she couldn’t. „Where am I?“ She turned her head to a side, just to see where she was.

She was lying on something. Something that was hard for her, with white cover. Everything around her was covered in dark and the place smelled like a desinfection.

There was a complete darkness around her and she couldn’t see any single thing, probably because it was too late at night. Why did she have the goddamn feeling that she was in hospital?

„Was I dreaming back then? Was that all... Just a dream?“
Pearl noticed her forearm being swathed in bandages, from which were some tubing leading to a hospital device that was quietly beeping behind her head, making her head hurt even more because of that monotonous sound.

She was all alone. In a terrifying silence. Lying somewhere in the dark and she didn’t even know where and why. She was scared. Really scared.

Her throat constricted, she choked herself with a weak sob. Then one hot tear appeared in a corner of her eye and rolled down her pale cheek, followed by another and another teardrop. She started to cry.

‘... I wanna go home...’

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She was lying in hay on her left side, covered in her blanket, squeezing it softly and with hands folded under head. She still could smell Pearl’s perfume on it, sweet and easy scent.

Lapis moved the blanket to her nose and smelled it intensively, although she felt really awkward while doing it.

She sighed heavily and tightened her grip. „I hope you’re okay.“

She was thinking too much, she couldn’t sleep. Her head was full of her, the girl with peach-colored hair, sparkling turquoise eyes and enchanting smile and…

„Shit, forget that!“ Lapis cursed and sat up quickly, hiding her face in her palms. She moaned. „What am I doing?“

She climbed down from the attic and quietly walked towards Blue’s stall. She took the stall bars in her hands and looked through them, wondering if the horse was asleep.

Lapis sighed and bit her lip, opening the gate as quiet as possible. She entered the stall and carefully touched her horse.

„You asleep, hon?“ She whispered.

The mare turned her head towards Lapis and grunted sleepily, shaking her pointy ears.

„Did I wake you up, girl? Uh, I’m sorry...“ She hugged the horse around its neck and stroked it in apologize. „But... Wouldn’t you like to go for a midnight walk with good old friend Lapis? I won’t tack you up."

Blue snorted and nodded, making few steps on spot. Lapis smiled and walked her out of the stall. She then took a headcollar from a tack room and put it on horse’s head. She was wondering if she should take a lead rope, although she was almost sure that Blue wouldn’t run away from her.

She decided not to bring the lead and then she just grabbed her mare by the halter and led her outside the stable, walking slowly towards a grazing meadow near the barn building.

Once they entered the grazing meadow, surrounded by rope fence, Lapis let go of her horse’s headcollar and together they continued up the hill.
Although Blue seemed really tired just a few minutes ago, she was now happily trotting and kicking her legs into the air. Lapis couldn’t stop herself from smiling. She watched how happy Blue was, how she was playing outside, how she was contentedly trotting around and neighing, how her short mane was waving in slow blowing wind.

Today’s night was clear with sky full of bright stars and a half moon. After Lapis climbed up the hill, she sat under her favorite and only tree that was growing there. It was little maple tree with red leaves on its branches. Lapis loved sitting under that tree and watching the night sky, listening to loud crickets that were all around her. She loved making new wishes and thinking about future. But tonight it probably won’t be thinking about the future…

„Right, Blue?“ She sighed and closed her tired eyes.

Blue raised her head from the ground, silently watching Lapis as she was sitting under the tree, leaning against its trunk.

After a moment the mare slowly approached her owner and softly poked at Lapis’ cheek with her muzzle. She continued upper on a top of Lapis’ head and then she breathed out a hot air out of her lungs, making Lapis’ blue hair locks flutter.

Lapis opened her eyes and sighed with a smile. She took her horse by its throat and with her free hand she stroked her forehead and nose.

„Who’s that girl, Blue?“ She asked, whispering, combing mare’s mane with her fingers. And as she realized that she won’t receive the answer, she hugged the horse around its big head, giving it kiss on forehead.

„What is happening to me?“ She asked again and sniffed, still hugging the horse.

Blue half-neighed at Lapis, leaning her head against Lapis’ shoulder.

„You’re right. It’s over… It’s over, isn’t it?“ She thought and sighed heavily. „I should stop… I probably won’t see her ever again… But I still wish I could."

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

- Lapis takes care of Pearl while she's resting by the stable
- Pearl appears to be confused, wondering if all that happened was just a long dream
- Now it's time for Lapis to admit that she has a crush on Pearl
„How are you doing?“ Garnet asked with her low voice, standing in the door, while Pearl was sitting on Garnet’s bed in her apartment.

Pearl was looking out of the window at that moment. She glanced over at her older friend. „I’m fine.“ She said, but it didn’t sound much convincing.

Garnet approached her and sat down on the bed next to her. „I’m glad that the concussion is over. But I feel like something’s still bothering you.“

Pearl looked Garnet into her dark eyes. Garnet always recognized that something was wrong, she was right. She was always right. Pearl couldn’t lie to her and she couldn’t even try. But she didn’t want to tell her the truth either. What was she supposed to do then?

Pearl looked back out of the window and leaned her forehead against the glass. „It’s nothing. I’m just being ridiculous.“ She forced a smile.

Garnet was silent for a moment, watching Pearl as she was trying to hide her emotions and her slightly red cheeks. „Being in love doesn’t mean being ridiculous, Pearl.“

Pearl immediatelly pulled back, face bright red. „What?!“ She turned her head to Garnet again. „But, Garnet.“

„You don’t have to be ashamed if you like her, Pearl. Being in love with someone is natural.“

„But I—“ Pearl bit her lip hard, furrowing her eyebrows. As she opened her mouth to say something, Garnet managed to answer her question before it was asked.

„Be honest with her. Don’t be afraid of telling her.“ A warm honest smile appeared on her dark face and she gently put her hand on Pearl’s shoulder.

„You know that I can’t.“ Pearl opposed. „What would she think of me?“

The dark-skinned woman smirked widely and shook her head. „Probably that you’re sweet girl.“

Pearl blushed deeply at that, she couldn’t be more red than she was right now. „What… What makes you think that?“

Garnet smirked again, still holding her hand on Pearl’s shoulder. „Sometimes you can ask such a silly questions, Pearl.“

The skinny girl locked her mouth in a tight line, staring still at Garnet. The older woman then pulled back and shifted her glasses upper.

„She was worried about you. She kept calling every day to make sure that you were okay...“ She made a short pause and then continued. „I think she would like to see you again.“

„Me too…“ Pearl looked aside with a sigh.

„You don’t have to be afraid of anything. Just be honest.“ She patted Pearl’s shoulder several
times then. She slowly stood up and headed to the door, giving Pearl some time and space to think. She grabbed the door handle and turned back to Pearl once again.

„May I bring you something? Tea? Coffee?“

Pearl froze, recognizing those words that were already asked before. But by someone else.

„Tea…“ She blinked and smiled a little. „Tea would be nice…“
She watched Garnet nodding, leaving the room and closing the door behind her. Pearl listened to the sound of footsteps that were slowly vanishing in the distance and again she leaned her head against the window, wondering what to do.

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„Damnit…“ Lapis cursed as she knocked down another hurdle, cantering along a fence that surrounded the training area.

„Dude, what’s wrong with you? Have you even jumped any hurdle today?“ Peridot asked, sitting on the wooden fence, watching Lapis.

Lapis pulled the reins and stopped her horse in front of Peridot, taking off her helmet. „I’m done today… I don’t know what’s wrong! It was okay just a few days ago.“

„Pfff…“ Peridot sputtered. „Just give it a rest, woman. You won the World Cup two weeks ago! You should relax…“

Lapis looked at her, quite annoyed.

Peridot cleared her throat and opened her mouth. „Hey, you know what would I do?“ She asked eagerly, joining her palms together.

„Ride your boyfriend instead of your horse?“ Lapis rolled her eyes.

„Hey!“ The blonde barked. „Take that back!“

Lapis shrugged her shoulders. „Make me…“ She snorted.

Peridot growled, closing her eyes. „But seriously. What’s going on with you? You’re acting strange… Are you on period?“

„No, I’m not!“ She hissed, rolling her eyes. She spurred her horse aggressively and asked it to trot, leaving Peridot.

„Where are you going?“ The shorter girl asked, leaning both elbows on her knees, pointy chin resting in her palms.

„I’m gonna try it again.“ Lapis shouted from the distance, approaching the vertical that was standing on the opposite side of the fence from where Peridot was watching her.

Lapis squeezed Blue’s sides right in front of the obstacle, jumping into the air and crossing it successfully. She headed to another hurdle in the training block. She spurred her horse again and jumped over the reduced obstacle.

„Good one. “ Peridot nodded and jumped off of the fence, approaching the fallen hurdle that Lapis had knocked down before. „I’ll go clean Percy, can you do it alone here?“ She asked, lifting up the fallen rail and putting it on place.
„I’ll be fine.“ Lapis answered, galloping around.

After her friend left the training ground, Lapis tried to make several clear rounds without hitting any rail, but she couldn’t do it, even if she was trying her best.

„Aaaaarghh!“ She growled loudly, mad at herself. „Why can’t I do that?!“

She dismounted her horse and walked her way to fallen vertical, taking its rail and putting it back. She slowly headed to the other hurdle and fixed it, murming something to herself. Lapis then climbed up on the fence and sat on it, face buried in her hands. It didn’t take too long when Blue came to her and stood in front of Lapis, snorting at her, watching and waiting what will happen next.

„What’s wrong with me?“ She sniffed, looking at her mare. Tho she knew that she won’t get any response from her.

„I need a break…“ Lapis sighed and took her horse’s muzzle into her hands, giving Blue little kiss on her white snip between her nostrils. „Just give me ten minutes.“

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„I can’t believe I’m doing this…“ Pearl stared unbelievably ahead, holding a piece of paper with some small letters on it. She was standing in a gate that led to the big area with fences, meadows, the stable and big wooden barn. Everything was telling her not to enter this terrifying area full of giant and dangerous, loud animals that were Pearl’s creepiest nightmare. But there was one thing that made Pearl come there. She tried all kinds of things to make her go and she finally induced herself to do it. There was no way back. She was doing it. Right here and right now.

She took a deep breath and stepped forward, leading her bike by her right side. She even forgot to ask Garnet how she got her and her bike home after that accident.

She was careful this time and slowly walked along a loamy path, down a small hill that led to the stable. On her way down, she heared few loud neighs, because of which she made herself stop and persuade herself that it’s absolutely safe to continue in what was she doing.

Finally she overcame the hill and slowly, doubtfully she approached the entrance to the barn. She swallowed hardly, biting her bottom lip. There came a loud neigh again and Pearl jumped into the air in fear, making herself almost turn around and run away.

Her breath suddenly accelerated, her hands started to tremble. She wanted to leave immediately.

’No, stop! I can’t leave now! Once I got here, I have to finish what I started!’ Pearl clenched her teeth and resolutely walked towards the barn. She recognized the bench where she was once sitting on. Where Lapis brought her large and soft, warm blanket and a delicious green tea.

Pearl sighed dreamily and wished she could bring those times back. But with another horse neigh she shook her head and came back to reality.

The girl leaned her bike against the bench and slowly, carefully enough she entered the barn.

She was breathing fast, stepping silently and near the tall walls, trying to avoid a large, empty-handed, part of the barn and its enormous space all over her.

As she continued forward, she kept touching the wall on her left side with her both hands, at least the wall wasn’t that scary at sight. On her right side there was ladder, leaning against the attic edge, in where many bales of hay were lying. Also there were few bales of hay under the attic, in
a half-empty room without a front wall.

'Probably feed room.' Pearl thought for a moment, but cleared her head right after that.

Next to the feed room, and the attic above it, in the end of the short corridor was another room, but with a front wall and closed door with a 'Storage' sign on it. Also there was second entrance to the barn on the other side of the corridor.

Pearl continued deeper into the building, still keeping the wall on her left side near her. There were lots of dry goldish ears of hay lying everywhere on the ground, and some stable prongs and shovels standing near the walls, supported by them.

As Pearl was looking around the interior, a bunch of little swallows flew into the barn and headed to the attic. She wondered if they have a nest there, it made Pearl smile for a while.

Pearl then stepped into the open entrance to the stable, which was on a left side of the barn. She remembered to touch the wall, but with that she couldn’t continue. There were stalls on both sides of the corridor, no safe wall. Pearl, half-hiding behind the corner, thoroughly scanner the whole area, watching all those dark eyes that were staring at her, watching her every movement, every blink of her eyes.

'This wasn’t a good idea…' Pearl felt a drop of sweat rolling down her forehead. And another, and another.

'This wasn’t a good idea at all…’ She swallowed, squeezing the door frame violently enough to break it, with her hands shaking.

Pearl all of a sudden heard one loud bash against the wooden plank of a horse stall, that shook with the whole stable interior. It was huge, strong and really terrifying pitch-black-coated horse that was making that noise. It kept knocking and bashing with its hind legs to the stall, yet so aggressively and violently. It was loudly neighing, still bashing to the wooden wall, not quit close to stop.

Pearl for a moment felt like she let go of her soul. She froze on a spot, her legs and hands unable to stop from shaking, her heart wildly bouncing in her small chest. Her eyes were swollen and wet from tears, jaw trembling and her mind completely fogged, unable to think or do anything else than just stand face to face against the worst nightmare she could even imagine.

'Malachite! Shut up, you fucking horse!' Someone yelled from the other side of the stable and kept yelling until the animal finally stopped. 'Christ, what’s wrong with you today?''

A short girl with blond hair approached Malachite’s stall. It was kinda funny that the girl was really tiny against that giant horse. She almost wasn’t even once its size. But Pearl had to admit that the girl could prove her authority very well.

'Hey.' The blonde looked to a direction where Pearl was standing, putting hands on her hips. 'Can I help you?''

Pearl, paralyzed with fear, was searching for words and also trying to move. 'I-I… I…''

'Y-You what?' Peridot asked impatiently. She then turned on her heels and walked towards a horse that was standing in between two stalls on the other side of the corridor, with its back turned to Pearl. That horse was attached to a steel pillar with some rope, standing still.

Pearl swallowed, staring at Malachite, who seemed to be really calm at that moment. Then she looked at the unknown girl who was now standing on the horse’s left side. She slowly moved her
left hand from horse’s flank towards its hind leg, sliding her hand down and lifting its pastern. She leaned the strong leg against her thigh and pulled a hoof pick out of her trouser pocket. Gently holding the hoof, she carefully started cleaning it.

„So, are ya gonna tell me or will you just stand there like that?“ The girl raised her head, gazing at Pearl, who didn’t seem to move from spot yet.

Pearl cleared her throat, still unable to move. „I-uh…“ She straightened her back, searching for words. She just wondered what is that girl probably thinking. That some strange girl just walked into their stable without any invitation and even without any permission to enter the whole area?

„You’re not much talkative, huh?“ The girl grinned, continuing in cleaning horse’s hoof. „Are you looking for something?“

Pearl then clenched her teeth and took her courage, at least the small amount that left yet. „I’m… I’m looking for… L-Lapis.“

After mentioning her name, her cheeks became slightly red. She was glad that the girl couldn’t see it from the distance between them. At least she thought that she couldn’t.

The blonde raised her head again, measuring Pearl thoroughly from top to the bottom. Pearl became nervous as the girl kept staring at her, so she made one short step backwards.

Another neigh filled the stable and Pearl jumped in surprise into the air, then she hid behind the corner. „Oh my God. Who induced me do this?!“

„Oh yeah, Lazuli is at the back behind the stable. Training ground, you can’t miss that.“ The blond said and continued in her work, but after a few seconds she heard horseshoes clapping against the floor behind her.

„Who’s at the back again?“ Suddenly another girl appeared in the stable, passing Peridot and her haflinger with big mahogany-coated horse.

The blond-haired girl turned around to see who it was, although she recognized that voice. „Oh, there you are. Some girl was looking for you.“ She said and turned back to finish clearing the hoof.

Lapis lead her horse deeper to a center on the stable. „Some who?“ She asked and when she noticed Pearl hiding on the other side of the corridor, she froze on a spot. Pearl likewise.

There was maybe six-meters distance between them. They both stared at each other totally breathless, with cheeks slightly red, without moving a muscle. The moment of absolute silence then broke Lapis’ horse that poked her into her right shoulder with its muzzle, making Lapis shook her head and bring herself back to earth.

„… Pearl.“ She breathed out, still gazing at her.

Pearl swallowed and made one step to a side, so she wasn’t hiding behind the corner. „H-Hi…“ A cracked greet left her mouth. Waving her hand slowly, Pearl bit her lip.

„Hi.“ Lapis sighed with a shy smile. „What… Brings you back here?“

„I… Uh.“ Pearl couldn’t find words. She watched Lapis as she took off her helmet and shook her head, so her blue mane waved around in the air. It was all like a slow motion with a charming music and all those sparkles around.
Pearl suddenly felt dizzy again. She had to lean her body against the wall for support, because she felt like her knees will stop working soon. *No, I can’t… I can’t let this happen again!*

„Are you okay?“ The rider asked worriedly. Her horse then poked her again, this time to her head. The animal took a blue hair lock into its lips and toyed with it. Lapis then softly pushed the horse aside, still looking at Pearl.

„Y-Yeah. I’m fine.“ Pearl assured her, trying to straighten up.

As Lapis presumed, Pearl probably won’t go deeper to the stable, so Lapis decided to walk to the place where Pearl was standing.

She let go of Blue’s reins and slowly approached Pearl, making the distance between them smaller with every step.

She stopped right in front of her, realizing that Pearl was actually taller than her, kinda like Lapis’ sister. „Are you sure that you’re okay? Don’t you wanna sit down?“

Pearl couldn’t believe that there actually was someone so kind. Most strangers that she met in the past often weren’t so nice to her. So why was she?

„No, it’s okay. Thank you.“ A shy smile appeared on her lips.

Lapis smirked at that, letting her cheeks become warm. „Tell me, have we ever formally introduced to each other?“

Pearl thought, but she couldn’t find a positive answer. She shook her head. „I… Don’t think so.“

„Well then…“ Lapis offered Pearl her hand with a warm smile on her cheeks and looked Pearl into her turquoise eyes. „Nice to meet you. I’m Lapis. Lapis Lazuli.“

Pearl hesitated for a moment, but then accepted Lapis’ offer and gently shook their joined hands. „I’m Pearl. Just Pearl for you.“

„Okay, Just Pearl.“ Lapis snorted. „So, what brings you back to our stable?“

When Pearl opened her mouth to say something, her eyes suddenly widened. She screeched in fear as Lapis’ horse came near her and stopped on Lapis’ right side, looking over her shoulder. Pearl then made several steps backwards.

„No, no! It’s okay. She won’t hurt you.“ Lapis reached out her hand, stopping her friend, who started to panic. The horse didn’t do anything about that. It just stood there innocently and watched them both dealing with their problems.

„Trust me, Pearl. I wouldn’t let her to hurt you.“ Lapis smiled widely at her, slowly taking Pearl by her hand.

Pearl almost stopped shaking after that. Lapis’ touch kinda calmed her down. Her hand was soft and warm, with soothing vibration that overwhelmed her whole skinny body.

„O-hokay.“ She nodded, biting her lip. She greatly enjoyed the moment when Lapis held her hand, so gently and carefully squeezing it.

Pearl’s fingers then lowered, but she was trying her best not to touch Lapis back with her fingers, trying not to squeeze her hand, too. Just letting herself be hold.
"See?" Lapis patted Blue on her neck, then she led her free hand to horse’s head and stroked its long nose. "She’s a good girl."

Pearl nodded quickly, wanting to run away from that enormous animal as far as possible. But still something was telling her that she doesn’t have to be afraid.

Lapis was really charming, Pearl thought. She was a bit smaller than her. She had freckles and those beautiful deep dark eyes. Pearl felt like she’s prettier every time she sees her. The girl was so enchanted by Lapis that she almost forgot why was she actually there.

Pearl cleared her throat finally, letting go of Lapis’ hand, although she didn’t want to. "I just… I wanted to thank you for… Rescuing me, and… All those thing that you did for me back then."

Lapis smirked, shaking her head and giving Pearl honest smile. "That’s a matter of course, rescuing someone when he’s in trouble. Isn’t it?"

"Yeah…" Pearl locked her mouth in a tight line, looking awkwardly aside.

"Actually… Thanks to Blue we found you. She wanted to go to the city that day. You should thank her instead of me. Lapis grinned, patting her horse. "Right, girl?"

Blue quietly neighed and poked Lapis again, snuggling to her and toying now with Lapis’ clothes with her lips.

A warm wide smile appeared on Pearl’s cheeks. That animal in the end didn’t seem to be so scary that she thought. She felt love and harmony between those two.

"Well… Thank you, too… Blue." Pearl addressed her carefully. And as she watched Lapis and her horse, she remembered something. Something important that was the reason she came back here. She put her hand into her pocket and shortly searched for something. In the end she pulled out some piece of red folded fabric and shyly she handed it to Lapis.

"What is it?" Lapis asked softly and took it, thereupon her horse sniffed it.

Pearl’s cheeks turned bright red when she didn’t know what to say. Well, she knew, but she had no idea how to say it.

"I-uh…" She rubbed her nape and looked aside, feeling slightly embarrassed. "I thought that flowers are kinda… Unexceptional, so…"

Lapis carefully and with care unfolded the fabric, finding there beautiful, shiny little thing.

"… A pearl?" Lapis’ eyes widened in surprise. She looked unbelievally at Pearl.

Pearl then looked back at her, not even trying to hide her red cheeks. "Yeah… My dad works for a company that’s dealing with pearls, corals and other sea stuff and I thought… That you might like it."

Lapis’ eyes just shone with happiness, she couldn’t believe her own eyes. "This pearl is sooo beautiful! I’ve never seen a real pearl in my life before… Wait. You’re not really giving me that, are you?"

Pearl’s cheeks then flushed with darker shade of red. "Well… I am."

"But, Pearl… I can’t keep such a beautiful thing like this." She looked worriedly at her, eyebrows furrowed.
„Of course you can.“ Pearl opposed. „You saved my life.“

Lapis just unbelievably stared at her, unable to say any single word. A tear appeared in a corner of her eye.

Lapis then made one quick step forward. She wrapped her arms around Pearl’s shoulders and squeezed her tightly, enough not to crash her. „Thank you…“

Pearl immediately lost her breath as Lapis’ chest was pressed against hers. She felt her fast heart beat, her breath, her body’s warmth. She could smell her sweet spring perfume again. It was so light and comforting. Who would think that a girl from stable actually doesn’t smell like a horse?

The taller girl then took a deep breath. She would crack up if she let her brain and other important organs without oxygen again. She hesitantly, slowly put her arms around Lapis’s slim waist and giving her waist tender squeeze.

Lapis recognized that smell, the light perfume that was still holding onto her blanket. Now she had its source right under her nose. She also smelled a pleasant fragrance that was coming out of Pearl’s fresh washed peach-colored hair.

They stayed like that for so long, yet for really short time. None of them wanted to get separated from each other. But they had to.

Lapis, as the once who started all this, thought that she should be the one who also ends this. She then weakened her grip and made a step backward.

Pearl felt so weak and strong at the same time. She had no idea what exactly this strange feeling was. But it was always happening when she was near her. Or just when she was thinking about her.

Today’s night will definitely be a long one. For both of them.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Pearl visits the stable again, but this time by herself
• Pearl meets Peridot for the first time
• Lapis receives a gift
„You’re… Welcome.“ Pearl let out breathlessly, completely paralized by what just happened.

They were standing there without any single word then. They both were lost in their thoughts, staring at each other. Even that horse was gazing at them, probably wondering what was this strange ritual that they were still carrying on.

Pearl pulled a hair lock behind her ear, biting her lip softly and looking aside. „I… Should probably go. I don’t want to waste your time.“

„You’re not!“ Lapis reacted immediately, and it was a little bit louder than she wanted it to be. „I mean… You’re not wasting my time.“

Lapis’ cheeks became slightly red as Pearl looked back at her. There were thousand of words that she wanted to say, but she was too shy to do it. She couldn’t. Her tongue was curled up in her mouth, she wasn’t able to say anything.

Blue then decided to help her. She made one step back and with her muzzle she pushed Lapis straight ahead, making her do a few forced steps forward towards Pearl. Lapis panicked a little when she appeared just a few centimeters away from her, almost making a contact with her chest again.

„Blue?! What are you…“ Lapis tried to pull herself back, but the mare was still pushing her forward. „I-I’m sorry, I… She’s not usually like this.“ And as Lapis finished the sentence, she was pushed against Pearl again, slightly touching her.

Pearl would normally do a step backwards, but now she couldn’t do it for some reason.

„I’m sorry, Pearl.“ She apologized and then turned around, pushing her horse away. „Blue, stop it! Damnit, what’s wrong with you?“

„Maybe she’s hungry.“ Pearl opined. She didn’t notice that yet, but even if Lapis’ horse was so near her, she didn’t feel nervous. Well, maybe a little, just in principe that it was a horse, but nothing big about it.

„Well, yeah.“ Lapis agreed, embarrassed, still pushing her horse away. „I should feed her probably…“

Pearl smirked, crossing her hands on her chest in embarrassment. „Okay, so… I should be going. I won’t interrupt you.“

„No, it’s okay.“ Lapis finally made the mare stop, although she knew that Blue will do that again in a short time. „You can stay.“

Pearl licked her lips, they became dry for some reason. „Thanks, but… I’ve got some plans for tonight.“ She lied. She would really like to stay, but there was a problem. Well actually lots of problems, a giant problems with big dark eyes that were staring at her since she came here.

„Oh.“ Lapis lowered her eyes in disappointment and rubbed her nape. „Yeah, well I… It totally slipped my mind that I actually wanted to clean my horse and… The stable and some stall, too…“
So, yeah… I should be going, too.”

Pearl looked at Lapis with a worried expression. She felt like something was bothering her. She suddenly seemed so sad.

„So…“ The taller girl said, clearing her throat softly. „This is our goodbye, huh?“

Lapis crossed her arms on her chest, not looking at Pearl, although this was the only thing she wanted to do at that moment. „Yeah… Probably.“ She squeezed the red fabric in her hand and sighed.

„… So, goodbye then… Lapis.“ Pearl said, a little confused that Lapis actually wasn’t even looking at her. „She probably doesn’t want to see me… Huh… I knew that this whole thing was a bad idea… I shouldn’t do that… I shouldn’t give her that stupid pearl.‘ She thought and bit her lip hard.

„Bye…“ Lapis sniffed, not moving a muscle. And with that Pearl made a step backward and turned around slowly, still watching Lapis, wondering if she will look at her for the last time. But she didn’t.

Pearl breathed out heavily and headed to get her bike. Hot tears appeared in a corners of her eyes as she was leaving.

„What was I thinking? That someone so famous like her would hang out with some ordinary girl like me? Huh… I was just being ridiculous again…‘ She grabbed the handlebars and pulled the bike off the bench. But then she heard quick footsteps behind her and turned around.

„Pearl, wait!“ Lapis pleaded, stopping in the doorway. She took Pearl by her shoulder and stopped her. „I-um, sorry I… I just.“

Pearl stood there and stared at her. She could do nothing but enjoy her touch again.

Lapis then straightened and removed her hand from Pearl. „It was-uh… Nice to see you again, Pearl.“

Pearl blushed at that, wondering what to say. She thought that Lapis has no interest in her and let her leave just like that. But it seemed that she actually cared about her. Just like Garnet told her.

„You too, Lapis.“ She smiled at her, blinking. She noticed Lapis blushing a little.

„I was wondering if…“ Lapis started, she rubbed her forearm and blushed once again when she felt Pearl’s gaze on her. „If you’d like to… Hang out… Some-times.“

Pearl for a moment felt like that the heart attack almost wasn’t that far from happening. Her eyes widened and she almost dropped the bike down.

„I… I’d like to.“ She grinned finally. Lapis gave her back a warm smile. The one and only smile that could make Pearl crack up on the spot.

„Oh, really? Well, I have to admit that it was kinda unexcepting…“ Lapis then laughed and looked down on the red fabric. „So… See you around?“

„See you around.“ Pearl nodded. She mounted her bike and headed towards the hill from where she entered the area, slowly making the distance between her and Lapis bigger and bigger.

Before Pearl was far enough to leave the area, Lapis managed to wave at her and shout. „Be
careful, so I don’t have to fish you from the ditch again!“

Pearl waved back and laughed at that. „I will!“ She responded. She stood there for a while, watching Lapis as she was still waving at her. Pearl gave her one last smile and then dissapeared behind the horizon.

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Lapis was still standing there, enchanted, dreamy, watching as Pearl was slowly dissapearing. She leaned her side and head against the door frame. She sighed dreamily, lowering her eyelids. „I think I’m going crazy…“

„I bet.“ This sentence suddenly came out of nowhere and Lapis jumped into the air in surprise.

„Who was that clod?“ Peridot approached her friend and stood next to her.

„Excuse me?“ Lapis turned her head to that small girl. „She’s my… Friend.“

„Hello?“ Peridot waved her hand right in front of Lapis’ face. „Don’t dream so big, Lazuli. You don’t really think that she’s into you, right?“

„What? Why are you asking me that?“ She asked, kinda confused.

„Do you think I’m stupid? I bet you were blushing like a little shit, and I didn’t even have to see it.“ The girl explained emotionaly, then she rubbed her chin. „Wait, it kinda does make sense."

„What?“ Lapis crossed her arms on her chest, trying to hide the red fabric that Pearl gave her, and also her red face.

„That’s why you’re acting so weird lately! You’re like that since that accident happened. It’s because of her, isn’t it?“ Peridot poked her into her shoulder. „You like her!“

„Stop that.“ Lapis pushed Peridot away, making her stop from harassing her. Lapis locked her mouth in a tight line, but still she was smiling, feeling a bit ashamed.

„Hey, c’mon, Laz. I’m just teasing.“ She grinned widely and poked the blue-haired girl again. Then Peridot turned around and headed back to the stable. „Now come on. Don’t you have a dung to muck out?“

Lapis sighed. She looked up the hill, wondering if Pearl was coming back, although she knew that she wasn’t. Then she looked down at the soft fabric. She unfolded it and in the center of the it then appeared beautiful big pearl, so shiny and sparkling. Lapis had a feeling for a moment like if Pearl was there with her. Well actually she was.

She scanned the pearl carefully, she watched its every glint that was making her want to see more and more of them. It was just too perfect and beautiful for her to watch it all the rest of the day. Well she could… But after her job here is done.

She hid the pearl to the smooth fabric fibers and put it into her pocket, then she headed to the stable to see Peridot and the rest.

She entered the main part of the building and immediately stopped, noticing her horse still standing on the same spot where she left her. „Ah, Blue…“ She groaned and ran to her, giving her a hug. „I’m sorry, girl. I know I was too rude to you, I… Wait a minute. You’re the one who should be apologizing!“
The mare then made a few steps backwards, neighing at Lapis like if she was laughing at her. She trotted on a spot and shook her head, making her mane wave in the air.

„Why are you laughing?“ Lapis grinned widely and approached her horse again, pushing her away gently. „Don’t you dare laughing at me! Where’s your stall? Shoo, shoo!“

Blue neighed at her for the last time and turned around, trotting to her stall, Lapis running right after her. „Whether you’re there or I’ll get you!“

Lapis ran after her, laughing and passing Peridot as she was finishing clearing Percy. Peridot just unbelievably stared at her.

„You really are going crazy…“ She laughed under her nose, untying a rope, which was Percy attached to, and then she led him to his stall.

Blue found her stall and quickly parked into it, happily neighing that Lapis didn’t catch her. This stall was placed on a left side of the hallway, it was the third stall from the end of the corridor.

Lapis finally got to Blue’s place, patting her on her right buttock heavily. „Damn, you’re so lucky that you always manage to run away from me.“ Lapis laughed again. Blue just shook her head and turned her ears backwards so she could hear Lapis a bit better.

Lapis walked around Blue to her left side and disengaged the girth from the saddle straps, then she pushed up the stirrups on both sides and with a saddle pad she removed the saddle from Blue’s back, taking it back to the tack room to its place.

„Hey, Lapis.“ Peridot addressed her when Lapis was passing her.

„Yeah?“ She turned her head to her friend and noticed big black bucket that she was bending down for.

„Don’t you wanna go for a ride?“ She asked, lifting up the bucket.

„No… Blue is tired after that training for sure. You know that I can’t ride any other horse except for her, right?“

Peridot hummed at that, fishing something in the bucket. „Yeah, right… Here, catch!“ She urged the other girl and threw a carrot after her on her way back.

Lapis ably caught it and took a bite. „Thanks.“ She thanked with a full mouth. But Peridot just stared at her, disgusted.

„Dude… That was for horse…“

Lapis then stopped chewing, eyes wide. She then shrugged her shoulders and took another bite, letting her mare take one too and after that Lapis tasted the carrot once more.

„Yuh…“ Peridot bit her tongue, but grinned. „You’re disgusting.“

„What? You wouldn’t eat a food after your partner?“ Lapis raised her eyebrows, untacking her horse from bridle.

„A partner?“ Peridot repeated and walked towards Percy’s stall, bucket resting in her hands.

„Well, yeah. We shared a few kisses.“ Lapis smirked, heading back to the tack room, this time with a bridle, chewing a rest of the carrot.
„And spits, huh? That girl will probably be jealous when she finds out."

„Oh, come on!“ Lapis shouted from the tack room, laughing. Then she walked out. „You’re the one who’s disgusting now."

„What, me? I’m not swallowing my horse’s spits!“ The girl opposed, opening a stall window and giving a carrot to her haflinger. „Don’t worry, Percy. Mommy won’t eat your food."

„Pff, you’re ridiculous.“ Lapis laughed. She took a headcollar from Blue’s stall gate and stood in front of her horse. She lifted up the halter and put it on Blue’s head and without using a lead rope she whistled and made Blue follow her out of the stall.

„Hey, gimme another carrot.“ She waved her fingers towards herself, her palm turned up.

Peridot pulled out one piece of orange vegetable and threw it at Lapis. „I thought you don’t like… Carrots."

„What?“ Lapis turned around, walking backwards and heading out of the stable, together with her horse.

Peridot pulled out another carrot and forced it towards her lips. She then opened her mouth and pretended licking the tip of the carrot, raising her eyebrows and giving Lapis a dirty smirk.

Lapis almost froze on a spot, shaking her head in disbelief. „Gross! Now who’s disgusting here!“ She shook her head again and turned back, clapping her hands and calling her horse to follow her. She ran out of the stable, heading to the grazing meadow, followed by Blue who was happily trotting right behind her.

Lapis opened the rope fence and let her horse walk in, so she could graze some grass with other horses in the pasture. Then Lapis closed the fence and watched Blue as she walked towards the herd of horses grazing on the top of the hill, where her favourite small maple tree was growing.

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„Aren’t you hungry, Rose?“ Pearl spoke suddenly, sitting on her couch in a complete darkness, watching tv. She stroked her cat, that was lying in a comfortable position in Pearl’s lap, slightly purring.

Pearl looked down at her, the satisfied cat that was enjoying the night in her owner’s lap and massaging her with her paws.

„I’m taking that as no.« She smiled at her little ball of fluff and rubbed her cat’s nape.

A sudden phone ringing broke the silence, making Pearl wonder who might be calling at 10 PM. Pearl reached her hand and took the phone carefully, just not to make her cat change her position.

„Hello?“ Pearl picked the phone, waiting for response.

„Hello, Pearl.« A familiar voice came out of the other side.

„Oh, hi, Garnet.« She smiled to herself. „What’s on your chest?“

„You know that I would never call that late, but I wondered how did it go back at the stable?“

Pearl lost her breath for a moment, replaying the whole afternoon once more in her head, like if she didn’t think about it all night already. „Oh? It went well… I guess.«
„Did Lapis enjoy her gift?” Her friend asked, interested, as the one who actually had the idea to give Lapis a gift.

Pearl bit her lip, seeing Lapis’ reaction again that played in her mind. „She… Liked it. She didn’t even want to keep it.” Pearl then grinned.

„See, I told you.” Pearl couldn’t see it, but she was sure, that Garnet was smiling and was happy for her younger friend.

„How about the rest of your meeting? Did anything interested happen?” The dark-skinned woman asked eagerly.

„Well, everything…” Pearl thought. She had a few words on her tongue, but she was shy to tell Garnet, even if she knew that she could trust her. If she told Amethyst, it probably wouldn’t come out well.

„Actually, she…” She took her breath and spoke calmly. „Asked me out.“

There was a silence for a while, but Garnet managed to answer before Pearl could think that Garnet hung out. „Congratulations then.“

There was a silence again, but then Pearl jumped into the air in surprise when she heard a loud party blowout sound.

„Gee, Garnet.” She shook her head and patted her chest to calm herself down. „Don’t do this to me.“

„I’m just happy for you.“ The woman laughed softly. „Okay, Pearl. So, watch yourself and good night to you.“

„I will. Thanks, Garnet.“ Pearl also wished Garnet a good night and then hung up the phone. She sanked deeper into her couch, making Rose shift in her lap and change her position to more comfortable one.

„So, what we got here?” Pearl asked herself and took a remote control, changing channels and ending up on a tv news. She watched it for a bit, but found nothing that interesting. All those news were just about accidents, politics and violence. Why in a name of God there could not be just a few good news? But at the exact moment when Pearl wanted to switch the tv off, she managed to stop herself, watching the screen. Something caught her attention. She put the remote control back down slowly, listening carefully to the tv.

It said that next week’s Thursday, there will be an extreme and one of the most beautiful perseid meteor shower, probably with a clear sky and nice weather. Even the observatory owner promised that the observatory will be open all night for the general public to see hundreds of falling stars.

Since Pearl was a little girl, she loved watching stars, recognizing all the constellations, building paper spaceships and wishing to get a job as an astronaut and travel to the other side of the universe, to the infinity and beyond. She still owns a telescope that she got from her parents when she was eight years old. Damn, she really loved that expensive thing.

„Look at that, Rose.“ She pointed at the tv, but Rose’s response was just an annoyed cat expression. „Oh, come on. What’s that face about? It will be absolutely gorgeous!” Pearl then smiled widely, already making a big plans for that night.

„I’m gonna ask Garnet and Amethyst. What do you think, would they like to go?” She looked back at her ragdoll cat, but she received the same response. „Okay, I see. It’s perfectly clear.“
Pearl reached out for the calendar that was standing on a cabinet, right next to the couch. She turned the actual page to the next week’s page and smiled happily. „Yeah, we could totally do it. It’s on our next together Thursday.“ The girl searched for a pen in a cabinet drawer after that and with it she circled the next Thursday date.

„Can’t wait for it.“

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Peridot finds out about Lapis’ crush for Pearl
• Pearl is planning to visit the observatory to see the perseid shower
Okay, I’ll pick you and Amethyst at eight.” Pearl nodded, staring out of the window at the cloudy sky. „Hope the weather will get better.“

„Sure it will.“ Echoed from the other side of the phone with a giggle.

Pearl smirked. „You’re the best weather station ever, Garnet.“

„Thank you, Pearl.“ The dark-skinned woman laughed to the phone. „See you around, darling.“

„See you.“ Pearl hung up the phone.

She sighed and leaned her palms against the window sill, her forehead met the glass. Pearl then hissed in pain and pulled back, finding out that another bruise popped out. Still she had a few scars and bruises on her body and she always found another one and another as the time was passing by, although the accident happened over two weeks ago. Every scar that she had, was reminding her of Lapis. The girl who saved her, the girl who was worried about her and did her best to keep Pearl calm. Pearl wondered what might she be doing right now. She always was. She was thinking about if Lapis is thinking about her, too. But no, she probably had better things to do than thinking about some ordinary girl.

A meow came out from the ragdoll cat as she sat down on the floor next to Pearl. The cat then brushed its snow-white head against Pearl’s leg several times and started to purr.

Pearl looked down at her and breathed out a smile. She reached out her hands and carefully took her ragdoll into her arms, letting her long furred hind legs bend and rest in her arms. Rose then put her front dark grey paws on Pearl’s chest and brushed her head against her owner again, purring louder.

Pearl suddenly remebered a woman she once was in love with. But the love for her was just an unrequited love, since Pearl knew that the woman loved someone else. But before she passed away and gave her son a birth, she gave Pearl a kitten for her birthday. A cute little ragdoll kitten that Pearl started to love right after she saw it for the first time. Her cat is now the only one who remains Pearl about her beloved friend who passed away. Shen then named her Rose.

„What are we gonna do now, Rosie?“ Pearl nuzzled to her cat and pressed her lips to its smooth head, kissing her and rubbing her neck gently.

Rose then reached her paw and put it on Pearl’s mouth and patted it several times, which made the girl smile widely. She kissed Rose’s paw and then slowly removed it from her lips, stroking her pet again.

Pearl made her way to the livingroom and sat down on the couch. She reached out for the remote control and switched the tv on, searching for a music channel. As she finally found it, she leaned back against the sofa and closed her eyes, letting a sorrowful sigh escape her lips. Ragdoll, sitting in her lap, looked up at her and meowed. But Pearl didn’t look back at her, so the cat tried to meow again, trying to get Pearl’s attention. But the girl still didn’t move. Suddenly she furrowed her eyebrows and sniffed, bitting her lip hard.

„Why did you have to leave?‘ She sniffed again and opened her watered eyes. Pearl knew that
there was no point in crying about people who passed away. She knew that crying won’t bring
them back and they probably wouldn’t even want people to still cry for them, since they’re in
peace and in the place where they belong. It’s okay to miss them, but the’re still here for us and
helping us to get over the obstacles that life is building right in front of us. The’re showing us the
way, the way where we’re supposed to go.

Rose stood up on her legs and with her front paws she leaned against Pearl’s face, meowing at
her again. Pearl opened her eyes and found Rose, staring at her with her light blue eyes and
purring. Pearl couldn’t resist, but smiled. She took her cat and straightened her own arms, picking
the cat up into the air and giggling.

„I know you’re still here.“

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It’s time to pick up the others. Pearl grabbed the car keys and headed to the parking lot. She
unlocked her old car and opened the door, entering it and sitting down on the seat. Then she
reached out for a seat belt and buckled up. Pearl pressed the clutch and turned on the engine, then
she released the handbrake and changed the gear level from neutral to level one. Then she pressed
the gas pedal and as the car started to move, she slowly removed her left foot from the clutch. The
car slowly moved forward and Pearl turned the steering wheel to the left side, so she could head to
the exit of the parking lot, which was placed in between a round housing estate full of civil
apartments, in which one of them she lived.

First she made her way to Amethyst’s place which wasn’t that far from Pearl’s apartment. It took
her about ten minutes to get there and Amethyst was already waiting for her on a parking lot and
waving at the approaching Pearl’s old pickup.

„Hey, P!“ The girl greeted her and sat on the front seat next to her friend. „Hope those clouds
will spread away soon.“

„… Same.“ Pearl sighed and looked out throught the window to see how bad the cloudiness
was. Pearl then made the car move again to get the last passenger.

They soon arrived to Garnet’s place, which was standing nearby the Beach city town. Garnet
lived in a large fancy house with a beautiful english grass garden, a terrace attached to a pergola
and big garden pool shaped like a bean. Girls loved spending time in the garden, especially when
they celebrated something, like birthdays, Christmas or New year.

„Maaan.“ Amethyst widened her eyes when Pearl stopped right in front of the beige gravel
driveway, and looked out of the window. „I feel like every time I come here, the house is getting
bigger and bigger.“

„I’ve got the same idea…“ Pearl agreed and leaned closer to Amethyst, so she could look at the
house, too.

Suddenly a tall dark-skinned woman with dark glasses appeared in the house door. A wide
smile appeared on her face. She went down the porch stairs and headed to Pearl’s pickup. She
then opened the car door and entered it.

„Hello, girls.“ She greeted them and buckled up. „I’ve got a little surprise for you.“

„Oh, let me guess.“ Pearl started and looked at Garnet through the rear-view mirror with a
smirk. „You bought another pool.“

„Oh-oh, let me!“ Amethyst then cut in, raising her hand. „You bought a fancy lodge in
mountains!"

Garnet froze for a moment, but then she grinned and shook her head. „No, no. I’ve got a double
swing now.“

Both girls didn’t say anything to that, just looked at each other. They actually expected
something really big compared with where Garnet lives and what she can afford. Amethyst
opened her mouth to mention something, but Pearl managed to cup her mouth in time.

„It’s great, Garnet.“ She smiled sheepishly and removed her hand from Amethyst’s lips after a
few seconds. „So… Are you ready for a trip?“

„Yes.“ Garnet responded with her deep calm voice and shifted in her seat, leaning back. The
slightly plump girl also agreed and smiled. Pearl then pressed the clutch down, moved the gear
stick and then pressed down the gas pedal, making the car move.

The observatory wasn’t that far from Garnet’s house. All Pearl had to do, was just to cross the
city labyrinth and get on the top of the hill where the observatory building was standing. It really
didn’t take long, and they made it to the top of the hill and parked near the building. The
observatory was standing in the middle of nowhere, there wasn’t single tree, house or any other
building around it, so nothing was shading the view on the sky from any side. The building floor
plan had a ‘V’ shape with a round base in the middle of it, and had two floors. On the very end of
each building wing was placed an observation dome, that means the west and the east cupola,
where people could watch the sky through the telescopes.

It was already dark outside. Some clouds faded away, but the sky wasn’t entirely clear yet. Pearl
wished that the sky will get clear before the main program starts.

The skinny girl turned the engine off and all three of them then got out of the car, staring at the
enormous building in front of them right across the parking lot and the gravel driveway that led to
the entrance to the glazed observatory.

They entered the building through the rotating door and headed to the reception, buying
themselves a tickets and leaving their clothes in the cloakroom. The main program should start at 9
PM, so they had more then forty minutes to explore the whole interior.

First they headed to the right wing where the lab was and where they could watch the
microorganisms through the microscopes. There also were many large pictures, hanging on the
walls, in which people could see photos of so many things that were vastly zoomed so almost
nobody could say what in the picture was, until they read a description of the taken photo. On the
right wing then girls could try a simulation of gravity on the Moon or a platfost simulating an
earthquake. They then saw many of organic minerals and its structures, how and with what are
meteors, comets, planets and stars formed, what its temperature and color is. They found out how
many degrees of earthquake is possible to measure on Earth, they could even see the seismic
station that measures and records the quakes of earth. Pearl and the girl could read about how the
Earth is old and how all its organisms evolved during all those milliards of years, how lava works,
what kind of soils other planets have, how their hot core’s are large, they could touch and search
on the 3D models of all planets in the Solar system. They could try to control a prototype of the
Sojourner Mars bot and find out how it works, especially when it is so far away from Earth on
planet Mars. They thought how many stars, planets or star clusters are in space, if some sort of life
could exist somewhere in the entire universe. All three girls watched how the Earth rotates around
itself, around the Sun and what constellations can be seen in the night and the day sky, and what
kind of star swarm falls in what number and when.

Pearl felt like she was in heaven. Although she knew all those things, she always learned
something new. She haven’t been to this observatory for years, a lot changed in here and for her it was absolutely wonderful and educational.

Right as Pearl’s digital watch showed 9 PM, Pearl and her two friends headed to the main hall to hear the lecture about worm holes. After that, Pearl was so experienced that she felt like she can’t learn anything more, like her head will soon explode because of all the knowledge she absorbed in a one single hour.

Then they went to the observatory west, so they could watch stars and the constellations through the telescope, accompanied by practised and experienced astronomer. They went up a spiral staircase to the cupola’s dark room with its dome roof opened. They listened to another lecture about astology and watched the stars together. In the end, the sky was beautifully clear, except for some small clouds that were still floating around, and the girl decided to get to a meadow that was spreading nearby the building, intended for watching the night sky. Garnet, Amethyst and Pearl headed to the reception, but then…

Pearl was happily skipping on her way to the main hall through the corridor, when she accidentaly hit something and hit herself to her head. „Ouch!“ Pearl squaked as she mistakenly ran into someone who just came out from behind the corner to her way. She forced her hand to her forehead to rub the damaged spot and bit her lip.

„Oh no, I’m so sorry I–“ Pearl heared someone say… That voice. It sounded familiar somehow. Pearl looked up while her two friends approached her.

„Lapis?“ Pearl noticed a young familiar blue-haired woman and immediately froze on a spot. She thought that she must be dreaming.

„Pearl?“ Lapis seemed surprised. „I-um, I’m sorry, I didn’t want to hit you like that. Are you okay?“ She then approached Pearl and reached her hand carefully, like if she wanted to take Pearl by her hand.

„I-it was my fault, I…“ Pearl stuttered and rubbed her forehead where she unfortunately hit the exact spot where she found another bruise just a few hours ago. „I shoul’ve been looking where I was going.“

Amethyst then walked around her taller friend to find out who was this stranger standing in front of her. „Hey, aren’t you the girl from that horse show like month ago?“ She then asked, while Garnet put her hand on Pearl’s shoulder.

Lapis blushed a little and intertwined her fingers. „Y-yeah. That’s me.“ She smiled nervously. Then Garnet spoke.

„You did a great job back then, congratulations.“ The tall woman nodded and talked a bit with Lapis later then.

Amethyst was just having fun while watching Pearl who was absolutely flushed with red and couldn’t even look anywhere else than on her toes. Amethyst then poked Pearl with her elbow with a smirk on her face and raised eyebrows. Pearl could do nothing than just awkwardly rub the place where Amethyst gently pushed her. Pearl swallowed.

„Thank you for your care about Pearl, she’s feeling much better now.“ Garnet then said thankfully, giving Pearl’s shoulder a bit tighter squeeze. Pearl then raised her head and looked at Lapis who was just smiling at her.

„It’s a trifle. I’m glad she’s okay now.“ Then she smiled wired, which made Pearl blush even
more. „Oh and-uh… Nice to meet you. I’m Lapis.“

Garnet accepted Lapis’ hand and shook it gently. „Garnet.“

Amethyst then joined the meeting and shook Lapis’ hand, too. „I’m Amethyst.“

The dark-skinned woman cleared her throat and shifted her glasses upper, patting Pearl’s shoulder. „I have a feeling that you two would like to talk, so… We’ll give you some space.“ Garnet pushed Amethyst into her back and made her go ahead. Even if the girl resisted, she then growled and continued forward, leaving Lapis and Pearl alone.

Pearl couldn’t move. Her eyes were wide open and her mouth likewise. She stared at Lapis while she was watching Garnet and Amethyst leaving, but then she turned back to Pearl who jumped in surprise.

„You have a nice friends.“ Lapis admitted calmly, although she still couldn’t believe that she could meet Pearl on a place like this, and actually at the same time. „It’s a surprise that we meet again.“

Pearl nodded hesitately, rubbing her nape. „Yeah… I didn’t even think about that we could meet in a place like this. I didn’t know that you’re interested in astronomy.“

Lapis giggled. „What can I say, I loved it since I was little kid.“

Until now, Pearl thought that she was crazy, because she loved astronomy and everyone was saying to her that astronomy is a job and interest for men. She felt alone back then, nobody understood her, nobody wanted to talk to her because she was different and loved different things than other kids in her age. Now this warmed her heart.

Pearl again watched Lapis carefully, she scanned every part of her body, and she then suddenly noticed little shiny thing resting in her throat pit. It was beautiful round pearl glued to a little silver cone and attached to thin cable chain. Pearl’s eyes shone.

„The pearl.“ She held her breath, realizing that it was the pearl she gave her.

Lapis for a moment looked like she doesn’t understand, but then she realized what was Pearl talking about. The smaller girl then reached her hand and took the pearl between her index finger and her thumb.

„Yeah… I went to a silversmith and wanted him to make something special with it. It would be a shame just throw it into a drawer and let it be, don’t you think?“ Lapis asked, tho she knew the answer.

The skinny girl just stared. She was so surprised and enchanted. She couldn’t even dream about a thing like this could happen.

„It…“ Pearl swallowed, trying not to get redder somehow. „Suits you.“

Lapis thanked her in whisper and then they went into a silence, both biting their lips and looking aside. Lapis then looked out of the glazed wall and inhaled.

„Would you like to… Watch the perseids together?“ Lapis asked shyly, forcing herself to look at Pearl who was trying to do the same. But Pearl finally made herself to look at the other girl.

„I’d like to.“ She snickered.
Both girls headed to the observatory meadow and took a seat on a random bench. They looked up and watched the sky for a bit when a first perseid passed the sky, soon followed by another.

Pearl sighed dreamily and intertwined her fingers in her lap, eyes full of a beautiful light, hope and wishes. Lapis watched her as she was leaning backwards with her palms against the bench. She thought that there is nothing more interesting than a night sky and stars. But she felt like that one star is sitting right next to her, smiling and gazing up and swinging her legs slightly.

Another star passed the sky and Pearl pointed at it with a bright smile on her cheeks. „Another one! Make a wish.“ She urged and glanced over at her friend, but found her gazing at her.

Lapis looked aside, glad that the darkness was hiding her red cheeks perfectly. „I wish—“

She didn’t manage to finish the sentence when she was suddenly cut by Pearl. „Don’t say that! Or it won’t happen.“

Lapis grinned with a snort. „Okay.“ She then closed her eyes and wished for something in her mind. Still she was more focusing on Pearl than on what to wish. Why couldn’t she just intertwine those two things together?

„Look! Those stars are making a flower shaped constellation.“ Pearl said all of the sudden, grinning, but then she lowered her head. „... Which reminds me that I haven’t been in a botanic garden for a while.“

Lapis looked up at the sky, but then looked back and raised her eyebrows. „Do you like flowers?“ She leaned forward on her elbows to see Pearl’s face.

The girl nodded and sighed dreamily. „I love flowers.“

Lapis then started to think. One idea popped up in her mind.

„Well, I could show you something way better than a botanic garden.“ She puffed her chest, smirk on her face.

Pearl turned her head to her with interest, although she doubted that there could be anything more beautiful than a botanic garden. „And what?“

„Come tomorrow to the stable and I’ll show you.“ She urged, smiling at the other girl.

Pearl was in such a state of shock, thinking about that she should go to that terrifying place again. But if Lapis really meant it, the place that she wanted to show her must’ve been much prettier than the botanic garden then.

„I don’t know…“ Pearl blushed and hid her head between her shoulders.

„Don’t worry, it’s not inside.“ The rider assured her. „It’s in a short distance from there. And I can tell that I haven’t seen a better place than that.“

Pearl raised her head and looked at Lapis. Could she trust her? Well, Lapis saved her. She wears a necklace with a pearl she gave her. Lapis for sure wasn’t a bad person, Pearl thought. She could give it a chance.

„Okay.“ She finally nodded. „When may I come then?“

„I’m free all day. It’s up to you.“ She gave Pearl a smile.
Pearl hummed at that. „How about afternoon?“

„Sounds great to me.“

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

- Pearl, Garnet and Amethyst visited the observatory
- Lapis met Pearl’s friends for the first time
- Pearl accepted Lapis’ offer and decided to visit the stable again

PS: Thanks to ‘emma20020226’ for the observatory idea and also thanks to my friend Pavel for visiting the real observatory with me! ;)
„So, here we are again.“ Pearl sighed softly, biting her lip. She gently pushed the car brake down to slow down her pickup. Car tires were slightly slipping on the loamy path with tiny pebbled, so Pearl tried to be as careful as possible.

She continued downwards the hill along the long path, decorated by large and endless meadows on each side of it, and slowly approached the stable. After a few minutes when she got there, she parked her pickup on the right side of the entrance to the barn, on little gravel parking lot with only three parking places.

Pearl then took a deep breath, closing her eyes for a while and leaning her head against her seat. She wondered if all this was actually real, if it really was happening. Being friends with someone so famous seemed so unreal to her, so unbelievable. Was it just luck? Or was it destiny? Millions of questions were fogging her mind, never ending thoughts were making her feel dizzy, yet happy and elated. Seeing Lapis felt the same, or just feeling her being near her. Pearl wondered if she was even real. Lapis was something like an angel to her. So inviolable, so supernatural, so uplifting, happy, positive and full of affecting energy. Like if she was born from pure light. Lapis was just too perfect to her. Just the look of her enchanting eyes felt so heavenly, dreamy, making Pearl just stare at her like at a holy picture and pray for another beautiful sounding word to escape her heart-shaped lips.

Pearl opened her eyes slowly, making herself stop from having her head in the clouds, and breathed out softly. She then turned the engine off and unbuckled her seat belt, putting the car keys into her pocket.

She opened the car door, thereupon she immediately heard a dog barking. Little Shiba-Inu puppy was jumping around Pearl’s car and waving its tail, greeting their guest with loud barking.

„Oh, hello there.“ Pearl closed the door and kneeled down to meet that little barking ball of fur. She tried to rub that puppy on its head, but Shiba managed to jump right into Pearl’s lap and made her fall down on her back. The dog was waving its curled tail wildly and licking Pearl’s face, not planning to stop. The poor girl couldn’t even take a breath, yet get the dog down.

After a moment of the sweetest terror that happened to Pearl so far, someone softly giggled, not standing so far from her. „She likes you.“

Pearl then turned her head, finally getting the dog’s wet tongue off of her face and finding Lapis, leaning her side against the wide door frame with arms crossed on her chest.

„Yeah…“ Pearl smirked. „Probably.“

„… Pumpkin, get off of her.“ Lapis snickered. She quickly approached Pearl and helped her to get out of that adorable trap. She offered Pearl her hand and helped her to get on her feet.

„Are you okay?“ Lapis dusted the ash off of her, her back, her shoulders, her… Chest. Then stopped and pulled back, feeling her cheeks becoming hot.

They both then flushed red as their eyes met. They were so close to each other, and none of them even noticed that just yet.
„Yeah, I’m okay.“ Pearl then added with a sigh, dusting the loam off of her hair.

„Great.“ The rider smiled and pulled a dog collar with a lead, attached to it, out of her pocket. „Ready for a walk?“

Pearl nodded without a word, wide smile danced on her cheeks. She watched Lapis as she gave the dog its collar and how it immediately started to bite the lead, trying to get rid of it.

Pearl let out half-suppressed laugh, cupping her mouth. „She’s a cutie.“

„Yeah. And forever hungry.“ Lapis added and stood up. „Just like me.“

Pearl couldn’t stop herself from giggling again. She felt like every sentence that Lapis let out of her mouth was worth snicker.

„So, where are we going?“ Pearl asked thrilled.

„Let yourself be taken by surprise.“ She gave Pearl a smile. „I bet you will love it.“

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They walked around the stable and headed to a hill where a pasture with the rope fence was. They then walked along the fence, on another loamy path that was leading them up the hill. There were large meadows and fields all around with no visible end in really large distance.

They walked maybe for fifteen minutes, walking along the path lined with large fields. The late afternoon sun was shining, wind blowing calmly and carressing Pearl’s pale cheeks. She then decided to stop. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, raising her hands and letting the wind stroke her whole body, her bare arms, cheeks and short hair. Pearl smiled wildly into the wind and enjoyed this amazing moment of freedom.

After a while a bark came out of Pumpkin’s mouth. She stopped and pulled Lapis back, staring back at that tall human who walked with them.

„What?“ Lapis turned around bored, pulling the lead towards herself. But then she noticed Pearl, standing maybe four meters away from her, with hands raised into the air, closed eyes and a beautiful smile on her face.

Lapis gazed at her. She lowered her eyelids and parted her lips, unable to move. She watched Pearl carefully as she was able to enjoy every little thing that any ordinary person could barely just notice. Sun shining, the wind, the place where she was standing. Those things were something so common for most people, but for Pearl they were something special, something that she might miss and never feel again.

„Ah, Lapis! It’s so beautiful up here!“ Pearl laughed warmly, whirling around her own axis. Lapis could do nothing but sigh dreamily, letting her spirit leave her body and travel straight to Heaven to say that they lost one of their angels.

She never felt like this, not even close to this feeling. This feeling was something new, something strange and amazing and the same time. Lapis had a feeling that her heart will jump out of her chest every time she’s near her, every time she hears Pearl’s sweet voice, every time Pearl calls her name, every single time Pearl looks right into her eyes.

There came a bark again, this time directed to Lapis who was completely lost in dreams. Two short seconds passed and Lapis came back to herself, shaking her head and breathing again.
„It’s not quite that beautiful like the place I want to show you.“ Lapis smirked. Pearl then stopped whirling around, looking at Lapis after a long time again.

„Are you kidding me? This place is like heaven!“ The taller girl grinned, raising her hands once more, looking up to the goldish sky. „I was always dreaming about a place like this, but I couldn’t believe that it could really exist.“

„Then come with me, you dreamer.“ Lapis approached her friend and took her by her hand, making her look down at her. „… To The promised land.“

The sky quite changed since Pearl came to the stable. Now all the trees, leaves, fields and all those hills around them were beautifully shining like if they were all made of gold. The sky above their heads was cloudy and all those clouds were dark-purple colored. The crowd of clouds continued further, further beyond them. But the sky in front of them had some mixed shade of violet and orange color, like if there was a storm coming. But the weather was too calm and harmonic for it to be happening.

Lapis loved weather like this, those gold sunbeams shining through the dark purple storm clouds, illuminating the whole area around her with the most beautiful golden color in the world. She couldn’t imagine being something better than this. Maybe spending time with her horse in such a weather, crossing the meadows and letting the wind blow through her cyan blue hair.

„Come on, we’re almost there.“ Lapis spoke to the silence, leading the stable Shiba and Pearl forth, continuing up the hill. And just before they got there, Lapis managed to stop, still holding Pearl by her hand, and looked straight at her. „Close your eyes.“

Pearl raised her eyebrows in confusion, losing her breath. „What?“ She whispered.

„Trust me.“ Lapis gave her a genuine smile and squeezed her hand a bit more.

Pearl gazed at her for few seconds, then she breathed out a smile and closed her eyes with her eyebrows raised. „Okay.“

Lapis bit her lip and grinned, leading Pearl up the hill. Just a few steps left to get to the top. „Don’t look. We’re almost there.“

„I’m not looking.“ Pearl sang softly. It wasn’t like Lapis didn’t believe her, but she cupped Pearl’s eyes, just to make sure that she really wasn’t able to see anything.

After a pair of last steps, they stopped on the top of the hill. Pearl’s body was trembling in impatience, she wanted to open her eyes.

„May I look yet?“ She asked hurriedly. Lapis slowly removed her hand from her face and nodded.

„Take a look.“ She urged and let go of Pearl’s hand, although she regretted that later.

Pearl slowly opened her light turquoise eyes and immediately lost her breath. Her eyes widened in amazement and her jaw lowered.

„Lapis…“ She gasped. There was one extremely large and endless sunflower field spreading out right under their noses. There were too many flowers all around. Too many. There were so many lofty yellow flowers shining like the full moon at midnight, or like a sun in the sky at midday. There were so many of them and Pearl felt like she was looking straight into the ocean of gold, or lava rolling down an enormous volcano. And with the dark sky above it, it felt so dramatic and extraordinary, so unreal. Pearl couldn’t believe her own eyes, she just stood there breathlessly.
„So, what do you think?“ Lapis squeezed her shoulder graciously, ready for any kind of response. She turned her head to Pearl, making herself chuckle when she saw Pearl’s indescribable expression.

„I…“ Pearl breathed out in disbelief, still staring straight ahead. „… Completely ran out of words.“

Lapis giggled, happy that her plan worked perfectly. „Do you want to go down there?“

The pale-skinned girl immediately turned her head to Lapis, eyes wide as a dinner plates, full of thousands shining stars. „Are you serious?“

Pearl’s expression kinda scared her, but she nodded. „I am. So?“

„Yes!“

They all ran down the hill, led by little Shiba puppy and stopping right in front of the field. From maybe two hundred meters distance the sunflowers didn’t seem that big. But now, when those three were standing right in front of them, the flowers were for sure more then two meters tall.

„I can’t believe my flipping eyes.“ Pearl stared at those giant yellow plants. She reached her hand and stroked one’s large jagged leaves, she almost couldn’t even reach the bloom.

„Do you wanna walk in?“ Lapis then asked once more, looking at amazed Pearl.

„Really?“ She pulled back. „Isn’t it illegal?“

„It’s not illegal if nobody can see you.“ Lapis laughed and rubbed her hands together, entering the field. „Come.“

The taller girl hesitated, but entered the field with enthusiasm, following Lapis and Pumpkin. Pearl suddenly felt so small. Those flowers all around her were so big, so enchanting and beautiful. She felt like she have already been here, this place seemed kinda familiar to her. And after a moment she realized why it was probably so familiar.

„Isn’t this the field that you’ve got on your phone wallpaper?“ She remembered the wallpaper on Lapis’ phone, wading through the plants.

Lapis then slowed down, almost stopping on a spot, eyes widened. „Yeah… It is.“

„And-uh… Who was that pretty woman in it?“ Pearl wondered, almost rushing into Lapis, since she haven’t noticed that Lapis was moving slower now. But Lapis didn’t respond, she continued straight ahead.

„Was she something like your… Idol?“ Pearl tried to make another chance to get a response.

Lapis then stopped completely and stared down at the dirt. A sob choked up her throat. She tried her best not to let the tears roll down her cheek.

„Lapis?“ Pearl adressed her softly, worried.

„Yeah…“ She sniffed. „She was.“

„And… What happened?“ Pearl asked carefully, slowly passing Lapis and facing her.

The blue-haired girl stared down and didn’t move for a while. She let out a weak, shaky sigh
and sniffed again. „It’s my mother… She had an accident while… Riding a horse.“

Lapis sighed, letting a tear appear in a corner of her eye.

„Lapis…“ Pearl squeezed her shoulder softly, looking straight into her tearful eyes. „I’m so sorry. I didn’t know.“

„Thanks, but that doesn’t matter now. She wasn’t even my real mom tho.“ The rider forced a smile.

Pearl furrowed her eyebrows in confusion. „What… Do you mean – real mom?“

„… I’m… Adopted.“ Lapis breathed out and made a short pause. „All my family members have their last name ‘Blue’… Only I am ‘Lazuli’. “

„But, Lapis… It doesn’t matter if you’re adopted. She sure loved you like if you were hers, didn’t she?“ Pearl tried to comfort her, smiling at her.

Lapis sniffed for the last time, looking Pearl right into her beautiful eyes, and also smiled. „Just like I loved her. “

„See, I bet she’s so proud of you, proud of everything you’ve done.“ And after that a bark escaped Pumpkin’s mouth, as if she agreed. Lapis then snickered and dried her eyes from surplus tears.

„Thanks, Pearl.“ She gave her honest smile, letting her flushed cheeks be visible to her, not even trying to hide them.

„That’s the matter of course.“

Lapis giggled, shaking her head to clear her thoughts. „But that’s enought about me. Tell me something about you.“ She urged Pearl, tilting her head aside and shaking it ahead to continue in their journey.

„What, me?“ Pearl forced a laughter. „There’s nothing interesting about me.“

„Pfff. “ Lapis sputtered. „I highly doubt it.“

Pearl just looked at her with a corner of her eye, biting her lip and letting herself blush. But she said nothing, she just continued forward.

„Okay…“ Lapis started. „Sooo… What’s your favourite flower?“

„Oh, that’s really hard question.“ Pearl rubbed her nape. She gazed at the goldish field that was spread out all around them, deciding about a right choice to make. „I don’t know. I love all flowers.“

„I like lavenders.“ Lapis smelled the air, like if she could smell them.

„Well…“ Pearl rubbed her chin and looked at Lapis importantly. „Lavender isn’t a flower, it’s a herb.“

„Oh, come on. It’s still a plant!“ She laughed and pushed Pearl with her own shoulder into hers gently.

Pearl then let herself blush and she pushed her own shoulder against Lapis’ as a revenge, making them repeat this several times again, accompanied by their soft chuckling.
“Okay, so?” Lapis poked her again. “What’s your favorite flower again?”

As if Pearl heared Amethyst saying ‘blueberry’, she suppressed a laughter. But she couldn’t say such a thing. Not right in front of Lapis. Not now.

“I think… Rose. Or carnation.” Pearl shrugged, poking Lapis back. “And what’s your… Favourite color?”

“Conclusively all shades of blue.” Lapis said proudly, lifting her chin a little. “What’s yours? I bet it’s pink.”

“How did you know that?” She furrowed her eyebrows in disbelief. “Yeah, I do like pink color. Also peach and yellow-green.”

“Nice choice.” Lapis nodded, smirking.

They spent whole the way back asking each other about their favourites, still poking each other and laughing all the way back to stable. Their eyes were full of tears of joy and their cheeks hurt from laughing. It all passed so quickly, like if they’ve just been here by the stable, although they were gone maybe for like two good hours.

They continued down the hill along the rope fence as slow as possible, not ready to let the day end so soon, although it was around 7 PM by now.

Lapis, Pearl and Pumpkin made their way to Pearl’s old pickup, stopping on the little parking lot. Lapis kneeled down and removed Pumpkin’s green collar and lead, putting it into her pocket. The puppy was so tired from that long walk, that it couldn’t even move. It immediately laid down and started softly snoaring. Both girl couldn’t stop themselves from smirking as they watched that little fluffy ball.

“She really is a cutie.” Pearl sighed dreamily, watching the little animal’s chest as it was raising up and lowering down.

“Yeah…” Lapis nodded in agreement.

“So…” Pearl intertwined her fingers, locking her mouth in a tight line. “I’m gonna go.”

Lapis turned to her with a sad face. “Do you have to go?”

“I do…” She sighed. “Rose is waiting for me.”

“Rose?”

“My cat.” Pearl chuckled, gazing at her friend.

“I see.” The rider smirked and nodded, but then she turned around in her waist, searching for something behind her back. “But before you go…”

Pearl raised her eyebrows, watching Lapis as she was fighting something. Lapis then pulled little sunflower from behind her back and shyly she handed it to Pearl.

The only thing Pearl could do was let her eyes widened. She lost her breath. “… Lapis.”

“I owe you this.” Lapis swallowed and licked her dry lips, wondering how Pearl’s expression looked like. But for sure it wasn’t anything bad.
 „Oh, Lapis, you shouldn’t have…“ The girl accepted the gift and pressed it against her chest, giving Lapis the most beautiful smile she could even give her. „Thank you.“

 „It was nothing.“ Lapis rubbed her nape and looked back at Pearl, accepting her smile and giving her one back.

 „Don’t you want me to… Drive you home?“ Pearl offered and stroked smooth yellow petals that were leaning against her chest.

 „Oh. No, thank you. I’m staying here tonight.“

 „Here? You have your own room in the barn?“ She asked interested. Lapis then shook her head towards the attic.

 „Yeah. I sleep in the attic.“ Lapis shrugged her shoulders, but left Pearl in disbelief.

 „But… Doesn’t it feel uncomfortable – sleeping on a hay?“

 „Not at all.“ Lapis grinned. „I’ve got a blanket in there, and some pillows, too.“

 Pearl lowered her head, imagining how could it possibly look like in there and wondering if she will get there someday. „Does it feel like home?“

 „…. Absolutely.“ Lapis blinked, making herself and, as well Pearl, blush. „So… Thank you for today. I-uh, I really had fun.“

 „Me too… I wish we could do that more often.“ Pearl sighed, looking pleadingly at her blue-haired friend. But she thought, wasn’t she asking too much?

 „Well, we can.“ Lapis proposed. „At least we could share our phone numbers, so we could talk sometimes… What-do you think?“

 „That isn’t a bad idea.“ Pearl immediately pulled a phone out of her pocket, but then she froze. „Am I really doing this?“

 But Pearl then realized that she hardly could imagine something better. Now she had a chance to make another friend – Lapis Lazuli.

 Chapter End Notes

 Chapter recapitulation

 • Lapis and Pearl made a journey to a sunflower fields
 • Pearl finds out about Lapis being adopted
 • Lapis surprised Pearl with a gift
Lapis headed to the feed room under the attic, with a black bucket in her arms. When she got there, she opened one of the bags that were standing in a corner of the room, and filled the bucket with oat. Then she walked to Blue’s stall and entered it with a bright smile on her face. Blue was standing there, her side turned to Lapis, and watched Lapis with a corner of her eye as she poured the oat into a food trough. Blue then immediately approached the trough and started to swallow the oat. She crunched the grains for a moment and then filled her mouth with another batch.

Lapis hummed and smiled at her, patting Blue onto her strong neck. „See you later, baby girl.“ She said softly. She stood there for a while, watching Blue as she enjoyed her meal, and then left the stall, quietly closing its gate behind herself, not to disturb Blue while she was eating. She dropped the bucket next to the stall gate and looked back at her horse once more.

Lapis was still smiling. She was smiling from the daybreak since she woke up. She had no actual idea why was she constantly smiling whole day like that. Even Peridot thought if Lapis wasn’t sick, but she wasn’t. She was just happy. She was going to meet Pearl this evening again and she couldn’t wait for it. She couldn’t think of anything else but her recently.

Few weeks passed and they have already spent several long days together and had a lot of fun, since it was warm summer and there’s still plenty of time to spend it together. Lapis loved it. They both did. They always found a free minute just to talk to each other on a phone or see one another just for one short hour during the whole day.

Pearl was so excited about Lapis that she even skipped some of her together Thursdays with Garnet and Amethyst, and then Lapis totally forgot to focus on her training.

Today Pearl had something special in her mind. Something she knew that Lapis will totally love and enjoy. But she wanted to keep that as a surprise for her, just like Lapis kept the sunflower field in secret.

Whole day was passing so deadly slow, but Lapis ably endured all those tormenting endless hours, although she was keeping a smile on her face all day long. Now it was time to meet Pearl. At last!

Lapis finished cleaning some stalls and then made her way home to get herself a shower. After that she got into her car and headed to the beach nearby the Beach city, where they were supposed to meet. The sky was already dark, but not entirely yet, and Lapis got to the place of destination right on time. Pearl was already standing there and waiting for her, with fingers intertwined on her chest and a blissful smile on her cheeks. Lapis honked at her and parked the car beside the road. She unbuckled her seat belt and with a key locking sound she got out of her car and closed the door, heading to the sea shore where Pearl was standing and eagerly waiting for Lapis to come.

„Hey, Lapis.“ She waved her fingers, face shyly hiding between her shoulders.

Lapis approached her and bent down in her waist, whirling her hand in circular motions and ending up with a straightened hand towards Pearl. „Milady.“

Pearl giggled and let her cheeks darken, bowing slightly. „What a gesture.“

They both then let out a half-suppressed laugh, later bursting into laughter and letting the tears
They both then let out a half-suppressed laugh, later bursting into laughter and letting the tears water corners of their eyes.

Pearl inhaled deeply and tried to calm herself down, her cheeks hurt from smiling. „So, did you bring what I wanted you to bring?“

Lapis slowly slowed down, finally looking at Pearl and wiping her eyes. She then nodded and pushed her blue hair aside, so Pearl could see the top part of Lapis’ swimsuit tied up in a ribbon behind her neck.

„Perfect.“ Pearl smiled.

The walked along the sea shore for a while, leaving footprints in wet sand under their bare feet, holding shoes in their hands, talking and laughing.

„I’ve never been to night swimming before.“ Lapis admitted excitedly.

Pearl giggled and turned her head to her friend. „You’re gonna love it. And actually it’s not quite that pretty as the thing I want to show you.“

„Oh, well.“ Lapis raised her dark eyebrows and blushed, tilting her head slightly aside. „I wonder what it is.“

Pearl gave her the most beautiful smile she could, the one and only smile in the world that always made Lapis melt. „Let youself be taken by surprise. But before that… You have to close your eyes.“ Pearl commanded and made Lapis stop, holding her shoulder until Lapis finally closed them.

„Fine.“ She let out with a pert voice.

The taller girl then gently took Lapis by her hand and led her forward, assuring herself every five seconds that Lapis really wasn’t looking.

It took about a minute to get to the place where Pearl wanted them to be and stopped. She took Lapis’ other hand into hers.

„Keep still your eyes closed.“ She ordered softly.

„Oh, come on. I wanna look.“ Lapis grinned, eyes still closed. „Where are we anyway? I can hear the sea waves.“

Pearl, who was fully turned to Lapis, carefully made one step backwards and led her friend forward, without answering. She then made another step, another and another. Slowly, carefully she continued, finally feeling a cool sea water above her ankles. They continued further, deeper into the water, until the wavy surface reached the lower half of their calves, then Pearl stopped.

„Ready?“ The skinny girl asked in whisper.

Lapis nodded impatiently, grinning. „Yes.“

„Take a look then.“ Was the last sentence before Lapis completely lost her breath after openening her eyes and looking down. They were surrounded by a beautiful bright blue light that was encircling them, lining with the sea shore along the entire lenght. It was like there were thousands of blue shining bulbs right under the sea surface, irradiating them from below.
Lapis gasped, she couldn’t catch her breath. „Pearl…“ She squeezed Pearl’s hands firmly, totally exited. „What… What are these?“

Pearl just laughed at that, watching Lapis’ exited and unbelieving expression. „These are called a bioluminescent plankton.“

„And this is real?“ Lapis just stared down at the illuminated water, completely amazed and unable to blink even once.

Pearl laughed softly again. „Yeah.“

„But how? Are those some kind of sea fireflies?“ Lapis then let go of Pearl’s hands and bent to reach the water.

„I suppose that they work like a solar lamp. During the day they absorb as much light as possible and during night they just emit the obtained energy that they got from the sunlight.“ She explained, dabby.

„… This is so beautiful…“ Lapis carefully touched the shining water surface, not to startle those mini creatures. „How could I never notice it before?“

„Oh well, that’s very simple.“ Pearl smirked and rubbed her chin importantly, closing her eyes. „You’re watching the night sky too much. You should search for the beauties of Earth sometimes, too.“

„From now on… I will.“ Lapis sighed exitedly and sank her hands under water, the plankton was slightly brushing against her skin and tickling her, making her hands shine blue.

Pearl then watched her. She dreamily stared at Lapis‘ childlike expression full of happiness and joy, how she watched the shining plankton and how she was shaking her head in disbelief in every ten seconds just to make sure that she wasn’t dreaming.

Pearl sighed quietly. „Stars… She’s so beautiful…“ With lowered eyelids she gazed at Lapis how her eyes were sparkling with a pure thrill. But Pearl managed to stop melting to her before she could actually colapse.

„So, um…“ She cleared her throat. „Ready for a night swimming?“

It took a moment before Lapis actually looked up at her, but responded. „Like never.“

They then took their clothes off and left it nearby the sea shore, far enough that the water couldn’t reach it and completely soak it.

The one who entered the open sea first was Pearl. She had her turquoise one piece swimsuit on with one little yellow star placed on her chest. She continued deeper into the water until the surface reached her thighs.

„You comin’, Lapis?“ She waved at her and called her from the six-meters distance.

Lapis nodded and quickly she tied up her hair in a tiny ponytail. Some hair was too short that it couldn’t even reach to the back of her head, so it just hung down and lined with Lapis’ round jaw. She wore her light blue bikini which the top part of it was tied up in a bow. Her swimsuit also had two darker triangles on it, one on the top and one on the bottom piece, so it looked like a big parted rhombus.
Lapis stepped into the water and stopped for a while, just to enjoy the shining plankton surrounding her ankles once more. She smiled, giving the sea fireflies one last look and then heading straight to Pearl.

Pearl giggled when Lapis came to her. „You should come here more often I see.“ „We.“ Lapis corrected her and let a cute smile appear on her lips. „We should come here more often.“

Pearl blushed a little and looked aside, making a short moment of silence between them. She had chills all over her body, but it wasn’t because of the cool water. She knew exactly what its source was.

She still couldn’t believe that she was actually here, with Lapis – practically with a celebrity. She could barely only dream about something like this and still she couldn’t admit to herself that this was really happening.

And one of the things that was keeping Pearl amazed was that Lapis was still wearing a necklace with the pearl she gave her. It really suited her and nicely contrasted with her tanned skin. Actually everything on her made Pearl’s heart stop and her knees always became jelly because of it. Because of her smile, because of her sweet voice, because of–.

„Hello?“ Lapis waved her hand right in front of Pearl’s nose while she was staring god knows where.

Pearl cleared her throat and rubbed her neck in embarrassment, shaking her head slightly. „Oh- um. Sorry, I-was-just…“

„It’s fine.“ Lapis assured her and grinned. „So, let’s go?“

Pearl hummed in a question, like if she missed something, but answered. „Oh-yeah. Let’s-let’s go.“

They swam to the deep, but not that far where they couldn’t touch the sand with their feet, just to a reasonable distance from the shore. They then laid on their backs and let their bodies float on a sea surface, silently breathing and staring up at the sky.

„… Do you know what’s funny?“ Lapis asked after a moment of silence.

„What?“ Pearl let out a soft, calm voice, slightly turning her head to Lapis. Water was then pattering against her ear.

The rider then giggled and also turned to the other girl. „That you can watch stars and swim at the same time.“

Pearl breathed out a smile and looked back at the night sky. „Yeah… You’re right.“

They went to a silence again. But this silence wasn’t a silence of awkwardness, it was a harmonic silence. A silence that even if none of them said one single word, there were thousands of words that they were sharing with each other somehow. They didn’t have to talk, just feeling their silent presence made them feel like they already knew everything about one another, although it wasn’t entirely true. But every time they meet, they both feel like they know each other for so long, like they’ve already met, maybe in some past lives.

„… Pearl?“ Lapis addressed her with a low voice suddenly.
Pearl hummed in question. „Yes?“

It took Lapis a few moments to speak again, but she managed to do it in the end. She opened her mouth slowly. „... Are you happy?“

This kind of question kinda surprised Pearl. She wondered why was Lapis asking her this.

She was. She was very happy, especially when she was with Lapis, and sad when she was not. What was she supposed to answer then?

„Yes... Yes, I-am.“ She then breathed out softly. But then there was a silence again for a few short moments.

„... Are you?“ Pearl asked her back, but haven’t receive a response right away. She then worriedly looked at Lapis and studied her expression, but it didn’t seem much positive at that moment. Pearl wondered what was taking her so long to answer. But suddenly a beautiful smile curled up on Lapis’ cheeks.

„Yes.“ She smiled even wider, giving Pearl honest look and waving her hands slowly like if she was making a snow angels. „I’ve never been happier.“

Pearl widened her eyes and stopped breathing for several seconds, staring still at her friend. „Do you... Really mean that?“

Lapis blinked with a slow nod of her head. „I do...“

Pearl suddenly had a strange feeling that was a bit teasing her stomach, however this feeling didn’t hurt her, anyhow it made her want to cry, to scream and also to rejoice.

She slowly dropped her feet onto the sand and stopped floating on the water surface. Lapis turned her head to Pearl in confusion and raised her eyebrows.

„Pearl?“ She addressed her, also dropping her feet down, standing on the ground now. She didn’t even gave Pearl some space to decide what to say and she immediately approached her, standing so close to her and watching her worriedly. Did she say something wrong?

She tilted her head so she could see Pearl’s face. She furrowed her eyebrows, seeing Pearl’s face distort and noticing tears appear in a corners of her light blue eyes.

„Pearl, what happened?“ Lapis reached her hand, but wasn’t brave enough to wipe her eyes from those tears. But Pearl did.

„I’m just...“ She sniffed and finally smiled at her. „I’m just really glad I’m here.“

„... Oh, Pearl.“ Lapis gave her a smile back, longing for touching her hand. But she was too afraid to do it, although it wouldn’t be the first time she held her hand.

„If only you could just imagine how happy I am to be here, too.“ She sighed deeply, finally taking her courage and taking Pearl by her slender hand.

The skinny girl sniffed again, making herself giggle. She tightened their hand’s squeeze, enjoying the warmth of Lapis’ palm.

„But do me a favor, okay?“ Lapis’s smile widened. „Stop crying, please. It makes me cry too when I see someone like that.“
„Yeah… I’m sorry.“ Pearl apologized and wiped her tears, although her hand was already wet from the salty sea water, so she didn’t help herself much by doing it.

„Don’t be sorry, Pearl.“ Lapis still kept smiling. She rubbed the back of Pearl’s palm with her thumb gently, making Pearl snicker the sweetest way that only she could do. Lapis blushed deeply at that, wanting to kiss Pearl immediatelly, even when she knew she would stop her from that cute giggling.

„Um…“ The blue-haired girl cleared her throat carefully, letting go of Pearl’s hand. „Are you… Free this weekend? We could invent something to do together.“

„You know that I’ll always find a time for you.“ She blinked slowly, gazing into Lapis’ dark eyes which were sparkling with hope.

They swam in the sea for several long minutes again, wondering what could they do on this Saturday and splashing one another with cool water. This night was extremely long, and also short at the same time. They both wished they could stay a bit longer, but it was already too late and they both then started to became tired because of today’s adventure, ready to meet their warm beds and sleep until noon.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

•Lapis joined Pearl at night swimming
•Girls revealed the beauty of a sea world

PS: Thanks to 'leafy-socrates' for the bioluminescent plankton idea! ;)


“Come on, come on! Quickly!” Lapis grabbed Pearl by her wrist and ran towards some wooden house which was the only house standing in a five hundred-meters distance all around them. They ran to the very end of the street and hid on the house’s porch with a bench and few withered flowers standing on the ground.

Pearl pulled her sweatshirt hood down and fixed her wet messy hair, while Lapis leaned her back and elbows against the porch rail.

“We did it, huh?” Lapis sighed with a grin, still breathing fast after running from that crazy rain. Pearl approached her and leaned against the rail next to Lapis, crossing arms on her chest and trying to get warm.

“Yeah.” Pearl giggled. She turned her head towards the street and watched the raindrops falling on the wet asphalt and making puddles bigger and bigger with every next drop that fell into it.

The skinny girl shivered when a massive wave of cold washed her body and turned her head back. Pearl put her hands into her sleeves and hid them in her armpits, closing her eyes with a sigh.

Lapis looked at her friend and crossed her arms on her chest, too. “Are you okay, Pearl?”

The girl swallowed and nodded. “Yeah. Just a little bit cold.”

Lapis hummed at that. She scanned Pearl from top to the bottom, realizing that she’s all soaked to the bone and trembling. Lapis grabbed the hem of her black leather jacket and rubbed it with her thumb, biting her lip. After a moment of hesitation she started to unzip her jacket slowly.

Pearl carefully looked at her with a corner of her eye as Lapis pulled one of her arms out of the sleeve, followed be the other arm. While Lapis slowly undressing, Pearl noticed the girl’s well trained belly muscles hidden under her tight undershirt, also the biceps that appeared on her arms.

Pearl gasped and immediately turned to a side. She then shaded her eyes, so she couldn’t see the other girl. But it didn’t help her for that long.

Lapis stood in front of her and wrapped her jacket around Pearl, fixing the sleeves, so they fitted on Pearl’s shoulders.

“Lapis, what are you doing? You’re gonna get cold!” Pearl objected, but then her gaze accidentally slid down to Lapis’ belly. Pearl swallowed hard and stopped breathing for a second. She couldn’t make herself to get her eyes away.

“I’m not.” Lapis smiled, giving Pearl’s shoulder gentle squeeze, which made Pearl look back up at her. “I don’t want you to get cold.”

“B-but…” Pearl stuttered. “You’ve got just an undershirt.”

Lapis laughed softly and leaned back against the porch rail, followed by Pearl’s stare. “I’m used to it.”
“Ah-hah…” Pearl nodded slowly and turned her head forward, trying not to be that conspicuous by staring at Lapis’ body and scanning her every muscle. She wondered how did she get them, and that was the only thing that she was thinking about the next five minutes.

Lapis suddenly pulled herself away from the railing and headed towards the house door, reaching out her hand. „Do you think that someone lives in there?“

„I don’t know.“ Pearl sighed and looked up to the windows.

Lapis slightly knocked on the door, but she didn’t receive any response. She tried it again, but this time she knocked a bit louder. Again, nothing.

This house seemed really old, however it didn’t mean that nobody still lived in there. Lapis approached one of the dusty windows, she shaded her eyes and looked inside through it.

„Hm… Seems like no one’s home.“ Lapis rubbed her chin, thinking. Then she stood in front of the rotten door and took a deep breath. She stood there for a moment, like a statue, staring at the closed door.

Pearl had no idea what was she doing, but Pearl then jumped into the air in horror when Lapis bashed into the door with her foot and made the them open.

The rider dusted her hands, clearing her throat. „Door’s open!“ She exulted and turned to Pearl, but Pearl just stood there with mouth wide open.

„Are you… Serious?!“ The skinny girl whispered aloud hysterically. „You’re not gonna break in, are you?“

The girl snorted. „Oh, come on, Pearl. There’s no one in there.“ She assured the other one and placed her hands on her own hips.

„Lapis, I…“ Pearl squeezed the jacket a bit more. „I’m not sure about that.“

Lapis sighed quietly. She came to Pearl and stood in front of her, looking into her worried eyes.

„This house is abandoned, Pearl. Nobody can caught us in there… Let’s just sit there until the rain stops, hm?“ She gave Pearl’s shoulders tender squeeze and smiled at her.

Pearl couldn’t resist to that sweet face. Lapis really cared about her, she just wanted them to outlast the rain at some dry place where they won’t get more wet and freeze there. She wanted to find some comfortable place to sit for her, but Pearl couldn’t refuse to such a polite gesture. Could she?

She glanced over and watched the street, realizing that the rain probably won’t stop that easily. Even when they were hidden on the porch, it was still a bit raining on them. Pearl then gave up and agreed and with accepting Lapis’ hand, she let herself be led to the inside.

It was cold there, but not that much cold as outside. The place smelled strangely. Window’s inside shutters were shut, there was dark and silence all around them. The interior was really old and gray, buried under tons of dust.

Pearl went to a room which seemed to be living room and sat on a sofa, crossing her arms and legs and mentally trying to stop them from trembling.

Lapis followed her and entered the living room. She leaned her head and side against the large doorless frame and watched Pearl. She watched her as she was trembling and trying so hard to
avoid it, but unsuccessfully.

Lapis sighed and crossed her arms on her chest. „Wish I could give you something more to warm up.“

Pearl sniffed and then wiped her nose. She lifted her legs up and pressed them against her chest. „Thanks for your care, Lapis.“ She gave Lapis a smile, which immediately turned Lapis’ cheeks red.

The rider glanced over, looking for a blanket or something that could help warm Pearl up faster, but everything was under dust, she almost couldn’t recognize any single thing in the house.

Lapis checked the entire floor, but she couldn’t find anything. She thought that the bedroom might be on a second floor, but she was a little bit scared to go there, since it was dark in the house which she didn’t even know.

„I’m sorry, I couldn’t find anything.“ Lapis sighed angrily and sat down on the couch next to Pearl.

Pearl just gave her a confused look. „Why are you apologizing?“ She asked softly.

Lapis rubbed her forehead and eyebrows. „I wanted to help you.“

„But… You did.“ She shook her head in disbelief and then she tilted her head aside to see into Lapis’ face.

„But you must be freezing… If I could just find something!“ She hit her thigh with a fist. Then she sighed again and leaned her elbows against her knees, thinking.

„I could give my undershit. It might help.“ Lapis then looked at her, but Pearl’s reaction were just widened eyes and red cheeks.

„W-what?“ Pearl breathed out without moving a muscle, staring at the other girl. „You must be freezing more then I am. Just look at you! You’ve got bare arms and shoulders and… Throat.“ Pearl bit her lip, making herself turn her head away from Lapis. She felt embarrassed, her cheeks were so hot, although she was really cold.

„I’m not freezing. I’ve got warm hands.“ Lapis checked her palms and felt nothing but warmth on them, then she turned back to Pearl, but she had turned her back on her.

„…. Pearl?“ Lapis addressed her softly, lifting her body and moving closer to her. The girl glanced over at her, but just a little.

„Hm?“ She raised her eyebrows. After a moment she felt a freezing wave that washed her again. She trembled at that and sniffed, wiping her nose again.

Lapis swallowed and lowered her eyes. She wanted to go closer. She wanted to warm her. But she was shy, she was scared and she felt embarrassed. But she really wanted to help Pearl somehow.

„…. Give me your hand.“ Lapis urged, a bit nervous, but offered Pearl her own hand. After a moment of hesitancy, Pearl turned back to Lapis and slowly put her hand into hers, still trembling. But she wasn’t sure if it still was because of the weather.

Lapis hid the other’s hand into her warm palms and then hesitately forced her lips towards them, breathing out a wave of hot air at them. She repeated it several times, again and again. Her lips
were so close and with every next breath closer and closer. She could almost touch Pearl’s skin with them. But she knew that she couldn’t do it. Pearl was something so noble to her, someone who she felt so honored to be near her. Someone almost untouchable, someone so tender and fragile.

She pulled back and whispered, looking Pearl deep into her eyes. „… Is that better?“

Pearl suddenly felt cold again, since Lapis pulled back from her. She felt like an ice cube thrown into snow, into freezing arctic water. It made her shook her whole body again. It was even worse than sitting in that ditch, because there she didn’t feel the cold that intensively. Well, she wasn’t thinking back then. She was just lying there and waiting for what will happen next.

„Yeah… It’s better.„ She let out tremblingly, nodding, longing for another Lapis’ breath. She sniffed.

Lapis watched her as her body became shaking again, thinking about what to do. She couldn’t keep breathing the air at her hands forever, her head would then start to spin and it wouldn’t be much good for her health.

She hesitated, but in the end she shifted her body closer to Pearl, slightly touching her. „Would you mind if…“ She bit her lip, trying to make an eye contact with her, but it was really hard at that moment for her, and so for Pearl.

Pearl was almost for one hundred percent sure what she wanted to do. One half of her accepted that, but the other half wasn’t that sure about it. Still it was a human who she barely knew. But Lapis already helped her so many times, and she didn’t even have to. And she wanted to help.

She made a decision, but she was still persuasing herself to really do it. Pearl swallowed nervously and moved closer to Lapis, letting her head lean against her shoulder and letting Lapis’ bare arms wrap around her own shoulders.

„Wish I could have your blanket right now, Lapis.„ Pearl then sighed a smile, finally feeling some warmth.

Lapis giggled softly. „I’m your blanket now… If you don’t mind?“

„No.“ She lowered her eyes. „It’s nice…“

Lapis let her head lay down on Pearl’s and let out soft breath, making Pearl’s peach hair flutter a bit.

The skinny girl sighed, lowered her body and let her head shift lower on Lapis’ bare shoulder. „I wonder… Why are you doing this?“

„What do you mean?“ Lapis tilted her head to see Pearl’s face, with eyebrows raised in confusion.

„Why are you helping me?“ She then looked up at her friend.

Well, it wasn’t hard question for her at all, but it was hard for her to say the answer.

„What kind of question is that?“ Lapis questioned her question, snorting. „Do you think that I would leave you like this?“

„Well, you could.“
Lapis just laughed at that. She squeezed Pearl a bit more. Her arms already warmed her cold leather jacket, but she wondered if the person covered in it was still cold.

„Don’t be silly, Pearl.“ She said and smiled warmly. Lapis noticed some of Pearl’s hair locks that were protruding to every world side, wet and cold. She reached her hand slowly and with a few strokes she fixed the messy locks of Pearl’s smooth hair.

Pearl let herself blush and close her eyes. She now started to feel the warmth of Lapis’ body that was flowing through her jacket to her own, which was still shaking, but not that much like a little while ago.

She rested in her soft caring arms for the next thirty long minutes, forbidding herself from falling asleep, although it was really forcing her to do it. It was so comfortable in her arms, so calm and peaceful. Sometimes she felt Lapis’ thumb stroking her shoulder through the jacket.

Pearl carefully lifted her head and looked up at Lapis. She had her eyes closed, she was breathing softly, her head was tilted to a side where Pearl had her head resting on the blue-haired girl’s shoulder. Lapis looked like she was asleep, but still she was stroking Pearl with her thumb tenderly.

„… Lapis?“ She whispered, but get no response from her.

Pearl noticed that she was actually very close to her. But this was different closeness than when they shared their first hug. She was now practically lying on Lapis, in her arms. This was way different and a bit strange, but Pearl felt somehow good, she felt satisfied and safe, like never before. But why was she feeling like this?

She felt her heart beat speeding up, and also her breath. She felt like there were pins and needles in her stomach. She was trembling, but not because she was cold. Actually she didn’t feel cold at all. All Lapis’ warmth already overwhelmed her. She was melting like a snowflake in a stove now.

Pearl swallowed hard, still staring at the girl who was sitting right next to her. She scanned her face again, more carefully. Her dark eyebrows, her big closed eyes, her delicate freckled nose and cute cheeks, her lips shaped like a heart.

Staring still at her, Pearl was slowly leaning forward to Lapis, towards her lips. They were provocative, calling her, forcing Pearl to touch them with her own.

„Why are you doing this to me?“ Pearl asked herself, breathing softly a boiling air out of her shivering lungs through her parted lips right onto Lapis’ face.

Pearl gasped and lowered her eyes, getting her lips closer and closer to the other’s. She had goosebumps all over her body, her jaw started to tremble, her heart was bouncing in her chest so wildly and aggressively that she felt like it will explode in a few seconds.

She almost brushed the soft flesh of Lapis’ lips, but then she noticed Lapis opening her eyes and that made Pearl immediately pull back as quickly as physically possible.

„Lapis!“ Pearl bit her lip hard, breathing uncontrollably quick. She pressed her hand against her chest, trying to slow down her heart beat at any cost. „I… I-uh… Uh. Thank-goodness! I… I was worried ‘bout you. You-you weren’t responding and… I thought something might happened to you.“ Pearl let out quickly, breathing fast. She felt so embarrassed, her cheeks were so hot, boiling even.

„Um…“ Lapis locked her mouth in a tight line, without the slightest idea about what was
happening just few seconds ago. „I’m fine… I just took a short nap probably. I’m sorry I scared you…”

Pearl felt really bad for lying and she regreted everything that she wanted to do earlier, and that Lapis didn’t even know about it. Well, Pearl hoped she didn’t.

„Ah-huh… Don’t be sorry, I…” Pearl rubbed her nape and looked aside in embarrassment. She then looked somewhere where Lapis was out of her field of vision, out of the windows, and noticed that it already stopped rain. „Oh, look! The rain is over.“

„You’re right.“ Lapis nodded and looked at the same direction where Pearl was looking. „We can go home.“

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After Lapis accompanied Pearl home, she headed back to stable to see how was it going in there. The weather was still changing. Sometimes it was rainy, sometimes cloudy and sometimes even the sun appeared in the sky. But Lapis didn’t care how good or bad the weather was. The only thing that she cared about those past seven weeks, was spending all the time with Pearl, since she had that terrible accident. Except for equestrian, she felt like she had something to live for again. Well, someone. She couldn’t imagine losing her, or never seeing her again. She was really important to her and she was the reason why Lapis could forget the bad and think only about the good. To think about the future, not about the past. She was the reason why was Lapis smiling, the reason why was she happy, after the accident with her mother happened. She didn’t feel alone anymore.

She entered the barn and then headed to the stable, wondering if Blue was inside or grazing in the pasture. But the stable was whole empty-handed. No horses, no humans. So yeah, everything was clear. Peridot probably led all the horses in the pastures. Or someone else might did it. These two weren’t the only ones who worked in the stable, but they were the ones who were spending most of the time in there.

Lapis walked through the corridor to the other side of the stable and looked at the grazing meadow that was spreading out from the bottom to the top of the hill where her favourite maple tree was standing. She could see few horses grazing under the hill and some of them on its top, and Blue was probably somewhere there, too.

Lapis hummed happily and sighed, leaning her side against the wide stable door frame. She lowered her eyes slightly, watching the sunset.

She was standing there for so long, thinking about what happened today’s late afternoon. Something was bothering her now and she didn’t know how to figure this thing out. She felt something back at that house. Something strange. Or was she just dreaming? She felt like someone was leaning towards her, like someone was breathing right onto her face. She was even thinking about if Pearl was about to kiss her, but Lapis marked that as the most impossible choice of all those choices that she had in her mind.

„Why would she even do that…” She sighed heavily and shook her head. She thought, how could she actually live with herself, having this kind of ideas in her head? How could an idea like this just pop up in her mind? She had to get those ridiculous ideas out of her head. Or rather continue?

Chapter End Notes
Chapter recapitulation:

- Girls hid in an old house from rain
- Pearl managed to escape from being caught by Lapis from almost kissing her
When Lapis walked through the corridor again, she heard some noises coming from the storage, and some cursing, too.

She silently peered inside, finding Peridot who was urgently trying to get to the highest shelf in the room. But for her misfortune, she was too short to reach her hands there.

Lapis leaned her back against the wall and crossed her legs and arms, snorting so softly that Peridot wasn’t able to her that. Lapis watched her in interest, in absolute silence. She longed for seeing how will the short person help herself to get to that shelf that was almost a meter above her. Although it felt really hopeless for Peridot, Lapis had a lot of fun while watching the blonde who was trying her best to get up there.

Lapis then couldn’t make it and broke out in laughter. „You know, this is priceless.“ Lapis snorted and wiped her eyes from tears.

Peridot just jumped into the air in horrify and barked. „Lapis! What the hell?!“

„I’m really, reeeally sorry, but I couldn’t help myself with not staring at you.“ She wiped her eyes once more.

„Well, that’s reeelly funny?“ The blonde growled and turned back to the shelves.

„I actually… Came here to ask you for a little help.“ Lapis then revealed, stopping herself from laughing.

„Oh, reeeally? Didn’t you come to just laugh at my misfortune?“ The blonde rolled her eyes, crossing arms on her little chest.

„Believe it or not, I didn’t.“ Lapis answered, although the smile wasn’t that convincing at first.

Peridot hummed and rubbed her pointy chin, thinking for a moment. „Okay, but something for something, Laz.“

„Sure.“ Lapis shrugged and lowered her eyelids.

Peri cleared her throat and turned entirely to her friend. „Could you hand me that box over there?“ She pointed at the dark green plastic box located in a corner of the shelf.

Lapis willingly approchad the shelves, stood on her toes and took the box into her hands, taking it down. She heard a steel clinking in the box and with interest she opened it.

„Horseshoes? What are you going to do with them?“ Lapis asked and handed the box to Peridot.

„I just wanted to check if some of Percy’s horseshoes are in there. I wanted to keep one.“ She clarified and cleared her throat again. „Now, when the box is down, how can I help you?“

Peridot put the box down on the floor, her thin arms were kinda weak to carry something heavy for a long time, then she straightened up and looked at Lapis.
Lapis froze in surprise. She haven’t even think about how to put her question yet. And now she started to doubt if it was even a good idea to ask Peridot for this kind of help. But who else could help her? Peridot was practically her only good friend so far and she knew her for so long.

„So?“ The blonde raised her eyebrow and broke Lapis’ train of thoughts with her question.

Lapis shook her head, her cheeks became slightly red. This was difficult. Even more difficult than she expected. But in the end Lapis took her courage and deep breath.

„Peridot… Let me kiss you.“

„What?!“ Peridot barked. „What kind of help is that?“

„Listen, I…” Lapis inhaled slowly. „I really like one girl and I just… I just wanted to make good first impression.“

„Dude, I can’t do that! I have a boyfriend. That would be cheating.“ Peridot objected, already giving Lapis a sigh that there was no way to do it.

The taller girl then lowered her eyes in disappointment and sighed heavily, rubbing her forearm. „… I know, I know. This was a bad idea. Sorry, just… Forget that I said anything. Tho I thought that asking you would be silly.“

There was an awkward silence between them for a while, although Lapis was still hoping that Peridot will change her mind. But it didn’t look like that. Lapis decided to let it be, so she headed towards the door with a hung head, and left the room.

„That was embarrassing…‘ Lapis sniffed, cupping her forehead and dashing from the storage as quickly as possible. „How could I think that might work? I’m such a–“

„–Lapis, wait!“ Peridot then ran out of the room and headed to Lapis, taking her by her shoulder. „I… I’ll do it…“

Lapis’ eyes then widened in surprise. „Um… Really?“

„Yes, just… Promise me that immediately, right after that kiss is over, we will act like nothing ever happened and we’ll never speak of this again, okay?“

„We… Don’t have to do it, Peridot.“

„Dude!“ Peridot slapped her own forehead and gesticulated. „You wanted me to help you! So let me do it then!“

Lapis knew that making Peridot do something that she didn’t want to do was a challenge and really difficult goal in every way. But she appreciated Peridot’s kindness towards her. Lapis was the only one who Peridot could truly trust, and she even admitted it to her.

Lapis sighed softly through her nose and approached her friend. She lowered her head to look Peridot into her emerald eyes. She could feel her nervousness, but her willingness, too. She watched her as her green eyes were staring at her doubtfully, with a bit of fear and uncertainty.

Peridot shut her eyes, probably wishing that everything will be over soon, and swallowed.

Lapis reached her hand, but managed to stop before touching Peridot yet. „It’s okay. It’s okay… Just pretend it’s Pearl.‘ She then took her courage and gently took Peridot by her jaw and pulled her slowly towards herself. She also closed her eyes and imagined Pearl being there, standing in
front of her and forcing her lips towards hers. This was kinda hard for Lapis to imagine, because Pearl was half a head higher then she was, and Peridot was more than half a head smaller than Lapis. But still, she felt like it was worth try.

Lapis let her lips be pressed against Peridot’s, which made the smaller girl wince softly, but she seamlessly let Lapis continue. The taller girl then pressed their lips together a bit harder, carefully and slowly enough not to startle the other girl and making her run away. She held their lips together for a few moments, with each of them breathing into each other’s lungs softly. This short kiss then ended with a click of a tongue as Lapis pulled back a bit, but still she was close enough to feel the soft flesh of Peridot’s parted lips.

„So…“ Lapis swallowed nervously. „How was it?“

Peridot blinked several times and shook her head slightly, kinda shocked. „I… Think I’m not straight anymore…“

„Be serious.“ Lapis forced a sigh and furrowed her eyebrows, wanting to hear a honest answer.

„I am! Like… Not that I’m not straight, but yeah. It wasn’t bad at all…“ The blonde felt embarrassed, she couldn’t look Lapis into her eyes. But in the end she had no choice.

„Thanks, Peridot.“ Lapis smiled as the smaller girl looked back up at her.

„Yeah…“ She rubbed the back of her thin neck and looked aside again.

Suddenly both girl heard fast steps approaching them and they immediately pulled back from each other.

„Oh, Lapis there you are!“ It was her good old friend that haven’t appeared in the stable for a while, since he had a lot of work with other riders and their presence on show jumping competitions.

„Hey, Greg.“ Girls said concurrently and waved at him, hoping that he haven’t seen anything that happened just a little while ago.

„How are you?“ He said breathlessly, but it was more like a rhetorical question than a common one. He was probably in a hurry, still gulping for some air „I just wanted to let you know that I recon with you to get involved to this year’s Grand Prix in October.“

„Oh?“ Lapis rubbed her nape, with Peridot’s gaze on her. „A Grand Prix? This October?“

„Yes. We should probably start with practise soon.“ He objected, tapping a glass of his watch, still breathing fast.

Lapis nodded in agreement. „Right. I… I could take Blue to the hall tomorrow. “

„Wonderful.“ Greg nodded hurriedly. „I’m so sorry, but I have to go now. I’m glad I could catch you here. See you tomorrow then.“

„Okay.“ Lapis half-smiled, saying goodbye to the older man when he turned on his heels and headed out from the stable in hurry. Lapis knew that he had a lot of work and that he didn’t have any time to relax, even just for a few minutes. He was completely bussy all the time and that was the reason why Lapis and Peridot spent so much time in the stable and practically were taking care of everything on their own.

„Grand Prix, huh?“ Peridot smirked and bit her lip, looking at her taller friend. She poked her
into her side.

Lapis just winced a little. „I know. I hope he didn’t forget about those two competitions before the Grand Prix where we planned to go, too.“

Peridot just loudly laughed at that, the only way she could truly laugh at something with her high pitched voice. „I bet he did.“

Lapis hummed unsurely, while Peridot was still laughing.

„Don’t be like that, Lappy. You know he’s sclerotic.“ She patted her shoulder.

„Unfortunately…“ Lapis sighed and ran her hand through her hair, making her fringe turn backwards.

„Hey, don’t worry.‘ Peri then smiled at her, looking Lapis into her dark blue eyes. „You can still remind him of it tomorrow.“

The other girl nodded, but said nothing, mouth locked in a tight line.

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After Lapis finished cleaning her horse and clearing her hooves, she tacked Blue up and headed to the hall that same day, since she had nothing else to do that afternoon. Peridot helped her to set up the cavaletti and hurdles to several different types of sizes, so Lapis could always move to higher levels of jumps. Peridot then left back to stable to clean some stalls.

First Lapis walked around the whole arena and let her horse check every fence that was settled on the dirty-surface ground, so the mare knew what kind of jumps will they practise on today.

Lapis went to a free walk and let the reins released to let Blue stretch her neck muscles, still walking around the hall in slow and calm movements. Finally when she felt comfortable enough and in harmony with her horse, she asked her horse to trot. As Blue was trotting in an optimal speed, Lapis got slowly to the coordination with mare’s body, letting her own body lifting slightly up and lowering down to catch up with the rhythm of Blue’s movements and steps. Lapis hold onto the knee roll with a firm squeeze of her knees, resting the tips of her feet in the stirrups and pushing her heels down. She spurred her horse once more with a clicking sound of her tongue and leaned a bit forward to remind the balance while going to canter.

Once she was cantering, she approached one of the smaller fences and in an optimal distance from it, she spurred Blue into her flanks, making a clinking sound again and then crossing the small vertical. She headed to another small fence and again she crossed it succesfully.

Later then, she was very satisfied with all those jumps she overcame, still trying to go for higher and higher levels, forcing herself not to stop yet and continue, making the jumps even more difficult to defeat. Lapis wasn’t some fragile little girl like everyone always called her. She was pushing herself so hard, sometimes even too much to get the best from her. She even made herself collapse several times because of that, despite she could take some real burden on her and bravely fight it. When she was about to do something, she did it properly and correctly and at any cost, even if it meant to crack up and stay lying on the ground, unable to move.

They galloped around the hall, letting the hooves drum and making the ground dust float around. Lapis then changed the direction by pulling the reins slightly to the right and squeezed horse’s left side. She turned her horse to the right by one hundred and eighty degrees, so now they galloped counterclockwise, repeating the last few rounds several times without any break.
Blue slowly started to become tired from two hours of constant running, she was already snorting loudly and sometimes she missed some of Lapis’ commands that she gave her. But Lapis simply didn’t have enough, although she was gulping for some air, too. Also some drops of sweat started to roll down her forehead. Her hands were sweating, too, especially her palms and the spots between her ring fingers and the pinkies, where she was holding the reins. She already felt wet circles on her shirt under her armpits, and they were still growing bigger and bigger. But Lapis was determined, namely too much. She was ready to get the best out of her, she didn’t want to stop, although she felt really exhausted. She barely stood in the saddle, but she was convinced that she can do it. And she will.

Even when Blue was sorely refusing to still keep cantering, Lapis kept kicking her and spurring her, talking to her and telling her to hold on and keep going.

Her head was spinning, her hands were burning, well her whole body was, her legs hurt like hell. She almost couldn’t catch her breath, but she was still bravely standing in stirrups, feeling her knees and legs unstoppably tremble.

They were still running, jumping, running, jumping and running over and over again, repeating it so many times, one long round after another, galloping around the whole arena without even only one second of little break. Lapis’ vision was completely blurred, she didn’t know if that irritant fluid in her eyes were tears or sweat, she couldn’t hear anything clearly, she could only hear deep muffled noises and she had no slightest idea from where were they coming from. Her mare’s hooves’ drumming against the ground was Lapis’ only mantra, repeating and repeating, slightly vanishing with every second. She couldn’t even distinguish them from her heart’s wild beating. Her eyes were rolling upside down, but she was furiously trying to blink it off, she almost couldn’t see where was she going. Her body was weak, shaking, her every muscle was ruefully pleading to finally stop. But Lapis had to continue, she couldn’t stop. She was determined to finish what she started. And in any case, at any slightest cost.

She managed to swallow weakly, clenching her teeth as hard as she could at that moment, reaching to the very bottom of her vigor.

For a moment she felt like someone was calling her, but she put that silly idea behind her head and continued in what she was doing.

She then completely got out of the pace, rising up from the saddle and lowering down in some strange rhythm, if only we could call it like that, and kept jerking and hitting the saddle nastily and painfully, nearly making herself fall down from her horse’s back.

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Peridot picked up the used bedding with a pitchfork and threw it into the stable wheelbarrow. She then bent again and picked up another batch, throwing it on the stack of dirty straw. She repeated it several times until the stall wasn’t perfectly devoid of mess. She grabbed the barrow handles and headed to the manure pile. After that she came back, took a broom and swept away the bedding residues from the corridor into Percy’s stall, then she headed to a hay shelter, placed in one of the meadows near the stable, she then filled the barrow with new fresh bedding, taking it back to stable and spreading it out in her haflinger’s box stall.

Half the work was done, but still she had a lot to do. Peridot wiped her forehead and relaxed for a moment, leaning her back against the stall gate. She rubbed her chin, wondering where Lapis was and hoped that she wasn’t still in the arena. Peridot knew exactly about Lapis’ problems with overdoing her training and collapsing because of it. She knew that it wasn’t very good for Lapis’ health and always she was worried about her. Lapis was gone for three hours now and Peridot started to become nervous. She then pulled off of the wooden wall and headed to arena to check
on Lapis, wishing that she wasn’t there anymore.

She took a deep breath, hoping that the training hall will be completely empty, but nearly screamed in horrify after she saw Lapis in the desperate state of hers. She was still cantering, well urgently trying to, barely holding onto the saddle, bent in her back, entirely red and sweaty, gasping loudly. Blue was also completely tired, barely holding on her legs, wide streams of white sweat were rolling down on her dark mahogany coat from top to the bottom. Her lips were suffused with spits, some of them could even touch the ground.

Peridot shook her head several times, extremely horrified. „Lapis, you fucking blue-haired idiot! Stop that horse immediately!“ She yelled and ran to them. But Lapis seemed barely to notice her. She kept spurring and kicking her horse, over and over, not quite close to stop.

„Lapis! Stop! RIGHT-NOW!“ Peridot kept calling angrily, finally approaching them. She jumped right into their way and made Blue stop by grabbing her reins and pulling them aside. The stopped so sharply that Lapis almost fell down from her back.

Blue’s legs were shaking so badly, her mouth and nostrils were wide open, unstoppably gulping for air. But Lapis didn’t seem to react. She was sitting still in the saddle, practically lying on Blue’s neck, completely sweaty, burning, with eyes swollen, whole body trembling and arms hung down on each side of the horse’s neck.

„Lapis, what the fuck do you think you’re doing?!“ Peridot reached her hands and grabbed Lapis by her arm, pulling her heavy body down. She dragged her down into her arms, almost falling on the ground with her and that because of Lapis who practically fell down from over five feet height. Peridot carefully laid her down, unbuckling her helmet and throwing it away.

„Lapis, what have I told you about overdoing your training? You’re such a stupid chump! Can you hear me?!“ She barked at her, letting Lapis’ head rest in her lap. Lapis didn’t say anything at responce, at least her fast breathing was slowing down. Her mouth was open, gulping for air, eyes half-closed and teary.

„I’m…“ Lapis let out weakly. „….F-fine. “

Peridot growled and rolled her eyes. „Yes… And I’m a pope. “

Lapis then breathed out a grin, happy to hear Peridot’s kind of humor again. She was lying there for a bit, maybe for twenty minutes, finally indulging in some rest.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Lapis asked Peridot for a help
• Lapis nearly collapsed during the training

- Pearl wasn't in this chapter
The Virgin and The Crab

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was beautiful sunny and warm day and Pearl felt like this was a perfect moment for cleaning the house. She went to the kitchen and put a bucket, window spatula and a rag out of a sink cabinet. She then removed the spatula and the rag from the bucket and filled it with warm water, heading to the kitchen casement window and starting to clean it. First she opened it, dipped the rag in the bucket and then neatly wiped the outer side of the glass. She then bent down, dipped the rag again and washed the other window glass. Once she was done with it, she took the spatula and slowly she slid down the glass from top to the bottom to clean it from water. Then she went back to the cabinet and grabbed a dry rag to wipe the surplus water drops from the bottom window frame and the window sill where the warm water flowed down on it. Satisfied with her finished work she closed the window and continued to another room.

It took her about an hour to clean all those windows, but she didn’t care about the time. Pearl loved cleaning up the house, and for her the best part of it was that sometimes she found things that she couldn’t find for several weeks. In most cases it were books, since she loved reading them. She always puts them somewhere and later she doesn’t know where. Sometimes she even blames her cat that the books are mysteriously disappearing. Maybe Rose lays down on them and after her short nap she stands up and makes the book fall behind the couch. Well, that was one of Pearl’s many others possible theories.

Pearl put the bucket and the rest back to the sink cabinet and she headed to a small pantry room, where she got a washing machine, a broom and other cleaning supplies, and took the hoover. She started with the living room, since it was the place where Rose spent most of the time and the furniture was completely lost in her white hair because of that. Pearl vacuumed the floor, the table carpet and of course the sofa, then all the pillows and blankets, later then vacuuming the other rooms.

Last but not least as she finally finished vacuuming, she put the hoover on its place and pulled out a box of wet napkins, later dusting all kinds of surfaces in her apartment, including shelves, tables, cabinets, door handles, lamps, a closet, window sills and picture frames on the walls. And finally, after cleaning the dust, she took a mop and mopped the entire floor with it, hoping that Rose won’t decide to jump down from couch and make footprints on now perfectly clean and wet floor.

Now the only thing that left was get dressed and get psychically ready to visit the stable again. Pearl had visited the barn several times yet, but still she didn’t feel enough comfortable with it. But she knew that if she’s with Lapis, she doesn’t have to be afraid of anything.

"That’s great, Lapis! Keep going, keep going!" Greg urged, watching the stopwatch, standing in the middle of the arena and walking between the obstacles. Lapis nodded resolutely and spurred the horse. She galloped around the arena, directing Blue to a triple bar. Once she approached the obstacle, she kicked Blue to her flanks, making a clinking sound and leaning forward against the mare’s neck to keep balance. Blue overcame the fence, touching the ground with her front legs, the hind ones still in the air. Lapis then bent back, pushing into the stirrups and squeezing firmly her knees. Lapis pulled her left hand against her body, kicking the horse with her right leg and turning the animal to the left, heading to another fence. Soon she got there, again clicking her tongue and squeezing Blue’s sides, forcing her to jump. Blue was already snorting, lashing her tail.
in the air and shaking her head. It’s been two hours since they started their training and they’ve already become tired after one hour. Lapis kinda regreted yesterday and her behaving, she’s always regretting it the next day after the training, because it has really bad effect on her health. But today she couldn’t afford to skip the training because of Greg. Lapis knew that he was always gone and that he has almost no time for her, so Lapis is practically preparing herself for the competitions alone most of the time.

Lapis and Blue finally jumped the last fence, then they slowly went to trot and after a moment of trotting to walk, then stopped in front of their coach.

„Good, Lapis, good.“ Greg raised his hat, nodding. „Just watch your time next training and I think that you’ll surely beat them.“

Lapis giggled, blushing slightly. She unbuckled her helmet and took it off, now remembering about what were they talking yesterday. „Thanks, Greg, but… I don’t know. Grand Prix? Isn’t it too soon?“

„Of course not!“ Greg waved her off, but smiled. „Lapis, if I wasn’t sure about that, I wouldn’t take you in.“

Lapis then hummed, still a little worried. She looked aside and freed the reins to let Blue stretch her neck.

„Listen, Lapis.“ The older man started, he approached the horse and patted it on its neck, looking up at Lapis. „You have a potential. You were born for this! And I know you can do it! So why bother with those low level competitions if you got the potential for something more to show?“

„But… This was my first big gold. I was always stuck on a third or a second place.“ Lapis objected. She then pulled her feet out of stirrups and jumped down next to Greg.

„But you were so close to it! And then you finally got it! You just had a bad luck before that… Or the others had more of it.“ Greg pouted, looking aside for a few seconds. He then put his big hands on the girl’s shoulders gently. „But trust me, Lapis. You’re strong, brave warrior. I believe in you, and if someone believes in you, it’s way easier to succeed.“

Lapis looked into his eye, they were so serious and full of joy at the same time. Greg was wise man and Lapis knew it, even though she had doubts about it sometimes. He was always right about these things, but why couldn’t Lapis just trust herself if he did? She’s pushing herself so hard to get the best from her after all, isn’t she? So why couldn’t she risk a bit and have some fun?

„But… What about those two competitions on our list?“ She then asked, suddenly remembering.

„You’re not going.“ He said clearly. „Let’s just focus on Grand Prix now. Although I think that it’s already too late to train for those two competitions. We don’t have even a month for the preparations for them. We’ll better prepare for the October.“ Greg then removed his hands and stepped slightly back.

„Just trust yourself, Lapis… And me, too.“ He smiled and then half-turned, leaving. „By the way, good job today, girls. Get yourselves a shower and relax for a bit. I’ll see you in a week.“

„… Okay.“ Lapis sighed, holding the helmet and staring after Greg as he was leaving the training hall. She grabbed the reins with her right hand and pulled Blue towards herself, nuzzling to her cheek and stroking her long nose.

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Pearl parked her car on a small stable parking lot, turning off the engine and unbuckling herself. She then got out and opened the back door, taking a rolled up blanket and big round watermelon from the back seat. She didn’t even bother to lock the car and walked to the inside of the open barn, although a bit unsure.

She walked through the barn slowly, right into the stable. Always when she was there, the first thing she saw was Malachite. That giant terrifying black horse, always aggressively neighing and knocking into the stall walls. But today, she seemed kinda calm to Pearl. Maybe she was asleep, Pearl thought, but that early? The sun didn’t even entirely hide yet.

The skinny girl continued deeper into the building, recognizing the smaller blonde with glasses in a short distance from her. Peridot was her name. She was brooming the corridor, sweeping away the spilled straw that was all over the paved floor. Pearl wanted to greet her, but wasn’t sure enough if she should walk through the building to the other side and meet her. But on the other hand, Pearl was so proud of herself, because every time she was there, she made herself go further to the stable, trying her best not to give her attention to all those scary dark staring eyes.

Peridot had her back turned to Pearl, talking to someone, but she couldn’t see anyone. Probably she was talking to herself or to her horse. Pearl could also hear a stream of water falling on the ground from somewhere near the blonde.

Pearl opened her mouth, hesitating for a moment, but spoke.

„Hi, Peridot.“ She greeted her with her common voice, not even bothering to increase her voice to make all those enourmous animals turn their heads and stare at her. Peridot raised her head, looking around for a moment to find the source of the familiar voice and finally when she glanced over, she found Pearl. There was maybe ten-meters distance between them and Peridot was standing roughly in the center of the corridor, which was maybe about twenty and five meters long.

„Oh, hey there, skinny one.“ Peridot grinned, leaning against the broom.

„H-hi…“ Pearl greeted again. She couldn’t even wave, because she was holding that big watermelon. „Is Lapis somewhere there?“

„What, I can’t her you!“ Peridot placed her open palm behind her ear, shaking her head and gesturing that she didn’t hear Pearl’s question. „Come here."

Pearl swallowed hard, standing still on a spot, and heared somebody’s short curse from somewhere then. That also made her froze once more. But she took her courage and made several steps forwards and went closer to Peridot, but still was good five meters away from her and now she could hear the water stream a bit louder.

For some reason Peridot started to smirk widely with a half-suppressed laugh. „What did you say?“

„I…“ Pearl cleared her throat. „I was asking where Lapis is."

Peridot then looked to her right side, while she was turned to Pearl, and snorted loudly, nearly laughing. But she then looked back at the taller girl. „Well, if you’re interested in an ultra HD online stream of Lapis having a shower, then go ahead.“ She said impudently and gestured with her hand to where the water was falling down.

„You little bastard!“ Someone yelled at her, which made Pearl wince. The voice sounded somehow familiar to her. Now Pearl noticed a blue hair that was visible through the stall bars, but
fortunately for Lapis, the walls weren’t made of glass, so she was safely hidden behind one of the walls and Pearl couldn’t see her naked body. Pearl couldn’t even shade her eyes because of that watermelon. Her cheeks were completely red and boiling and Peridot just kept laughing.

Lapis immediately grabbed the bloom shaped faucet and turned the water stream off, putting the hose back on its place and taking the towel. She tried to dry herself up as quickly as possible and also not to be seen by Pearl. Huh… What an embarrassing idea for her.

She quickly put on clean clothes and took the sweated ones together with the towel. She then bit her lip and walked out of the wash stall, turning immediately red while seeing Pearl.

„Oh, Pearl…” She rubbed her wet hair, grinning awkwardly. „Wasn’t expecting you coming so quickly.”

„Quickly?” Peridot asked ironically and shook her head. „She didn’t even manage to catch you up naked. What a wasted opportunity.”

Lapis’ cheeks then turned to a darker shade of red, Pearl’s likewise.

„You little runt!” Lapis sizzled through her teeth, squeezing the fabrics firmly.

Peridot sputtered, turning to Pearl. „Sorry for that. Maybe next time you’ll catch her.”

Pearl swallowed hard and furrowed her eyebrows in embarrassment. Lapis then intervened and took Peridot by her shoulders.

„Hey, Peridot, how about you going to finish brooming the stable and giving us peace?” Lapis blinked at her several times, smiling, although she had that I’m-gonna-kill-you expression on. Then, still holding Peridot’s shoulders, she turned her backwards, so now Peridot had her back on them. After that Lapis let go of her and turned back to Pearl, still with hands full of her clothes and a towel. After a moment she heard Peridot growling and brooming again.

„So.” Lapis finally sighed and still feeling a bit awkward, she rubbed her nape. „How was the ride?”

„Um… Quick?” Pearl snickered. „I-um… I brought a watermelon.”

And after Pearl finished the sentence, Peridot spoke with a grin, snorting. „Well, great choice. Lapis loves melons.”

At that Lapis growled loudly. She rolled her eyes and tilted her head towards her smaller friend. „You mean watermelons?”

Another snort came out of her. „I mean melons.”

Lapis sighed heavily. She turned to Pearl with a grumpy face on. But Pearl let out a half-suppressed laugh.

„At least she’s got jokes.” She giggled, smiling at Lapis.

„Bad jokes…”

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The sun hid itself behind the horizon soon and then many stars appeared in the sky. Fortunately it was nice weather that night, so girls could comfortably sit outside and don’t have to be worry
about a storm.

Lapis carried a plate with sliced watermelon while Pearl carried the blanket. The rider led Pearl to the grazing meadow with a rope fence, assuring her that there are no horses in. They walked in and continued on the top of the grazing hill where one small maple tree was growing. After they arrived, Lapis put down the plate and helped Pearl to spread the blanket. Then they together sat down and each of them took a slice of watermelon, nibbling it and enjoying its sweet, sugary center.

Lapis took the last bite of her triangle shaped piece and put the peel back on the plate. „Thanks for that watermelon, Pearl. It’s really delicious.“ She chewed slowly with joy. Then she looked at her friend, sitting by her left side, and smiled.

Immediately when their eyes met, Pearl winced, turning red and looking slightly aside. „I-um. Yeah, you’re… Welcome.“ She then smiled, too, but didn’t look back at her. She was still nibbling her slice of melon.

Lapis wanted Pearl to look at her. She wanted to see her eyes shining in a starlight. Well, she could see them, but not entirely.

She wanted to say so many words that were dancing in her mind and forcing her to do it. She studied Pearl’s face carefully. Every single part of it reminded her of a different word and every time even sweeter one when she looked back at that spot again. Pearl was so beautiful, so young and innocent, so fragile and elegant, charming, enchanting even. Especially at the muffled light that was made from starts. Lapis could tell.

She cleared her throat softly, taking another triangle into her hands. „Um, Pearl?“

Pearl hummed in question, finally turning her face to Lapis, still nibbling her piece of watermelon.

„Have I asked you… About your age yet?“ Lapis wondered, searching in her mind. And Pearl seemed that she didn’t know neither.

„Oh, um. I think not.“ Pearl cleared her throat, wiping her mouth from the juice. „I’m nineteen.“

Lapis took a bite and raised her eyebrows in surprise. „Hm, you’re still a young girl.“

„Young?“ Pearl snorted. „How about you? How old are you?“

Lapis chewed for a moment, she didn’t want to talk with full mouth, and meanwhile Pearl took another bite.

„I’m… Twenty-four.“ She swallowed, but suddenly heard Pearl choking. Lapis immediately leaned to her and punched her in the back several times, delicately enough not to hurt her. „Pearl? You okay?“

Pearl then stopped, getting the little watermelon stone out of her throat and patting her chest. „You’re twenty-four?!“

„… Um, yes?“ Lapis furrowed her eyebrow in confusion. „Is that okay?“

„Yes, I mean. Yeah, I… You.“ Pearl stuttered, shaking her head, trying to calm down. She took a deep breath then. „I thought… You seem younger.“

Pearl was a bit afraid to look at her after making a scene like that. She wished that Lapis won’t
take it somehow personally.

„Well, thank you.“ Lapis then giggled and with that she made Pearl look at her, probably she surprised her with this kind of reaction.

The taller girl stared at her for a while, holding a slice of watermelon. „Um, yeah. I… I’m sorry that I overreacted like that.“

Lapis snorted at that. „That’s okay. I’m glad that you didn’t suffocate yourself. You okay now?“ She softly patted Pearl’s back and smiled. Pearl nodded, finally breathing again.

Soon they ate all the slices of melon, extolling the brilliant taste of it and peacefully digesting it. They were laying on the ground, letting the soft blanket adhere to their bodies, hands folded under their heads. Lapis had her hair almost dry by that moment, and all because of the breeze that was slightly blowing and wiping her every single cyan blue hair, one by one. Sometimes when the wind blew a bit stronger, Lapis’ fringe fell into her face, which then made Pearl softly laugh.

„What a… Astrological sign are you?“ Pearl asked after she stopped giggling. She folded her hands on her belly, turning her head to Lapis.

Lapis was silent for a moment, thinking and watching the starry sky. „… I’m a cancer.“ She said proudly, also turning her head to the other girl who just started to snickered again.

„A cancer.“ She sighed. „It’s a shame. A cancer constellation is under the horizon at this time.“

Lapis softly hummed at that, wondering what Pearl’s sign was. It also kept her amazed how Pearl could confess in astronomy and astrology so well. And she foolishly thought that she was the one who knew the sky well.

„What’s yours?“ She asked, gazing at her impatiently.

It also took her a moment, but then she spoke and gave Lapis a smirk. „A virgo.“

„Well, that sounds better than cancer.“ Lapis objected ironically, nearly laughing. „And is a… Virgo constellation in the sky right now?“

Pearl rubbed her chin, thinking. „Well… I think that if we look towards the west, then there will be only a small part of it.“

The rider hummed at that in disappointment, urgently searching for the small part of a virgo constellation, but she couldn’t see it. She wasn’t that good in finding these things, especially when there were millions of tiny and also big stars covering the sky.

She sighed softly. „And what’s-uh… Above us right now?“ She asked Pearl, like if she was some constellation encyclopedia.

Pearl thought, staring up at the sky. Finally she recognized some of them. She reached her hand and pointed up. „There’s the swan, can you see? The long neck, tail and two spread wings.“ She pointed to every single star that composed the cygnus constellation. „And under the swan there’s a pegasus.“

„… The winged horse.“ Lapis sighed dreamily, which made Pearl turn her head at her and smile.

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Pearl yawned silently, cupping her mouth and shutting her eyelids, and with a click of her tongue she then made her eyes open. „What time is it?“

Lapis checked her digital watch. Since she didn’t bring her phone, there was no chance to know what time it was. „Half past one.“ She made herself yawn, too.

„Already?“ Pearl sat up quickly. „It’s too late, I should be going by now.“

The other girl looked at her sorrowfully. She also sat up, folding hands in her lap. „Do you really have to go? You can stay if you want.“ She offered, her gaze was pleading.

„I do…“ She exhaled, turning her gaze to Lapis. „But I can’t… I have to go home.“

„I see…“ Lapis sighed heavily, furrowing her eyebrows in sadness. But an idea popped out in her head then, as a little hope. „May I at least accompany you to your car?“

„Please.“ Pearl smiled imploringly.

After a while, when they packed up the blanket and Lapis brought the plate back to stable, they headed straight to Pearl’s grey pickup that was standing on a parking lot near the barn. Pearl sighed as they approached the car and stopped by its side. She then opened the back door and threw the blanket to the inside, closing the door after that. She turned back to Lapis and leaned her loins against the cargo space outer wall, supporting herself with her hands that she put on the cargo space wall border. Lapis was standing near her, right in front of her, with a sad smile on her face.

Pearl sighed again, putting a hair lock behind her ear. „So... Thank you for today, Lapis. It was fun.“

„Yeah. It was.“ Lapis nodded in agreement.

They stood there for a while, looking at each other without speaking. They were standing so close to one another and there was no doubt that each of them wanted to go even closer. While they were standing there, suddenly the wind rose, which made Lapis’ hair fall into her face again. She growled a sigh and Pearl then started to giggle at her, cupping her own mouth. But when she saw Lapis’ hopeless face, she reached her hand and slowly she pushed Lapis’ fringe aside, making her blink when the hair locks brushed her eyelashes.

Pearl gently pushed her cyan blue hair away, slowly, slightly brushing against Lapis’ skin with the back of her thin pale fingers, sliding them down along the girls’ freckled cheeks at a slow pace, ending up on her jaw.

Lapis sighed softly. She lowered her eyes, absorbing the warmth of Pearl’s fingers and staring at her parted lips. Chills then ran down on her spine when she looked back up at Pearl, looking her in the eyes. She sank deeper into them, almost losing her breath and mind. She then scanned her lips, their shape, their curves, those sparkling white teeth that were slightly showing from behind them. Lapis then made a small step forward, remembering kissing Peridot and pretending she was Pearl. But this time it was real Pearl, right here, right now.

Lapis reached her hands slightly, leaning slowly forward. She was in a doubt, she was scared, terrified even, but she longed for her lips too much not to kiss her. Lapis stopped when she appeared near to Pearl’s lips, giving Pearl a chance to finish what she started and hoping that she will.

Pearl lost her breath. She swallowed, seeing and feeling Lapis so close to her. She was scared, too, but there was something. Something calling her and forcing her to do it. She was leaning
forward slowly, cautiously, without even the slightest idea that she was actually doing it. She made her eyes close, softly breathing hot air into Lapis’ open mouth.

Lapis could feel it. She felt Pearl’s hot breath as she was brushing her lip, she could feel her nervousness, but also the appetency. Lapis didn’t want to wait any single second more. She just didn’t. She was too impatient and greedy for that. She was waiting for so long, for too many long days, for too many long weeks. She already endured too much time thinking about this moment, this special and unique moment.

She then closed her eyes and softly pressed her lips against Pearl’s. As she had her hands reached a bit, she was brushing Pearl’s thighs delicately with her fingertips, not moving with them. She just held them on a spot, not to let Pearl feel unpleasantly.

Pearl’s hand still rested on Lapis’ jaw, her fingers were still holding onto her tanned skin. She then gingerly moved her hand upper and cupped Lapis’ cheek. Then she reached the other hand and took girl’s other cheek into her palm. She made their kiss deeper as she pulled Lapis a bit closer to herself. The taste of her lips was indescribable, yet so uplifting and enchanting. Lapis’ lips were so sweet, so smooth, warm and still a bit sugary from the watermelon juice. Pearl tasted them delicately, giving Lapis one suck of her lips by another, carefully, yet passionately.

Lapis didn’t know if she should stop breathing or breath faster. She was entirely melting, her cheeks were burning, her mouth likewise while stealing more and more kisses from Pearl. Lapis finally found her courage and instead of her fingertips she finally pressed her bare palms against Pearl’s thighs, continuing upper in a slow pace towards her slim waist and letting her hands rest there.

They stayed like that for a while, kissing and enjoying each other’s presence, feeling one another’s breath, lips and touches of their hands. None of them wanted to pull apart. If only it was an afternoon or a morning, they could stay like this for all the rest of the day. Well, they could, since it was 2 AM by the time. But they both knew that they couldn’t.

Lapis didn’t want Pearl to leave and also her to pull away from Pearl’s sweet lips. But Lapis knew that she had to. She was the one who started it and probably the one who should also end it. Against her will, she pulled away with a click of their lips, opening her eyes again. Pearl opened them, too. She looked Lapis in her eyes, softly breathing and still holding her hands on the other girl’s cheeks. Soon they both started to giggle, holding onto each other for support and hugging.

Pearl hoped that another accident won’t happen to her on her way home after this, since she was completely enchanted and feeling dizzy again.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

- Lapis was preparing herself and her horse for Grand Prix
- Lapis and Pearl spent the night by watching stars
- Pearl and Lapis kissed for the first time
It had been a few days since they saw each other after that kiss, each of them thinking about one another, but not talking, not even calling on a phone. They both were so excited about the kiss that they were so shy to talk to the other or even face them. Each of them thought that probably the other one was that ashamed of the kiss and didn’t want to talk about it, so they were just sitting by the phone and waiting for the other to call and say that everything is fine. But none of them did. They were just waiting, waiting in fear that the other girl won’t speak with them. But they so longed for each other, to see and hear one another again.

But then Pearl appeared to be the braver one. She took her car and decided to visit Lapis in the stable. Pearl wanted her, she needed her, she needed to see her again. She couldn’t stay like this any longer, not even a second.

Pearl soon arrived. She parked the car on her favourite spot, locked it and bravely stepped into the barn. She walked through the minor part of the building and headed to the stable. She clenched her teeth and fists firmly, resolutely walking in and trying to avoid making an eye contact with any of those giant animals in there. But as Pearl was continuing further, she realized that there was no one inside, not even Peridot. Pearl walked through the building and went out on the opposite side from where she walked in. She hummed and put her hands on her hips, glancing over, but still she couldn’t see anyone. After a moment she closed her eyes and listened. Pearl stayed like that for a moment, listening in total silence. She then could hear something. Some deep muffled clattering. It was coming from a big rectangle shaped building that was standing next to the stable. She then decided to explore that area and walked around the stable along wide stone pavement, slowly approaching the stable’s open double door entrance. There was a small slope in front of the door frame, whole building floor was a bit raised and covered in dirt combined with some sand mixture. Pearl walked up the slope and peered inside the building. It appeared to be a really big hall with large vertical windows that were overlaying the upper half of all four high walls.

Pearl looked down from the walls and noticed someone riding a horse around the hall, jumping over the fences. She smiled widely when she recognized that person, a slight blush on her cheeks.

She wasn’t entirely sure about going inside, but at least she leaned her back against the inside wall, right next to the door frame, so she always had a chance to run away if a horse appeared somewhere near her.

Lapis haven’t noticed her yet. She was paying her attention to the obstacles and crossing them one by one. She was cantering around the arena between the hurdles and jumping over them thoughtfully and avoiding to knock down one single rail.

They finally overcame the last fence, now trotting along the walls and taking a little break. But as Lapis approached the entrance to the training hall, she stopped her horse and gasped, finally noticing the girl. The skinny girl winced, stepping outside the building when Lapis’ horse appeared near her.

„Pearl.“ Lapis swallowed the inhale, staring at her.

Pearl also swallowed, half-hiding behind the wall. „H-hi.“ She tried to smile, but the animal was too close to her for her to do it.
Hi!“ Lapis grinned widely in joy, cheeks red. She pulled both her feet out of stirrups, tossing her right leg over Blue’s back and dismounting her. She turned to Pearl with a bright smile on her lips and ran to her, wrapping her arms around Pearl’s neck. She squeezed her tightly, shut her eyes and nuzzled to girl’s thin neck. Lapis suddenly felt a wave of happiness that washed her, even a tear appeared in a corner of her eye as she felt Pearl’s body again, as she felt her presence, her fresh perfume and her breath, her chest rising up and lowering down as she was breathing, her heart beating in a regular rhythm.

Pearl’s face turned red. A warm smile appeared on her cheeks. She was about to hug Lapis back, but as soon as she touched her skin, she nearly screamed. She immediately pulled back as Blue stretched her neck to them and cropped up right from behind Lapis’ back. Pearl crossed her arms on her chest in defence, gasping. Lapis then took her gently by her hand and gave it tender squeeze. Damn, she loved holding her hands so much. She missed it.

„Shh, she’s just glad seeing you.“ Lapis snickered, then took the mare’s reins to her other hand.

Pearl gasped again, this time a bit louder. „Uh…“

Lapis then sighed with a grin, pulling Pearl’s hand slowly down from her chest. „You don’t have to be afraid, Pearl. She’s not going to hurt you.“ She said softly and tilted her head.

Pearl knew that. She trusted Lapis. Well, how couldn’t she? Pearl didn’t exactly know why was she afraid of horses, but she felt like it wasn’t that bad like before. This place and Lapis probably helped her to reduce her fear, but not entirely yet.

„I know.“ Pearl tried to smile and gave Lapis’ hand delicate grip back. She looked up at Blue, wondering what is she probably thinking right now while she was staring at Pearl with her big dark eyes.

„... Do you trust her?“ Lapis asked suddenly. She turned her head towards her mare with a nod.

Before Pearl could answer, she needed a lot of time to think about it. She couldn’t say ‘no’ in front of Lapis and likewise she couldn’t say that she trusts her horse, because she doesn’t. Well, not completely.

„I...“ Pearl exhaled despondently, eyes lowered.

Lapis gave her a moment to responce, but as it didn’t came, she leaned closer to her. „Do you trust me?“

Pearl turned her head to Lapis and slightly bit her own lip, scanning Lapis’ eyes cautiously. „I... I do.“ She nodded resolutely then.

Lapis gave her a warm smile. She tightened her hand’s squeeze and slowly started to move Pearl’s hand towards her horse.

Pearl started to panic. Lapis kept forcing her hand towards the horse, towards its head. Pearl gasped shakily and started to tremble while her hand was still approaching to animal’s big head. She just said that she trusts Lapis and now she couldn’t go back. She had to risk it.

Pearl bit her shaking lip hard, turning her head away and shutting her eyes firmly, but still she let Lapis continue. She prayed for everything to be okay.

Lapis understood her fear and she respected it, but also she wanted to help Pearl to move on. She wanted to help her to get rid of that fear that was uncontrollably manipulating her mind and body.
The rider kept moving their hands towards the mare, while Pearl was stiffly shading her eyes with a back of her free hand and trying to pretend that this wasn’t happening.

When her palm slightly brushed mare’s smooth muzzle, it made Pearl wince and groan. But after a few seconds, she took a deep breath and let Lapis put her hand on the horse’s nose once again, only slower this time. Once Pearl’s palm cupped the smooth spot between Blue’s nostrils, the girl let out another shaky sigh, expecting the worst. But for a good half a minute nothing happened, Pearl could only feel mare’s breath that was rolling over her arm and Lapis’ hand that was cupping her own and psychically supporting her, stroking it gently with her thumb.

Pearl managed to remove her hand from her eyes and with a slight interrupts in the motions of her head, she looked at the horse. For her surprise Blue seemed really calm at that moment, she was standing still, quietly breathing and with her eyes closed.

‘Oh my God… I can’t believe this…’ Pearl froze and stared still at her hand, which was hidden under Lapis’ one. Pearl then looked at her friend, finding her beautifully grinning.

“You did it.” She whispered, smiling widely. But Pearl just stared at her in disbelief, unable to move for a good minute.

“So… How is it?” Lapis chuckled. It seemed funny to her how Pearl just kept staring at her the way she did.

Turning to Blue, Pearl hummed, deciding what to say. „It’s… Smooth. I-think.“

Lapis made herself giggle again and Blue opened her eyes. She lifted her head in a quick motion, which made Pearl jump aside and hide behind Lapis, but this only made Lapis chuckle again.

„What even made you to come just here?“ Lapis wondered, furrowing her eyebrow and turning her head to the taller girl who was pretending to be invisible and trying to maze the horse with that.

„Er… Y-you…” She breathed out, grabbing Lapis’ shoulders and pulling them both back, away from that animal.

The blue-haired girl opened her eyes wide. „How’s that?“ She turned to her with interest. But Pearl kept herself silent several seconds.

„Be-because… You know.“ She stuttered. „We haven’t seen each other for a while, so…” She lied, biting her lip, but so that Lapis couldn’t see it. Well, it was a truth, but it wasn’t the main reason why she came here, why she forced herself to walk through that terrible stable full of those… Ugh! Beasts.

„That’s… Right.“ Lapis’ voice a bit weakened. Suddenly something popped out in her head. The memory of that late night when they were together, the only, precial, blessed night. Ah, Lapis kept thinking about it every day, every good minute. She wanted to experience it again. This was the only wish that was making her heart still beat.

Blue’s snort then broke her train of thoughts and Lapis shook her head. She rubbed the spot behind her ear. „Well… We could do something together if you want. Again.“

Lapis wasn’t the only one who was constantly thinking about that night at all. They both were too scared and too afraid to talk about it with each other, although this was the only thing that they wanted to do. They wanted to scream, they wanted the whole world to know how extraordinary
that night was and how great and regally they felt back then, and that they still do. Both of them
wanted to tell the other how important the other one is to them and how they feel when they’re
near each other, how it feels when they are mutually looking into one another’s loving eyes, how
just being present to them feels like.

„I would love that.“ Pearl finally smiled, giving Blue one last look.

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It took Lapis just several minutes, maybe a quarter an hour, and she managed to untack her
horse and with a blanket tossed over the horse’s back, she delivered it to a grazing meadow to get
some food into its empty stomach after their training. Lapis still had to clean her, but there’s still
plenty of time until the day turns into night, so she could devote to Pearl now, since they haven’t
seen each other for a few days.

„So, what are we up to?“ Pearl looked at Lapis as she led her to the inside of the stable. It kinda
surprised Lapis that Pearl was okay with it, obviously.

Lapis hummed, massaging her chin and thinking. Finally an idea pop up in her mind and she let
out satisfied grim. „I have an idea.“

Lapis offered Pearl her hand just to make her feel safe while they were walking through the
building to the other side of it, but Pearl gently refused, since she could do it on her own now.
Although she hoped that she didn’t make Lapis somehow insulted or worse, but Lapis seemed to
be okay with that. But still Lapis was capable of asking her that again, since she loved holding
Pearl by her fragile hand. It always felt like she touched the smoothest plush in the world.

Lapis led her to the barn, still amazed that Pearl showed minimal aspect of being scared of the
four-legged animals that were staring at them from their stalls, watching them the whole time.

They finally arrived and Lapis nodded towards the attic ladder, bowing and gesturing towards
the ladder and urging Pearl to go first. „Milady.“

Pearl held her breath. It always fascinated her how sometimes Lapis could be so sweet and
gentle. But why was she like that, she didn’t know. Well, until that night, probably. Was that
Lapis’ intention? To make Pearl trust her and make her feel comfortable in her presence, so she
could reveal her feelings for her later? If ever?

„Oh, come on. You just want to see my butt from the bottom.“ Pearl joked and softly pushed
Lapis to her shoulder, making her blush on a spot.

„Uh, n-no! No. No, no! Pff…“ Lapis waved it off and furrowed her eyebrows with a stupid grin
on her face. She looked aside just to avoid Pearl’s gaze and not to make her to be totally sure
about her opinion. But Pearl seemed satisfied and let Lapis eat her heart out with it, leaving her
standing there and peering still to nowhere.

Pearl grabbed the ladder bar and began to climb up carefully. Lapis only managed to exhale
heavily, but quiet enough not to let Pearl hear it. She bit her lip and kept rubbing her forehead also
in part shading her vision, staring sharply down and trying her best not to look up while Pearl was
climbing the ladder. A drop of sweat then rolled over her tightened lips as she was munching them
tensily.

„Watch your head!“ She called out while staring down. But it was already too late, because she
could hear a loud bang right after she said that. She then heard Pearl mumble something under her
nose.
„Are you okay?“ Lapis looked up finally, finding Pearl who was rubbing her forehead.

„Um, yeah… I’m fine.“ She smirked, but still the pain in her face was quite visible.

An apologizing smile curled up on the smaller girl’s face, she then grabbed the ladder bars and climbed up to Pearl, likewise watching her head.

It appeared to be wall of hay built right in front of them, but on the farther side of the wall, which was the left side of the ladder, there was a gap that led to the small area behind the hay wall. The gap was a regular door sized and placed behind a corner, so no one could see to the inside from the ground and even from the tiny attic vestibule. Usually Lapis maintains the entrance to her place right in front the ladder and she didn’t even builds a wall of those haystacks, but it is like that only until they deliver the hay consignment to the stable once a month. Peridot and Lapis always take a hay from the middle part of the wall, so it always restores Lapis’ regular entrance to the attic after some time, so then she can see the stable interior again. The attic roof was bevelled from the right and the back side, the left wall only separated the attic from the second part of it that was behind the door. Lapis kept the door open so the hay from the other room could ventilate. There also was another reason why Lapis kept the room opened.

„Come. I wan’t to show you something.“ Lapis whispered and blinked at her.

After Pearl nodded in agreement, she followed Lapis and remembered to walk quietly. Lapis first led her to her place. There were many other haystacks behind the hay wall, but also there was one large raised cozy nest repleted with straw, with a blanket and some pillows in it.

„Welcome to my place.“ Lapis welcomed her with a half-voice. Pearl just couldn’t believe how nice it was in there, how snuggy and comfortable it seemed. The ceiling was kinda low for Pearl. With her height she couldn’t stand there straightened, but it hard mattered to her, because she felt so nice in the attic. Just like Lapis told her so earlier.

„So, what do you think?“ Lapis put her hands on her own hips, giggling at Pearl as how amazed she looked.

„It really is so comfy in here.“ She glanced over the room. It wasn’t big and wasn’t small either. It was just right and comfortable enough to spend a night there. Pearl let out a dreamy sigh.

„So, you ready to continue in our journey?“ Lapis asked again in whisper and that made Pearl wonder.

„There’s more?“ She turned to her excitedly, but then let out another question. „Why are we even whispering?“

„Shh.“ Lapis softly pressed her finger against Pearl’s smooth lips and smiled. „Come."

They continued to the other room that was way darker than Lapis’ place, because she, at least, got a small window in there. That room was as narrow as the attic, but longer and had only one window on the opposite side of the door. It also seemed really quiet in there, but as they continued further, a soft weak cheeping could be heard, louder and louder as they were wading through the straw to the other side of the room, but still the cheeping was quiet enough to be easily missed.

Pearl silently gasped in excitement and covered her mouth. There was a little swallow nest attached to the roof’s inside corner. The roof was low enough for both girls to look inside it and what they’ve found in there only made a tears appear in Pearl’s eyes.

There were five of little swallow baby birds only slightly covered in some fluff, pink as a small rose bud. They were so tiny, so weak, so fragile for girls to carry them. Pearl couldn’t help herself
but sniff and wipe her eyes.

„Lapis…“ She covered her mouth once more. „They are so beautiful…“ Now Pearl remembered the swallow she saw the day when she came to the barn to give Lapis the gift. That swallow was their mother. That’s why Lapis kept the door opened. It was for their mother to be able to feed them and take care of her little babies.

„Sometimes when their mother isn’t coming, I feed them…“ Lapis then sighed softly with a grin. „It’s such a beautiful feeling when you know that someone needs you.“

The taller girl glanced over the other one who was leaning against her thighs on her palms and smiling at those cute little creatures. „Ah, Lapis…“ Pearl sniffed again and put her hand on her friend’s shoulder, which made her straighten and look at her. With a hum she raised her eyebrows.

Pearl chuckled. „How many secrets do you have yet? It still keeps me amazed how wonderful you are…“

Lapis snickered, doubting, although she knew that Pearl meant it seriously. She always did. „And what makes me that wonderful in your opinion?“

„To be honest, it’s whole your being.‘ Her cheeks flushed a bit. „You’re so… Thoughtfull and… So kind and nice. You’re always helping others.‘

It made Lapis only chuckle again, but she took the compliments by her heart. „…. So are you.“ She gave Pearl a honest smile and after a moment she looked back at the nest. „We should be going… And let those cuties have some sleep.“

Pearl nodded in agreement and then followed Lapis to the attic, watching her every step and trying to do as less noise as possible. Once they arrived back to the attic, it made Pearl stop for a few moments, and Lapis wondered why.

„Pearl?“ She addressed her and managed to stop in front of the entrance to her place. But Pearl still kept staring forth. She smiled.

„Wish I could have a place like this…“ A dreamy sigh escaped her mouth. „It just feels so peaceful here.“

Lapis slowly came to her, slightly brushing her shoulder, and gave her a smile. „You can always come to my place.“ She offered softly. „…. How about you coming and spending a night here tomorrow?“

Pearl’s eyes widened in a small shock. „Spend a night?‘ She wasn’t expecting something like this, but she really wished she could. Well…

Pearl frowned a bit, biting her lip. „I’ve got something tomorrow. It’s our together Thursday and I can’t skip it again.“

„Oh… I understand.“ Lapis hummed and then they went silent for a while, but just until Pearl spoke again.

„But I could come on Friday if… It’s okay with you?“ She finally turned her head to Lapis, who was already so excited about it and grinning. She took Pearl by her hand.

„You know I am.“
Chapter recapitulation:

- For the first time Pearl made contact with a horse
- Pearl visited Lapis’ favorite place in the attic
This time, Pearl arrived by her good old bike, since she knew that she wasn’t going to come back home at late night today. When she appeared in the large equestrian area and came near to the ‘T’ shaped building, she led her bike inside, so she in part made sure that no one will steal it from her while the bike’s out of her sight.

She slowly inhaled and entered the main part of the building where horse stalls were. She was lucky that this time she actually saw Lapis in there. At that moment she was on the other side of the hall and in her hands she carried a bridle. Lapis left Blue’s stall and headed to the tack room, which was on the opposite side of where Pearl was standing. Lapis haven’t noticed her yet, so Pearl had a perfect chance to surprise her a bit.

Pearl crept along the corridor and as she appeared near the tack room, she silently slipped her head inside, finding Lapis who was placing the bridle on its place right above Blue’s saddle that was resting on a metal rod protruding from a wall. Pearl tried to make as less noise as she could and came near Lapis who had no slightest idea that Pearl was quietly lurking behind her back with a wide smirk on her face. Once Pearl was close enough to her, she jumped right after Lapis, tossing her arm around her chest and cupping her mouth. Lapis winced in horrify and nearly began to scream, but gladly she realized that this was just Pearl who for sure didn’t have any bad intentions to do with her.

Lapis turned her head and found Pearl snorting and softly chuckling, but still she had her back turned to the taller girl. She took Pearl’s hand into hers and removed her thin hand from her mouth, so she could speak.

„Geez, Pearl. You scared me!“ She frowned, but laughed.

„I know.“ She rippled her thin light eyebrows. „That was the purpose.“

Lapis blushed to it and took Pearl’s other hand. She was holding both her hands now and slowly she hugged herself with them, feeling comfortable and safe, almost invulnerable. Nobody could doubt that this gesture made Pearl’s cheeks turn red, too.

Standing in a silence, Lapis leaned her head onto Pearl’s shoulder and closed her eyes. She couldn’t remember when in the past she actually felt so comfortable and nice like she did now. Even when she was dating someone a few years ago, it has never been like this back then. Sometimes Lapis wondered how in the world could she even love that person. She was playing with Lapis like with some poor unneeded toy and never showed the slightest hint of interest in her feelings, never gave her a shoulder to cry on and never gave her true hug or kiss. Now from the time distance, Lapis saw how foolish she was that she couldn’t see how it harmed her from the inside, but now she was glad that everything was over and that the person won’t cast any more trouble again. At least she hoped.

„How was the together Thursday?“ Lapis lifted up her head to see Pearl after her moment of contemplation.

Pearl let out a grin. „It was nice like always. And-uh…“ Pearl then paused for a while, she freed herself from Lapis’ tender hold of her hands, and so made Lapis turn to her.
Amethyst finally reached her eighteen and Garnet invited you and Peridot to a birthday party in her garden. “She bit her cheek from the inside and slightly looked aside.

Lapis just held her breath for a few seconds. “Really? Well, that’s so sweet of her…“ She furrowed her eyebrows thankfully, smile on her cheeks. “But Peridot, too? I didn’t know that they know each other.”

“They don’t… Personally.“ The pale-skinned girl explained. “But I’ve been talking about you two too much and… Tho I think that Peridot will get through to Amethyst. Their sense of humor is kinda similar.”

An alarm button was then pressed in Lapis’ head as she just imagined two Peridots and their lightly sarcastic sense of humor. But she thought, if Pearl was sure that it won’t be a total disaster, she could try to trust her and give it a chance.

“Oh, then… We will be more than glad to join you.” Lapis grinned. “But you’re about to give me Garnet’s address, so we can get there.”

“Will do.” Pearl saluted and made Lapis snickered.

Lapis always made Pearl’s heart nearly explode while she was laughing or just smiling at her. Lapis’ smile was just so enchanting and beautiful to her, she always felt like she saw an angel beautifully smiling at her with those big sparkling eyes full of happiness, honesty and friendliness. Pearl always looked at her so dreamily, just like Lapis did look at her.

Lapis allowed herself to take Pearl by her hand and then she slowly led her back to Blue’s stall to finish her work. It didn’t take long to get there, since Blue’s stall was near the exit and on the same side of the building as tack room.

“Aren’t you afraid that she’ll run away?” Pearl asked as she found the stall gate wide open, but Lapis just chuckled at that.

“I’m not. She’s not going anywhere.“ She then let go of Pearl’s hand and turned on her heels, making a few steps backwards and saying that she’ll be right back after grabbing some hay from the attic, so she could feed her mare. Pearl nodded at that and cupped the front of her elbow with her palm. Right after Lapis turned away from her and left, Pearl realized that Blue had her head completely out of the stall and was intently staring at her even without single blink of her eyes. Pearl winced as she found her like that and made a few steps back. But Blue didn’t do anything about it but softly snorted. By the moment several ideas popped up in Pearl’s mind what could possibly happen. The stall was wide open and the horse wasn’t even attached to anything, so it could easily escape and run right after Pearl, bit her, kick her or whatever was on Pearl’s mind. Pearl clenched her fists and teeth tightly and was ready for any kind of thing to happen. But to her surprise, the mare was deadly calm. Blue was just standing there, sometimes she waved her tail or turned her ears to different direction, although it was mostly towards Pearl.

The girl suddenly felt like she was missing something. The longer Pearl stared at that horse, the more she had a feeling, or rather a need, to touch it again. After some time, she realized that it wasn’t that bad the last and also the first time she in fact touched her muzzle. Pearl still was in doubt and probably didn’t have the guts to touch the horse again, and on top of that when Lapis wasn’t anywhere near to resque her if something bad happened. But then Pearl clenched her fists more and took a deep breath. She made one small doubtfull step towards the horse. She swallowed hard and slowly she started to move her hand up.

Even if it hardly at all was in Pearl’s nature, she wanted to get rid of her fear once for all. She’s been visiting the stable for more then a month and she could see better results every single day.
She couldn’t afford to be scared as some little child and with that right in front of Lapis who’s life was probably only about horses. Pearl felt like Lapis was already thinking that Pearl was a total fool, but Pearl wanted to win. She wanted to win against herself and overcame her fear and get a little closer to her friend.

„Okay, girl…“ Pearl swallowed once more, moving slowly forward and lifting her hand up to meet horse’s dark muzzle with a small white snip between her nostrils. „I’m not gonna hurt you and you’re not gonna hurt me.“

Pearl found it funny when Blue blinked like if she understood and agreed with her. Pearl bit her lip and slowly approached the horse, but still she was in a safe distance from it, her hand was fully stretched and she still moving forward. Even if Pearl was partly determined, she was lightly shaking, shifting her body doubtfully forth, firmly forcing herself to continue.

The target was within reach and Pearl took one last deep breath, clearing her mind from dark thoughts.

Her palm finally met smooth horse skin and Pearl held her breath for several long moments. She didn’t dare look Blue into her eyes, but she stared at her hand and hoped that Blue won’t eat her alive. At that moment the girl’s hand immediately stiffened, but it didn’t last long when Pearl realized and admitted that it actually wasn’t that bad. She then managed to gingerly move one of her fingers and displaced it to a side, feeling Blue’s warm and soft skin.

Blue was breathing calmly and allowed Pearl to rest her hand on her muzzle without making any unexpected movements. She breathed hot air out of her lungs, and so it lightly tickled Pearl’s bare forearm.

Pearl blinked several times and assured herself that she wasn’t dreaming. A corner of her mouth slightly turned up. „I did it…“ Pearl breathed out and started to chuckle. A big bright smile appeared on her cheeks and then she started to chuckle even more. She became so happy, she felt free, now when she was breaking those barriers that were prohibiting her from escaping their prison.

Soon a muffled rustling sound of hay falling down on the floor echoed through the hallway and Blue, quickly like a shot, straightened her long mahogany neck and turned her head towards the barn, where Lapis threw down an arms of hay from the attic. Pearl winced slightly because of the mare’s sharp movement and also turned to Lapis, who sliddown the ladder and now was holding the hay in her arms, heading to Blue’s stall to fill her feed trough.

„Pearl!“ Lapis addressed her in amazement when she finally got to them. „You did it again!“

„Um… Yeah.“ Pearl shifted aside, so Lapis could enter the stall.

With gentle push of her shoulder against her horse, she moved the animal to a side and threw the hay into the trough. „That was so cool! I didn’t know that you actually had guts for that.“ She snorted and after leaving the stall she closed its heavy gate.

„To be honest.« Pearl chuckled slightly and rubbed her forearm. „Me too…“

„I’m so proud of you!“ Lapis smiled honestly and gave Pearl one big hug, silencing her and leaving her entirely breathless.

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The main front entrance to Lapis’ place was slowly widening and soon it will be as pretty as always. Lapis let Pearl enter the attic room first and then she followed her in.
The day slowly turned into night as Lapis cleaned Blue’s hooves and broomed the stable hallway with slight help of Pearl, who offered to help Lapis with cleaning the stable after the long day. And now, when they arrived into the attic, there wasn’t as much light as the last time when Peal was there, but still the interior was well visible.

„Just now I realized that you’re actually the first person who visited me here.“ Lapis announced, standing close to Pearl by her left side.

„Really?“ She turned her head for a while, but then again glanced over the attic. Nothing has changed. Well, maybe the blanket and pillows were placed differently than before.

„Yeah… Even my date have never been here.“ Lapis sighed and stepped forward, heading to her hand-made nest.

Suddenly a shock ran through Pearl’s body. She stared to nowhere for a while, thinking. „A date? Wait, is Lapis dating someone?“ She lowered her eyes in dissapointment. „Of course she’s dating someone! How couldn’t she? How couldn’t I just think that? Why am I so dumb—‘

„Pearl?“ A tender voice then broke the silence. Lapis was already sitting in her hay bed and worriedly gazing at Pearl as she didn’t receive any answer before.

„Oh-um. I’m sorry.“ Pearl forced a giggle. „I just remembered something.“ She lied in whisper and rubbed her nape.

Lapis hummed at that as she stretched her hand, took some paper box from a small shelf and pulled it down. It seemed like she missed Pearl’s responce or like she wasn’t paying much attention to it. But Pearl was kinda glad for it at that moment.

„Come on. You don’t have to stand there whole night.“ Lapis snickered and patted a spot beside her. She then waved with the paper box above her head. „I brought some cookies for us.“

Pearl gave her a half-smile and approached Lapis’ large nest, so she could sit there. „That’s so sweet of you, Lapis, but… I can’t… I’m alergic to gluten.“ She sighed right after she sat down beside the other girl.

„What?“ Lapis asked, eyebrow wrinkled in confusion. „You’re alergic?“

Pearl shifted a bit, making her sitting position more comfortable, and looked at Lapis. „It’s called a celiac disease. I can’t eat anything that’s made of cereals.“ Pearl explained.

Lapis froze, feeling sorry for her. She couldn't even imagine her life without eating any common food. „Oh, Pearl…“ She exhaled and lowered her eyes. „I’m so sorry… I didn’t know.“

Pearl sighed through her nose, but smiled. „That’s fine. I can live with that… But thank you anyway.“

The rider hummed. She put the box back on its place and saved it for later. But she decided that she will replace it with gluten free ones next time.

„So basically… You can’t eat almost anything.“ Lapis then clarified. She slowly shifted closer to Pearl. She loved being near her, especially now when she could finally afford it. She wanted to take her hand, but managed to stop herself from doing it. She was always afraid if it didn't bother Pearl too much.

„Basically… No.“ Pearl admitted and laughed shortly. Soon she noticed Lapis being close to her
and it didn’t even make her nervous. She always enjoyed Lapis’ presence. Her presence was different than any others. It was different than Garnet’s or Amethyst’s. This was more… Close, and also compassionate and familiar. Also the occasional silence between them two was so comfortable and harmonic. Not like the silence between Pearl and Amethyst sometimes. This was different.

Pearl tilted her head to a side and looked at Lapis, wondering what was she doing in the present silence. Thinking? And if so, then about what?

Pearl’s eyes weren’t adapted to dark just yet, so she couldn’t tell which way was Lapis looking, but she knew that Lapis had her head turned to her. And she was close, too.

Pearl was still thinking about their kiss. She felt like the kiss was still lasting, she felt the exact feeling that she felt back at that night. She had butterflies in her stomach, head spinning and her cheeks were burning like a hot stove. She wondered if Lapis was thinking about the same sometimes. If ever.

The longer they were staring at each other like that, the closer they were. Lapis could already imagine those thousands of stars that she saw back then during their first kiss, even when she had her eyes closed. Now she could feel Pearl’s lava-hot breath, her delicate body vibration that was harmonically pulsing and overwhelming her own body.

Lapis dared to move a bit closer. She was calmly breathing out hot air throught her nose. The air was tenderly brushing Pearl’s pale cheeks, lips and her chin. Every few long seconds Lapis looked up to Pearl’s eyes to make sure that everything was okay and that she could continue when she looked back down on her thin lips.

Pearl had her mouth already lightly open, but opened it a bit more as Lapis’ lips parted and breathed some air into her mouth. Pearl’s breath then started to tremble when her heart beat speeded up. Chills ran through her entire body, although she wasn’t even cold, quite the contrary.

She felt Lapis slowly closing her eyes and that made Pearl quite panic and for a moment lose her breath. Lapis slightly brushed the small pit between Pearl’s nose and her cheek with a tip of her nose and this time she let Pearl to finish what she started.

The taller girl had no idea if she was doing it or if her hand started to move on its own, but she dropped her hand on Lapis’ one that was resting on Lapis’ knee. She delicately petted the back of Lapis’ palm with her long fingers, then slowly moved them to Lapis’ shorter digits and continued along their whole length to Lapis’ polishless nails and then back up at a slow pace.

A sudden goosebumps ran along Lapis’ arm as Pearl was slowly moving her hand up and softly brushing Lapis’ skin with her fingertips, continuing to Lapis’ shoulder and when she finally got there, she slid down her sensitive bare forearm once more, really slowly and carefully.

‘Don’t tease… Please, don’t tease.’ The rider swallowed hard, her whole body was shivering in impatience, her heart bouncing in her small trembling chest. Lapis still had her dark eyes shut, but trying not to open them and look down at Pearl’s hand that was tenderly stroking her whole arm with a feather-light touch, again and again.

But finally, after Lapis successfully overcame this sweet torture, Pearl leaned forward and for the second time she brushed Lapis’ heart-shaped lips with her own and closed the space between them. She didn’t press her lips against Lapis’ entirely yet, but was only softly brushing against them from side to side as slow as she could, making Lapis more impatient and way more greedy.

„… Pearl…“ She breathed out in whisper, still keeping her eyes closed.
The skinny girl slid down Lapis’ arm for the last time, making another goosebumps appear on her tanned skin, and intertwined their fingers. She finally pressed their lips together, nor loosely, nor hard. Softly enough not to feel like a ghost was kissing her and hard enough not to bend Lapis back, she kissed her. It wasn’t like Pearl had only her mouth pressed against Lapis’, but she was actually kissing her, although she had no slightest idea how to do it, because she never had any chance to kiss anyone before. Now she had to work with her fantasy and imagination and try not to make herself feel awkward because of her inexperience.

Although Lapis thought that Pearl’s kissing technique was absolutely amazing, she wasn’t fully satisfied yet. She missed something. The slight touch of Pearl’s hand was really comfortable and satisfying, but not entirely. Lapis wanted to touch her a bit more. She wanted to feel a little bit more of Pearl’s body, but she knew that she had to be careful and that she couldn’t make any silly or quick decisions. But since Pearl was teasing her so nicely, Lapis lifted her arms gingerly and wrapped them around Pearl’s neck, making the space between them even smaller and more intimate. She ran her fingers through Pearl’s peach hair and rubbed between it in adequate amount of pressure, stroking and fondling it with care and remembering to keep her lips pressed against the other one’s, softly sucking the smooth flesh and painlessly nibbling it.

It wasn’t like Pearl didn’t like it, she loved it, but she had a bad feeling about it. She was confused about what Lapis said earlier about her date. Pearl frowned slightly. ‘If she’s dating someone, then why is she doing this? I don’t want her to be cheating on someone because of me.’ Pearl shared one last breath with her and then she pulled away a little, but tried to keep Lapis’ arms still around her. It just felt so good, so pleasant. She so wanted Lapis to touch her like she did again.

Lapis still longed for her. She longed for her lips, for her kisses. She leaned forward to steal another kiss from Pearl, but the girl refused and turned her head to a side softly.

‘Oh no… I went too rough on her… Damnit, Lapis!’ Lapis pulled back immediately and removed her arms from Pearl. ‘Pearl, I… Forgive me, I… I shouldn’t–‘

‘–No! It’s fine… It wasn’t your fault.’ She looked at her, but only for a short moment.

Lapis let out a sigh of relief and let her tensed muscles and mind relax, but then chills washed her body when Pearl exhaled sorrowfully and lowered her eyes.

‘Pearl, what’s wrong?’ She asked softly and tilted her head, so she could see to her face, although it was kinda dark.

Pearl gasped and looked up to Lapis. She swallowed and her cheeks turned red. ‘I just… I don’t want you to be cheating on someone because of me.’

Lapis froze in a slight shock, but then started to giggle at that idea. ‘Cheating on whom?’

Pearl just gave her a confused look.

‘I’m, I’m not dating anybody.’ She continued chuckling. She lifted her hand and stroked Pearl’s cheek with back of her fingers.

‘But you said–’ Pearl tried, but was interrupted.

‘-It was two years ago. I’m no longer with anyone.’ Lapis explained and petted Pearl’s cheek once more. It surprised Lapis how Pearl cared about these little things, to not make anybody suffer or make them feel betrayed. Pearl was that kind of person that didn’t want to make any harm or hurt someone. She was just too careful about things like this and Lapis really appreciated that.
„But hey, it’s so sweet of you, Pearl.“ Lapis smiled at her thankfully and her hand, that rested on Pearl’s cheek for a while, moved down and took Pearl’s thin hand.

Pearl breathed out a sigh of relief and a smile curled up on her face with a bright blush. She hummed shyly and lifted her eyes to meet Lapis’ ones. She now felt more relaxed as everything was clarified. For some reason she was glad that Lapis wasn’t dating. But why was she glad? She was kinda scared and shy to admit the reason.

This time Pearl was really glad that she didn’t have to go home and leave Lapis again. She loved the idea that she will spend with her the entire night and that she doesn’t have to be worry about coming home in time. She wished that every night could be like this one.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Lapis was invited to Garnet’s garden party
• Lapis found out about Pearl’s celiac disease
• Pearl spent a night at Lapis’ place

PS: Hello there, guys! :3 I'm gonna take a little break from constant writing and think about what will happen next with those two now. :D :) Also, this is my final year in high school and I'll have a lot of stuff to learn and study, so I probably won't have much time for writing this year. T___T But I promise that I'll try to post at least one chapter per month! ^w^  
• Thank YOU so much for reading my fanfic, for your support and comments, I really appreciate that and I love you all very much! :* :3 Have a nice day! ;)


• Hey there again! ^w^ I've been a long time since I posted something and it really
ruines me, too. :D :| I had this chapter in progress for maybe like 3 weeks, but I
wasn't able to finish it sooner because of school… And it's gonna be even worse! ;A;
But don't worry, I'll try my best to post something new soon! ^w^
Enjoy and have a nice day/night! ♥

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The sun already rose up and poked its beams through the little attic window, stroking Pearl’s
pale cheek and shoulder. Pearl felt something jabbing her as she was lying on her whole right side.
She noticed that she was covered in warm smooth blanket, a familiar blanket. She now realized
that she woke up and was laying in a hay, curled up in the soft cover that Lapis lend her so Pearl
wasn’t cold at night.

How beautiful and sweet thought popped up in her mind – waking up next to someone and not
only next to her cat.

Pearl lightly opened one eye, counting with seeing Lapis beside her, but her vision was
completely blurred and she couldn’t recognize any single thing. She blinked several times to get
rid of the mess in her eye and finally opened the other one, too. But in her surprise, Lapis wasn’t
there. Pearl frowned as the light was welcoming her and she leaned back on her elbows. She
glanced around the room, but she was the only one in there, Lapis was gone and Pearl wondered
where did she go.

The room was covered in muffled light, except for a small rectangle of bright light that was
shining through the window and falling right onto freshly awakened Pearl. But she didn’t mind.
Pearl loves sun, especially when it's waking her up with its warm beams, although Pearl always
has to get used to the sharp light for the first time. She enjoys it, because it happens only once per
day and anyone doesn’t know if the sun will appear the next day again, so. Sometimes she
wonders what would it feel like if the sun never appeared again, how would the life in a
complete darkness be like. Pearl loves making theories and philosophies about great amount of
different things all the time. But mostly when she's alone and nobody is keeping her company, so
she has plenty of time to think. Yes, Pearl loves little things, and those little things always make
her feel happy and positive for whole day, such as sun or its beautiful light.

Pearl heared the ladder creak a bit and after that she recognized quiet footsteps that were slowly
approaching her, but she couldn’t see who it was, because the person was walking behind the wall
of hay blocks. But when the person emerged between the entrance, Pearl immediately smiled
happily from ear to ear and let her cheeks become red.

It was Lapis and in her right hand she carried a mug with some hot liquid and in her other hand
she was holding a paper box, but Pearl couldn’t see what it was, so she rather paid more attention
to Lapis at that moment.

„Look who’s awake, Sleeping beauty.“ Lapis chuckled and stepped forward to meet her friend.
„Morning, Lapis.“ Pearl blushed a bit more and sat up. Later she removed some straw that she
had adherent oh her shirt and legs and then put her intertwined fingers in her lap that was covered under Lapis’ blanket.

„Good morning.“ She blinked and kneeled beside Pearl, still holding the mug and the paper box. „Did you sleep well?“

„I can’t complain.“ Pearl shook slightly her head. She heard barking from the bottom floor and turned to it, realizing that she haven’t seen Pumpkin some time in a while.

„I’m glad to hear that.“ Lapis shifted a bit and made Pearl look back at her as she spoke again. „I brought you some tea. Green, you like it.“ She said knowledgeably and handed Pearl the mug. Pearl could do nothing but gasp and thankfully accept the mug. „Oh, and…“ The rider blushed a little and from behind her back she pulled out the paper box, also giving it to Pearl, biting her lip. „And-uh… Something small to fill your stomach.“

Pearl gasped in surprise and froze. It was box full of gluten free raspberry brownies. Pearl only shook her head in disbelief. There was no shop in long distance from this place and not even a shop with gluten free products about which would Pearl probably know. Lapis should’ve gone so far just to bring Pearl a breakfast which won’t kill her after she consumes it. She really has to care about her, Pearl thought.

„Lapis…“ She just furrowed her eyebrows in disbelief and shook her head again. „Where did you…“

Although Pearl seemed really emotional at that moment, Lapis snickered and forced Pearl to take the box. „It was nothing… Just a little things.“

„But, Lapis–“

„Shh.“ She hushed her softly. „You deserve it.“

Finally Pearl managed to chuckle after her serious moment. „Why?“ She scanned the box and took a sip of her tea. It tasted incredibly delicious. Good old jasmine tea.

Lapis shrugged. „You just do.“ She grinned and watched Pearl as she was contentedly sipping her tea.

With her turquoise eyes she was staring at Lapis as her cheeks were becoming hot every next second. Still Lapis had a slight feeling that it wasn’t because of the tea. And she liked that thought.

Pearl took one last sip and swallowed, gazing at Lapis for a bit. She then lowered her hands and dropped the mug and the paper box down on her each side. She grabbed the blanket, threw it aside and shifted closer to Lapis, grabbing Lapis’ cheeks into her palms and giving her one tasty jasmine kiss on her lips.

Lapis swallowed a gasp. For a moment she thought that she would quickly get used to mornings like this.

She returned a kiss back, but only a little deeper one, and giving her one more after Pearl returned hers again. But then Pearl quickly pulled away, cheeks bright red. She bit her lip.

„Um… Sorry. I just… Let myself be carried away a bit.“ She rubbed her nape nervously, but it only made Lapis giggle.

„Pearl, please just… Stop being that cute.“ She poked in the skinny girl’s shoulder gently.
Pearl swore that if she had animal ears, she would turn them backwards and with flushed cheeks she would shyly look aside, pretending she’s invisible and that nobody will blame her for what she did.

"Those were really delicious, Lapis.\" Pearl swallowed the last piece of her brownie while climbing down the ladder. Lapis was already down and was trying not no look up once again.

"I’m happy that I made a right choise.\" She smiled and leaned on her side against the ladder a bit, crossing her limbs.

"You did.\" Pearl snickered softly. "To be honest, most of the gluten free products are… Well, not that tasteful. And they’re crumbling very often.\" Pearl let out a sharp sigh as she jumped down from the third step and landed on her feet, but smiled as she found Lapis standing near her.

"Looks like I’m gonna learn how to bake.\" Lapis thought aloud and grinned at her friend, squeezing her chin with her fingers.

"Oh, Garnet is already baking for me. She has that small oven for gluten free baking.\" Pearl smiled. "But thank you. You’re really so sweet…"

"Only one of us can be sweet here, girl.\" Lapis poked in Pearl’s side gently and smirked. The taller girl blushed at it and bit her lips from the inside.

They shared few looks before one of them finally spoke again, after a short silence full of nape rubbing and letting their cheeks blush even more every second.

"So…\" Lapis started shyly. Suddenly a memory of the last night ran through her mind and she forgot to breathe for a moment. She swallowed.

"So?\" Pearl repeated softly.

How could Lapis just concentrate in her presence? She was in a high doubt because of Pearl’s sweet voice and that cute look on her face just made Lapis’ heart stop and beat even faster at the same time. That was driving her crazy, how only one human could do this to her, how could a human, such a cute person like Pearl, just make her feel this way every time she sees her.

"I…\" Lapis cleared her dry throat. "When… Do you have to go?\"

Pearl thought for a few moments, although she knew what to answer, but wanted Lapis to wait, she wanted her to feel a little impatient once more, she wanted tease her a bit. And it actually kinda scared her, because she wasn’t thinking about things like this ever before. She even wondered if it wasn’t bad in some way. But still, teasing Lapis made her feel sort of… Happy. She was just being playful.

"I actually have no plans for today, soo…\" Pearl smirked. She hid her arms behind her back and swinged herself on her heels lightly. "We could do something together."

Lapis wouldn’t resist to an offer like this, but still there was something that was blocking her from doing it.

"I’d really love to, Pearl… But I’ve got a lot of work here to do. Peridot isn’t coming today and I have to clean all those stall by myself. It will probably take all day and you would only get bored.\" She frowned sorrowfully and let a quiet sigh escape her lips.
It made Pearl feel sad – seeing Lapis like this. She knew that Lapis was surely used to it, but what kind of friend would Pearl be without offering her a little help?

Pearl shrugged her shoulders playfully and grinned. „Perhaps I could help you.“

Lapis’ eyes slightly widened. She wondered if she heard that clearly. Wasn’t Pearl scared of horses just a little while ago?

„What? But, Pearl… Are you sure you would really walk into a stall? I mean… I don’t want you to have some post-traumatic consequences.“

„Hey, I’m gonna be there with you, right?“ Her confident smile suddenly turned to less confident one and so her grin curled into some strange shape. She almost lost her whole determination of doing it because of Lapis reminding her of her fear. Oh, come on, Pearl just wanted to be a little badass.

„Pearl…“ Lapis took Pearl by her hands carefully and also she couldn’t forgive herself for rubbing the back of her palms with her own thumbs. She could feel that Pearl was slightly trembling, those vibrations were permeating through her arms, too. „You don’t have to do it. I’ll be fine. We can go out another time.“ She smiled.

„But I want to…“ Pearl blurted and started to shake even more. She just wanted Lapis to accept her offer until her persuasion is whole gone. And there wasn’t much time left until Pearl loses the determination to help her. But she damn wanted to, so why did it take Lapis so long to finally agree?

„But… Look at you. You’re whole shaking!“ She stepped a bit backward, just to make sure that Pearl was actually trembling, and then looked back at her. „I can’t want this from you."

„Those are… Just a little things. “ Pearl finally managed to smile normally again. Her trembling softened. „… I can do it."

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After this kind of experience, Pearl’s back hurt like never before. She cleaned only empty stall where weren’t horses and Lapis took care of stalls with horses in, so Lapis made sure that there was possibly nothing that could harm her friend. Lapis gave her a slight education about what should Pearl use and what should she do on the first place and what to do next, but since Pearl had a lot of experience with cleaning, she managed to clear the stalls before Lapis finished cleaning her part of work. And actually thanks to Pearl’s help, they were finished early and so they had some free time to spend together again. It actually didn’t bother Pearl – being in the stable, especially when she was with Lapis. She even started to like that place. But still, the only thing that was always making her scared and worried, was Malachite – the giant, unfathomable pitch-black horse, which Lapis described like a schizophrenic being, and which only Peridot had a control of. Peridot was practically the only one whom the horse listened to. Even Lapis or Greg tried to make as less contact with that animal as possible. So this time, Lapis left Malachite's stall untouched and left it for Peridot.

Lapis remembered the time when she met Malachite for the first time and she hated just to think about it. It was the day when she was cleaning her stall without any tips or hints how to do it. That day she was new in the stable, she was something about ten years old when she started to work with horses and stuff around them and she barely knew what kind of being Malachite was. Well, her mother – Blue Diamond – was always telling Lapis to keep out of Malachite’s stall and reminding her small adopted child how dangerous Malachite could be. But one day, little Lapis wasn’t quite paying attention to what stall was she stepping in. She closed the gate behind her and
started to pick up the straw with long stable pitchfork. But unfortunately, Malachite wasn’t in one of her good moods and she started to aggressively snort and shake with her head, stomping and kicking the wooden walls. And on a top of it, it wasn’t even the worst part of what was happening. The worst part of it all was that Malachite was entirely blocking the door and Lapis couldn’t run away. She was facing the enormous animal that was nearly three times bigger than her and it was loudly neighing, kicking into everything that was around, lashing its tail and nearly attacking the defenceless and hopeless little child who had no possible chance to escape. So there she was, screaming and crying, lying in a ball on the ground for like two hours, bruised and battered, waiting for someone to come and get her out of that terrifying hell. Since then she doesn’t bother to even feed that horse, not to mention clearing her stall.

„How did you make it so quickly?” Lapis breathed out a grin and leaned against the pitchfork handle, looking at Pearl who had her back pressed against the stall wall and stared at her friend.

She shrugged in response and grinned at Lapis. Pearl watched her while Lapis was gulping for some air after she finished the last stall and came back to the wide hallway.

„I’m used to it.“ She folded her hands on her chest.

„Used to cleaning stalls?” Lapis laughed softly. She put the fork aside and stepped closer to Pearl, realizing that Pearl actually didn’t seem that tired from the hard work. She even wasn’t sweating like Lapis usually was, although she was cleaning stalls every single day. Well, maybe that was the cause.

This kind of idea sort of scared the tall girl, but she took it with humor. „No, just cleaning.\“ Pearl shrugged her fragile shoulders and giggled, watching Lapis as she was still stepping closer to her. „I love it.\“

Lapis broke off approaching to her for a second, but then continued, her smile getting bigger. „Well…\“ Lapis finally penetrated into Pearl’s personal space and shyly, with red cheeks, she hid her arms behind her back, stretching her neck to get even closer to that skinny girl. „I could possibly abuse your services then, miss.\“

It was happening again. It just happened all of the sudden and Pearl’s heart started bouncing again in her small chest. Lapis’ closeness always made her feel like this, although almost nothing big have happened just yet. Only Lapis’ deep dark eyes and cute freckled cheeks happened. Pearl could feel a slight fainting slowly overwhelming her, knees becoming jelly.

„O-of course…\“ Pearl blurted, all enchanted by Lapis’ sweet gaze, but after a while she realized that what she just said didn’t make any sense, so she cleared her throat and slightly shook her head, trying to correctly reformulate what she actually wanted to say. „I mean… What do you mean by the services?\“

It only made Lapis’ smile widen, seeing Pearl’s cheeks slowly turning red and her light eyes roving round the room nervously.

„By that I mean…\“ She chuckled, making Pearl redder even more. She made the small space between them yet smaller by making one step towards Pearl. „To abuse your perfect ability to clean, of course.\“

There was no doubt that Lapis’ heart was also bouncing so wildly as Pearl’s, only it wasn’t that noticeable, for which was Lapis kinda glad. She could hid her nervousness perfectly. That was the main trick of all athletes.

„O-oh…\“ Pearl let out shiveringly, not bothering to breathe out the small amount of air that was
frozen in her lungs. She was pinned against the wall with Lapis almost all over her. Well, for Pearl it felt like it at that moment. Lapis was so close to her once more, breathing in Pearl’s flushed face.

Pearl shivered and bit her lips from the inside, wondering if Lapis was about to get yet closer to her. ‘Why am I always getting nervous like this? Why isn’t she? And if so, she’s perfectly hiding it.’ Pearl thought, trying to avoid turning more red. She had to resist that sweet temptation somehow, she couldn’t let Lapis always win against her.

„What do you say?“ Lapis whispered. Pearl couldn’t see any possible way to get more red than she was. She had to bit her lip hard and try to remind calm breathing, although the question Lapis asked sounded kinda ambiguously. Or was Pearl just thinking dirty?

„A-I.“ The girl stuttered while catching a breath as Lapis was still getting closer. What was Lapis’ intention, Pearl wondered silently. Lapis’ eyes were acting like a pendulum, hypnotizing Pearl like a swirling colorful spiral and magnetizing her, forcing Pearl to do whatever was on Lapis‘ mind.

„Pearl?“ Lapis addressed her softly, touching Pearl’s nose tip with her own. But Pearl wasn’t capable of doing anything but lose her breath. Her muscles tensed, she was whole pressed against the wooden wall. For a moment she felt like she was a part of it and that she couldn’t separate from it because of the girl who was standing right in front of her.

„Um…“ She sighed lightly right into Lapis’ face, still unable to move. She could feel Lapis’ breath on her thin lips – her fresh, mentol breath that was caused by the chewing gum, which Lapis used before. Pearl could feel the aromatic wave of mentol breaking into her partly open mouth, continuing down through her throat, her bronchial tubes and filling her lungs. Her lungs straightened, her slim body and muscles tensed, she could feel her heart beat in her throat, she felt her head spinning and knees slightly shaking.

‘Why is this happening to me? Is this normal? Am I sick? This can’t be…‘ Pearl was killing every next question that cropped up in her fogged mind, but there were still appearing new ones. She couldn’t escape this gorgeously feeling tortue. She was trapped. She felt like the only way to solve this „problem“, was to give in, although she didn’t want Lapis to win again. But damn, Pearl couldn’t win. Lapis had a superiority in this. This was a lost battle.

Pearl exhaled carefully and watched the girl’s full, delicious, wonderful lips that were still getting closer and closer. Pearl knew that there was no escape now.

‘Come on.’ Pearl closed her eyes slowly. She then cautiously sucked to Lapis‘ lips and gave her one graceful kiss, soon followed by Lapis’ tender one. She could feel Lapis’ breath chase. Her nerves tensed and at the same time she felt relaxed. She enjoyed the harmonic silence between them again. A soft, quiet squelching sounds of their lips could be heard as they continued kissing. They were sharing sweet kisses, one after one, with care and passion, silently, gently.

Lapis’ hands then gingerly traveled onto Pearl’s hips first, keeping them onto her for a while. She then closed the tiny distance between their bodies entirely, pressing her whole well trained torso against the slim girl, and let her arms surround her waist, squeezing her tightly, but not that much to actually crush her.

Pearl slightly flinched when she suddenly felt every Lapis’ strong muscle that was brushing against her flat stomach. She managed to gasp when Lapis pressed a little bit harder on her and tightened her hug. This just felt like heaven, Pearl thought. Lapis was so gentle, so tender and affectionate to her. Sometimes Pearl was philosophizing about how she deserved that much care, how she deserved this loving treatment, how she deserved this kind of touches or even kisses from Lapis. Pearl never felt like if she was someone special and now she feels like she, well… Like she
was someone extraordinary. She still couldn’t believe this fact, this reality.

And while they were kissing, slowly and lovingly, Pearl lifted her arms and wrapped them around Lapis’ neck, pulling her closer and making their kiss deeper. There were still thousands of questions running around her mind. Questions that she probably won’t be able to answer.

She softly rubbed the cyan blue hair with her fingertips. It was so smooth, so soft, like a velvet or plush. Pearl was urgently searching in her mind when for the last time she touched something so downy like Lapis’ hair, but she couldn’t remember anything at all. This felt just so heavenly good. She even forgot to repay her kisses to Lapis for a few seconds while she was exploring the ocean with her long fingers.

Lapis quietly gasped at Pearl’s touch, also she forgot to kiss the girl back for a while. She so loved when someone was touching her hair and toying with it. When it comes to it, Lapis is automatically under the source’s control and able to crack up, purring and enjoying the contact of her skin and someone’s fingers.

She gasped once more. Her knees then slightly buckled and her body sanked into Pearl’s arms. Lapis was still holding onto her with her tanned freckled arms around Pearl’s body, but her knees were becoming weaker and weaker as Pearl was adding to the pressure of her fingers and rubbed between the blue hair locks in circular motions, traveling from side to side and stroking her gently. It only caused Lapis choobumps all over her body and another soft moan. She haven’t felt like this for an eternity. The rider lowered her head and nuzzled to Pearl’s neck to rest and feel the pleasure for a while, until Pearl spoke quietly.

„... Lapis?“ Pearl interrupted her action for a moment, just to look at her shorter friend who seemed to be standing on her feet only because of Pearl who was holding her. Somehow.

But Lapis came back to her senses and straightened a bit, finally feeling back on earth again.

„Yes?“ She whispered, but when she remembered those delicate fingers that were caring her so fondly, she appeared back in heaven.

„Do you feel okay?“ She asked softly and petted her blue hair again.

„I feel amazing.“ Lapis purred. She tightened her squeeze and cuddled to Pearl again. „I just love when someone's toying with my hair.“

Pearl giggled slightly and gave Lapis a small kiss on her forehead. „So now I can offer you my services.“

„Really?“ Lapis chuckled and nuzzled a bit more, hugging Pearl tightly. „But tell me, what makes me to deserve this?“

This question was very easy and simple to answer and the skinny girl just managed to smile widely at that plainness. „Just a little things.“

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Pearl woke up in the attic
• Lapis was offered a help in the stable
• Pearl found out that Lapis loves people toying with her hair
It was early beautiful afternoon with sun shining above their heads that was basking their skin with its warm beams. A cool breeze was caring their cheeks, tips of their ears and noses and blowing tenderly through their hair.

Girls were sitting outside the stable on the bench while little Pumpkin was running around, barking and playing fetch with Lapis. Pearl watched them with interest with hands folded in her lap, smile on her face. Sometimes she got lucky when Pumpkin brought her a whistle rubber ball and started jumping around until Pearl threw the ball away, so the little ball of fur could chase it.

Pearl threw the ball far away from them again, further than before. Shyly she bit her thin bottom lip, her eyes turned to Lapis. „Sooo… What are we up to?“

After they finished their work, they could afford almost anything to do. They have plenty of time now and full spectrum of possible activities that they could do together – just choose.

Lapis pressed her back against the tall wooden wall and crossed her arms on her chest. Softly she hummed. „I don’t know. Do you have any ideas?“ She shared her look with her friend and stopped paying attention to the stable shiba for a moment.

„No.“ Pearl shrugged and started to chuckle. „That’s why I’m asking you.“

Pearl’s sweet giggling always warmed Lapis’ heart. It was such a pleasant and cute sound of hers, it always made Lapis smile and lose her thoughts for a really long time. And that wasn’t the only thing that made her smile all the time while she was with Pearl. Also Pearl’s voice, her unique, soft, angelic voice was like a drug for her, yet so addictive. It’s a dreamlike sound, almost indescribable for Lapis – harmonical as violin, tender as harp, playful as flute, soft, full of joy and happiness. It always made Lapis think positively.

„So?“ Pearl narrowed her eyebrows enthusiastically, leaning forward, so she could see into Lapis’ face with busy gaze to nowhere.

„Oh!“ The rider cleared her mind, making her head lightly shake. Suddenly she noticed Pumpkin coming back to them with small rubber ball in her mouth. After she arrived, she let Lapis to take the ball and ran after it right after Lapis threw in away again.

„Ah…“ Lapis leaned back, slightly touching the wall and thought for a while. „How about-uh… How about taking a ride around the area? I know about one pretty place.“

A quick wave of shock washed Pearl just as she imagined herself riding a horse. She immediately lifted her hands in defence and shifted backwards. „I-I’m not riding a horse."

„Huh?“ The other girl turned to her. She noticed Pearl being quite terrified by that, but Lapis tried to clear it up for her. Of course Lapis wouldn’t think about stuff like making Pearl ride a horse… Or would she? „No, I mean…“ She exhaled a chuckle. „You could take your bike and I could take Blue for a walk.“

The taller girl’s cheeks lightly reddened as if she was mistaken. For sure, Lapis wouldn’t force her to such a thing like riding a horse! Ha, that sounds just ridiculous! „Does it?“ „Oh, that’s… Yeah. Yeah, well. That’s not bad idea.“ She then smiled, accepting the offer, still sort of unsure.
But Lapis is gonna be there, so Pearl has practically nothing to be worry about. And it was warm afternoon, so what would they do inside?

Pearl wished for a really long time to get used to Lapis’ hannover mare. She knew that Blue was a good being, calm and kind, just like Lapis. Yes, Pearl already knows Blue couple of long weeks, but still she feels like she has to find her own way to get a little bit closer to her. Pearl noticed that with every single day it’s getting better and better, but she knew that she couldn’t underestimate any situation while being near the mare. Horse’s are beautiful, Pearl thought, but she still has a great deal of respect to them, too. But since she met Lapis, another door into her heart have opened, new possibilities, new people and plenty of new experiences and great times filled her heart with joy. She was extremely glad for everything that she could experience, that she could be with Lapis who had shown her an entirely new world full of wonderful enjoyments.

Pearl was already ready for a ride, but tacking up Blue took Lapis few more minutes. She also had to clear Blue’s hooves before riding, so nothing would hurt or press against her sensitive soles while walking.

They finally got in front of the stable and both of them exulted at how beautiful the weather was. Lapis stood on her horse’s left side. She grabbed the reins into her left hand and then placed it on the pommel. Then with her right hand she grabbed the cantle, the very rear part of the saddle. She turned her back to Blue’s head and put her left foot into a stirrup, softly she swang up and with a slight slip of the saddle she mounted her horse. Lapis loved the sound of leather crunching under her. She enjoys it every time while she’s riding. It was just as calming sound as the sound of clapping hooves.

„Lapis! Jee, don’t do that to me.” Pearl called suddenly, slapping a palm against her forehead, she breathed out a sigh of relief.

„What is it?” Lapis narrowed her eyebrows, trying to figure out what Pearl meant by that. Blue automatically made a few steps forwards as Lapis landed on the saddle, so Lapis pulled the reins back to make her hannover horse stop.

„I thought you were falling! I saw the saddle slip right under you!” Pearl clarified, now squeezing both of her bike’s rubber bars tightly.

„Oh?” Lapis glanced down and found out that nothing unusual happened to the saddle. She looked back at Pearl with a snort. „That’s okay, it’s always doing that. Don’t worry, I’m not gonna fall.”

„Yeah… I-I see.” Pearl shyly looked aside, cheeks red, which of course made Lapis giggle. Pearl looked so damn cute when she was blushing. Always.

„Um, sorry, it’s just a… Reflex…” Pearl snickered awkwardly and weakened her squeeze, her cheeks got even more red. Finally she lifted her head up to meet Lapis again.

„Hey, that’s fine.“ The rider chuckled once more. „Actually it was really sweet of you.“

The other girl didn’t say anything at that, but just kept staring. „Does Lapis actually think that I care about her? Uh… I shouldn’t be overreacting like that.’

After they shared a few looks, Lapis gave up waiting for a responce – she could totally forgive that cute and sort of confused looking gaze of Pearl.

„So, are we ready?” Lapis asked, making the reins free, so Blue could start walking after Lapis sinks deeper into the saddle.
“Yeah. Definitely!” Pearl nodded with a shy smile. She then mounted her bike and turned it around, so she was facing the same direction as Lapis. She stepped into the pedals and made the cycle move, riding along with Lapis right next to her.

During the ride, Pearl almost entirely forgot about Blue. She cycled so close to her, but wasn’t even paying attention to the horse and wasn’t even scared of anything that could happen while being that close. Well, she was with Lapis and she knew that Lapis wouldn’t allow her horse to harm her somehow. Pearl was too important to her, but still Lapis tried to keep a sensible distance between them. Still she was about one meter higher than Pearl on her bike and Lapis kept in mind that she has the entire control of her mare and she was responsible for everything that may happen. She wouldn’t forgive herself if something happened to Pearl because of her mistake.

They travelled across a large plowed field and continued along dirty forest path between giant conifers around them that were decorating the trail. The air in forest was cool, wind slightly blowing and birds were loudly chirping. Pearl could already smell the autumn in the air, although it wasn’t even September yet, but it has a slight tinge of fall atmosphere.

It was nice forest path with little pebbles, twigs and spruce cones. The sun was making beautiful bright stripes of light through the trees that were touching the ground and illuminating the path.

Pearl sighed softly, enjoying the atmosphere and letting the breeze caress her cheeks. „You were right. It really is pretty here.“ She closed her eyes for a moment and rode forward, inhaling the fresh air that smelled of wood.

„I know right.“ Lapis admitted. „But it’s not the place I wanted to show you yet.“

„It’s not?“ Pearl opened her eyes and looked at Lapis.

The girl shook her head and let her cheeks smile at Pearl. „Wanna see it already?“

„I’d… Like to.“ The cyclist giggled.

Lapis then smirked widely. She lifted the reins and pulled them slightly back, so they were stretched. „Then catch up to me!“ She clicked her tongue several times, squeezed Blue’s side and asked her to trot. With every second step she kept slightly kicking her mare’s flanks and soon they went to canter. Pearl almost couldn’t catch them growing away, but she managed to step into the pedals and lift herself front the seat, making her feet work faster and trying to get somehow closer to Lapis who was already several long meters away from her.

„Come on! I can’t see you!“ Lapis glanced over at her and laughed, still spurring her horse to run faster.

Pearl smirked, although she was yet tired from pedaling so fast, but speeded up. She felt like she was riding Tour de France.

Lapis was standing in stirrups, still glancing over at Pearl and realizing that she was getting closer and closer by every step. She then turned her head to Blue. „Come on, girl. We can’t let her win!“ Lapis clicked her tongue again, squeezed the saddle with her knees and kicked Blue into her sides gently. „Hyaaaa!“

„Oh, come on!“ Pearl called after them a bit poisonously, but started to laugh. She made her legs move faster and clenched her grip on the handlebars.

It didn’t take long for Lapis to get the ’edge‘ of the forest. She pulled the reins and asked Blue to
walk and soon they stopped entirely. „Hurry up, you snail!“ Lapis chuckled, turning her horse to the left to face Pearl who was slowly approaching them and gulping for air. And finally she arrived, stopping her bike right in front of the horse. Pearl folded her arms on the whole length of the handlebars, she hung up her head and started to breathe deeply. She could feel the sweat drops rolling down her forehead.

Lapis snickered and freed the reins, watching Pearl as she was resting. „Adrenaline, huh?“

„Kinda.“ She breathed out a laugh and lifted her head, still leaning against the bars. „I just wanted to be nice, so I let you win.“

„Sure.“ Lapis chuckled softly and gave Pearl a minute to rest. Well, she deserved it.

„... We’re here.“ Lapis then added, making Pearl look forward. Finally she realized where they are.

They were standing on the edge of the woods. The dirty forest path, which they had arrived, continued ahead, but the forest was decorating it only from the right side and was attached to another part of the forest that was maybe one hundred meters far from the place where they were standing, and then on the girl’s left side there was spreading one large flower meadow with an amazing view across its entire length. Girls could see a small city that was spreading below the hills and fields. It was such a breathtaking view.

„Oh my... Goodness.“ Pearl’s light eyes widened and she lost her breath. She couldn’t stop staring, even for a second.

„Pretty, isn’t it?“ Lapis asked and joined her friend who was gazing towards the almost endless space of poppies right in front of them.

„It’s so... Beautiful.“ Pearl sighed dreamily. „We should come here more often."

Lapis giggled softly and folded her hands on the pommel, leaning on them. She let Pearl to fully experience the moment of her ecstasy and after a moment she dismounted her horse. Gently she patted Blue’s fleshy shoulder and let her freely run around. Lapis knew that this was Blue’s favorite place and that she loved being here, especially with her owner. Lapis on the other hand loved to watch while her horse was happily making wide tails behind itself as it was trotting between the poppies. Roughly in the middle of the uncovered forest path was standing large flat rock, on which was Lapis usually sitting, watching her hannover mare and the meadow below her. She loved this place. She could spend here whole day. And now she was more than happy to share this place with someone else than just her horse.

„Wanna take a moment?“ Lapis placed her hand onto Pearl’s shoulder gingerly. „Or are you coming?“

„Um.“ The tall girl shook her head, finally feeling her feet on the ground again. „Yeah, I’m coming."

She rather wasn’t even asking why did Lapis let go of her horse. For sure Lapis knew what was she doing and Pearl knew that she couldn’t watch her friend’s every step as if she was her mother.

Pearl dismounted her bike and followed Lapis forth, walking her bike beside herself.

After two short minutes or so, they arrived to Lapis’ sitting rock. Pearl led her bike next to the rock and leaned the cycle against it. Lapis then offered her a hand and helped Pearl up, then she climbed up the rock herself and sat next to her friend.
It really was one of the most beautiful views that Pearl had seen so far. Now she could enjoy it entirely, breathe slowly and deeply and feel the breeze stroking her skin and combing her hair.

Lapis watched her, rapt. She hugged her knees and put her chin onto them with a soft sigh. „I could sit here all day.“ She said and looked forward across the hill spreading under them.

Pearl giggled and also hugged her own knees. „You can.“ She looked at her friend.

„Hmm.“ Lapis purred and turned her head to Pearl. „I can’t. Someone has to clean the stable and take care of horses, you know.“

„Wish I could do that instead of you and let you sit here for how long you want.“ Pearl laid her head on her knees, still gazing at Lapis enchantedly.

„Ah, Pearl…“ The rider furrowed her eyebrows, all touched by Pearl’s offer, warm smile on her lips. Lapis slowly stretched her hand and placed it onto Pearl’s back, stroking her fondly with her thumb. „Tell me, why are you always like this?“

„Like what?“ The girl asked softly. She could feel Lapis’ hot palm even through her clothes on her skin.

„Like… Being so nice to me. You’re always so… Kind and happy! Honestly I’ve never seen you mad or sad or anything like that.“

Pearl was quiet, but gave Lapis one beautiful wide smile that almost made her heart explode while looking at her. „Well… I don’t have any reason to be sad… When I’m with you.“

It wasn’t only Lapis who’s cheeks immediatelly started to burn, but Lapis was the one who’s heart almost exploded again. She only hoped that Pearl couldn’t see her hands nervously shaking.

„Oh, stop.“ Lapis bit her lip hard and with a bright blush on her face she looked aside, taking her hand back. She felt so flattered by that. She felt so happy.

„Do you want me to stop?“ Pearl smirked and pushed Lapis into her shoulder, gently enough not to hurt her, but it only made Lapis blush more.

„N-no, but… I mean… It’s just making me feel… Embarrassed.“ Lapis chuckled awkwardly enough to make Pearl giggle at that.

„… Don’t feel like that.“ She whispered, which made Lapis turn her head and face her, even when she was harshly trying not to show Pearl her flushed face.

They went into a silence for a while and a silence like this always made Pearl think, usually about them. About their kisses and adventures that they’ve experienced together. But every question that appeared in her mind was one more important than the other. Pearl wondered how was Lapis feeling about her. How was she feeling about them, about the intimate moments they shared. Or was Pearl the only one who was thinking about ‘silly things’ like: ‘why would Lapis even thing about her’, ‘why would Lapis think about their kisses’? But Pearl longed for the answer. She wanted to know. She was even wondering if Lapis was thinking about all of this in her head, too, and if she was that shy to ask Pearl about it.

„Umm…“ Pearl cleared her throat softly, unsure how to formulate her question. „I was wondering-uh… Have we ever talked about… Dating?“ „... Well, that’s was a stupid question…“

Lapis immediatelly reacted. She lifted her head, but didn’t look at the girl. This kind of question kinda surprised her at that moment. „You mean like… Us?“ Finally she turned to her, shyly.
„Um, n-no, I…‘ Yes…’ Pearl then cursed something under her breath, fortunately Lapis couldn’t hear it. „I just wondered if you were dating before… And I already know you were, so… F-forget that. That was a stupid thought…“

„Pearl, it's not. It's fine.” She assured her calmly, but a wave of nervousness washed her immediately as she remembered what happened two years ago and what was happening several years before that. „I… Was dating. I was dating older woman, but I broke up with her two years ago, because she was rude to me and she was using me like if I was her toy. She didn't care about my emotions or feelings. And if I tried to object something, she beat me up. She was really strong and I couldn't do anything against her…” After a moment of thinking, Lapis ironically laughed. "Peridot always thought that those bruises were made by horses."

Pearl could do nothing but stare. She just felt so sorry for Lapis. She couldn't imagine to experience something like that. Pearl always thought that life was just about kindness and happiness, not violence. Her parents and friends were always so nice to her and did everything to make Pearl feel happy and wanted. She was really glad that she didn't become a victim of bullying when she was younger.

„Lapis, I'm… I'm so sorry." She gently petted Lapis's shoulder. She so wanted to hug her tightly without letting go of her. „I don't understand how could someone just hurt such a fragile being."

The girl sighed through her nose, but smiled at Pearl. "Thank you… But it's over now. I'm fine."

„And I'm so glad for that!” Pearl couldn't hold it anymore and tossed her arms around Lapis and hugged her.

Lapis slightly winced, because she didn't expect something like this, but hugged Pearl back, burrying her face into Pearl's neck.

„And how about you?” Lapis asked quietly, still holding Pearl in her arms. But Pearl pulled back, so she could speak.

„Me? Well…“ She laughed. „To be honest, I've never had a chance to date anyone. All girls at my school had their boyfriends when they were eleven, but I was different. Nobody had interest in me back then… And I guess it's still the same."

„Well, maybe it's not entirely true…‘ Lapis thought in her mind and sighed. „So, wait…“ She then interrupted her, but softly. „You're telling me that you've never been dating anyone? Not even once?"

The taller girl sighed and looked away with sad expression. „No…” Another sigh escaped her lips. She then turned back to Lapis. „Is that weird?"

The rider thought for a while, but didn't find anything weird about it, so she just smiled warmly at her. „It's not."

Pearl snorted at her answer, because what Lapis just said, she couldn't mean. Pearl knew that. It was weird. „But still… Sometimes I feel like I'm too picky. If I wasn't, I would find someone for sure."

The blue-haired girl shifted a little to change her position to more comfortable one. „I would rather call it being careful and patient."

Again she made Pearl giggle. Pearl's cheeks turned bright pink and she shyly hugged her knees.
„But I was always wondering…“ Lapis started. „How did you learn to kiss like that?“

Pearl could feel her cheeks getting warmer. Well, she wasn't prepared for this kind of question. Her grip on her knees tightened. „Like what?“ She asked carefully.

„Like the way you do." A playful grin was shining across her freckled cheeks.

„I would call it an experimentation." Pearl lifted her chin proudly.

„Oh, come on. You're not really telling me that!" Lapis pushed her teasingly, but it only caused her one push back.

„Ah, please… I'm terrible at that--"

Lapis then cut in. „—Are you joking me? Man, I still have no idea how to kiss after a three-years long relationship and you're telling me that you're terrible at that?“ She laughed at her.

Pearl couldn't stop herself from joining Lapis' laughing, her belly started jumping from giggling. „Yes, I am terrible."

„No, you're not." She objected playfully.

„Wanna bet?" Pearl challenged her, sooner than she realized what she had actually asked for.

„With pleasure…"

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Girls were playing fetch with Pumpkin
• Lapis and Pearl took a ride around the area
• Lapis found out that Pearl wasn't dating yet

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