Summary

• Lapis is a professional horse rider focused on show jumping. One day 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 slowly starts to vanish.
• Human AU

Notes

• Thanks to you, guys, I decided to write another fanfiction, but this one will actually have "a bit" longer story than the others! :3 This fic takes place in equestrian environment; relaxing reading, no big drama (because world can be beautiful and positive as well), lots of horses, fluff and a bit of smut. :3 I hope you'll enjoy and don't forget to leave like or comment! I'll be more than glad for any feedback from you!

• PS: English is not my native language; please be considerate. :O Though if you find any
unbearable grammar mistake(s), please tell me, I'll fix it right away! ;)}
“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 turning 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 making any mistakes. From an absolute victory she shared only a few meters, a few moments.

There was a 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 was absorbing.

The girl especially cared to correctly calculate how many steps 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 was dividing her from a 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 thought that only a few moments 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 too long now. Now 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 rail. 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 circuit 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 and a course 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 whose hands slowly started to fall down from the clapping, tiredly. 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 equestrian 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 winner's announcement and award ceremony.

“Finally! Time for another nap.” A girl with light purple mane exulted, slightly annoyed, 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, Amethyst. Would you rather go to see women’s football?” A woman with dark curly afro asked with an uninterested voice.

“Pff.” The pudgy girl hissed instead of a reply first. “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 don’t seem that… 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 the other one and crossed her arms. Garnet leaned back against her seat and brushed her eyebrows. She wondered if she should go and buy some drink, somehow 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 and every blink of her eyes. She scanned each of her graceful movements, watched as each strand of her cyan hair waved in the wind, as her hair locks that were protruding out of her helmet, nicely 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 towards 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 where Pearl was looking, perhaps to find out why she was acting so strange.

“Oooh.” She raised her eyebrows in astonishment, apparently understanding the reason of Pearl’s behavior. “I didn’t know you were into 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 like 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.”

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 whom Lapis was 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 disappeared. “… 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 and Deedee always brought her mother a great bunch of beautiful flowers and pictures of them and their mother's favorite horses from their stable, she remembered how her younger sister sang to her when they were sitting next to her bed. It was almost six 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 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 raised 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 has 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 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 awesome!” A middle-aged man with long gray hair congratulated 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
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 barrier which delineated the training arena. He took the blanket and tossed it over the Hanover 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’ younger sister were already gone. ‘Hmm. They probably went to the tribune already.’ 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.

“Hyah.” She squeezed both of her horse’s sides and asked 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 Hanover 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 disappeared 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 sofa, since doesn’t have bed in her apartment, 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 was 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 were more of them, more than usually. 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…

“Damn it!” 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:

- Garnet, Amethyst and Pearl decided to visit and watch a show jumping competition
- Lapis won her first gold in show jumping
- Pearl couldn’t admit to herself that she has a crush on Lapis

♦ 1st week (World Cup week, Thursday)
Accidently in Your Arms

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

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

“You’re lucky you’ve got 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 food before the storm started.”

“Haven’t I told you?” Garnet asked, 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 and 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 faster.”

“If only I knew that 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 onto 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 the 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 confectioner’s that’s behind the city. And me and Garnet could take a walk to the store which ins’t that far from here. The confectioners are 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.” Amethyst smirked, her chest puffed in pride. "Man, I’m really hungry for cake.”

Pearl giggled and cupped her mouth with her hand. "Alright. I’ll bring us something sweet to eat after that storm is over.”

“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 sound 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 favorite place of hers to spend alone times in. She dared say that she spent more time in there than in her own room at her house. She really loved being here.

As the lightning bolt flashed the sky, followed by a 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. Don’t worry, 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 which was adjoined with the barn in which 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 lying 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 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 hasn’t noticed Lapis yet. Lapis giggled and barked at the person with 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? You know it's my fav spot, right.” 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 in 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, though.” She then took the puppy in her arms
and smiled at it.

The girl stared at her misunderstandedly. “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 temples with a pointfinger and a thumb, 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 meant it ironically… Just for you to know.” She rubbed her temples again. “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 you were coming, so.”

“Oh, alright.” She blinked. “Anyway, thanks for looking after Percy. I’m gonna ride that horse unless 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 sort of 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 busy 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 the victory last Thursday.”

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“So, see you later!” Pearl waved, standing in the doorway.

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 her, 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 brief 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. 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 happened 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.

Lapis picked up a riding saddle along with saddle pad and headed to her horse’s stall. She opened the gate and entered it.

“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 the 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 into 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 and gave her the cubes. “You’re beautiful, you know that?”

The mare whickered 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 equestrian 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 chose 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 preffered the dirt-surfaced soils and nature like forest or meadows. But yeah, today’s decision made someone else and she respected it.

Soon 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 it. 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 fadded 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 has seen in a while. There were lots of large meadows and fields were surrounding the road from all sides. Its golden ears were slowly moving in the wind, birds were sweetly singing, a cool breeze 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 happend?” 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 blinked several times 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 its 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. Also she noticed two long black stripes, probably caused by the bike's tires as it slipped off of the road. “Hallo?”

The blue-haired girl made a few steps forward, towards the ditch right next to the road.

Blue whickered as Lapis approached it, but she hushed her and continued forward. She looked over the edge of the road and nearly screamed. She saw a 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 slid down the ditch, her mare whinnying 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 the 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 when 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 her 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 cheek again, worriedly staring at her.

Suddenly Lapis felt like the girl changed her breath. She was breathing more deeply than before. She shifted her body a little 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. For 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 onto 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 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 into her dark blue eyes. She could see a little bit better than 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 when she’s been hurt, battered. Lapis tried her best not to blush and get caught by her, but that hardly mattered. She didn’t probably even perceive.

“Okay… Pearl. I have no idea for how long were you sitting down there in that cold 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 enourmous 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 if nothing was happening. She snorted at the horrified girl and she then jumped into the air in fear.

“Okay, just please…” Lapis tightened her squeeze. “Do me a favor and don’t fall down into 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 uninterruptedly 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 one kilometer away from here. 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 inside, 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 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 nicker 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 tight 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 recapitulation:

• Lapis met her friend Peridot after a week
• Pearl was sent to bring something from the confectioners
• Lapis found Pearl fallen to a ditch

♦ 2nd week (Thursday)
“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 has to be perfectly quick and that she can’t leave there Pearl all alone for too 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 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 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 a 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 into 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 a 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 and hard. 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 Pearl's thin lips touched the 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 equestrian 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 it. 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 her honey-sweet voice, fishing her memories from the 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 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’ thick dark eyebrows, her long eyelashes. She didn’t even have a makeup, mascara or eyeshadows, her whole face was naturaly really enchanting and beautiful.

Her gaze then slid down 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 very beautiful woman, maybe about thirty-forty years old, with long white hair, standing in the middle of 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, but also sort of worried.

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

“Pearl?!“ Amethyst yelled. “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 in 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’m 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 pants 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 sort of 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 smirked 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’s surprising that you can actually 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 as that 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 it 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!”

‘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 covers. 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…'

She was lying in hay on her left side, covered in her blanket, squeezing it softly and with hands
folded under her 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, hidding her face in her palms. She moaned.
“What am I doing?”

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

Lapis sighed and bit her lip, openening 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 the stall gate 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 a 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 a 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 which 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 onto 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 its 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 a kiss on forehead.

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

Blue nickered at Lapis, leaning her head against Lapis' shoulder.

“You’re right. It’s over…” She thought and sighed heavily. “I should stop… I probably won’t see her ever again… Though I still wish I could.”

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

- Lapis took care of Pearl while she was resting by the stable
- Pearl was confused and she wondered if all that happened was just a dream
- Lapis found out that she has a crush on Pearl

♦ 2nd week
“How are you doing?” Garnet asked with her low voice, standing in the doorway while Pearl was sitting on Garnet’s bed in her apartment.

Pearl was looking out of a 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 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 neither. 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 immediately 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 a sweet girl.”

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

Garnet smirked again, still holding her hand on Pearl’s shoulder. “You're asking such a silly questions sometimes, 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 brief 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 towards 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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“Damn it…” Lapis cursed as she knocked down another hurdle, cantering along a fence that was surrounding an outer 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.”

“Pff…” 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, do you know what would I do?” She asked eagerly, clapping her palms together.

“Ride your boyfriend instead of your horse?” Lapis gave her a taunting look.

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

Lapis shrugged. “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!” Lapis 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 against 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 clean rounds without hitting any rail, but she couldn’t do it, even if she was trying her best.

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

She dismounted her horse and walked her way to a fallen vertical, taking its rail and putting it back. She slowly headed to the other hurdle and fixed it, murmuring 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, though 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 in disbelief ahead, holding a piece of paper with some small letters on it. She was standing in a gateway 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 herself 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 she walked along a loamy path, down a small hill that led to the stable. On her way down, she heard several loud whinnies, because of which she made herself stop and persuade herself that it’s absolutely safe to continue in what she was doing.

Finally she overcame the hill and slowly, doubtfully she approached the entrance to the barn. She swallowed hard, biting her bottom lip. There came a loud neigh again and Pearl jumped into the air in fear, almost making herself 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 gold 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 realized that she couldn’t continue. There were stalls on both sides of the corridor, no safe wall. Pearl, half-hiding behind the corner, thoroughly scanned the whole area, watching all those dark eyes which 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 almost break it, 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 whinnying, 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 nag!” 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 quite 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. The horse was attached to a steel pillar with a 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 pants’ 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 the spot yet.

Pearl cleared her throat, still unable to move. “I-uh…” She straightened her back, searching for words. She just wondered what was that girl thinking. That some strange girl just walked into their stable without any invitation and even without a 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 a corner. ‘Oh my God. Who induced me to 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 led her horse deeper to the center of 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-meter 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 equestrian 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.

As Lapis presumed, Pearl probably won’t go deeper into 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, kind of like Lapis’ sister. “Are you sure you’re okay? Don’t you wanna sit down?”

Pearl couldn’t believe that there actually was someone so kind. Most strangers she met in the past weren’t so nice to her, often. 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 sort of calmed her down. Her hand was soft and warm, with soothing vibration that overwhelmed her whole skinny body.

“O-okay.” She nodded, biting her lip. She really 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 held.

“See?” Lapis patted Blue on her neck, then she placed her free hand onto 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 she was actually here.

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 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 they’re 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 whickered quietly and poked Lapis again, snuggling to her and toying 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 as scary as she thought. She felt love and harmony between them 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 briefly she was searching 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 kind of… Unexceptional, so…”

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

“… A pearl?” Lapis’ eyes widened in surprise. She looked at Pearl with a surprised expression.

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, the warmth of her body. 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 gave 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 backwards.

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 was it also 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 visited the stable again, but this time by herself
• Pearl met Peridot for the first time
• Lapis received a gift

♦ 2nd–3rd week
“You’re… Welcome.” Pearl let out breathlessly, completely paralyzed 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 kind of a strange ritual that was.

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 thousands 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… Usually she’s not 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! Damn it, 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 a principle 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 dry 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 backwards 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 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 that Lapis was 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 if a heart attack wasn’t actually 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 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 quite unexciting…” 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 which 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 disappeared behind the horizon.

Lapis was still standing there, enchanted, dreamy, watching as Pearl was slowly disappearing. 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 too big, Lazuli. You don’t really think that she’s into you, right?”

“What? Why are you asking me that?” She asked, quite 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 emotionally, then rubbed her chin. “Wait, it 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. She’s the girl who it happened to. 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 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, literally.

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 into 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 whinnied 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 into 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 on her way back.

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

“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.

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 head collar 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. “Yuhh… 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 favorite small maple tree was growing.

“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 the gift?” Her friend asked, interested, as the one who actually had the idea to give Lapis something.

Pearl bit her lip, seeing Lapis’ reaction again that was playing in her mind. “She… Liked it. She didn’t even want to keep it, though.” 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 interesting 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 up. “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, removing the blowout from her lips. “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 sank 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 can’t be only a few good news there? 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 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 and smiled happily. “Yeah, we could totally do it. It’s on our together Thursday.” The girl searched for a pen in a cabinet drawer after that and circled the next Thursday date with it.

“Looking forward to it.”

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

* Peridot found out about Lapis’ crush for Pearl
* Pearl thought about visiting an observatory and watching a perseid shower there

♦ 3rd week
“Okay, I’ll pick you and Amethyst at eight.” Pearl nodded, staring out of a window at the cloudy sky. “Hope the weather will get better.”

“Sure it will.” Echoed from the other side of the phone.

Pearl smirked. “You’re the best weather station in the world, 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. But then Pearl immediately 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 could be Lapis up to right now. She was always wondering. She was wondering if Lapis was thinking about her, too. But no, she probably had better things to do than thinking about some girl.

A meow came out from the ragdoll cat as it 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 cat 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 remembered 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 reminds 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 meowed again, trying to get Pearl’s attention. But the girl still didn’t move. Suddenly she furrowed her eyebrows and sniffed, biting her lip hard.

‘Why did you have to leave?’ She sniffed again and opened her watered eyes, still thinking about
the woman. Pearl knew that there was no point in crying about people who passed away, for too long. 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 they’re still here for us and helping us to get over the obstacles which life is building right in front of us. They’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, she 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.”

…>

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 herself up. Pearl pressed the clutch and turned on the engine, then 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.

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 after the car stopped and sat on the front seat next to her friend. “Hope those clouds will spread away soon.”

“… Same.” Pearl sighed and looked out throught a 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 that 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 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 a 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 at that, just looked at each other. They actually expected something really big compared with a place where Garnet was living 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 the 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 buildings around it, so nothing was shading the view at 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 part of the building wings were placed an observation domes that means the west and the east cupola where people could watch the sky through a 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 tickets and leaving their clothes in a cloak room. 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 microscopes. There also were many large pictures, hanging on walls, in which people could see photos of many things that were vastly zoomed, so almost nobody could say what exactly was in the picture, until reading a description of the taken photo. On the right wing then girls could try a simulation of gravity on the Moon or a platform simulating an earthquake. They then saw many of organic minerals and its structures, from what and how 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. They 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 a 3D models of all planets in the Solar system for whatever they wanted. 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 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.

Girls then decided to get to a meadow that was spreading nearby the building. They headed to the reception.

Pearl was happily skipping on her way to the main hall through the corridor when she accidentally bumped into 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 heard someone say… That voice. It sounded familiar somehow. Pearl looked up while her two friends approached her.

“Lapis?” Pearl noticed 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 a few weeks ago?” She then asked. Garnet put her hand on Pearl’s shoulder.

Lapis blushed a little and intertwined her own fingers. “Y-yeah, that’s… Probably me.” She smiled nervously. Then Garnet spoke.

“You did a great job back then, congratulations.” The tall woman nodded.

Garnet and Lapis then shared a few words and Amethyst was having fun while watching Pearl who was entirely flushed and couldn’t even look anywhere else than at her toes. Amethyst then poked Pearl with her elbow with a smirk on her face and raised her 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 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, and patting Pearl’s shoulder she looked at her and whispered. “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 when 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’ve got 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 wasn’t expecting that we could meet in a place like this. I didn’t know you’re interested in astronomy.”

Lapis giggled. “What can I say, I loved it since I was a 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, and 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 then she suddenly noticed a small shiny thing resting in Lapis’ 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 if she didn’t understand, but then she realized what Pearl was talking about. The smaller girl then reached her hand and took the pearl between her index finger and her thumb.

“Yeah… I went to my uncle who’s 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, though she knew the answer.

The skinny girl just stared at the other one. 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 look at the other girl.

“I’d like to.” She snickered.

Both girls headed to the observatory meadow and took a seat on a free bench. They looked up
and watched the sky for a while 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. “Oh, ah... I wish...“

She didn’t manage to finish the sentence when Pearl suddenly cut in. “Don’t say it! Or it won’t happen.”

Lapis grinned with a snort. “O-hokay.” She then closed her eyes and wished for something in her mind. Still she was more focusing on Pearl than for 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 a sudden, grinning, but then she lowered her head. “... Which reminds me that I haven’t been to a botanic garden in 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 that. “And what?”

“Come to the stable tomorrow 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 stable.” The equestrian assured her. “It’s not far from there. You can bet that there's no place in the world better 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 an observatory
- Lapis met Pearl’s friends for the first time
- Pearl accepted Lapis’ offer and decided to visit the stable again

♦ 4th week (Thursday)

**PS:** Thanks belongs to ‘emma20020226’ for the observatory idea and also thanks to my friend Pavel for visiting a 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 full of tiny pebbles, so Pearl tried to be as careful as possible.

She continued down 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 one of a little gravel 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. It felt 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 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 the puppy on its head, but shiba managed to jump right into Pearl’s lap and made her fall down right onto 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 her 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 jamb 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 onto her feet.

“Are you okay?” Lapis dusted the ash off of her, her back, her shoulders, her… Chest. Then she 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 fine.” Pearl then added, dusting the loam off of her hair.

“Great.” The equestrian smiled and pulled a dog collar with a lead that was 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 always 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 smiling.

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

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

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

They walked maybe for fifteen minutes, walking along the path that was lined with large fields. The late afternoon sun was shining, wind blowing calmly and caressing 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. The dog stopped and tried to pull Lapis back, staring back at that tall human behind.

“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 stared at her. She lowered her eyelids and parted her lips, unable to move. She watched Pearl carefully, finding it really nice that Pearl 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 and something that nobody could be sure that it will last forever.

“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 is close to 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 and 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 as the place I want to show you.” Lapis smirked. Pearl then stopped whirling, 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 gold sky. “I was always dreaming about a place like this, but I never believed it could be actually real.”

“Then come with me, you dreamer.” Lapis approached her friend and took her by her hand, making Pearl 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 dark purple storm clouds, illuminating the whole area around her with the most beautiful golden color in the world. She couldn’t imagine something being better than this. Maybe spending time with her horse in such weather, crossing the meadows and letting the wind blow through her cyan 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 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 shivering impatiently, she wanted to open her eyes.

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

“Take a look.” She said and let go of Pearl’s hand, though 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 a 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 and special. 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 funny 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 sort of 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 one hundred-meters distance those sunflowers didn’t seem that big. But now when those three were standing right in front of them, the plants were for sure more than two meters tall.

“I can’t believe my own eyes.” Pearl stared at those giant yellow flowers. 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 – stepping in someone’s field?”

“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 has already been here, this place seemed familiar to her somehow. And after a moment she realized why it was probably so familiar.

“Isn’t this the field that you’ve got on your 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.

“Is 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 tears roll down her cheek.

“Lapis?” Pearl addressed her softly, worried.

“Yeah…” She sniffed. “She was.”

“And… What happened?” Pearl asked carefully, slowly passing Lapis and facing her.
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... I’m so sorry. I didn’t know.”

“Thanks, but that doesn’t matter now... She even wasn’t my real mom, though.” The equestrian forced a smile.

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

“… I’m… Adopted.” Lapis breathed out and made a brief pause. “All my family members' last name is Blue… Only I am Lazuli.”

“But, Lapis… It doesn’t matter if you’re adopted. I'm sure she loved you as 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 enough about me. Tell me something about you.” She urged, tilting her head aside and shaking it ahead to continue in their journey.

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


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 favorite flower?”

“Well, that’s a really good question.” Pearl rubbed her nape. She gazed at the gold 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 gently nudged Pearl’s shoulder with her own.

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 heard Amethyst saying ‘blueberry’, she bit back laughter. But she couldn’t say such a thing. Not right in front of Lapis. Not now.

“I think… Rose. Or carnation.” Pearl shrugged, pushing back into Lapis. “And what’s your… Favorite 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 palette.” Lapis admitted, grinning.

They spent whole the way back asking each other about their favorites, 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 that 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 the long walk that it couldn’t even move. It immediately laid down and started snorting, softly. Both girls 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 rising 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 explained, chuckling.

“I see.” Lapis 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 a little sunflower from behind her back and shyly she handed it to Pearl.

The only thing Pearl could do was letting her eyes widen. 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 those 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, but left Pearl in disbelief.

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

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

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

“… Absolutely.” Lapis blinked, making her 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 plan something… 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 a new friend – Lapis Lazuli.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Lapis and Pearl made a journey to sunflower fields
• Pearl found out that Lapis is adopted
• Lapis told Pearl about her mother’s accident

♦ 5th week
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 was enjoying 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 was wondering 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 there was Lapis who 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 hot hower. 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, head 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 tears water
They both then let out a half-suppressed laugh, later bursting into laughter and letting 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?”

Lapis gingerly 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.

They 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 that always made Lapis melt. “Let youself be taken by surprise. But before that… You have to close your eyes.”

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

The taller girl then gently took Lapis by her hand and led her forward, assuring herself almost every second 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 your eyes closed.” She ordered softly.

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

Pearl who was fully turned to Lapis carefully made one step backwards and led her friend towards herself without answering. She then made another step, another and another. Slowly, carefully she continued, finally feeling 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 opening her eyes and looking down. They were surrounded by a beautiful bright blue light that was encircling them, lining with the sea shore along its entire length. It looked 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 bioluminescent plankton.”

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

Pearl laughted 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 which 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 sinked her hands under water, the plankton was slightly brushing 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 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 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 in a center of her chest. She continued deeper into the water until the surface reached her thighs.

“You coming, Lapis?” She waved at her and called her from the six-meter 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 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 brief 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 were keeping Pearl amazed was that Lapis was still wearing the necklace with pearl that 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 equestrian 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 silent again. But this silence wasn’t a silence of awkwardness, it was a harmonic silence. A silence that even when 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 a question quite surprised Pearl. She wondered why Lapis was 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 brief moments.

“… Are you?” Pearl asked her back, but hasn’t received a responce 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 an honest look and waving her hands slowly like if she was making snow angels. “I don’t know if I’ve ever been so happy like now actually.”

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, not sharing her look with the other girl. “I do…“

Pearl suddenly had a strange feeling that was a bit teasing her stomach, however this feeling didn’t hurt her, but 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 give 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 rather felt like she said something sentimental.

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 grinned 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’ grin 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 immediately, even when she knew that she would stop her from that cute giggling by doing it.

“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 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 then, wondering what they could do on this Saturday and splashing one another with cool water. This night was extremely long and 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 become 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 sea world

♦ 5th–9th week

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

“Come on, come on! Quickly!” Lapis grabbed Pearl by her wrist and ran towards a wooden house which was the only house standing in the middle of nowhere. They ran to the very end of the street and hid on the house’s porch with a bench and few withered flowers standing there.

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 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 raindrops falling on 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. She hid her hands into her sleeves and put 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 then and rubbed it with her thumbs, biting her lip, watching it. After a moment of thinking 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 was slowly undressing, Pearl noticed the girl’s well trained abdomen muscles hidden under her tight undershirt, also her biceps that appeared on her arms.

Pearl gasped and immediately turned to a side. She then shaded her eyes, so she couldn’t see Lapis and her undressing process, but it didn’t help her for too long, because Lapis stood in front of her and wrapped her jacket around Pearl's shoulders, fixing the sleeves, so they fit her.

“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 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 gaze. “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 started to wonder where did she get
these, 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 into one window.

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. Nothing again.

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

“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 was standing there for a moment, like a statue, staring at the closed door.

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

The equestrian dusted her hands and cleared 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 catch 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 yet more wet and freeze, to find some comfortable place to sit in and be safe. 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 inside.

It was cold there, but not as much as outside. The place smelled strangely. Curtains were shut, there was dark and silence all around them. The interior was really old and gray, buried under tons of dust.

Pearl entered a room which seemed to be a 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, too. She leaned her head and side against a large door-less entrance and looked at 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 faster.”
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 equestrian glanced round the room, looking for a blanket or something that could help Pearl get warm faster, but everything was under dust, she almost couldn’t recognize any single thing in the house. Lapis decided to check the entire floor, but then she couldn’t find anything. She thought that bedroom might be on the second floor, but she was a little bit scared to go there, since there was dark and a dead silence in the house.

“… 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, furrowing brows sorrowfully. “Why are you apologizing?” She asked softly.

Lapis rubbed her forehead and eyebrows, disappointed with herself. “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 her fist lightly and shook her head. Then she sighed again and leaned her elbows against her knees, thinking, supporting her chin with heels of her palms. “… I could give my undershirt. It might help.“ Lapis then looked at her, but Pearl’s reactions 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 than 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, then she turned back to Pearl, but she had turned her back on Lapis.

“… 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, so she then took her courage and cleared her throat. “… Give me your hand.” Lapis urged, a bit nervous. She offered Pearl her warm hand.

After a moment of hesitancy, Pearl turned back to Lapis and slowly she put her hand into hers, still trembling, though she wasn’t sure if it was because of the weather now.

Lapis hid the other’s hand into her warm palms and then hesitantly 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, someone almost untouchable, someone so tender and fragile whom she could easily break.

She pulled back and whispered, looking Pearl deep into her eyes. “… Is that better?”
Pearl suddenly felt cold again as Lapis pulled away from her. She felt like an ice cube thrown into a snow, into freezing arctic water. It made her whole body shake again. It was even worse than sitting in that ditch, because there she didn’t feel the cold that intensively. Well, she wasn’t even thinking about it back then. She was just lying there and waiting for what will happen next.

“Yeah… It’s better.” She let out trembly, nodding, longing for Lapis’ hot breath spreading on her hand again. She sniffed.

Lapis watched her as her body became shaking again and wondered what to do. She couldn’t keep breathing the air at her hands forever, her head would start spinning then and it wouldn’t be good for her health.

She hesitated, but in the end she shifted her body closer to Pearl, slightly touching her. She got an idea, but she wasn’t sure if Pearl will accept it. Lapis wanted to wrap her arms around her shoulders and keep her warm. That would be maybe the best way to stop Pearl's body from shivers. “… Would you mind if…” She bit her lip, lifting one of her arms and offering it to her friend, 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, Lapis was a human whom she barely knew, but Lapis already helped her so many times and she didn’t even have to. And she wanted to help.

The skinny girl then accepted her offer, although there still was a little doubt in her mind. Pearl swallowed nervously and moved closer to Lapis, letting her own head lean against her shoulder and letting Lapis’ bare arms be wrapped around her shoulders.

“Wish I could have your blanket right now, Lapis.” Pearl then sighed, but smiled, 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 a soft sigh, making Pearl’s peach hair flutter a bit.

The taller girl breather out, lowered her body and let her head shift lower on Lapis’ bare shoulder. “… Why are you even 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 like that?” She then looked up at her friend.

Well, it wasn’t a hard question for her to answer at all, but it was hard for her to actually say it. “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 the cold outer side of her 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. Lapis reached her hand slowly and with a few
strokes she fixed those messy hair locks gently.

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 body 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 so. It was so comfortable in her arms, so calm and peaceful. Sometimes she could even feel Lapis’ thumb stroking her shoulder fondly.

Pearl carefully lifted her head and looked up at Lapis, but she had her eyes closed. She was breathing softly, her head was tilted to a side where Pearl's head was resting on the blue-haired girl’s shoulder. Lapis looked like she was asleep, but still she was stroking Pearl with her thumb tenderly with brief interrupts.

“… Lapis?” She whispered, but got 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 laying 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?

Pearl felt her own 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 close. Her dark eyebrows, her big closed eyes, her cute freckled nose and cheeks, her lips shaped like a heart. And staring still at her, Pearl started to lean slowly towards Lapis, towards her lips. They were provoking her, 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 into Lapis’ face. Pearl gasped and lowered her eyes, getting her lips closer and closer to the other ones. 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 skin of Lapis’ lips, but 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 about 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 a few seconds ago. “I’m fine… I just took a nap. I’m sorry I scared you…”

Pearl felt really bad for lying and she regretted 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 window, and noticed that it already stopped raining. “Oh, look! The rain is over.”

“You’re right.” Lapis nodded and looked at the same direction as Pearl. “We can go home.”
After Lapis accompanied Pearl home, she headed back to the stable to see how it was going 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. Pearl 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 she was 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. Everything was clear. Peridot probably led all the horses in the pastures or someone else might do 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 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 favorite 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 a long time, 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 could feel 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 into her face. She was even wondering if Pearl was about to kiss her, but Lapis marked that as the most impossible choice of all those choices which 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 these kinds 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. But was it even possible?

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:
- girls hid at unknown old house from rain
- Pearl managed to escape from being caught by Lapis as she tried to kiss her
- 9th week
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Help is an Important Act

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 hear that. Lapis watched her with 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 jumped into the air in horrify and barked. “Lapis! What the hell?!”

“I’m really, reeeally sorry, but I couldn’t help myself.” She wiped her eyes once more.

“Well, that’s reeeally 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 and suddenly getting serious.

“Oh, reeeally? Didn’t you come here to laugh at how short my legs are? Better said at how short I am?!” 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.

Peridot 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 approached 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 sort of weak to carry something heavy for a long time, then she straightened up and looked at Lapis.
Lapis froze in surprise. She hasn’t even thought 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 want 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 doing 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. I thought that asking you would be silly anyway.”

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 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 this 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… You’re my best friend and friends should help each other, right? Just… Promise me that immediately, right after that kiss is over, we will act like nothing ever happened and we’ll never speak of it again, okay?”

“We… Really 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 could Peridot 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 a bit 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 trying.

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 brief 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, a bit shocked. “I… Think I’m not straight anymore…“

“Be serious.” Lapis forced a sigh with a frown, wanting to hear an honest answer.

“I am! Like… Not that I’m not straight, but... 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 girls heard fast steps approaching them and then they immediately pulled away from each other.

“Oh, Lapis there you are!” It was her good old friend who hasn’t appeared in the stable in a while, since he had a lot of work with other riders and their presence on show jumping competitions.

“Hey, Greg.” Girls said at the same time and waved at him, hoping that he hasn’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 air. “Lapis… Just wanted to tell you I signed you and Blue to the show jumping Grand Prix this October.”

“… What?!” Lapis froze, and Peridot followed. “Grand Prix? This October?”

“Yes. We should probably start with practice soon.” He objected, tapping the glass of his watch, still breathing fast.

“I-I, um… Uh.” Lapis stuttered, still a bit distracted by kissing Peridot one minute ago, too distracted to understand what was just happening. She was confused – Greg just appeared here from nowhere and told her something about Grand Prix? What was going on? “Right. I-uh… I-I could take Blue to the hall tomorrow.” She let out heedlessly, completely lost.

“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.”

“… O-kay.” Lapis’ chin dropped slightly. She said goodbye to the older man when he turned on his heels and headed out of the stable in hurry. Lapis knew he had a lot of work and that he didn’t have any time just to relax, even for a few minutes. He was busy all the time and that was the
reason why were Lapis and Peridot spending so much time in the stable and were practically taking care of everything on their own.

“So… Grand Prix?” Peridot smirked and bit her lip, looking at her taller friend. She poked her into her side.

Lapis just winced a little. “What the actual hell should that mean?” She stood frozen, staring ahead. “I hope he didn’t forget about the two competitions we planned to go to, though.”

Peridot tried to bit back a chuckle, but failed. “I bet he did.”

Lapis hummed unsurely while Peridot was still sniggering.

“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. “But… Grand Prix? Is he crazy?”

“Hey, don’t worry.” Peridot smiled at her, looking Lapis into her dark blue eyes. “You can still talk to him about that tomorrow, right?”

The other girl but said nothing, mouth locked in a tight line. She hummed.

After Lapis finished cleaning her horse and clearing its 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 into several different types of sizes, so Lapis could always move to higher levels of jumps. Peridot then left back to the stable to clean the rest of the 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 they will practice 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 a slow and calm movements. Finally when she felt comfortable enough and in a 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 successfully.

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 herself. 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 the
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 a break.

Blue slowly started to become tired from an hour 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 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 herself, 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’ mantra, repeating and repeating and later slightly vanishing with every next 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 she was 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.

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 onto 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 filled the barrow with new fresh bedding, taking it back to the stable and spreading it out in her haflinger’s 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 a 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 she was always worried about her. Lapis was gone for two hours now and Peridot started to become nervous. She then pulled off of the wooden wall and headed to the training arena to check on Lapis, wishing that she isn’t there anymore.

She took a deep breath, hoping that the training hall will be completely empty, but nearly screamed in horror 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 her 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 that, she was glad that at least her fast breath was slowing down. Her mouth was open, she was 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 little help
- Greg signed Lapis to Grand Prix
- Lapis almost collapsed during training
♦ 9th week
The Virgin and the Crab

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was a 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 waterdrops 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 they 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 lies down on them and after her brief nap she stands up and makes the book fall behind the couch. Well, that was one of Pearl’s many other possible theories.

Pearl put the bucket and the rest back into the sink cabinet and then 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 was spending 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 the least thing 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 the 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 for 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 cantered around the arena, directing Blue to a triple bar. Once she approached the obstacle, she kicked Blue into 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, but this time they were making brief pauses regularly. Lapis quite 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 the time next training and you’ll surely beat them… Also we should heighten the fences gradually. Grand Prix has a completely different level of jumps.”

Lapis bit her lip. She was flattered by the compliments, but on the other hand she was worried about where this all was heading. She undone her helmet and took it off. “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, the World Cup… This was my first big gold. I was always stuck on third or 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… Or maybe 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 eyes, 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 the Grand Prix now, and though I think that it’s already too late to train for those two competitions. We don’t have even a month for the preparations. 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.”

“… O-kay.” 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.
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 a big round watermelon from the back seat. She didn’t even bother to lock the car and she walked to the inside of the open barn, although a bit unsurely.

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 that’s always aggressively neighing and knocking into the stall walls. But today Malachite seemed quite 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 sweeping the corridor, getting away 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 into the stable, trying her best not to give her attention to all those scary dark staring eyes.

Peridot had her back turned to Pearl and she looked like she was talking to someone, but Pearl 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 blond girl.

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 enormous 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 hear 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 heard somebody curse from somewhere near Peridot then. That also made her freeze once more. But she took her courage and made several steps forwards and went closer to the other girl. Still she was good five meters away from her, but 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?”

“…” Pearl cleared her throat. “I was asking where Lapis is.”

Peridot then looked to the right while she was turned to Pearl, and snorted loudly, nearly laughing. But she then looked back at the taller girl, trying to make a serious face. “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, she was safely hidden behind one of the stall 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… You’re here already.” She rubbed her wet hair, grinning awkwardly. “Wasn’t expecting you coming so fast.”

“Fast?” 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 hissed through her teeth, squeezing the fabrics firmly.

Peridot sputtered, turning to Pearl. “Sorry for that. Maybe next time.”

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 sweeping the stable and giving us some space?” Lapis blinked at her several times, smiling, although she had that ironical expression on. Then, still holding Peridot’s shoulders, she turned her around, so now Peridot had her back turned at 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 sweeping again.

“So.” Lapis finally sighed, 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, laughing. “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 water-melons?”

Another snort came out of her. She kept sniggering while sweeping the floor. “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 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 didn’t have to worry about any
Lapis carried a plate with sliced watermelon while Pearl carried the blanket. The equestrian led Pearl to the grazing meadow with a rope fence, assuring her that there were 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 grinned, 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 the starlight. Well, she could see them, but just partly.

She wanted to say so many words which were dancing in her mind and forcing her to do so. 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 in a muffled light that was made from the stars. 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 eating 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 either.

“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, still 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 for overreacting 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 lying 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 lightly 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 laugh softly.

“Which a… Zodiac 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 snicker 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, sounds better than cancer.” Lapis objected a bit 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 could be a small part of it.”

The equestrian hummed at that in disappointment, urgently searching for the small part of the 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 to her and smile.

PEARL YAWNED SILENTLY, CUPPING HER MOUTH AND SHUTTING HER EYELIDS, AND WITH A SMACK OF HER LIPS 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 other 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 sadly. But an idea popped up 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 the 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’s wall, supporting herself with her hands that she put on the 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, the wind suddenly 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 looking face, she reached her hand and slowly she pushed Lapis’ fringe aside, making her blink when those hair locks brushed her eyelashes.

Pearl gently pushed her cyan hair away, slowly, slightly brushing against Lapis’ skin with the back of her thin fingers, sliding them down along the girl’s freckled cheek in 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 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 to not to kiss her in the end.

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’ partly 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 the 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 those watermelon juices. 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 for a moment.

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 herself 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 end it. Against her will, she pulled away with a smack of their lips, opening her eyes again. Pearl opened them, too. She looked Lapis into 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 watching stars
- Pearl and Lapis kissed for the first time

♦ 9th week (Sunday)
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 favorite 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 thought 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 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 knocking 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 immediatelly 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 she was 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 she might be thinking about 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 equestrian kept moving her hands towards the mare while Pearl was stiffly shading her eyes with the 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 did she force 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, precious, 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 does it feel 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 ten, 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 a 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 sort of 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 it and urging Pearl to go first. “Milady.”

Pearl held her breath. It always fascinated her how Lapis could be so sweet and gentle sometimes. 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 to her later? If ever?

“Oh, come on, I know you want to see my butt from below.” 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 tensely.

“Watch your head!” She then 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, also 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 on left side from the ladder, there was a gap that led to the small area behind the hay wall. The gap was a door-sized entrance and placed behind a corner, so no one could see into 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 usually she doesn't even build a wall of those haystacks. They always build a wall like that when a hay consignment is delivered to the stable once per 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 she can see the stable interior again then. 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 actually was in there, how snuggy and comfortable it seemed, though the ceiling was quite low for Pearl. With her height she couldn’t stand there straightened, but it didn't matter 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 the nest 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 her 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 come and 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 her palms against her thighs 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 your whole 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 an 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, bitting 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… That’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 it is.”
Chapter recapitulation:

• for the first time Pearl made a contact with a horse
• Pearl visited Lapis’ place in the attic

♦ 10th week (Wednesday)
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 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 creeped 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 the 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 at 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 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 she could 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, she never gave her a shoulder to cry on and never gave her a 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 made Lapis turn to her.

 “… Amethyst finally reached her eighteen and Garnet invited you and Peridot to a birthday party at her place.” 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 too much and… Though 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 snicker.

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 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, just softly snorted. 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 when she in fact touched her muzzle. Pearl still was in a doubt and probably didn’t have guts to touch the horse again, and on a 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 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 the 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 was still moving forward. Even when 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 arms of hay from the attic. Pearl winced slightly because of the mare’s sharp movement and also turned to Lapis who slid down 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 neither…”
“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 light as the last time when Pearl 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 has 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 and then 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 quite 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 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 equestrian 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 wasn't bothering Pearl too much.

“Basically… No.” Pearl admitted and laughed briefly. 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 other’s. It was different than Garnet’s or Amethyst’s. This was more… Close, compassionable and familiar. Also the occasional silence between them two was so comfortable and harmonic. Not like the silence between Pearl and Amethyst sometimes, for example. This was different.

Pearl tilted her head to a side and looked at Lapis, wondering what she was 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 which 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 at 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, for a moment she lost 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’ 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 equestrian swallowed hard, her whole body was shivering in impatience, her heart bouncing in her 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, not 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 brief 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 quite 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, not to make anybody suffer or make them feel betrayed. Pearl was that kind of person who didn’t want to make any harm or hurt someone. She was just too carefull 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 was resting 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 quite scared and shy to admit the reason to herself.

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

♦

10th week (Friday)

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 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! ;)

Thank you for reading!
The sun already rose up and poked its beams through a little attic window, stroking Pearl’s pale cheek and shoulder. Pearl felt something jabbing her as she was lying on her right side. She noticed that she was covered in warm smooth blanket, a familiar blanket. She now realized that she woke up and that she was lying in 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 for her surprise, Lapis wasn’t there. Pearl frowned as the light was welcoming her and she leaned back on her elbows. She glanced round the room, but she was the only one in there, Lapis was gone and Pearl wondered where she went.

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 loved 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 wondered 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, she has plenty of time to think. Yes, Pearl loves small things, and those small things always make her feel happy and positive for whole day, such as sun or its beautiful light.

Pearl heard 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 in it 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 Your 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 was adherent on her shirt and legs and then she 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 hasn’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 equestrian blushed a little and from behind her back she pulled 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 a 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 isn't going to 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 small things.”

“But, Lapis–“

“–Shh.” She hushed her softly. “You deserve it.”

Finally Pearl managed to chuckle after her serious moment. “But 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 moment. 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
“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 to look up once again.

“I’m happy that I made a right choise.” She smiled and leaned against the ladder, 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 baking.” 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 pastry.” Pearl smiled. “But thank you. You’re really sweet…"

“Only one of us can be sweet here, girl.” Lapis poked into Pearl’s side gently and smirked. The taller girl blushed at it and bit her lips from the inside.

They shared a few looks before one of them finally spoke again, after a brief silence full of nape rubbing and letting their cheeks flush 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 as 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 quite 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 stalls 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 small things.” Pearl finally managed to smile normally again. Her trembling softened. “… I can do it.”

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 – as always.

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, Lapis’ 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 she was 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 best moods and she started to snort and shake her head aggressively, stomping and kicking the wooden walls around her. 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 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 whinnying, 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, curled up 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 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 a sudden and Pearl’s heart started bouncing again in her small chest. Lapis’ closeness always made her feel like this, although almost nothing big has 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 quite glad. She could hide 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 redder. 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 sort of ambiguously. Or was Pearl just thinking dirty?

“… Ah-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 menthol 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 torture. 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 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.

‘… Oh, come on.’ Pearl closed her eyes slowly. She then cautiously sucked to Lapis’ lips and gave her one gracefull 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 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 there for a while. She then closed the tiny distance between their bodies entirely, pressing her whole well trained abdomen 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 felt 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 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 someone touching her hair and toying with it, and when it come to it, Lapis was 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 choosebumps all over her body and another soft moan. She hasn’t felt like this for an eternity. The equestrian lowered her head, nuzzling Pearl’s neck to rest and enjoy that pleasure for a while.

“… 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.

“Are you alright?” She asked softly and petted her blue hair again.

“I’m 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 alright.”

“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 small 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
PS: Hey there again! ^w^ It's 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! ❤
Riding Along With You

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It was early beautiful afternoon with sun shining above their heads that was basking their skin with its warm beams. A cool breeze was caressing their cheeks, their ears and noses and blowing tenderly through their hair.

Girls were sitting outside the stable on a 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 was lucky and 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 everything to do. They had 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 equestrian 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 take the ball and ran after it right as Lapis threw it 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 ride.”

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 going to be there, so Pearl had 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’ Hanover mare. She knew that Blue was a good being, calm and kind, just like Lapis. Yes, Pearl knew Blue for couple of long weeks, but still she felt like she had 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 can’t underestimate any situation while being near the mare. Horses are beautiful, Pearl thought, but she still had a great deal of respect to them, too. But since she met Lapis, another door into her heart had 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 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 next to 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 Hanoverian 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 happend 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 redder. Finally she lifted her head up to meet Lapis again.

“Hey, that’s fine.“ The equestrian chuckled once more. “Actually it was really sweet of you.”

The other girl didn’t say anything at that, 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. 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 had 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 the 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 had a slight tinge of fall atmosphere.

It was nice forest path with little pebbles, twigs and spruce cones fallen on it. 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 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 slightly kicked 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 and although she was yet tired from pedaling so fast, she 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. “Hyaa!”

“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 to the edge of the forest path. She pulled the reins back 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 sweatdrops 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 were.

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 one large flower meadow with an amazing view across its entire length spreading. Girls could see a small city below the hills and fields around. 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 fully experience the moment of her ecstasy and after a while 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 Hanover 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 on 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 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 brief 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 on 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 and let you sit here for how long you want.” Pearl laid the side of her head on her knees, still gazing at Lapis enchantedly.

“Ah, Pearl…” The equestrian furrowed her eyebrows, all touched by Pearl’s offer, warm smile on her lips. Lapis slowly stretched her hand and placed it on 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 have no reason to be sad… When I’m with you.”

It wasn’t only Lapis whose cheeks immediatelly started to burn, but Lapis was the one whose 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 cheeks.

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 Lapis was 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 ever think about her?’ , ‘Why would Lapis think about their kisses?’? But Pearl longed for answers. 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, after she found a courage to speak, unsure how to formulate her question. “I was wondering-uh… Have we ever talked about… Dating?” ‘… Well, that was a stupid sounding question…”
Lapis immediately reacted. She lifted her head, but didn’t look at the girl. This kind of question quite 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 was 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 and she was using me like if I was her toy. She didn't care about my feelings, or maybe even about me myself… When I tried to object something, she shouted at me or beat me up. She was really strong and I couldn't do anything against her…” After a moment of thinking, Lapis ironically laughed. “I was always convincing Peridot that the bruises that Jasper made me actually made horses… I was so dumb, thinking that she’d believe me that.”

Pearl could do nothing but stare. She just felt so sorry for Lapis. She couldn't imagine experiencing something like that. Pearl always thought that life was only 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, this is terrible. 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, Pearl… But fortunately it's over now. I'm fine.”

“Thank goodness 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 in 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 equestrian thought for a while, but didn't find anything weird about it. It only was a bit unusual, that was all. So she just smiled warmly at her and blinked slowly. “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, maybe I would find someone.”
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 **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 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’d actually asked for.

“With pleasure…”

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**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

♦ 10th week (Saturday afternoon)
Rebirth

Chapter Notes

• we reached over 1000 views! THANK YOU SO MUCH, GUYS! You're keeping this fanfic alive and thanks to you it's really fun and joy to write this story! ^w^
• many thanks to ALL OF YOU! Love you so much and thank you for your support!~ :3 ^///^
• enjoy this new chapter and have a nice day/night!

WARNING:
• sensitive content

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lapis was leaning towards her slowly, waiting for a kiss, but Pearl froze instead.

“Um…” Pearl's cheeks turned red and she was still watching Lapis as she was getting closer, but then the girl stopped as she noticed Pearl who was staring at her.

“Kiss me, silly.” Lapis urged with a smirk. “Or are you afraid of loss?”

“I… I'm not!” She opposed, but carefully. She didn't want to sound much confident to Lapis, so she could possibly heighten the challenge even more.

“Then what are you waiting for?” A soft, but hot breath brushed Pearl's lips. Lapis was so close.

Pearl swallowed. She scanned Lapis' eager expression. She looked like a predator and Pearl was just a poor prey that couldn't escape from her. The skinny girl, although she had no reason to feel hopeless or weak, took her courage, decided to lift her hands and slowly she moved them towards Lapis. Unsurely first, but after gaining a bit of self-confidence, she burried her fingers into Lapis' cheeks and pulled her towards herself, finally feeling the soft flesh of Lapis' lips on her own.

Lapis then sank deeper into their kiss, wrapping her arms around the other girl's waist. This sudden closeness made Pearl replace her hands from Lapis' face around her neck and then she pulled her tenderly towards herself.

Pearl’s kisses were soft, so careful and innocent. Her lips were smooth and sweet, sweet like the sweetest fruit in the world. Sweeter than honey, sweeter than sugar, sweeter than anything that Lapis could imagine. For Lapis it actually didn’t matter how well Pearl could kiss, but the taste of her lips was always gorgeous and satisfying. She simply couldn’t get tired of it. Pearl wasn’t like Jasper – rough, ruthless and mean. Pearl was slow, patient, extremely gentle and affectionate, and that was what Lapis loved about Pearl and what she truly appreciated.

Everything suddenly went into a silence – the breeze, birds and everything around them. The only thing that girls could hear was quiet smacking of their lips as they were meeting and then briefly pulling apart so they could meet again. Pearl chose to be careful and tried not to be too greedy, but Lapis was making it difficult, because she was asking for more with every next kiss and with her soft touches on Pearl’s back. Lapis was like a magnet, pulling Pearl closer and closer, and still she didn’t have enough.
She was kissing Pearl slowly, brushing against her lips with her own from side to side and carefully nibbling it, breathing into her mouth and tenderly scratching Pearl’s back and loins with her fingers.

It was so breathtaking for Pearl. She could feel her heart beat in every single part of her body. Her skin immediately became warm and she started to tremble slightly at Lapis’ touches.

Pearl parted their lips after a moment and let out something between a sigh and groan, looking Lapis straight into her dark eyes. She kept Lapis close, staring at her like if she might disappear any second. And while watching, Pearl slowly lifted one of her hands and stroked the girl’s cyan hair fondly several times. She was toying with Lapis’ hair locks, combing between them with her long fingers and massaging the smooth skin under the blue.

Lapis started to become weak again. Having someone’s fingers in her hair just felt so good. But the way Pearl was doing it was just as pleasant as finding a well filled with water in the middle of a great dry desert.

She breathed out some air quietly. Everything that Pearl was doing was making goosebumps all over Lapis’ skin. She made an eye contact with Pearl and started to drown in them, in the most beautiful sky blue color. Pearl’s eyes were hypnotic, that hypnotic that it was almost impossible to look away from them – impossible for Lapis.

Lapis suddenly grinned sheepishly while staring at Pearl. “I won.” She raised her thick eyebrows.

The girl hummed in question and stopped scratching Lapis.

“I won the challenge.” Lapis clarified and gave Pearl one small peck on her lips.

“Oh?” Pearl also raised her eyebrows, playful smirk on her face. “And what makes you so sure?”

The equestrian chuckled. She lifted one of her hands and took Pearl’s hand that was resting in her blue hair and fondly she squeezed it. “… You.”

The weather was getting colder with an increasing number of hours, but the rock, on which were girl sitting on, was still warmed up from sunbeams. Pearl didn’t hesitate and laid down on the rock with joy. She folded her hands under her head which made her shirt roll up a bit and with that she exposed her flat belly.

Lapis rather convinced herself not to look at Pearl and to avoid herself from blushing, but even when she tried her best, it didn’t help. But since Pearl had her eyes closed, Lapis thought that she could at least afford to look at her just for a second or two.

Although Pearl’s eyes were shut, she could feel that Lapis was gazing at her. She could simply feel it and that made her blush, too, which made Lapis wince and look away from her instantly, because she thought that Pearl saw her staring.

As they were coexisting silently next to each other, it evoked several questions in Lapis’ mind. Sometimes she glanced over at her friend, sometimes she closed her own eyes and tried to find out about what could be possibly Pearl thinking or dreaming. She wanted to ask her so many questions and also it was making Lapis feel sad that she hasn’t even asked most of them yet. She was wondering how Pearl felt about her, how did she feel when they were together and how did she feel when they were not. She wondered if Pearl felt alone like her when they were split up and
living their own lives. It was making her worried. Lapis had so much to talk about, so much feelings that she wanted to express to her, but she was shy and scared. She wondered and she wished that Pearl was feeling the same. This was Lapis – wistful and melancholic, waiting for the others to notice her, hiding her feelings and not showing them to anybody, because she was afraid. She was afraid of people like Jasper who could only misuse her sensitive being for their benefits and their own satisfaction. The last time it happened, it hurt. A lot. And the pain was still buried deep inside her.

All of those questions made Lapis sigh, and so it made Pearl look at her, wondering what happened, if so.

“Lapis?” Pearl addressed her gently.

“Yes?” The girl turned to her with a slight blush on her cheeks.

Pearl furrowed her eyebrows sadly, she sat up slowly. “… You look… Sad. Is something wrong?” She leaned a bit closer, ready to listen.

‘Is it that noticeable?’ Lapis swallowed the inhale and with a foolish smile she tried to pretend that everything was absolutely okay and that there was nothing to worry about.

“Nah, everything’s fine. I was just… Thinking about… My mother.” She bit her lips from the inside and looked aside.

It didn’t assure Pearl at all for the first time, so she asked the question once more. She could see that Lapis’ smile seemed way believable this time and so she decided to believe it and let it be.

Although it was sort of boiling in Lapis, she could stand it, but still she wanted to cool it down a little. She wanted to ask something and she hoped that it will help cool down her brain. However, before Lapis could find a single acceptable question which could make her mind relax after finally making herself ask something, Pearl suddenly spoke.

“Maybe it will sound weird, but…“ Pearl bit her lip shyly. “Don’t you mind that I’m a girl?”

Lapis made her eyes widen in surprise, her answer was then rather a question. “What do you mean by that?” She wondered and asked once more. “... Do you mind that I’m a girl, Pearl?”

“No.” Pearl said, sinking into Lapis’ eyes. Finally she smiled. “I don’t.”

It wouldn’t be Pearl if she didn’t make Lapis smile back, and she did. “I also don’t mind.” She chuckled. “I like girls.”

“... Do you?” Pearl licked her dry lips and cupped her knees with her palms.

Lapis stretched her arms above her head and then, with a smirk on her cheeks, she leaned back on them. “Do you?”

“Why are you questioning my questions?” Pearl furrowed her eyebrows, but smiled playfully.

Lapis shrugged and sniggered evilly. “Because I can.”

The skinny girl shook her head with an exhale and teasingly she pushed Lapis into her shoulder, grin on her face. “Lapis…”

“Oh-kay, you got me.” Lapis chuckled. “Yeah, I do like girls.”
Pearl then shifted a bit closer. The weather was getting cold, and Pearl was getting cold because she was laying on a now cool rock, so she put on her sweater that she had tied up around her waist. “And…” She blushed slightly as she rolled the sweater down and stretched it over the hem of her jeans. “How did you find out about it?”

The other girl giggled at how was Pearl urgently trying not to make herself blush. “Well…” Lapis started, thinking. She looked up at the sky. “I had several vain attempts with boys when I was something about seventeen, but later I realized that boys don’t satisfy me, so I tried it with a girl once and… It was something completely different.” Lapis paused for a moment. “Later I started to notice that I was looking more at girls than boys and… I accepted that.” She added in a low voice, giving Pearl a warm smile.

Pearl froze. She kept staring at Lapis, almost in disbelief. This was completely different story than hers and it made her think about the past. When did she actually realize that she was more into girls herself?

“How about you?” Lapis then asked carefully, and before Pearl could notice it, Lapis shifted a bit closer to her.

Her soft voice brought Pearl back to earth. She cleared her throat, but didn’t say anything yet, because she didn’t know what exactly she should say. Her story was bare and pale like her skin. She didn’t have any experiences like Lapis that she could share with her and that was making her feel ashamed.

She hung up her head and closed her eyes for a brief moment, trying to remember anything she could. “I…” She raised her head, eyes open. “When I was fifteen… I… I don’t know how, but… Somehow I was attracted by one woman. She was twenty-two back then, I think. She was tall and strong and she had beautiful long curly pink hair. She was so kind, loving and gorgeous.” Pearl made a pause, then sighed and closed her eyes for a few seconds, until she spoke again. “For a moment… I thought that she might possibly feel the same as me. But before I could ask her, she started to spend less time with me and later she told me that she met someone. Someone new – a man… She was spending so much time with him and…“ A wave of emotions suddenly washed her. She could feel a great lump in her throat as her rather forgotten memories emerged from the deepest depths of her soul right on the surface. “I felt so abandoned…” She said, but it rather sounded like a sob than her regular light voice. She sniffed, remembering all of the memories, remembering everything that happened.

It was all back again. Those moments that they spent together – how they were laughing, how they were singing together, how they were watching stars, walking on a beach, reading book in a library, skating in a park… But then, all of the sudden, everything faded away, every single thing was messed up. Everything was gone – that man, the wedding, the childbirth and… ‘The funeral…’

Pearl started to tremble, arms wrapped around herself, trying to hold the emotions inside, but this feeling was too strong. She could remember every single thing, she remembered the room where she used to go on therapies after all that happened with Rose, she remembered the deep stress she used to feel, the deep depression, those unstopable streams of boiling tears on her cheeks.

Her stomach twisted and her head suddenly started to hurt.

While Pearl was calmly telling her friend her own story, Lapis leaned back on her elbows and listened to the story with interest. But suddenly Pearl went into a silence that caused an attention in her. Lapis immediately realized that something wasn’t right. She sat up quickly and found Pearl quietly sobbing with tears on her pale cheeks.
“Pearl!” Lapis called, she sat right next to her friend and grabbed her arms into her palms with a firm squeeze. “What is…?” She noticed that Pearl was shaking. Lapis could even feel her cold skin through her sweater as she was holding her. She instantly wrapped her arms around the skinny girl and pulled her towards herself, hugging her tightly.

“I… I’m…” Pearl sobbed aloud, she clenched Lapis’ cotton t-shirt in her fists, burrying her face into her friend’s chest. “I’m… I’m so sorry!” She cried. “I couldn’t… Hold it anymore.”

“Shhh… Shh.” Lapis squeezed her even more, petting Pearl’s hair fondly and whispering soothing words into her ear. “It’s fine. I’m here. I’m here.” ‘Damnit! Why did I even ask her that?! If I didn’t, this wouldn’t happen!’ Lapis cursed to herself.

“I’m s-sorry… L-Lapis.” Pearl weeped.

“Don’t be sorry.” Lapis said. And it almost sounded like a command. “You have to get it out.” Her grip then got stronger and she pressed her lips against Pearl’s cold forehead, holding it there for a long moment and giving Pearl the tiniest kisses on her skin. “I’m here… I will always be here.”

At least Lapis’ body was warm, so Pearl could get warm quite quickly because of it. Pearl wasn’t afraid to nuzzle up to Lapis, but exactly the opposite. She welcomed her tender squeeze and the warmth of her strong body. Her hug was tight and fond at the same time, it felt like if Pearl was wrapped in wings of a loving angel. She could feel the positive and calming energy around herself and Lapis, it was like if they were surrounded by pure love and happiness.

Pearl couldn’t believe it, but since she practically cracked up, Lapis was still kindly stroking her, maybe for a good hour. Lapis was still tenderly petting her, whispering reassuring words to her and lightly swinging them both back and forth and silently hushing Pearl to make her lose her tensed mind.

Pearl felt way better and calm now, she enjoyed being in Lapis’ affectionate arms. She was fine, but still every so often she sniffed and wiped her nose. She also was stroking Lapis with her thumb while she was squeezing the fabric of her shirt that was wet from Pearl’s tears.

“… Lapis?” Pearl whispered, wiping her eyes. They still hurt, they were swollen and red.

A weight was lifted from Lapis’ heart as she finally heard Pearl speak again. She let out a deep sigh of relief and once more her hug tensed slightly. “Yes, dear?”

Suddenly a smile appeared on Pearl’s cheeks, small though, but it was there. One last tear rolled down her cheek, but this time it was a tear of happiness and later it even made Pearl’s smile widen. “Thank you for being here.” She sniffed one last time, then she slowly placed her arms around Lapis’ waist and hugged Lapis back.

“I will always be here for you, Pearl.” The equestrian slightly pulled back to see into Pearl’s face, stroking her cheek softly and wiping the rest of her tears away.

“… Do you promise?” She asked shyly, a little bit unsure. ‘Always’ was such a long time delay after all.

“I do.” Lapis smiled kindly and kissed Pearl’s forehead, just to make her answer sufficiently convincing.

Pearl hummed silently and her smile widened once more. She snuggled up in Lapis’ arms and
breathed out slowly. “... What time is it?”

Lifting her right hand, Lapis checked the time on her digital watch. “Half past five.”

“Oh no.” Pearl furrowed her eyebrows sadly and pulled away from Lapis, because of what her body instantly started to become cold again. “I should be going. Rose is...” She paused, feeling goosebumps over her skin as she said that name. ‘No! I can’t succumb to it again...’ “… My cat is home alone, probably hungry and circling around her bowl like a vulture.”

“Hmm.” Lapis sighed, rubbing her nape. She looked at Pearl gingerly. “Do you... Want to go then?”

She was waiting for her response for a good minute, but in the end she got the answer. Pearl gave her a sad expression and shook her head. “I don’t... But I have to.”

It was tearing Lapis apart – seeing Pearl like this. She wondered if she did something wrong. ‘Yes I did. I asked a stupid question!’ This was actually the first time when she saw Pearl crying like that. Lapis always thought that Pearl wasn’t capable of this, that she was always cheery, happy and full of positive energy. But after this emotional experience, Lapis realized that the whole sadness that Pearl wasn’t showing was likely buried deep under her skin, deep in her soul, and destroying her from the inside. One day in the past Lapis heard someone say: ‘The happiest people are the saddest people.’, but she didn’t believe it. Well, what if it’s true?

She wanted to cheer Pearl up somehow and she was almost on one hundred percent sure that it won’t be hard, because Pearl giggles at almost everything that Lapis says. Lapis has to go easy on her this time, because she didn’t know what reactions she should expect when Pearl was in this kind of state. She wanted her friend to feel at least a little bit more comfortable on their way home and make this afternoon more pleasant in some way for Pearl.

They were approaching the stable very slowly. It took them maybe a half an hour to get back into the equestrian area. During their ride back, Lapis was in all kinds of things trying to make Pearl at least smile or talk to her, but her responses were mostly only one-word long sentences. Lapis felt hopeless, although she tried her best. She really tried. She wondered if she couldn’t normally communicate or if Pearl was in a different dimension and drowning in her own thoughts.

They finally appeared in front of the barn. Pearl stopped her bike and leaned against her left foot, staring straight down across the handlebars. Lapis stopped her horse next to her. She removed her feet from stirrups and jumped down from her horse’s back on the dirty ground.

“I’m gonna walk Blue into her stall. I’ll be right back, okay?” The rider grabbed Blue’s reins and waited for Pearl’s response, worried expression on her face.

The tall girl nodded, not bothering to even look at her friend. “… Yeah.”

Lapis exhaled, still watching Pearl and holding reins in her right hand. She was waiting. She was waiting for Pearl to look at her, at least once, at least briefly. Slowly she started to wonder if she did something wrong. But better not to think about it.

Lapis turned around, leading Blue to the stable, but before she could make second step, she was stopped. Blue’s leather reins were stretched and the animal was still standing on a spot, not planning to move. Lapis glanced over at her and pulled the leashes towards herself to make her mare move, but it didn’t help. However, she noticed that Blue was staring at Pearl and also her long pointy ears were turned to her, not to Lapis. And this was what made Pearl finally look at
them and also what made Lapis stop pulling the reins.

“Blue, come on.” Lapis asked. But instead of making step towards her owner, she stepped towards Pearl and stretched her long neck.

Pearl was standing like a statue and even without a terrified expression she was watching the horse and its actions. She was in some kind of strange humor at that moment and that was making her seem fearless. And she quite was.

The mare gingerly approached Pearl. It looked like if Blue was trying not to make quick movements and not to startle Pearl somehow. And she actually did make her way to that tall human without making her run away, and although Lapis thought that it wasn’t a great idea, she let her horse continue.

Pearl sniffed. She looked straight into Blue’s dark eyes. She saw light in them. She saw beautiful light full of understanding and love. It was like she was looking into Lapis’ eyes. They were no more different.

Pearl lifted her hand. With a slight respect and in a slow pace she stretched her hand towards the animal's muzzle and especially cautiously she placed her palm on it. With that she realized that Blue was trying to tell her something, even without words. Pearl knew it. She could feel it. She could feel her energy.

They were standing there like that for a while and while staring at each other, Pearl understood. She realized that horses are not just some spiritless things, but they are living beings with soul and that they can feel. They can recognize that something isn't right. This brief unexpected contact made her realize many things and it even made her truly smile after a long time, for which she was really glad.

“Thank you…” She whispered to the horse and after that she removed her hand from its head with a small smile on her cheeks.

Lapis also smiled. It warmed her heart when she saw Pearl smiling again. Then finally, after several brief minutes, she made Blue move and she led her into the stable. Even after Lapis’ departure, Pearl still had a little smile on her face and it was still there as Lapis came back to her.

Lapis stood in front of her, but didn’t say anything. Shyly she rubbed her hands, then scratched her nape and bit her lip.

Pearl was also quiet, standing on the ground with one foot and with the other one on a pedal. She was holding handlebars in her hands and she was looking at Lapis. Her expression was unreadable. It was something between sad and happy expression, Lapis couldn’t tell, but she so hoped she could.

After a moment of silent gazing at each other, Pearl exhaled and briefly she turned her head down with closed eyes. It made Lapis a little worried, but this feeling faded away right as Pearl dismounted her bike and ran to her, wrapping her arms around Lapis’ neck. Softly she sniffed and hid her face between her friend’s neck and shoulder.

Lapis could suddenly feel a beautiful wave of relief and instantly she hugged her friend back tightly.

“I’m sorry, Lapis… I didn’t mean this to happen.” Pearl sniffed, hot tears appeared in corners of her eyes.

“Pearl…” She addressed her in surprise. “What are you apologizing for? This was my fault. I
should apologize to you.”

“What?” Pearl lifted her head with a confused expression. “Why? It wasn’t your fault that I cracked up… You were there for me! I was the one who made a scene.”

Lapis froze for a moment. This idea made her chuckle slightly, but only to herself. She shook her head. “Ah, Pearl. Don’t be silly. What scene?” She hugged her once more, carefully. “It’s okay to cry sometimes… But you made me worried. I didn’t know what I could do to comfort you.”

Pearl let out a sigh and hugged Lapis back. “I’m sorry…”

“Don’t be.” Lapis whispered. She then slightly pulled back and gave Pearl a small kiss to her forehead, she even had to stood on her tiptoes to reach it, because Pearl was a bit taller than herself.

Pearl’s pale cheeks turned beautiful pink. She looked to a side, biting her lips from the inside shyly. “Thanks for being there for me.”

“It’s a matter of course.” Lapis smiled frankly which made Pearl smile, too. “If you need anything, I’m here for you. Call me any time, even if it means calling me at midnight, okay?”

Pearl sniffed again, softly and for the last time. “Okay.” She lifted her hand gingerly, stroking Lapis’ cheek with her thumb.

“I mean it.” She emphasized, looking straight into Pearl’s eyes.

“I know.” Pearl giggled softly and stroked Lapis once more. “Thank you.”

“Yeah…” With light blush, she looked down, but then back up at the girl. “Don’t you want me to take you home by car?” She offered, but Pearl shook her head.

“Thank you, dear. I think I can make it.”

“Are you sure?” Lapis furrowed her eyebrows a bit worried.

The skinny girl hesitated for a while, but nodded in the end, enough for Lapis to believe her. “Yeah. I’ll be fine.”

“Okay…” The equestrian grinned. “But at least send me a text that you arrived safely.”

“I will.” This time Pearl was the one who kissed the other’s forehead and with that she let go of her friend and headed to her bike in a slow pace, mounting it and standing into the pedals, ready to go. But before Pearl could do first step, Lapis quickly approached her, grabbing her arm.

“Pearl, wait!” She called and made Pearl stop. “Before you go… I want you to know something.”

The girl grinned at that, wondering with what Lapis could come this time. “I should wear a helmet, I know.” She chuckled.

Lapis stared at her a little confused and then she realized that she was actually right. Anyway it wasn’t exactly what was on her chest. She knew that Pearl was still sad and Lapis hoped that this could cheer her up at least a little bit.

She took Pearl by her hands gently and fondly she pressed her fists against her own chest which
made Pearl shift closer to her. “… I love you.”

Pearl could do nothing, but stare, frozen and surprised. Her heart started to bounce uncontrollably in her chest, feeling hot salty tears getting out again. She gasped, trying to avoid those tears from falling down. A wave of emotions suddenly washed her fragile being one more time. “… Lapis.”

“I love you, Pearl.” She repeated, more clearly this time, making her friend’s tears finally come out and flow down over her cheeks.

“I…” Pearl tried in vain, but wasn’t able to finish the sentence because of the sudden flow of emotions. And instead of finishing what she started, she clasped Lapis in her arms tightly and pressed the most delicious kiss that she could make, right on Lapis’ lips, pushing her towards herself longingly.

Lapis appeared in heaven. She couldn’t move, she couldn’t breathe and still she couldn’t believe and realize what was just happening. Was she alive? Was she dead?

She was reborn.

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

- Pearl remembered her painful past
- for the first time Lapis confided to Pearl with her feelings towards her

♦ 10th week (Saturday late afternoon)
After two hours of aimless wandering around the town, with walking her bike beside her, Pearl finally got home. With a slight click she closed her apartment's door behind herself and let out a sigh which sounded like something between sad and happy sound. When she entered the flat, she appeared in a short narrow foyer with pegs and a shoe cabinet with a rectangular mirror above it. It was dark all around her and Pearl decided to turn on the light, so she could at least see where she was putting her shoes and sweater. Soon, as the light was turned on, the girl heard a soft meow from somewhere out of the darkness that was embracing the entire flat. Then a small snow-white fluffy cat scuttled to her and meowed once more, nuzzling Pearl’s thin calves and purring loudly.

Pearl was full of all sorts of emotions at that moment. She couldn’t stop thinking about Rose and she couldn’t stop thinking about Lapis. She was so confused. She could feel a great feeling of happiness and sadness at the same time. She felt like all of those bad memories and emotions came back to her after several long years, but fortunately for her new positive ones were successfully overwhelming them. Lapis was making her feel so happy and she was the one who gave Pearl another reason to live. She gave her another chance to love again. But still Pearl couldn’t stop thinking about the giant woman with ample curly pink hair. She was still somehow attached to her.

Pearl have read many books and articles about afterlives and other similar spiritual stuff and she knew that there was no reason to be constantly crying about someone’s death, because those who left us don’t want us to cry for them. They are in peace and they want us to be happy and live our lives. It’s sad, Pearl thought, but she was almost sure about this and wished it was true. She wished that every single body has a soul and the soul is released from the body as the time is right. Pearl wished that there were spirits all around her and around other people and that those spirits are helping them to succeed, to help them solve all kinds of problems, to support them and show them the right path that they’re supposed to follow, to make their lives easier and happier. She so wished that Rose was happy – wherever she is now. But for sure Pearl knew that Rose wasn’t in a material world. She was somewhere else. She was somewhere where she belongs, where her soul belongs, and she was happy. Maybe she’s watching over Pearl, maybe she’s watching over her little son, who knows? But as long as someone’s thinking about Rose, she is always with them and ‘alive’.

“Rose…” Pearl sighed softly, putting her bike aside and taking her little pet into her loving arms. Tightly, enough not to crash her fragile cat, she hugged her and buried her face into her beautiful white fur. “I’m sorry I’m late.” She apologized, facing the pet. But suddenly Pearl smiled brightly, lifting her cat into the air. “Guess what happened!”

Rose looked at her with a poker face which was typical for her in every kind of situation. Frustrated, happy, tired, hungry, it didn’t matter, her face was always the same. This time, instead of a response, she only waved the tip of her furry tail and kept staring at her exited owner.

“You won’t believe it!” The girl stood on her tiptoes happily, slightly shaking with her uninterested cat. “She said she loves me!”

Abruptly an extreme feeling of happiness overwhelmed her whole body. She remembered Lapis’ sweet and convincing tone in her voice, her honest eyes and gentle squeeze of her hands as she held her before. Back then Pearl didn’t quite realize what exactly happened. She was full of
many different emotions and wasn’t paying attention to any of them entirely, but finally she absorbed what Lapis have told her. Just now, after a decent time distance, everything became clear as a day sky. This was such a beautiful and pleasant feeling that Pearl has never experienced before. This feeling was just so uplifting, it was like every single dream came true at once. Pearl wanted to tell the world how amazing she feels, how her life suddenly became happier and brighter than it was ever before. She wanted to laugh, she wanted to cry, she wanted Lapis. She wanted Lapis to be there with her, to kiss her crazy, to keep her close and repeatedly whisper to her: “I love you, too.”

Pearl put her hands back down slowly, still holding her beloved Rose and watching her expression, and although it wasn’t somehow exiting to look at her face, the girl smiled widely.

Pearl sniffed. She was sad. She was happy, eyes filled with tears, a lump in her throat. She clasped the animal in her arms and hugged it tightly, suddenly remembering the giant woman again.

“I should move on…” Pearl sighed, eyes closed. She could feel a beautiful heat of the ragdoll’s long smooth fur that was warming her chest. It was nice, but thinking about Rose, the woman she once fell in love with, was making her worried. Pearl had a feeling that if she decided to stay with Lapis, it would be a betrayal against Rose, but on the other hand Pearl knew that Rose didn’t return her love to her back then and that it wouldn’t mean anything for both of them now. This was absurd to even cogitate about things like this, Pearl thought, but she was deeply emotional person and relationships with others meant so much to her. This was one of the most important things that she cared about. She didn’t want to hurt anyone and this would be the last thing she would be thinking about. Although she knew that Rose was no longer with them, she still had a bad feeling about all of this. But why?

“Why are relationships so difficult?” Pearl exhaled sorrowfully. ‘I do love Lapis, but…” Once more she let out a deep sigh, nuzzling her cat which had no idea what was going on at that moment and just let itself be hugged.

After a moment of musing, Pearl lifted her head up, straight to the sky. She wanted to be with Lapis. She wanted to see her, to look into her dark empathic eyes and melt in her warm arms, to hear her honey-sweet voice, to touch her and absorb the most beautiful and enchanting energy of hers, to smell her light perfume and kiss her with knowing that the other girl loves her back.

Rose is gone. She will never come back. Pearl will never see her again. She will never feel the warmth of her body and she will never feel her energy, her material presence, she will never look into her eyes again, she won’t hear her sweet voice and she will never have a chance to touch her.

This situation was perfectly clear and Pearl knew it, so why was it so difficult for her to decide?

“God, give a sign.” She pleaded in whisper, staring up to the sky. But nothing happened. There was a silence in the room and all around. The only thing she noticed after a while was just a weak rain outside, raindrops falling on the outer windowsill.

With a sigh Pearl looked out of the window, standing still and quiet. The light in the foyer turned off which Pearl didn’t take as a sign, because there was an automatic switch-off applied on it and when the detector detects no movements, it automatically turns off.

Pearl knew that any kind of sign, even tiny, such as a text or a phone call or many other little things could be the right sign, but these two didn’t make any sense to her. And if they did, it won’t let her sleep tonight unless she finds out what was the actual meaning of them.

“Why don’t you answer me?” Pearl called into the darkness, but received no responce. An
exhale was released and Pearl put her cat down. After leaving the small foyer she entered the largest room in her apartment – the living room where she sleeps. Pearl feels comfortable about sleeping on a couch every night. On the opposite side of the foyer, across the living room, was a kitchen, short and narrow just like the foyer, but it was way lighter during day time, because on the left side of the entrance to the kitchen were two large windows that were illuminating the small room. Next to the kitchen, there was a pantry and right next to it, there was Pearl’s bathroom. These two last rooms were the only rooms that were separated with walls and had doors. The foyer, kitchen and the living room was actually one big room shaped into letter ‘T’. Pearl really loved her flat, because it was bright and it was practically easy to move in its space. And although Pearl’s apartment was quite small, it was comfortable enough for her and her pet to live in.

Pearl didn’t bother to turn on the light again, she just lifted her bike from the wall and led it into the pantry where she keeps practically everything, including food, cleaning supplies, washing machine, hoover or her winter clothes. “… Come on, Rosie. We’re gonna feed you.”

There came a soft meow as an agreement and after closing the pantry door Pearl filled Rose’s bowl with a cat food with fish flavor – Rose’s favorite.

Partly dissapointed by receiving no sensible answer from the higher power and constant thinking about the pink-haired woman, Pearl was slowly roaming round the apartment. She changed her clothes without any deep thinking about what exactly she should wear, then sat down on the sofa and sank into the mattress, feet tossed over a small living room table. With a deep sign she listened to the silence and watched the ubiquitous darkness. She could hear her pet slowly eating its food and purring slightly, she could hear the raindrops claping against the kitchen windows quietly on her right side.

Pearl exhaled again, she bend her head back against the sofa and closed her eyes. “What’s wrong with me?” She whispered to herself, furrowing her eyebrows.

She suddenly felt alone and although she loved being alone, it was different this time. She didn’t want to be alone. Pearl wanted to be with someone, she wanted to speak to someone. She wanted to snuggle to someone, because her skin was becoming cold. The air in her apartment turned cool. Her room was dark and unpleasantly silent. Pearl always loved silence and calm atmosphere like this, but why couldn’t she enjoy it now? How was it different?

All of a sudden Pearl could hear a soft beep of her phone, soon followed by a muffled white light that lightened up the room. Pearl immediately lifted her head up, hearing another beep. She shifted closer to the table where her phone was lying and stretched her hand, but she stopped for a while with a slight doubt. Staring silently at her phone, she decided to pick it up after the fourth beep. With a small sigh she pressed a green button.

“Hello?” She leaned back against the couch slowly.

“Pearl? Oh my… Thank God!” Pearl heard someone call out in a worried tone. It was Lapis’ voice. Pearl could recognize it. “Where are you? I was worried sick something happened to you! Why didn’t you text me?”

“Lapis, I…” Pearl palmed her forehead, biting her lips from the inside. “I’m sorry… I forgot.” She said regretfully. Pearl felt bad, really bad. How could she forget? She was thinking about Lapis all the time, but didn’t bother to text her. But why? Pearl wondered what she was supposed to do now.

“Pearl, you really scared me.“ Lapis reproached which made Pearl’s throat tighten a bit. “… Are you okay?” Lapis then asked, this time with a calm voice, still worried.
“… Y-yeah… I’m fine.” She sniffed, wiping her nose. She suddenly started to feel emotional, a lump in her throat again. She wanted Lapis to be there, with her. She wanted to tell her, she wanted to look into her eyes, she wanted to feel her body as she would squeeze Pearl in her arms and whisper that everything will be okay.

“Are you sure?” Another question came from the other side of the line. “… Don’t you rather want me to come? I have a bad feeling about leaving you like this.”

Pearl smiled sadly. She sighed through her nose softly and sank deeper into the back of the sofa, hugging her knees. “You’re so sweet, Lapis…”

Pearl wasn’t able to speak then. She made a long pause. The pause was long enough for both of them to wonder if the other one was still on the line.

“… So?” Lapis spoke in whisper, carefully, hoping that Pearl was still there. She was really worried about her, she at least wanted Pearl to speak to her, at least for a minute or just for a few seconds before this call ends.

“Pearl?” A sad voice came through the phone. Lapis could hear Pearl breathe quietly, sometimes there was silent sniffing, but that was all. “Pearl, please say something.” Lapis pleaded, almost crying herself.

Lapis was really worried. She had no idea what was going on and without Pearl telling her, she couldn’t even help her, better said she didn’t know how, because Pearl wasn’t speaking to her.

Suddenly Pearl forced an exhale and her sniffing became intense. Her hands started to tremble, her breath was shaky and hot salty tears filled her eyes. She tried her best not to cry entirely, but her sobs were still becoming louder.

“Pearl, what’s going on? Tell me.” Lapis urged, but gently. “… Please.”

Her voice, so sweet and soft, only caused the narrow wet trails of tears widen, Pearl's sobbing then drowned out the silence in her room.

At that moment Pearl realized how much she needed Lapis, how much she needed her to be there and feel her presence, but at the same time she didn’t want to talk to her, she didn’t want to be with her, because she didn’t want to bother Lapis with her problems and make a scene like the biggest crybaby in the world. What would Lapis think of her?

Lapis tried to address her several times, but it was hopeless. The more she was trying to make Pearl speak, the more it made her cry, but Lapis didn’t want this to be happening, she just wanted to know what exactly was going on and mainly she wanted Pearl to stop crying, because it was the only thing that was nearly making Lapis cry herself.

But all of a sudden everything on the other side of the line went into a silence, a dead silence, a silence that was the last thing which Lapis wanted to hear. Lapis immediately removed the phone away from her ear, finding out that the call was canceled.

Lapis appeared in a state of shock. She felt like her heart stopped beating. Her breath froze, eyes wide open and frightened, her vision was becoming blurry.

She put the phone down on bed sheets extremely slowly, still with a terrified expression. She got up from her bed on which she was sitting and travelled across the dark room to the window. Placing her forehead against the cold glass, she looked out of it, posed with many trails of raindrops, and leaned against the windowsill with her palms.
Lapis was spending the night at aunt Agate’s house today – Lapis’ home. Since her and Deedee’s mother passed away, Blue Diamond’s sister took charge of her beloved daughters. She was pleased that she could take care of them and happy to provide them a roof overhead. Lapis practically wasn’t spending there too much time, she was spending way more time at the stable instead, in her favorite comfy attic where she didn’t have to listen to her younger annoying cousin who even disliked Lapis for her own reasons. But once per time, Lapis came back home to see her family, the part of her family that left, the part of her family that cared about her and loved her, even when she was adopted.

Lapis was standing there, silently and still like a statue, staring out of the window. ‘Did I do something wrong? What did I do wrong?’ Lapis was asking herself, thinking about Pearl, thinking about all that happened today. Everything suddenly became messy and chaotic. Everything was somehow different and it was tearing Lapis apart when she didn’t know why things were this way. She wondered why was Pearl crying and what made her cry. Was it her? Did she hurt her? Was Lapis responsible for all of this? How could she fix it? How could she help her friend when Pearl didn’t want to talk to her?

Lapis decided to do something. Resolutely she pulled back from the glass, heading back to her bed to pick up her phone again, but as she was getting closer, her determination was quickly fading.

She wanted to help Pearl, she wanted to know what’s wrong, but at the same time she wondered if all of it was happening because of her, because of what she did. She was asking herself if it even was a good idea telling Pearl about her feelings towards her. Was it too soon? Was it the worst time that she could choose? What if Pearl didn’t feel the same? What if she was mad at her? What if Pearl didn’t want to speak to her or even see her? What if–

Lapis hesitately took the phone into her palms, staring at the shining display and biting her lip that hard that she could taste her blood.

She sighed deeply, closing her eyes for a while before dialing Pearl’s phone number. She was scared. She was afraid of making things even worse, but how else could she fix it? How else could she help? Pearl was too important to her to just let it be.

Hesitately Lapis pressed a call button, slowly putting her comunication device towards her ear. After a moment of silence the phone started ringing, but for a really long time there was no responce.

‘Come on, Pearl. Pick it up.’ Lapis whispered, feeling a bit nervous, biting her lip once more. She sat back down on her bed and pressed her bent legs against her chest, then put her chin on her knees and hugged herself tightly with her free arm. Now she was becoming extremely worried. ‘… What’s going on?’

Lapis tried many times to contact Pearl on her phone, but without any luck. The girl became sad and afraid. She couldn’t think about anything else than Pearl – if she was safe. Curled up in a ball and lying on her cold bed which was the only place where she loved to be because it was usually warm, Lapis was silently staring into the darkness. Only a blue lava lamp that was placed on a windowsill was making a muffled light in the room.

The door suddenly opened without anyone bothering to knock and that made Lapis wince. Someone entered the room and before Lapis could recognize who it was, there came a sharp high voice. “Dinner is ready.”
It was Lapis’ cousin, young fourteen years old girl with blue bob cut. She was way smaller than Lapis, she was spoiled, mean, smug and absolutely annoying to Lapis. These two never got along. The girl never considered Lapis as her cousin, she didn’t like her, because she was adopted, and for her Lapis just wasn’t a part of their family. And on a top of it there was the fact that right as her younger cousin found out about Lapis’ attraction towards the same sex, she disliked her even more. Just speaking to Lapis was hugely against her grain and Lapis could say the same about the other.

“I’m not hungry.” Lapis replied, gazing to nowhere again, hands folded under her cheek.

“I wasn’t asking…” The girl said bitterly. Right after that she turned on her heels, went outside the room and slammed the door behind herself. That made Lapis wince once more and made her a bit angry.

She clenched her fists and furrowed her eyebrows. “At least learn to knock next time!” Lifting up her head from the sheets, she called after her cousin, but there was no response – fortunately for Lapis.

With a deep exhale, Lapis laid her head back down. Once more she was drowned in her thoughts, watching the dark screen of her phone and waiting for it to start beeping. But nothing happened. She didn’t know what to do.

Lying on her bed, partly covered in darkness and partly in blue muffled light, she was waiting more then ten minutes before hearing a soft knocking on the door. A slight disgust overwhelmed Lapis as she imagined seeing her cousin again, but she realized that her cousin wouldn’t knock so lightly like this.

Someone entered the room again, but this time Lapis wasn’t interested enough in who it was to glance over at them, so she kept staring forward.

“Lapis, dear, come eat dinner.” She heard a low, warm voice. The person sat down on Lapis’ bed right next to her, placing a hand on Lapis’ shoulder gingerly.

“… I’m not hungry, aunt Agate.” Lapis responded with a sad tone in her voice, not looking at her.

The older woman sighed through her nose and replaced her hand from her niece’s shoulder to her hair and stroked her gently. “Is everything okay? You’ve been here since you came home. Is something bothering you?”

Well, aunt Agate wasn’t the best person to talk with about this kind of things and Lapis even wasn’t in one of her best moods at that moment. She didn’t want to talk about it, not with her aunt, not now. “… I’m fine, just… Not hungry.”

Agate hummed at that and tilted her head aside, watching poor Lapis who probably wasn’t planing to continue in this conversation. “Lapis, you’re at the stable all the time, working hard without any sleep and your loving aunt’s food. Come, you should eat at least something. You can’t be starving all night.” The woman smiled and stroked Lapis one more time, trying to cheer her up, but without success.

The young girl looked at her aunt with a corner of her eye, but looked away soon after. “… I’ll come later.”

Aunt’s smile entirely disappeared when she looked closer at Lapis’ sad expression. “Are you sure that there’s nothing you want to tell me?” She then asked, leaning closer to her niece, but
Lapis only managed to nod weakly without speaking.

“Okay…” Agate sighed softly and petted Lapis for the last time, then stood up and headed to the door. “Come soon, dear. I don’t want you to eat cold dinner.” She asked in a calm voice with her eyes locked on Lapis. She was watching her for a while, realizing that Lapis probably won’t react or turn at her, so then she left the room and quietly closed the door, leaving Lapis alone in silence.

There was an uncontrollable wave of emotions boiling inside Lapis. Her stomach twisted and a large lump appeared in her throat. She wanted to cry. She had a feeling like everything was suddenly wrong, like there was no way to get out of this terrible feeling. She felt like everything that was happening was her fault and that she couldn't fix it. It was like everything was lost. She was afraid that this feeling won't go away sooner than she meets Pearl again – if ever.

Lapis wanted to know what was wrong. She needed Pearl. And she needed her now.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

- Pearl appeared in a state of remembering past memories and was trying to fight her emotions
- Lapis thought she did something wrong and had no idea how to fix it

♦ 10th week (Saturday night)
Pearl turned off the engine and removed the key from the ignition, putting the key into her jacket pocket. She looked out from the window and with a soft sign she leaned back against the driver seat. Gazing at the giant wooden building, she could feel a slight stress, a little doubt. She hasn’t seen Lapis for several days and she wasn’t even answering her phone when Lapis was calling. Pearl wondered what was Lapis thinking about her – that Pearl just decided to ignore her and then she randomly appears in the stable like nothing happened? Huh… Sure.

This was a weird feeling, really weird. What will happen when Pearl walks in? Will Lapis be there and will she run right after Pearl to give her a hug or is she gonna be mad? What if Lapis forgot about Pearl? What if she will never speak to her again after what Pearl did? Better said what she didn’t do.

The skinny girl was staring at the barn, head full of all sorts of questions and emotions. She wasn’t able to move, not even blink. She was scared. What kind of things are going to happen as she leaves the car? A storm or a warm welcoming? She didn’t know and also she wasn’t brave enough to answer this question. But one thing was certain – she missed Lapis. She missed her so much and she wanted to say so many things to her. But mainly she wanted to see her, to cry out the deepest apologies to her and hug her tightly with no possible way to let Lapis catch her breath.

‘God be with me.’ Pearl bit her lip, but after a while she grabbed her courage and got out of her pickup. For a moment she kept staring at the enormous building towering right in front of her and swallowed. A bit unsurely she stepped towards it, leaving the small parking lot, although she was afraid.

She stopped right in front of the entrance, unsure and scared of what might happen. What if Pearl tries to address Lapis first and the first thing Lapis will do is that she will scream at her? Or will she push Pearl away without the slightest interest to see her again? Pearl had no idea how was Lapis taking all that was happening the past two days and how she will react.

After a long time of deep thinking, Pearl decided to rather stay outside. Maybe it was safer to stay there and wait until Lapis shows up. She wanted Lapis to meet her and talk to her first. She wanted her to make the first step and she wanted to see Lapis’ reaction at her. If Pearl does it, she could easily get embarrassed if Lapis doesn’t take it in a positive way or if she’s about to scream at Pearl, because she didn’t call her back for two long days. Pearl wanted to avoid the possibility of being rejected after talking to her friend.

The girl sat down on the bench that was standing next to the entrance to the barn, biting her lip nervously and rubbing her bare arms. She bent her legs and pressed them against her flat chest, hugging her knees with her chin put onto them.

She was waiting. There was a silence around her, but not the type of silence she liked. Somehow she just couldn’t enjoy it. The breeze was caressing her cheeks and arms softly, but it wasn’t calming her down at all, and the warmth of the sun suddenly felt different than before.

She was waiting…
She was still waiting.

All of a sudden the silence was uninterrupted by a horseshoes clinking which was coming from the inside of the barn and the noise was growing louder and louder as it was approaching Pearl. And the louder the clinking was, the more Pearl was trembling. It had to be Blue and surely there was also Lapis near her. This is it. It’s time. It’s time for explaining everything and time not to make herself totally embarrassed.

But before Pearl could make herself rise from the bench, there came a horse out of the stable and immediately stunned her, because this horse wasn’t the one she expected to see. This tacked up horse was way smaller than Lapis’ and it had light palomino coat. And though this horse was smaller than Blue, its body was more muscular and stronger. It also had lushy feathering on all its lower legs, covering horse’s fetlocks, and beautiful long white curly mane and tail.

Pearl was in a slight shock, but also in a big astonishment how beautiful this horse was. But after a moment she realized that no one was riding the horse. It was walking around just by itself and that made Pearl a bit nervous. But fortunately for Pearl it didn’t take too long and there appeared a short blond girl who ran out from the stable with a slight visible alarm in her face and quickly as a bolt of lightning she grabbed the horse’s reins and stopped the animal from its journey.

“Hey, hey, hey! Stop. Where do you think you’re going?” The girl called and with every effort of her own she turned the horse towards the barn entrance and tried to lead it back inside, but she failed, because she managed to notice Pearl who was tensingly sitting on the bench nearby her. “Oh? Hey, pointy nose.” Peridot snorted, putting one of her hands on her hip, grin on her lightly tanned face.

After a moment of staring at the animal, Pearl finally looked down at the girl and blushed a little, arms crossed on her chest in defence. “Hi… Peridot.” But right after that she shyly hung her head, gazing at the dirty ground under her.

Peridot snorted quietly, accompanied with a shrug. “Hey, I didn’t mean it bad, you know. Never take the shit I’m saying seriously. Like ever.” She then laughed briefly.

Pearl lifted her head immediately with an awkward grin. She felt like in a different time-space for a moment, because what Peridot was saying wasn't really making her worried, but thinking about Lapis was, and every time Pearl slowed down, her mind was full of Lapis again. Actually she didn't even pay attention to what Peridot said to her, so she just mindlessly responded. “Oh… Okay.”

Although Pearl’s stress from meeting Lapis was quite relieved by meeting Peridot instead, Pearl could hear a muffled voice of conscience calling her. She should meet Lapis. She needed to. Instantly. She decided to do something, although her doubt was slowly rising again.

“Is… Lapis in there?” The tall girl asked shyly, avoinding to blush even more by mentioning her name.

Peridot hummed and thought for a moment, rubbing her chin with her short fingers. “I think not. Also I haven’t seen Blue today. Maybe they went out for a ride… Did you check the attic?”

“I did not.” Pearl shook her head. She wondered if Peridot knew anything about the situation between them two. Well, how couldn’t she? She was Lapis’ friend. Peridot wouldn’t just stare at Lapis without interest if something terrible and visible on her face could be teasing her.
“Then go ahead.” She waved towards the attic, but then her expression turned serious. “You better find her before she gets crazy ’cause of you.”

Pearl’s turquoise eyes widened in surprise, her stomach twisted a bit. “What-what do you mean?” She asked, but she immediately regretted it.

“You know exactly what I mean.” Peridot shot back with a slight bitterness in her voice, staring straight at Pearl.

Her expression was making Pearl nervous and scared. ‘Of course. Lapis told her.’ She hid her head hidden between her shoulders and looked away, all embarrassed, face entirely red.

There was a silence for a while. Pearl wondered if Peridot was about to say something, because she was extremely talkative – usually. At least when Pearl was spending time in the stable and Peridot was there, she couldn’t stop talking. But now Pearl was actually quite glad that there was a silence. She was worried that Peridot could be able to blame her or scream at her, because Lapis surely must have told her everything.

“… Hey.” Pearl then heard Peridot’s voice soften, but wasn’t brave enough to turn her head back at her. “I’m really worried about her, you know. I don’t want anybody to break her heart again.” And with a sigh through her small nose she dissappeared in the barn, along with her horse.

Then Pearl lifted her head lightly. She sighed, staring far, far away at the horizon. ‘Again?’

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She was waiting.

The day was slowly turning into the night, but there was still a bit of light. It wasn’t that warm as it was one hour ago. Now the weather was colder, making Pearl chills all over her body. Her skin was paler than it usually was, her heart was beating slowly, eyes heavy and watery.

She hugged her legs more tightly, pressing them towards herself to keep herself at least a little bit warm. But the slow the sky was darkening, the quick the rest of her hope was vanishing.

She was waiting. Weak and tired.

She was still waiting.

Getting cold.

Sad.

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Pearl was sitting there for another long hour, remaining still in the same position with her skin becoming colder and colder every minute.

Suddenly, in the middle of the dead silence, there appeared unknown muffled noises that Pearl could hear – quiet, small noises. But the longer she could hear them, the louder they were, though Pearl wasn’t paying much attention to them. Her eyes were closed, lips lightly parted, so she could
breathe a warm air into her lap which was the last part of her body that wasn’t completely frozen yet, to keep it warm at least for a few more minutes before she freezes entirely.

But then those noises stopped and everything went into silence again. And despite it, Pearl couldn’t even recognize if those noises that she heard before were real or if they were just a part of a dream. She didn’t know if she was sleeping. She didn’t know if she was awake. But she was sure that she heard something and that she was too weak and tired to find out what exactly those noises were.

“… Pearl?” There came a quiet voice out of nowhere, but Pearl stayed frozen and motionless. Her eyes were still closed. Even if she opens them, she would see only darkness around herself, so why bother with it? The night came very quickly while Pearl’s hope fell to the very bottom of her levels. For a moment it felt like the rest of her hope was gone forever. She must have been dreaming. This couldn’t be true. Though, it’s fine to create illusions to let ourselves feel better and stay above the surface of hopelessness as long as it’s possible.

“Pearl?” Someone addressed her once more with that soft voice and it seemed like its source was being closer to Pearl than it was for the first time.

Pearl’s eyes then opened, eyelids heavy and tired. Slowly she lifted her head. Something felt very familiar to her.

“… Pearl, dear?”

The girl, sitting on the bench with her entire body cold and slightly shaking, could feel a warm hand that has been placed on her cheek. It felt like an explosion, like if a fire burned an ice. There was an incredibly intense wave of warmness, love and care that overwhelmed the skinny girl’s frozen body and it finally made her eyes fully open.

“… Lapis?” She whispered, looking into the darkness, watching the dark silhouette in front of her.

All of a sudden Pearl was wrapped in hot arms and hugged as tightly as she almost couldn’t breathe. “Pearl, oh my god! You’re okay!”

Pearl’s eyes brightened. That voice could Pearl recognize between millions of other voices. This one was different. This one was sweet and warming. It was Lapis’.

Lapis forced an exhale, pressing Pearl’s weak body towards her own. “Jesus Christ… Do you have any idea how worried I was?!?” She then pulled back to face her, eyebrows furrowed. “I thought that something happened to you! Why weren’t you answering your phone?” Lapis reproached, almost screaming at her, weak sobs were lightly cracking her voice, her eyes were filled with tears. “I was calling you like a crazy! I was so worried! Freaking god…” Then Lapis let the tears fall down and she hugged Pearl firmly once more, feeling so relieved that she was okay and trying to calm down her own cry. “… I was so terrified. I thought that I did something wrong! I thought that I hurt you! I thought that you will never talk to me again.” She sobbed, facing Pearl again and taking her cool cheeks into her hot palms. “I’m so damn happy you’re okay… You made me so scared.” She whispered then, sighing softly. Slowly she pressed their noses together, finally feeling a bit more relaxed as she could finally touch Pearl’s physical form. Quietly she sobbed. “… My little Pearl. I missed you so much…”

She left Pearl totally wordless and stunned. Pearl wasn’t able to breathe. She was staring straight into Lapis’ worried eyes. Just the look at her was making Pearl really sad – the look of her watery eyes, those great tears marking her freckled face. This was just so unfair. Why was Lapis crying?
“… Lapis, I’m… I’m so sorry.” She apologized, her voice cracking up, tears in her eyes. Soon she started sobbing herself.

*This is what Pearl had done. She made Lapis that worried that she even made her cry! And just only because of her own selfishness. But was this what Lapis deserved? Pearl knew that she will go straight into hell because of this. ’… What have I done?’*

It felt like if a whole universe was destroyed. When Pearl saw tears in Lapis’ eyes it was the end of the line. She had no idea how to fix it. She didn’t want her to cry. This felt so hopeless.

“Lapis, I… I really messed up. I know I *should* call you. I just…” She swallowed, then sniffed several times. “I didn’t want to bother you… With my problems… I didn’t want you to see me like this… To see me weak.”

“What?” Lapis shook her head in confusion, salty tears rolling down her skin. “What problems?” She blurted, but carefully.

Lapis felt bad. Just a little while ago she was sure that everything was her fault, that *she* did all of this, she was convinced that she did it and she was regretting it, that she should’ve just shut up and stop herself from telling Pearl about her feelings towards her that afternoon, that she surely caused Pearl troubles and that she was suffering *only* because of her. That's what Lapis was thinking. But unfortunately this idea was still on her mind.

“It’s because of me…” Lapis spoke quietly after a moment of deep thinking, but it rather sounded like if she was talking to herself. “It’s me, isn’t it?” She pulled back, a tear rolled down her cheek, gazing at Pearl. “I’m the one who did this to you. I’m the one who caused you problems!”

There came a massive wave of coldness that engulfed Pearl’s body again as Lapis pulled away. Suddenly she felt alone when Lapis wasn’t close to her – and this was paradoxically the moment when she needed her the most.

Pearl took all the rest of her strength and leaned forward, hands stretched, longing for Lapis’ touch. She gently took Lapis by her hands and made her come back to her. “What–no! What are you saying?” She then made Lapis come yet closer.

Pearl’s stomach twisted. This was a bad feeling. Was this her conscience? She made Lapis think that all that was happening was her fault! That Lapis did all of this, that Lapis hurt her and made her suffer. Pearl didn’t want this! She really should’ve at least told Lapis what was going on. Making someone worried about her was the last think she would want to do, not even mentioning to make someone cry. “Lapis, you didn’t do anything wrong. It was all me!” Pearl pointed towards herself, eyebrows furrowed sorrowfully. “I was being stupid! I made you feel like it was all your fault.” Pulling Lapis a bit closer, she continued. “You were the one who was there for me! You were doing all possible things *just* to make me feel better. You were the one whom I needed the most… But I was the one who left you behind.” The girl then stopped and looked down, tears in her swollen eyes. “… I’m the one to blame.”

Lapis could just stare, although Pearl was about to cry. She had to do something. It was so uncomfortable doing nothing when Pearl was in an emotional trap, literally cracking up right in front of her. But also she had to get control of herself first to be able to calm down her friend.

The girl with blue hair gingerly kneeled down by the bench, between Pearl’s thighs, and hugged her around her slim waist which immediately made Pearl hug Lapis back around her neck and force her towards her own chest. Softly they were crying together, helping each other to calm down and relax. Everything was okay. They were here. They were together and both of them
were so glad that the other one was okay and safe.

Lapis’ squeeze was tender and soft. She was slowly and comfortably stroking Pearl’s back with her thumbs, her head resting on Pearl’s chest. She could feel Pearl’s heart beat intensify, it was beating fast against her cheek – those were such a sweet and comforting vibrations. At last she could hear her beautiful heart beat again.

“Pearl…” She whispered, nuzzling her chest. She sniffed one last time. Suddenly she realized how cold Pearl was. This evening was colder than usual and Pearl was sitting there in a t-shirt, with bare arms. “… Come to my place. You’re gonna get cold here.” Lapis offered and helped Pearl get up on her feet. Pearl didn’t resist and let Lapis to lead her inside.

They were followed by a large shadow and a clapping of hooves. It was Blue who was following them. Lapis must’ve arrived with her before she met Pearl who was sitting outside on the wooden bench.

This time Lapis supported Pearl and led her up into the attic room first, then she settled Blue in her stall and untacked her, leaving her and other horses alone with a quiet thunk of Blue’s iron stall gate, heading to the ladder and up to her room.

Quietly she climbed up and entering the small comfy attic she was briefly searching for Pearl in the darkness, until she finally found her. She was sitting there in hay, curled up in a ball and watching Lapis’ every movement.

Lapis blinked with a soft sigh and a slightly sad expression. “May I offer you anything? A tea for example?” She stepped forward, watching Pearl worriedly.

The girl breathed out, but smiled a bit, though she was still emotional and confused. But she was also truly happy that she was with Lapis once again. Her presence was making her feel relaxed – as always. “Just… You and your blanket, please.” She then looked Lapis straight into her eyes.

Lapis kneeled down cautiously, a warm smile playing on her face. She stretched her hand and from behind Pearl’s back she pulled out her smooth blanket. With slow and prudent movements she spreaded it and wrapped it around Pearl like a scarf.

Pearl had no idea what would she do without Lapis now. She felt like a baby, a baby that needs attention, care and love. But all of a sudden a sorrowful sigh escaped Pearl’s lips, her gaze away from Lapis. She grabbed both ends of the blanket and tightened them. Some thoughts have filled her mind again.

Lapis noticed that something wasn’t right, because Pearl was silent for a long time. So Lapis shifted closer, in front of her, shoulder brushed shoulder. She was so close, she could breathe Pearl into her face, and fortunately for Lapis the girl didn’t pull back, though she wasn’t looking back at her.

“Pearl?” Lapis addressed her softly, especially careful. But the other one didn’t react and it was making Lapis worried once more.

She was waiting.

She was waiting for a responce.

“What’s wrong?” She asked in whisper, but Pearl remained silent. She so wanted to tell Lapis, she wanted to cry, she wanted to squeeze Lapis tightly as physically possible and don’t let her go. She was afraid, but she knew that the longer she will keep silent, the worse it will probably get.
“Sweetie.” Lapis tried again, but received only a sad sniff from her and that made her lift her own hand, especially slow. Gently she placed her fingers on the side of Pearl's pale chin and without any force she turned her head towards herself, although her turquoise watery eyes were fixed somewhere else.

“Pearlie.” She pleaded for her attention, not urgently, but with care, and finally she made Pearl look up at her. “Tell me… Please.”

Pearl gazed at her. She noticed that thanks to Lapis she could get warm very quickly, but partly it was also because of the blanket.

Pearl pressed their noses and foreheads together, feeling Lapis’ hot skin against hers, and cupped the hand that was holding her chin, but she didn’t say a word, just enjoyed Lapis’ presence.

Lapis moved her lips closer to her. One beautiful small kiss was placed on Pearl’s pale lips and her sad little heart then started to beat.

“So?” The blue-haired girl asked. She brushed the other girl’s pointy tip of her nose with her own and then pressed their foreheads back together.

Pearl couldn’t help it. Lapis was just too sweet to resist more of her pleading.

An exhale was released from the skinny girl’s lips. Parting their foreheads, she looked slightly aside and covered her mouth with Lapis’ hand which she was holding, placing a kiss into her palm. But before she could speak, she needed a bit more time. Before a word was told, a tear rolled down her cheek, making a wet trail across Lapis’ hand.

“Honey, why are you crying?” Lapis asked right after the teardrop fell down from her skin, but suddenly there appeared a bright beautiful smile on Pearl’s cheeks.

“I’m just so… Happy…” She sniffed, a tone in her voice honest. “Lapis, I… I was so afraid. I was afraid of telling you…” She inhaled some fresh air and sank into the other’s dark eyes. “… Of telling you what I really feel… I was afraid of falling in love again…“

In fact Pearl was scared of letting herself love someone again, because she was afraid that it would end like it ended before – like an unrequited love. Also she realized that thinking about Rose was always making her feel sad, and it wasn’t even solving anything, but finally she decided to move on. She got a new chance to love. She got a new chance to live and she knew that the person, whom she was in love with, simply loved her back. This was a perfect moment to start a brand new life.

A big wave of relief overwhelmed Lapis as she realized that she actually didn’t do anything wrong – at least she thought that she didn’t, after this experience. She blinked slowly, scanning Pearl’s face and feeling that something has changed – for good. She suddenly felt so happy, she was filled with indescribable feeling of endless happiness. “Pearl…” She lifted her other hand, also placing it on Pearl’s cheek, holding her close, breathing into her face. But before she could speak, Pearl continued.

“The day when you told me, I felt so… So… I-I can’t even describe it, it was something… Something big and special. You always made me feel like I was… Everything. You made me feel like there’s something… Like there’s someone in this world who’s worth living for. You’re the one holding me on my feet, the one who makes me happy, who makes me laugh and smile, the one because of whom I wake up in the morning.” She sighed softly, taking another breath. “You gave me a hope, another chance to live… You can’t even imagine how honored I am to have you
by my side.”

This was enough. It was enough for Lapis to let tears fall down from her eyes. Everything that she was worried about was just a misunderstanding, she realized. Lapis was so worried about something that wasn’t even happening. And this little misunderstanding only made Lapis love Pearl more – now when she finally knew that what she had done was actually the best choice she could make – to say those three simple and powerful words.

“… I love you, Lapis.”

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

- after two days Pearl came back to the stable to see Lapis
- Pearl finally found a courage to tell Lapis about her feelings
- 11th week (Tuesday afternoon + night)
Lapis sighed with a warm smile, lightly brushing Pearl’s nose with her own. “Pearl… I love you, too… You have no idea how much.”

Pearl half-smiled. She looked aside slightly. But even when she told Lapis what she wanted, there was still something that was making her worried. And Lapis noticed that.

“Honey.” Lapis spoke, whispering, foreheads pressed together. Lapis was used to see Pearl happy, always, but now it was easy for her to recognize that something was still bothering her and that was making Lapis worried herself. Pearl was her light, she was her sun, warm and shining, smiling and laughing all the time, but now it was different and just a look at her was making Lapis sad.

“Hm?” Pearl lifted her eyes and looked into Lapis’.

To Lapis it seemed like Pearl was trying to hide something, something that was still hurting her from the inside and that she was afraid to say it, even when she ‘told’ Lapis the reason, because of which was happening what was happening before. Lapis could see it in her eyes. She could feel it.

“I know that something is still making you worried, Pearl.” She said compassionately, scanning Pearl’s expression. But the girl didn’t say anything at that, she just turned her head aside, so Lapis’ palm was covering her mouth again.

“I can feel there’s something making you sad… Just tell me.” After that she was silent and still waiting for Pearl’s response, but unfortunately she was silent, too. But Lapis wanted answers.

Pearl knew exactly about what was Lapis talking, but how could Lapis recognize it? How could Lapis know that she was thinking about the same thing as her?

Lapis sighed softly. “I know you weren’t crying just about nothing that Saturday, Pearl.” She stroked her pale cheek tenderly. “I want to help you. But you have to tell me what’s wrong.”

Pearl exhaled. She knew that she can’t resist any longer. That would mean making Lapis even more worried and that was the thing she didn’t want to cause. Not again.

So she gave in. “I just… Remembered something… Someone.” She swallowed. “And remembering things from the past has a great influence on me.” Although her voice sounded rather sad, a small smile curled up on her face. “But you were there for me… And that was the only thing that was important to me at that moment.”

Lapis wrinkled her eyebrows sadly, not reacting exactly at what Pearl just said. “… Did that someone hurt you?”
The girl winced slightly at her question, not expecting it. “Well…“ She thought. Rose actually didn’t hurt her, but Pearl did hurt herself, because she let herself feel bad, because she longed for something about which she knew was an unreachable achievement for her. “… No.”

“Then what made you cry?” Lapis asked, but carefully. “Was that me?”

“No, Lapis.” She shook her head quickly as to put an extra emphasis into it. “… You made me smile.”

And this made Lapis smile herself. She placed a small affectionate kiss on Pearl’s lips before Pearl could continue.

“It was all my fault that I let myself feel that way.” She admitted. “But now I know that I was acting silly. I realized that I longed for something that I couldn’t get…” She sighed quietly, the tips of their noses touching. “And I realized so many things since we first kissed, too…”

She went silent after that and both of them knew that no words were needed then. This special silence felt like these two were sharing thousands of words between each other, but the words didn’t even have to be told. It was like they were talking to each other through the tiny voices in their minds, reading each other’s thoughts and speaking to one another through unspoken words, just breathing slowly with eyes closed and minds finally relaxed, knowing that everything was okay. At last.

After a moment of harmonic silence, Lapis lightly opened her eyes, finding Pearl with her eyes still closed and with her forehead resting against Lapis’.

“Pearl?” Lapis whispered.

The girl hummed softly, but kept her eyes closed.

“I won’t let anything or anyone hurt you… Never.” She said resolutely, but still she was whispering. And at that moment Pearl opened her eyes, a wide smile shining upon her cheeks.

“You’re so sweet.” Pearl giggled briefly – the cutest way she always does.

“So…” Lapis brushed the tip of Pearl’s nose once more, tenderly. “Are we okay?”

With an enormous feeling of happiness and relief Pearl nodded, smiling brightly and blinking at her beloved friend. “Yeah.”

The other girl smirked and placed another kiss on Pearl’s smooth lips, and still she was holding her hands on her cheeks, keeping them warm, making Pearl feel safe and loved. “But promise me that whenever something happens, you’re gonna tell me… Okay?” She asked, her voice soft.

Pearl nodded as a response and after a brief moment she pecked Lapis’ lips in return, accompanied with another and yet one more buss.

These feather-light touches of her lips made Lapis shiver, chills ran over her body as quick as a bolt of lightning then. But she couldn’t let Pearl win that easily. She wanted to fight back and since they were finally together, alone, in private, Lapis had a great opportunity to tease Pearl as much as she wanted, but still cautiously.

She waited for a perfect moment to steal another kiss from Pearl and then, when Pearl wasn’t paying much attention once again, there came another peck from Lapis, this time on her cheek that
was already warmed up from the equestrian’s palm. And making the skinny girl giggle, Lapis continued, kissing every tiny spot on her face that was possible touch. Hundreds, maybe thousands of kisses were drowning Pearl in a waterfall of pure love. She couldn’t stop chuckling and she couldn’t stop her cheeks from getting redder and redder every time another kiss was placed somewhere on her face.

“Lap-is…“ She was still giggling, eyes shut, goosebumps all over her skin, not even trying to push Lapis away, because that was in fact impossible for her just now. “It… T-tickles.”

“Oh?” Lapis backed up a little, surprise visible in her face along with thrill. “So you’re ticklish.”

Pearl grinned shyly, but wasn’t brave enough to look into Lapis’ greedy eyes as she was about to respond. “Ah, I wouldn’t say tha–“

A weak squeak escaped her lips as she found Lapis kissing her slender neck. She jolted slightly, because she was extremely sensitive there, and once again she felt goosebumps everywhere.

“Lap–“ She groaned silently, now clenching Lapis’ wrists firmly with both hands. But these adorable moans only were a sign for Lapis to go on. And she did.

And while Pearl was softly gasping at those fond and extremely soft touches, Lapis’ affectionate hands found their place on Pearl’s hips, briefly stroking them with her hot palms, making Pearl gasp again at their immensely gentle press.

Pearl’s body tensed. Her heart started beating fast and chills flooded her body. There was nothing she wished more than to be with Lapis right now. She wanted to feel her body, she wanted to touch her smooth skin and toy with her cyan hair, to share her breath with herself and look into the depths of her dark blue eyes.

Since Lapis’ hands were resting on the skinny girl’s sides, occasionally stroking them with the most delicate touches, Pearl slowly moved her hands towards Lapis’ shoulders, slipping across the whole length of her beautifully tanned and strong arms, and then she stopped on the top of them, sinking into Lapis’ big deep eyes.

Lapis was enjoying this moment, although her breath was stuck somewhere between her throat and lungs, she could feel blood in her veins under her belly pulsing intensively.

Her freckled hands then started to slip upper along Pearl’s sides extremely slow, flattening the folds of fabric underneath Lapis’ wide-spread fingers. These sweet and gentle movements made Pearl raise from her position, so she was kneeling now, although she didn’t even know that she was doing it. Lapis’ palms then met her shoulder blades, gingerly continuing upper and then resting on the back of her fragile shoulders, pulling Pearl closer to her chest. It made Pearl gasp silently as their chests were pressed together, though Pearl was a bit higher than Lapis.

After a moment of staring at each other with eyes half-closed and sharing one another’s breath, Lapis slowly moved one of her hands towards Pearl’s thigh and behind a crook of her knee. She then allowed herself to toss one of Pearl’s legs over her own thighs, making the connection between their bodies more intense, pressing not only their chests towards themselves, but also their abdomens.

Pearl, feeling a bit besotted because of Lapis being slightly playful, suddenly felt a strange feeling inside her stomach, although it was very pleasant feeling. Beating of her heart immediately speeded up and she could feel her veins pulse on places where she couldn’t normally feel it, well, usually – her underbelly and the sensitive spot between her slim thighs which was pressing against Lapis’ leg. The spot was pulsing so fast and Pearl wondered if Lapis could feel it. Pearl started to
feel a bit nervous and shy because of that idea. Also this part of her body was a spot where no one has ever touched her but herself – sometimes. And it wasn’t a surprise that Pearl winced slightly right as Lapis made her leg hit that spot.

An unexpected moan escaped Pearl’s lips right after that. She wasn’t prepared for this, not even expecting it to happen, but this cute sound of hers curled up a grin on Lapis’ cheeks.

After Lapis’ goal was finished, she replaced her hand back on Pearl’s shoulder, making Pearl swallow with a bit of nervousness visible in her expression.

The tall girl placed her hands on Lapis’ cheeks, pulling her face closer to her own. For a long moment she studied her eyes, seeing her own reflection in them, but her reflection actually seemed more beautiful than she really was, Pearl thought. Everything in Lapis’ eyes just looked better and lighter than the reality.

Lapis lightly parted her heart-shaped lips and sighed softly, scanning the other’s beautiful ones. Her boiling breath brushed Pearl’s cheeks, causing her shivers and making the feeling in her stomach grow stronger. She then looked up and staring still up at her, she decided to slide her hands back down from Pearl’s bony shoulders, only way more slow this time.

Passionately she nuzzled Pearl’s thin lips with her own, making the girl open her mouth, too, and exchanging their quiet gasps. Once Lapis made Pearl open her mouth, longingly, but slowly at the same time, she made their lips join. She kissed those lips with passion, with love and care, sinking deeper into them with every next suck accompanied with a soft squelch.

Pearl was softly gasping into the other’s mouth, swallowing her breath and beautiful kisses, along with a slight help of her own hands which were pulling Lapis’ face closer to her. Pearl also noticed that Lapis’ hands started to move again. Her short polishless fingernails were finely burried in Pearl’s back, tenderly scratching it all the way down to her waist and then pulling her gently towards her strong body.

Pearl couldn’t find her cheeks redden more than they were now. Her face was burning, she could feel sweatdrops forming on her forehead. She was never dreaming about something like this. She had never felt like this. This was like if a bolt of lighting ran through her body from top to the bottom. It was a sudden energy, a pulse that was making her body tremble in pleasure, however feeling a little unsure, because this was the first time she experienced something like this, she longed for more these kinds of touches.

And while Pearl was slowly drowning in an ocean of ecstasy, Lapis cautiously clasped her thin bottom lip between her teeth and stretched it a bit. Her hands then wandered off under Pearl’s shirt – first there appeared the tips of her fingers, then her digits carefully continued further and finally her hot palms were squeezing Pearl’s bare waist, petting her smooth and fragile skin, shifting her hands upper and making Pearl raise from Lapis’ thighs.

She pulled Lapis’ face towards her own chest longingly. A soft gasp escaped her mouth as the girl burried her face in there, and it also made Pearl’s heart skip a beat, chills all over her skin. She hung up her head, her lips meeting Lapis’ hair, discontinuously breathing into it, eyes shut. A contact of the other’s sneaky hands made her lose her mind for a while, head lightly spinning.

Pearl’s body was shivering and Lapis could feel it, too, and placing tiny sweet kisses on Pearl’s chest made her shivers grow bigger, just as Lapis’ palms which were surfing across her bare back and belly, stroking and caressing them ever so fondly.

Gaspung for air silently, the skinny girl ran her fingers through the other girl’s blue hair, rubbing between it almost hungrily. An enormous wave of ecstasy flooded her. She felt like her heart
could jump out of her chest, because it was beating so aggressively and fast that she thought it
could explode any second, especially as Lapis was touching her the way she was.

Pearl has never felt this kind of feeling and she could barely even imagine it – until now. This
feeling was just so indescribable and astonishing. She couldn’t even think straight, she didn’t
know what was she doing or what was Lapis doing. She only wished that this wasn’t a dream.
Feeling light tickling inside her stomach and a state of inability to stop Lapis from what she was
doing was making her feel so pleased and relaxed, even when her body was tensed and her mind
fogged. Pearl knew that she was in good hands – literally.

But all of a sudden she couldn’t get rid of a feeling that something was tugging her backwards,
and though the ‘something’ weren’t Lapis’ breasts that were softly thrusting into her – and actually
this was the moment when Pearl realized that Lapis’ breasts were bigger than she first thought.
And she liked it.

But in the middle of her train of thoughts she found herself lying in a nest of hay on her back
with Lapis kneeling above her, and somehow she even noticed how lightly and carefully Lapis
laid her down with her arms around Pearl’s waist, squeezing her so gently and nuzzling the crook
of her slender neck like a little kitten.

Lapis’ weight against Pearl was enough for Pearl to let out a groan. The strange feeling in her
stomach was still growing. Lapis’ smooth lips were tickling Pearl’s neck and her collarbones.
Pearl’s grip around the girl’s head tightened and the very bottom parts of her lower abdomen
tensed right as Lapis’ leg unexpectedly pushed into them.

Pearl’s body shook and she groaned at that, a little bit louder than she expected. “I… Uh…” She
looked up at Lapis, eyes flutter open. “S-sorry, I-I wasn’t expecting that coming.”

Lapis deeply blushed and straightened. She backed up, leaning against her palms, staring still at
the girl under her. “No! That was my fault! I-I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to do that.” She apologized,
biting her lip.

Her pale cheeks turned red, too, realizing that this kind of contact wasn’t actually that bad. For
some reason it felt… Good. Kind of. But she wasn’t sure if she was ready to experience it again,
yet. Now Pearl just wanted Lapis’ warm arms around her and tug her close as much as physically
possible. Yes. This feeling was so nice.

“Hon?” Lapis addressed the girl whose gaze was still.

Pearl shook her head a bit, blinking and noticing Lapis who was watching her with eyes wide
open. “Yea?” She reacted, shyly a little. Her hands gingerly lowered from Lapis’ hair down on
her own chest like if she wanted to defend herself from something.

“I’m sorry if—” Lapis started again, but wasn’t able to finish what she wanted to say. She was
interrupted by the other’s sweet low voice.

“–It’s fine. Don’t worry.” She said, eyes fixed elsewhere, but her lips were smiling at her friend.

“Is it?” Lapis raised an eyebrow with a smirk.

Blushing Pearl so wanted to look at her, but she knew that if she isn’t doing anything, then
Lapis surely is and she wanted Lapis to do something. Something like she was doing before. And
without any sign of glancing at her, Pearl recognized that Lapis grinned and that she bit her lip
then. Soon Pearl found the girl moving slowly towards her and leaning against her elbows, hands
hemming sides of the slim girl’s chest.
Finally Pearl’s eyes looked into the other’s, then she turned her head, and Lapis appeared so close once more. Pearl felt so safe, like if she had some safety cloak over herself, like if an angel tossed their wings all around her. It was so warm and peaceful in her arms. She wished she could stay like this in there forever.

Lapis brushed Pearl’s nose gently with her own, from side to side, with eyes half-closed.

Pearl usually wasn’t that ticklish, but for some reason she was now. She started to giggle softly, lifting her hands in a slow pace, placing her fingers around Lapis’ neck with thumbs petting both sides of her jaw.

Two warm palms then carefully slipped under Pearl's shoulders, followed by thousands of cute tiny kisses on her cheeks and lips, her forehead and nose, as a quiet smacking of Lapis’ lips could be heard. It was such a sweet sound for Pearl and she never wanted it to fade away. And to stop it from fading, she decided to face Lapis again. Touching the tip of her nose and brushing her lips lightly with her own, she tenderly pulled Lapis towards herself with her hands.

There was nothing in the world that could be sweeter than Lapis’ lips – warm, smooth and full, almost making Pearl pass out every time while touching them. Feeling something as soft on touch just felt like a kiss from an angel.

Pearl wished this evening never ends, although she was a bit sleepy. But with Lapis, being there with her, along with her cute kittenish behavior, she could stay up all night.

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

- everything important was explained
- girls were cuddling in the attic

♦ 11th week (Tuesday night)
It was still dark all around, but it was time for Lapis to wake up. It was 5 AM and horses and stalls were waiting.

She rubbed her eyes wearily and realized that there was no light from the sun yet in the room. She rolled from her side onto her back and rubbed her eyes with her palms once more, then she stretched her face with them with a growl, resisting getting up just yet.

But something was different than usual. The room was warmer than it usually was and wasn’t even that quiet. Lapis turned her head to a side and realized that she wasn’t alone.

She found Pearl, sleeping so peacefully and undisturbedly, breathing softly with hands folded under her cheek, lying on her side face to Lapis.

Lapis couldn’t stop herself from smiling. Pearl seemed so happy to her when she was asleep. She even noticed that Pearl’s lips were moving a little, like if she was talking to someone, but she was silent. Maybe she was dreaming about someone, Lapis wondered, watching her with interest and a warm grin on her cheeks.

Lapis knew it was a responsibility to clean up the stable and take care of all horses, but she so damn wanted to stay in her ‘bed’, with Pearl, and watch that sweet little angel as she had no idea about anything that was happening around her.

Lapis shifted closer to the other girl carefully and stayed like that for a while, watching her sleep. Pearl was even cuter from close up, whispering something under her breath and moving with her eyes, even when they were closed.

Lightly she lifted her hand towards Pearl’s face and with a back of her fingers she carefully petted her smooth cheek, trying her best not to wake her up. Pearl was like a baby – cute, innocent and happy, calm and relaxed, especially when she was asleep.

Lapis could never fully realize that someone like Pearl was actually giving her this much fortune just by being with her, spending her free time with Lapis, smiling at her, holding Lapis’ hand or just calling her name with her honey-sweet voice. Lapis never felt so happy, until she met this amazing person who changed her entire life. Sometimes she wondered if all that was happening was real, although she knew that it surely was. But also it was almost unbelievable for her to realize that this wasn’t a dream.

Lapis sighed softly, eyes dreamy and cheeks lightly pink. ‘Time to get up, Lappy.’ She locked her mouth in a tight line, still hesitating to get onto her feet. But there was a task to do and this was her main responsibility for all day.

She decided to let her little sweet birdie sleep unless her job downstairs is done, then she will maybe come to wake her up if she’s not awake. But before Lapis could persuade herself to finally get up, the sunlight lightly flooded the room. That’s not a good sign – she should’ve been at the stable by now and cleaning the stalls.

Lapis groaned to herself and managed to get downstairs. She got herself quick cold shower in a wash stall, got herself clean stable clothes and started her every-day work with cleaning Blue’s stall first. She led her Hanover mare and other horses, except for Malachite, to a grazing meadow.
and returned back to the building, heading to storage for a pitchfork and a wheelbarrow.

Malachite wasn’t in one of her best moods today. She was snorting, neighing and kicking the wooden planks of her stall, but somehow it wasn’t making Lapis scared whatsoever, though she was sort of worried that it might wake up Pearl, and that was something that Lapis couldn’t allow to happen.

Lapis, almost determinedly, scooted to Malachite’s stall and punched the stall gate, just enough hard not to make much noise. “Shut it, you nag! You’re gonna wake her up.” She hissed and gazed into the dark horse’s eyes which was an act that she rather should think twice about before acting. The look at her caused Lapis chills all over her body – Malachite’s straight look was really sharp and evil-like. Lapis rather turned on her heels and didn’t bother to look back, continuing in clearing the stable, and fortunately the horse remained silent then.

Minutes went by and Lapis really enjoyed the moment of being finally done with stalls. Now she only had to sweep the main hall and get rid of a welter of straw residues all over the stone floor.

She started off with skipping towards the storage and getting in, she then took a broom and went back, walking through the building to the other side and starting sweeping there.

During that Lapis was happily crooning something to herself, her feet were dancing and her lips shining in thrill. She hasn’t felt like this for a really long time, she almost couldn’t remember when exactly she felt like this recently. She was extremely happy and this time she knew because of what. Well, because of whom.

Sweeping the floor, she was dancing round the hall, from side to side, with a wide smile on her cheeks, singing something in a low voice as nobody could hear it – maybe?

“Ahem?”

Lapis immediately stopped with everything she was doing, turning quickly towards the voice she just heard. But this dry ‘ahem’ wasn’t Pearl’s. It was Peridot’s.

“You seem… Happy.” The short girl said, an unreadable tone in her voice. She had her arms crossed on her chest, leaning against a stall with her shoulder, eyebrows lightly furrowed.

“Oh, do I?” Lapis straightened a bit. She sighed with a half smile on her cheeks, putting her chin onto a curved wooden end of the broom.

Peridot didn’t answer, but she asked another question instead, lifting her round glasses upper onto her small nose. “Guess you finally found Pearl?” With that the tone of her voice sounded rather playful, smirk on her lips.

Lapis flushed a little with a brief look aside. “Yeah.” She grinned nervously, but was proud of the fact that she found her.

The blonde was waiting for more, for details, but Lapis seemed a bit distracted to her, somehow. Lapis’ eyes were milky, dreamy, and cheeks bright pink. Something felt suspicious about all of this. “Yo what’s going on with you? I’ve never seen you that happy!” She gestured, leaning away from the wall. Then she froze for a moment, thinking, causing Lapis wonders what could just happen to her, but then Peridot happily continued with a sneer, like if she realized something. “Oooh, wait. Did Pearl sleep at your place last night?”

Lapis’ face got even redder. She bit her lip. Just the wording of this sentence caused her body shivers. “Umm, yeah… She did.” She responded shyly.
Peridot chuckled, cupping her mouth. “Oh maaan. I know what’s going on here.”

Lapis got nervous for a while, thinking about what could pop up in her friend’s mind. She swallowed before she opened her mouth. “And what’s… Going on?” She let out doubtfully, but then she realized that she rather shouldn’t ask. But now it was too late to take the question back.

“You two were fucking!” The girl snorted, pointing her forefingers at Lapis, knees slightly bent, wide grin on her face.

“What?! No! We were not!” Lapis automatically opposed without thinking. Her arms went spread and the broom fell on the floor with a thunk.

Peridot only laughed at her response, almost sure that her friend was trying to cover the reality up somehow. “But you wish you were, huh?” She snorted twice, shrugging. “Hey, admit it! She gave it to you!”

She flushed way more, trying to avoid her friend’s gaze. But she wasn’t ashamed only because of Peridot who was thinking about them like that, but even because Lapis almost couldn’t imagine herself doing something like ‘this’ with Pearl herself. “Oh, shut up.” She shook her head quickly, bending down to pick up the broom.

“So she did!” Peridot watched her, smiling widely like if she won a challenge.

“No, she did not!” Lapis got back up, still red. She could do nothing against Peridot in this conversation. Everything that she would try to explain to her, Peridot would be just about to prove that it’s not true. There was almost no way to talk her around, but Lapis had to try. She hated when people don’t believe her something that is true. And fighting Peridot in these kinds of situations was making her tired more and more often.

Lapis deeply breathed in, then out. She tried to be calm, speaking in a low voice. “We were just… Talking… And laughing.” She tried to explain.

The short girl sputtered her lips aloud with a brief chuckle. “Oh yes… And then your fingers accidentally slipped into her.”

Lapis winced at that with a surprised expression. “Peridot!” She hissed through her teeth, then lowered her voice. “She’s right up there!”

“So what?” The blonde narrowed an eyebrow.

“She might hear us!” She alerted.

“Pff… Don’t be such chickenshit, Lapis. Everybody here knows you want to fuck with her, woman. Everyone wants to get their fingers wet sometimes.”

The taller girl growled disgustedly, slapping her own face and shaking her head in disbelief. “Peridot, could you just please stop talking shit?” She asked, looking through her spreaded fingers back up at her friend.

“What, me?” She laughed. “Don’t be like that, I’m just teasing, ya know?” Peridot stepped towards her and lightly nudged Lapis’ shoulder with her own. “Go for it, woman.” With that she blinked and headed to the tack room.

With eyes wide, Lapis blew her fringe away from her forehead. She felt like she won this ‘battle’, for the first time. She was thrilled, but wasn’t able to move for a good minute.
The clock struck eight when Lapis managed to feed her mare, groom her dark coat, clear her hooves and tack her up.

Pearl was still asleep and Lapis thought that she could take at least a brief ride before Pearl gets up, so she led Blue out of the stable and walked around it, heading to the riding hall and entering it. She led Blue deeper into the building and then she stopped. She searched in her riding pants pocket and pulled out two pieces of chopped carrot.

“Here, girl.” She spreaded her fingers and moved her palm towards Blue’s muzzle, so the mare could take the treats. Blue stretched her upper lip and grabbed the carrots into her mouth. After she chewed and swallowed the vegetables, she demanded Lapis to give her some more, but Lapis only giggled.

“I’ll give you some later, baby girl.” She said with a kind voice. She placed her hand behind the groove of Blue’s chin and pulled her head towards her own chest. With her other hand she stroked the Hanover’s long dark nose, from its forehead to the smooth muzzle with a small white snip between its wide nostrils.

Blue closed her eyes and nuzzled Lapis’ chest with her muzzle, breathing hot air out of her lungs. Her owner smiled widely and pressed their foreheads together for a moment, still stroking the horse’s nose.

“You’ll be always my little girl.” She kissed the horse between its eyes and then took its cheeks into her hands, petting them. “I love you.”

Like if Blue understood her, she snorted in response and raised her head, looking Lapis into her eyes.

Lapis could feel a special connection between them, a bond that was keeping them in harmony ever since Blue was a newborn foal. She loved her like anybody else, but loved her as much as her family. If something happened to Blue, it would ruin Lapis, it would tear her heart apart. Blue was the other part of her soul, she’s the one who understands Lapis more than anyone. Lapis couldn’t imagine life without her sweet mare.

But Blue wasn’t the only one about whom was Lapis proud of by having them by her side. She was extremely glad that something, or someone, brought a new person into her life – a sweet girl named Pearl. She was entirely controlling Lapis’ mind, making her unable to think about anything or anyone else recently.

Lapis suddenly shook her head, stopping her train of thoughts. ‘Thinking too much.’ She chuckled to herself, seeing Blue again instead of Pearl in front of her. “Let’s go.”

She stroked the animal’s nose once more and then she headed to the horse’s left side, so she could mount its back. She patted Blue’s strong muscular neck and then grabbed the reins. Putting her foot into a stirrup, she swang up into the saddle and comfortably settled herself in there, also putting her other foot into the right stirrup. With a gentle move of her pelvis she asked Blue to walk, accompanied with a soft kick into her mare’s flanks with her heels.

They walked a few rounds before Lapis asked Blue to trot. There weren’t high fences in the hall, but there was a bunch of trotting poles sorted on the dirt-surfaced ground. Someone must’ve left them there over the night, fortunately for Lapis. Basics are always useful and they’re needed to refresh one’s mind once per time, so Lapis took this opportunity and directed her horse towards the poles. Having an active trot, Lapis took the weight of her body off the horse’s back to allow Blue...
cross the poles with ease. Approaching the poles, she directed Blue straight to the center of their length. The rider pulled the reins slightly back to raise Blue’s head and with a soft kicks she made Blue cross the poles by making a step between each of them, and once they made the first round, they cantered round the hall and then in an active trot they overcame the poles again.

Then when they got tired of repeating the same exercise for a quarter of an hour, were cantering round the arena, changing directions and making brief pauses for Blue to rest a bit.

“Good girl.” The girl praised her Hanoverian. She bent forwards and patted the mare’s neck for a well done work. Then, without interrupting Blue’s walk, she removed her feet from stirrups and sliddown from the saddle, patting the horse once more. Lapis then grabbed the reins and headed to the gate to leave the arena, but before she could do it, she noticed someone standing there and watching them and that made her stop.

Her cheeks turned beautiful pink. “… Pearl.” Lapis smiled, her knees slightly buckled. “F-for how long have you been standing there?”

Pearl giggled, arms crossed on her chest. She was leaning against the door jamb, also her head was resting there. “Long enough to think that your expression is totally cute when your focused.”

Lapis’ cheeks went redder this time. She managed to look shyly aside and rub her forearm. “Pearl…”

Giggles escaped Pearl’s lips. The look at blushing Lapis was just so sweet, she couldn’t help it.

“Did-did you sleep well?” Lapis then asked, mouth locked in a tight line.

“I did–” She blushed, too. “–Sleep well.”

The blue-haired girl let out something between a laugh and a sigh, then in an embarrassment she cleared her throat. “How did you know I was here?”

“Mm, Peridot directed me.” Pearl answered in a low voice and moved away from the jamb with a graceful swing of her body, approaching her friend.

Lapis’ breath stuck in her throat as she watched Pearl getting closer. For some reason, for Lapis it was like if Pearl was getting more and more beautiful every day, more elegant, more enchanting and more attractive. Was it because of yesterday’s night or was it just a pure fact?

Without timely realization, she found Pearl standing right in front of her – a half a head taller beautiful human being.

“Hey.” The tall girl whispered with a sweet voice, eyes lowered and fixed on Lapis.

“… Hey.” Lapis smiled in some sort of a silly way, also she couldn’t get rid of a feeling that her hands and forehead started to sweat and that there was something forcing her to step forward.

She released the reins and her hand lowered, approaching Pearl’s slender one. She scanned her face, her eyes, her lips. The way she was approaching her was causing her shivers.

With a muffled breath, Pearl intertwined her fingers with Lapis, stretching her neck towards her and closing her own eyes.

Lapis imitated her actions and rose up her chin, finding her way towards Pearl’s lips. But as soon as their lips brushed one another, suddenly Pearl could feel something unknown thrust into her arm. She immediately winced and squeaked aloud, eyes wide open in horrify.
Lapis’ eyes opened with a flutter, wondering what happened. She then grabbed Pearl by her wrist, trying to calm her down, even when she had no idea what exactly happened.

“Oh my god…“ Pearl exhaled deeply after the shock she received, breathing fast, pressing her hand intensively against her chest. She realized that the ‘something’ that thrust into her was Blue with her muzzle, just standing there and staring at them two.

Pearl exhaled once again, feeling a bit more relaxed, as she found out what was the source of this unexpected contact, and wondering how couldn’t she just notice such a huge animal being so close to her.

Lapis took Pearl by her shoulders and moved her a bit aside, away from Blue, like if she wanted to protect her. “Blue what are you doing?” She asked with a confused tone in her voice, she shook her head, pushing Pearl yet more away. She then looked at her, facing Pearl entirely. “Are you okay? I’m sorry for that.”

“Aah…” Pearl swallowed, staring still at the horse. But after a moment she looked back at Lapis. “Y-yeah, I’m fine… It’s just the surprise.” Was a response, then she glanced back at the mare.

“I-huh…” Lapis sighed with a grin. “I’m sorry. I should’ve watched her.”

“Don’t worry about that.” Finally Pearl calmed down, chuckling. “I should’ve paid more attention to surroundings.”

Lapis breathed out through her nose, smile on her lips. “She’s obtrusive sometimes.” She shrugged, giving a nod towards her horse. She slid down Pearl's arms and took her hands into her own. “Especially when someone’s around her momma.”

“I see.” The girl snorted, blushing.

The rider faced her horse, placing one of her hands onto Blue’s muzzle. “You can’t do such things to Pearl, honey.” She chuckled.

While Lapis was gazing at her Hanoverian, Pearl was carefully watching them, feeling the strong bond between them. It made her smile and it was also making her happy to see them together. Pearl wished she had someone so close to herself like these two were close to one another. She so wanted to join this connection, but she wasn’t sure if she was allowed to enter it, if she was allowed to share it with them. There was so much love, love that she has never shared with anyone, but longed for it so much.

“You’re so cute when you’re together.” The tall girl sighed sadly, although there was a smile on her cheeks.

Lapis turned to her with widened eyes. She breathed out a smile, looking aside briefly. “Yeah… She’s my girl.” She patted Blue’s neck lightly, sharing a look with her for a short moment. But after she looked at Pearl again, something felt strange. Suddenly she felt like if Pearl was sad. But she didn’t want her to feel like that. Maybe she wasn’t, but still Lapis could feel that something, even though it could be only a teeny tine feeling, was bothering her. She wanted to cheer her up at any cost.

“Hey.” The equestrian then addressed her with a light voice, making Pearl’s expression look less sad somehow. “I’ve got an idea.”

Pearl hummed in confusion, watching her friend. “What idea?”
“Do you want to give her a treat?” She asked, cautiously.

Pearl’s turquoise eyes widened in surprise. She gave Blue a brief look. “I… I don’t know.” She bit her lip and backed a little. This was a big challenge to her, but she quite wanted to try it.

“Don’t worry, I’m here with you.” Lapis comforted her, squeezing her hand a bit more. “It’s easy. Look.” She said and slipped her free hand into her pants’ pocket. Soon she pulled out two pieces of sliced carrot which made Blue immediately turn her head towards her owner, ears pointing forward.

“You’re gotta place the treat in the center of your palm and wait for her to take it. Or if you’d like to, you can just give it to her.” Lapis instructed knowledgeably and forced her hand towards her mare’s muzzle. In a short moment Blue was stretching her full upper lip, trying to reach the treat. She grabbed the carrot from Lapis’ palm and happily she started to chew it in her mouth.

Pearl couldn’t help herself, but smile. It just looked so cute. She was thinking about risking it, she wanted to do it, she wanted to try, but she was quite afraid. And while she was thinking, Lapis pulled out more carrots and gave them to Blue, hoping if Pearl will challenge her fear.

“So?” Lapis asked once more, petting the animal’s smooth muzzle while it was chewing.

Pearl bit her lips from the inside, watching as the mare was enjoying the vegetables and nuzzling Lapis to give her more of it. “Will you… Hold my hand?” She asked shyly. It made Lapis’ corners of her lips curl up.

“Of course.” The equestrian nodded. Her hand slipped into her pocket again and she pulled out another carrots. Slowly she took her friend’s hand and turned her palm upwards, then she placed there some carrots and as Pearl asked her, she underlaid Pearl’s hand with her own and in a slow pace she was forcing them towards Blue. “Just spread your fingers and let her take it from you.”

“O-okay…” She breathed out a bit shakily, but did as she was told.

Lapis put her free arm around the girl’s shoulders to make her feel safe and to let her know that she is there while her other hand, with which she was holding Pearl, was slowly approaching her horse.

Blue started to stretch her lips again and Pearl’s body shook.

Lapis squeezed her hand a bit more. “Don’t worry, you’re doing great.” And right as Lapis finished the sentence, Blue’s upper lip brushed Pearl’s soft palm. It was grabbling there only for a brief moment before Blue finally grabbed the carrots into her mouth, and it also nicely tickled Pearl’s soft skin.

A great wave of relief washed Pearl right as it was finally over. But there was something more she could feel. It was happiness. It was the most beautiful feeling of a joy of success she has ever felt in her life, it was a pure thrill, a feeling that entirely warmed her heart and she wanted to do it again.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:
• Peridot and Lapis were talking about last night
• Lapis and Blue were training on trotting poles
• Pearl fed Blue with carrots

♦ 11th week (Wednesday morning)
“Wohow, you did it, hon.” Lapis exulted, grinning.

“… Yeah.” She breathed out, cheeks red. The massive feeling of thrill was getting stronger and soon it overwhelmed her body entirely, later it caused Pearl light shivers. This was something big – this moment, this experience. Now she was extremely glad for everything, for everything that had happened to her these past few beautiful weeks. Pearl felt like she was slowly getting rid of her fear towards horses. Suddenly she was really proud of herself, she was proud of making these small steps forward. For her it was such a great success. She was proud of facing her fear, extremely glad for stepping into that stable a few weeks ago, for going to the show jumping competition, for meeting Lapis, for, well, everything. For everything that moved her forward, to the moment when she was now.

Pearl then quickly turned to her friend, her white teeth were shining bright. “Can I… Do it again?”

Lapis’ eyes widened in surprise, wondering if she actually heard what she heard. “What-really?”

Pearl nodded fast, smiling beautifully at Lapis.

Lapis couldn't believe this reality. She was staring at her friend in disbelief. She could also feel happiness that was pouring out of Pearl, light and pure. Lapis was literally surprised and pleased at how fast Pearl was moving on. She also wanted to do anything for Pearl to help her and to keep her holding onto this attitude. She felt like Pearl was opening more and more and this was making Lapis truly happy – and even Pearl herself. These small steps of success were moving her forward every day, slow, but they were.

“Wow, Pearl, you're full of surprises.” Lapis snickered.

Pearl chuckled back. “… That's how I work.” She shrugged and waited for Lapis to give her some carrots once again. After receiving the treats she carefully stretched her hand towards Lapis’ horse, spread her fingers and let the Hanover take the treats. Pearl wasn't even shaking this time, she only giggled as Blue's breath and lips which tickled her palm. It was nice, and though she could feel the thrill again. It was such a nice feeling, Pearl thought.

Blue seemed that she didn't have enough yet, so she cautiously poked Pearl into her palm with her muzzle, causing the girl wince right after – poor Pearl wasn't expecting the horse doing something like that at all. She froze for a second, but then Lapis reacted.

“Okay, girl.” The rider said resolutely, patting her horse’s cheek and stroking her nose. “That's enough of treatment for today.”

Blue snorted, turning her ears back and head away in disagreement. But although it should seem
as an act of disagreement, it only caused Pearl and Lapis laugh.

“Seems like she doesn't agree.” Pearl giggled, placing her hand on Lapis’ that was resting on her shoulder.

“She doesn't have to.” Lapis said with a smirk, shaking her head. She streached her hand, trying to reach Blue's reins, but the horse moved its head away from Lapis, leaving her frozen for a moment.

The equestrian frowned. “Hey, come on, what are you doing?” She stretched her hand further, but Blue dodged the contact again. For Lapis it seemed like Blue was up to something. Lapis knew it, she recognized when Blue was toying with her. The mare then teasingly sidestepped away from her with a loud whinny directed to her owner and with a great nod of her head.

“Now tell me what's your problem.” Lapis grinned and let go of Pearl, heading towards the big animal, but missed the reins once again as the horse started to trot around them and neigh.

The blue-haired girl exhaled. “Okay now…” Lapis crossed her arms, tapping her tiptoe against the ground, but Blue didn't take that warning seriously, this was just teasing Lapis even more.

Lapis was that focused on her that she almost couldn't hear Pearl giggling behind her, though Lapis was giggling herself. “Fine, you asked for it.” She made a step towards her mare with heavy steps.

This whole scene soon changed into a chase as the equestrian was rushing after her horse and trying to catch it, but it was successfully escaping from her and trotting round the hall, nickering and happily bucking.

“Ohokay! I give up now!” Lapis let out melodically after a few long minutes of chasing, arms tiredly swinging around her body.

Blue whinnied again, accompanied with a loud snort, running around those two and having fun while Lapis was slowly losing her patience, although she was grinning and watching how Blue was making fun of her inability to catch her.

Pearl was having a great deal of fun, chuckling and watching this whole show. But as soon as Blue headed straight to her, her chuckling lightly eased. The horse hid itself behind Pearl and stopped, probably waiting for Lapis' reaction.

Lapis let out a half-suppressed laugh and crossed her arms. She found this act of Blue very funny for some reason. “So now you're hiding behind Pearl, huh?” Lapis then approached them with a playful grin. She stood in front of the taller girl and looked over her shoulder at her mare, making side lunges every so often to make Blue run somewhere else.

Pearl was enjoying it, giggling and laughing at how hopeless Lapis was in catching her horse, and running after her round the arena earlier.

Suddenly her giggling caught Lapis’ attention. “Hey, what are you laughing at?” Lapis grinned.

Pearl shrugged several times, still chuckling. After a while she responded. “I‘m sorry, I can’t help it.” She then took Lapis’ cheeks into her palms and with a slow circular motions of them she squeezed them, pulling Lapis towards herself. “You look so cute when you’re trying so hard.”

Lapis sputtered, rolling her eyes and letting her cheeks become pink. “I don’t really find it – what did you say – cute.”
“Oooh, I totally disagree with you.“ The girl shook her head with a wide smile and gave Lapis one quick kiss on her lips, causing Lapis’ head spin a bit.

There was a brief silence once again and after a while Pearl took this opportunity to give Lapis another kiss, this time on her cheek – left one first, then right one – two small lovely pecks.

“Ah, Pearl…“ Lapis looked aside, snickering and blushing, unable to look back at Pearl, until another kiss landed on her lips. Lapis cupped Pearl’s smooth hands that were resting on her cheeks, with her own, unable to formulate any sensible sentence. Every time she tried, she was interrupted by a sweet buss. “Now sto–p… P–earl, please…” She pleaded softly, every second disrupted by Pearl’s soft kisses. “I ha–ve to… Catch–“

Pearl’s mood suddenly changed. Something inside her was growing – a heat. There was a light tickling in her stomach, her heart started to shiver. She so wanted to kiss Lapis again and again. She even forgot about Blue, she forgot about the place where they were, forgot to breathe while kissing that cute girl.

“Mmhm, Pear–“ She swallowed a breath, trying so hard to make herself normally speak, but it was momentarily impossible for her. But after a while she managed to blurt one quick sentence between two Pearl’s kisses. “She’s gonna be jealous.”

“Mm?” The tall girl moved back a bit and gave Lapis a moment to catch her breath, also gasping for air. “Who?”

With a silly grin, enchanted by Pearl’s sweet gaze, Lapis beckoned to Blue with her head, but right after that her eyes widened as she perceived that Blue wasn’t behind her anymore. After a quick glance back the hall, she in horrify realized that Blue wasn’t anywhere in there. The equestrian gasped. “Where is she?” She asked, looking back at Pearl.

“Emm…” Pearl bit her lip and also looked around to check for the horse’s absence. “I don’t know… How couldn’t you notice her getting away?” She taunted her gently.

Lapis snorted at that, arching her eyebrows with a teasing smile on her lips. “For how long were we kissing?” She asked without answering Pearl’s previous question and cautiously she grabbed her slim wrists.

Pearl shrugged with a half-suppressed laugh. “For maybe like… A few seconds?”

“B-but,” Lapis stuttered, breathing out a chuckle. “Tell me how could’ve she just disappeared like that?”

Another giggle escaped Pearl’s mouth. She gingerly lowered her hands from Lapis’ face, tossed them around her neck and made Lapis place her palms on Pearl’s shoulders. “Let’s just say that you were a little bit busy.” The skinny girl lowered her voice, now sweet and ribbing.

Lapis gasped, overexpressing a surprice on purpose. “But I’d like to object that this is totally your fault, miss kisser… Not mine.” Lapis suggested with a furrowed eyebrows, huge smirk on her lips.

“Oh?” Pearl arched her thin light brows, also having an evil smile on her cheeks. “You’re blaming me?”

“Absolutely.” Lapis whispered into her face, making the space between them smaller by pulling Pearl towards her chest. “Do you feel guilty for your actions, mistess?”

With a sigh Pearl shook her head to herself and laughed quietly. “… I do feel extremely guilty.
for my actions, miss Lazuli." Pearl put a mock regretful tone into her voice just to toy with Lapis a bit more.

“You’re such a bad girl, dear. You should pay for your shameless behavior.” Lapis continued, getting closer, mind slightly foggy. She was drowning in that familiar feeling of intoxication once again which was caused by that beautiful girl. Her tanned hands slowly wandered down from Pearl’s shoulders to her waist, clasping it in her arms.

Pearl gasped softly. This act sort of disturbed her, but she remained focused, although there was that familiar feeling again – the feeling in her stomach, shivers running through her body. She inhaled and as soon as she looked Lapis in the eyes again, she started to feel rather enchanted. Pearl then took her remaining strength of willness and grabbed the girl by her forearms, giving them a tender squeeze. “And ho-how can I make it up to you, my lady?” She let out dizzily.

Lapis hummed mysteriously, breathing Pearl into her face, making her and herself blush while getting closer to each other. “I would have an idea.” She said extremely slow, her voice barely a whisper, lips parted and slowly approaching Pearl's.

There was one brief confident laugh from Pearl once again. “… Spit it out.” The girl sighed into the other’s mouth, eyelids half-closed, waiting for Lapis to finally meet her lips.

Lapis licked her own dry lips and sighed softly. With a gentle pull of her arms she pressed Pearl yet more against herself. Her lips met a corner of Pearl’s and slowly ghosted along her skin to her cheek, then to her ear.

Lapis’ breath tickled Pearl's cheek and it also caused her shivers intensify. Pearl closed her eyes and replaced her hands from the girl’s forearms to her shoulders by shifting them gingerly up her strong arms.

Lapis’ breath was suddenly so loud when her lips got too close to Pearl’s ear. She could also hear Lapis’ heart beat somehow.

She lightly brushed Pearl’s skin with her full lips, accompanied with a quiet smack of them as she was up to say what was on her chest. A deep low voice was then released from her lungs and the hot air brushed the tall girl’s peach bangs away from her ear. “… Find my horse.”

Pearl’s heart froze for a moment, eyes wide like two dinner plates in surprice. “Wha–you tease!” She barked and pushed Lapis away, still with a playful smile on her cheeks. “Just you wait!”

The equestrian bursted into laughter and quickly headed towards the doorway with Pearl right behind her back.

Laughing aloud, she ran along the arena wall towards the stable, Pearl chasing her and calling after her to dare her once more. But before Lapis could get to the corner of the stable building and possibly run away from her friend, Pearl dragged her by her wrist and dragged her back, pinning Lapis to the wall and stepping right in front of her, so she couldn’t escape.

“Hey-y!” Lapis was laughing. Meanwhile Pearl took her other wrist into her hand and pressed it against the wall, too.

“You know, you’re gonna pay for that.” Pearl purred, breathing fast after the run.

“Oh? Am I?” The blue-haired rider whispered, voice suddenly dishy and low, chest raising and lowering fast.

“… You bet.” She blinked slowly, breathing Lapis into her face and sinking into her eyes.
But then all of a sudden Pearl felt like she was someone else, like this wasn’t her, like this kind of behaving wasn’t hers. She felt like she allowed something, her passionate, keen and eager self inside her to sprout on the surface. She was burning. Her skin was hot, also her breath, her hands were sweaty. Her heart was bouncing wildly, knees buckling and slightly shaking. This wasn’t like her. Pearl couldn’t recognize herself. She felt like a predator – hungry for a flesh, thirsty for blood. She was even thinking about biting Lapis, thinking about tasting her skin. She wanted to pull her close, to touch her and feel her body. She was approaching Lapis’ lips with every next blink of her greedy eyes, gingerly.

Lapis lost her breath. She recognized that something was different on Pearl. She could feel that heat – and she could also feel the heat inside herself. Her breath was stuck in her throat, bubbling in her lungs. She was lightly shaking, losing her mind more and more with every next centimeter that Pearl got closer to her.

This feeling was new for Lapis, although she already felt this ‘heat’ a few times before, but not this intense. This one was different – way different. It was deeper, more intensive, passionate, with energy of pure love, a lust. Shivers were running through her whole body. The strange, but pleasant feeling, was growing inside of her every time while she was near the girl, causing Lapis’ heart explode every short sec.

Her mind was forcing her to touch Pearl, but Pearl’s grip on her wrists was way too tough, though Lapis knew that she was stronger than Pearl and that she could quite easily escape from her. But now Lapis was just too powerless to do anything. There was something that was keeping her still, something that was forbidding her to get away from those sweet love handcuffs. She started getting used to this cute treatment.

“Pearl…” Lapis breathed out, eyes locked on the tall girl’s lips. She was still getting closer, but for Lapis it seemed to be an eternity to finally get to each other. She was shivering, impatiently swallowing Pearl’s hot breath, waiting for her lips, begging Pearl with her eyes to kiss her already.

But once Pearl seemed to comply, she didn’t kiss Lapis just yet, she only brushed her skin very lightly, nuzzling the corner of the girl’s mouth, tickling her tanned skin as she breathed out through her parted lips, causing Lapis goosebumps flood her arms and spine.

“Peearl…” Lapis pleaded sorrowfully, eyes shut, brows furrowed. And despite her pleading, Pearl didn’t appear to grant it. Instead she continued upper her cheek, nuzzling it, brushing it with the lightest touch that she could do.

Her grip then slightly eased and with a tips of her fingers she started to pet the inner side of Lapis’ smooth wrists, copying the blue pulsing veins underneath her skin.

Lapis was still, aching, groaning discontentedly at Pearl. She was upset, pleading Pearl so eagerly while she was still teasing Lapis with those fond touches and soft tiny kisses on her cheek and jaw. “Go… To hell with this.” Lapis groaned, shaking in impatience. Her veins under her stomach were pulsing so fast. She could also feel a wave of sweat wash her, she felt her stomach tickling, hot air piling up in her lungs, hands shaking.

But Pearl only managed to laugh softly, taunting Lapis and teasing her even more as her impatience was growing stronger.

“Pearl… Pleaaaase…” Lapis tried again, asking Pearl tenderly to finally stop with this sweet torture. But the girl wasn’t finished with her yet.

“Na-aah.” Pearl murmured, refusing to accept Lapis’ desperate begging.
“...You’re not... Gonna like what I’m going to do with you later...“ Lapis threatened, head tilted back against the wall.

Pearl giggled to herself, but loud enough so Lapis could hear it. Pearl allowed herself to continue in her task. She thought, she has never actually tried to kiss someone on their neck yet. She was always wondering how it could possibly feel like. Well, now she had a chance to try. To her Lapis sort of appeared to be under her control at the moment. Lapis could’ve just got away from all of this if she really wanted, Pearl thought, but she guessed that Lapis didn’t mind at all, quite the opposite.

She so longed for doing it. Lapis was just asking for it – her beautiful bare neck was asking for it. Pearl fixed her gaze at one specific spot under Lapis’ jaw, a spot where a big artery was visible and pulsing. But then she shook her head slightly, paying her attention to Lapis once again. She still wanted Lapis to wait. “Oh? Am I?” She asked with a low voice. “What are you going to do with me?”

Before Lapis could actually answer her, Pearl appeared so close to her again. This time she could feel her boiling breath on her neck, gliding down along its length, soon followed by chills. Lapis was defenceless. She couldn’t say anything. She only managed to clench her teeth and hiss quietly. She felt so hopeless, although she liked this feeling so far.

Soon Pearl took this opportunity while Lapis wasn’t moving, and decided to act. She was slowly moving her mouth towards Lapis’ neck, already feeling so excited about doing this, though she hasn’t touched her skin just yet. Pearl had a small doubt, too, but she so wanted to do it. Her own neck was one of the most sensitive parts of her body and except for Lapis nobody has ever touched her there. She never longed for it before, until Lapis did it – and she really liked it. So then she started wondering about trying it.

Lapis inhaled, but then her breath froze as Pearl’s lips met her skin. It was such a sweet and gentle press, light and careful. Lapis then realized how specific Pearl’s kisses were. She knew that if she was blindfolded and someone kissed her, she would recognize if it was Pearl for one hundred percent.

Her cheeks became red, right as Pearl pressed another kiss on her neck, and let her body flood with goosebumps. Lapis enjoyed this moment so much, those kisses, but she wasn’t expecting one thing that was going to happen.

“Owowow! Look what we got here!” A high pitched voice suddenly came out of nowhere. Sure it was Peridot – randomly appearing in situations where no one was expecting her was her speciality.

Both girls winced at that and promptly got away from each other with cheeks bright red – especially Pearl.

“Peridot!” Lapis called and leaned away from the wall, fixing her shirt and hair. “What are y-uh... I...” She babbled, almost not able to speak. Later Lapis realized that there was Blue standing right next to Peridot who was holding her reins, her free arm resting on her hip.

Peridot just stood there with raised eyebrows and huge smirk on her face. And while Lapis was trying to formulate a sentence and explain what was going on, Peridot spoke, accompanied with her specific laugh. “Hey, do you really think that this is the first time I saw you two making out?”

This question stopped Lapis from stuttering and made her turn to her blond friend, also it left Pearl stunned.
“W-what?” Lapis’ eyes widened.

Pearl turned away from them, too ashamed to make an eye contact with neither Peridot nor Lapis.

The girl with glasses laughed again. “Hey, it’s fine. I don’t mind, you know.” Peridot then said with a calm voice, making a few steps towards Lapis, leading Blue behind herself. “Here, your horse.”

With a slight shake of her head and clearing her mind, Lapis stretched her hand and smirked stupidly, still feeling a bit embarrassed because of the whole situation. “… Thanks.” She said, taking the reins.

Pearl crossed her arms on her chest, hiding her head between her shoulders and biting her lip nervously. She felt incredibly awkward. The ‘wild her’ that was just here was suddenly gone and now she was just the same old scared girl, saying nothing and pretending not to be there. But after a while of staring to nowhere she remembered something. She realized that Amethyst’s birthday party was planned on this Friday and now she had a chance to ask Peridot if she was coming, but in this kind of state it was completely unthinkable. But Pearl knew that she probably won’t have a chance to ask Peridot another time. So there it is – she has to ask her now. It was the best time to get out of this embarrassing situation anyway.

“Ammm…” She started, turned her head to the blonde, but right as their eyes met, she looked aside and blushed yet more. “Peridot?” She let out anxiously.

“Yea?” The girl placed her hands on her hips, pouting and watching Pearl and her nervous behaving.

“Are you… Coming to the brithday party this Friday?” She swallowed, finally she found a courage to look at her.

“What?” Peridot raised her brow, seeming a bit unbiased. “What party?”

“Umm…” Pearl gasped, trying to find words. But as soon as she found them, Lapis spoke.

“Oh, man! I’m such a piece of jerk.” She palmed her face. “I forgot to tell her. I’m sorry, Pearl.”

The tall girl glanced at Lapis and grinned, cheeks warm. “It’s fine.” She assured her and bit her lip once more for a brief moment, then turned back to Peridot. “Garnet invited you and Lapis to Amethyst’s birtday party this Friday evening. So I was wondering if you were coming.”

“Eeeh.” Peridot made a confused face, staring at both girls alternately. “Who is Garnet… And Amethyst?”

Pearl blushed and Lapis managed to answer first.

“Oh, those are Pearl’s friends. You should meet them, they’re awasome!” Lapis said exitedly, also trying to escape from the awkwardness. But Peridot didn’t seem much convinced with that, so she remained silent.

“Oh, come on.” Lapis challenged her. She placed her hand on her horse’s nose and stroked her several times. “It’s gonna be fun!”

The short girl sighed and hung down her arms defeatedly. “Okay, okay… I’ll come then.”

Lapis knew that Peridot wasn’t that much happy about it, but she was sure that she is going to
enjoy the party. “Hey, don’t worry. I bet you’re gonna get along with Amethyst. You’ve got a lot in common.”

“So be it.” Peridot shrugged, but finally she smiled. “Should I bring something?”

“No, no, it’s fine.” Pearl then rejoined the conversation. “It’s not necessary. We’ll be just glad when you show up.”

“Fine.” Peridot nodded, but she wondered how she was supposed to get there. She hummed, massaging her chin. “But you have to give me the address, ya know.”

“Hey, don’t worry about that.” Lapis waved her hand and grinned. “I’m gonna drive us there by my kodiaq. I know where it is.”

“Sounds good to me.” Peridot admitted with a nod and was ready to go mind her own business now, finally letting those two breathe. She made a few steps backwards and waved at both of her friends. “Well, I’m going now… See ya later, lovebirds! Yeah and... Thanks for the invitation.” And with that she turned on her heels, leaving Lapis and Pearl standing there and watching her vanish in distance.

Pearl waved her back while Lapis was petting her horse and gently admonishing it for its earlier bad behavior and running away.

It made Pearl smile, how gentle and kind Lapis was, even when she was mad. She couldn’t imagine Lapis being actually angry at someone. Lapis was just wonderful. She was perfect in Pearl’s eyes – and she always will be.

Pearl cleared her throat softly and approached Lapis. “Well…” She bit her lip and so did Lapis. “Yeah…” She looked aside shyly, now wondering what exactly Peridot saw a few moments before the conversation started. “Better not to talk about it, I guess.”

Pearl didn’t say anything at that, although she knew what Lapis meant by that. She just nodded silently.

After a moment of silence, Pearl breathed out, smile on her face. “Umm… Thank you for accepting the invitation, Lapis.” She said warmly and stepped in front of her friend. She wasn’t even afraid of the distance between herself and Blue, and though it was quite short. “I really appreciate that.”

Lapis hummed, giving Pearl smile back, voice low and sweet once again. “Thank you for inviting us.”

“That’s a matter of course.” The girl giggled and fell for Lapis’ charm once more while looking into her eyes.

“Am I supposed to bring something?” Lapis asked, gazing back at Pearl with cheeks lightly pink.

“Just youself, dear.” She answered and finally she gave Lapis one great and beautiful kiss that she deserved, on her lips, making Lapis’ cheeks shine with happiness. At last.
Chapter recapitulation:

- Pearl and Lapis made a step forward in their relationship
- Lapis and Peridot accepted the invitation to Amethyst’s birthday party

♦ 11th week (Wednesday morning)
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Friday came up quickly and Pearl already arrived to Garnet’s place. Even Amethyst was yet there, although she usually comes to parties as the last person. Well, maybe this time it was because this was her birthday party and she didn’t want to miss the beginning.

Amethyst was kneeling on the kitchen unit while searching for something in a cupboard above her. Garnet was standing next to Pearl and she was making a savory, cutting bread and covering its slices with a garlic or egg spread, putting chopped gherkins, spicy salami and cheese on it and piercing it with a toothpick so it was making one delicious piece of refreshment.

Pearl was smiling all the time since she woke up this morning, crooning to herself, swinging her hips and dancing while she was washing and rubbing the dishes to make them shine. And while she had her hands in a sink, all of a sudden everyone in the room could hear two loud honks from the outside.

“They’re here!” Pearl exulted, raising her head from the dishes. She looked out of the window in front of her and saw a dark blue Kodiak car with two passengers in it. The Kodiak parked on a long gravel driveway in front of Garnet’s large house right next to the entrance to the inside.

Pearl, all impatient, put the plate into the sink, poorly she dried her hands with a towel and ran straight to the main door.

Garnet smiled behind her. She realized that she hasn’t seen Pearl so happy in a while and she was really glad for her, too. Garnet knew that Pearl was very sensitive young girl and that she could bear things with a very great difficulty when it comes to the worst, but she also knew that she was strong, stronger than many people she knew.

Excitedly Pearl grabbed a handle and wide opened the heavy door, grinning at the world outside.

The engine was turned off and the first one who got out of the car was Peridot. “Hey, pointy nose.” She slammed the door, grin on her lips, then she headed to the rear door and opened it, searching for something on the rear seat.

“Hey, Peridot.” Pearl greeted back, leaning her side against a jamb, arms folded.

Then another girl got out of the Skoda – beautiful, enchanting, breathtaking blue-haired young girl. She wore red checked shirt with rolled up sleeves, short jeans ending just below her knees and finally her digital watch on her left hand – Pearl always found it charming and sexy when Lapis wore them. Then something caught Pearl’s attention as she saw a bright glint that came from Lapis’ throat. After realizing what it is, Pearl gasped. ‘It’s the pearl.’ The girl smiled hugely. ‘She’s still wearing it.’

“Wohoo!” Someone called, making Pearl shake her head, and she noticed that it was Lapis waving at her and approaching her, walking the three steps up to the porch where Pearl was standing.

“Lapis.” Pearl grinned, blushing and biting her lip, head hiding between her shoulders.

“Hey, precious.” Lapis greeted, voice sweet and low. She stood in front of her friend and
offered her arms while Pearl was shyly biting the back of her forefinger, partly hiding her smile behind her hand.

“Hi, honey.” She whispered and fell into Lapis’ arms, hugging her back tightly.

Lapis sighed happily at that. She closed her eyes and nuzzled the girl’s thin neck. Lapis could smell a sweet light perfume, the one that Pearl usually wore, the one that was always causing Lapis shivers and wanting to kiss Pearl crazy. But she had to contain herself not to do something stupid, namely in front of everyone present.

“I’m so happy you arrived.” Pearl said and leaned back a bit, looking Lapis into her eyes. The smaller girl chuckled a little.

“So am I.” She admitted and squeezed Pearl’s wait a little bit more to make her come closer. “I brought you something.” She whispered.

Pearl’s eyes widened in surprise, then she giggled. “And what is it? You?” Her eyes were sparkling.

Lapis blushed and hummed aloud, raising her shoulders, her gaze went to a side for a while, like if she was thinking. “That and one more thing.”

Her sweet look made Pearl giggle again, she could already feel her cheeks being warm, and while her arms were resting around the girl’s shoulders, she rubbed them with her fingers gently. “So?”

It made the corners of Lapis’ lips curl up. She closed her dark eyes once again and pouted slightly, pressing her lips against Pearl’s, causing her one unexpected step back, although their lips remained connected.

Pearl smiled to the kiss and gave Lapis one right back, only way sweeter and more passionate.

Their lips smacked as they pulled apart and it made Pearl redden yet more, not mentioning the look at Lapis after Pearl leaned back – Lapis was just so… Sexy. Pearl was certain that red color suited Lapis the best, whenever and wherever she wore it.

“Pearl?” A tender voice then brought Pearl back to earth. She shook her head slightly.

“Oh-uh. I’m sorry, I just…” She tried, pulling her bang behind her ear embarrassingly and avoiding making an eye contact with Lapis. “I’m sorry. You’re just… You look so beautiful.”

It left Lapis frozen for a moment, but then she snorted. “What-me?” She continued chuckling.

But soon she calmed herself down, giving her beloved another kiss. “Pearl… I should be the one saying that. Just look at you!” She stepped back, arms spread. “I never saw you wearing a dress! You look so… Magnificent in it!”

“Ah, Lapis… Stop it.” She bit her lips from the inside, all red and flattered. Intertwining her own fingers, she was shyly rubbing her thumbs.

“I’m serious.” Lapis grinned, scanning her beautiful short peach-colored dress patterned with tiny white flowers.

Pearl couldn’t hide her red cheeks and a great smile popping out. She only managed to pull her bang behind her ear again. And after a while she made herself look up at Lapis who was also all enchanted looking back at her.
“Hey, lovebirds!” Peridot then suddenly called out at them, standing nearby the car and holding a carton box in her arms – it seemed kind of heavy. “Mind helping me over here?”

“Um-yeah, coming!” Lapis cleared her throat with an apology grin directed to Pearl and then she ran down the stairs to Peridot and took the box from her.

“What’s in there?” Pearl asked curiously, stretching her neck like if she could get closer to the box and find out what hides in it.

“Um, pyrotechnics. I thought Amethyst could be into fireworks, so.” Lapis said, heading back up the stairs.

“Well, who isn’t?” Pearl wiggled her shoulders and pouted. “Though can you manipulate with it?”

“Yeah, Peri’s a technician. She knows how to handle these kinds of things.” She winked, then turned back to Peridot, watching her pulling a bottle of red wine out of the rear seat and closing the door.

“I bet girls are gonna love it.” Pearl smiled, gazing at the blonde coming up to them.

“Hey, we brought a red wine, is that cool?” Peridot asked, raising the bottle.

“Ah, you guys.” Pearl’s brows furrowed, smile on her lips. “You shouldn’t have.”

“Good for me. I can drink it down all by myself at least then.” The small girl joked. Lapis and Pearl laughed at that and after a moment Pearl led them inside where they could meet the others.

“Hey there, guys!” Lapis greeted when she entered the kitchen. She received a response right after.

“Hey, dude!” Amethyst grinned and jumped down from the unit, running towards Lapis. “Nice to see you, thanks for coming!”

“Nice to see you, too.” Lapis said joyfully and carefully she put down the box. She then offered her hand to Amethyst and smiled. “Happy birthday.”

The girl with light purple hair immediately took her hand and squeezed it gently. “Hey thanks!” She called, chuckling. But then the box caught her attention. “What’s in there?”

“It’s a surprise. You have to wait until evening.” Lapis reported.

“Aaah-what? Maan. I hope there’re porn magazines there.” Amethyst rubbed her chin but immediately started laughing, soon followed by Lapis. Garnet tried hard not to smirk at that, but she failed, just as Pearl.

“Okay now, Amethyst.” Pearl let out the last chuckle and entered the room. “Quit it, we have guests here.”

“Man, I know. They are not kids anymore, right?” Amethyst waved her hand, still snorting. Then suddenly Garnet spoke, leaving the savory to greet Lapis.

“Hello, Lapis.”

“Hey, Garnet.” The equestrian waved and approached the woman as well, giving her hug.
“Hey, Garnet.” The equestrian waved and approached the woman as well, giving her hug.

“You too.” Her dark eyes shone underneath her shades. And while they were hugging, Garnet noticed a small girl standing behind Pearl, rubbing her nape nervously. “I see you brought your friend.”

“Yeah.” Lapis agreed and after the hug she headed to Peridot. She took her hand and led her further to the kitchen. She found it funny that Peridot felt nervous, although she was very sociable and she could adapt very quickly. “Guys, this is Peridot.” She introduced, pushed the girl towards Amethyst and Garnet and introduced them back to her.

“Nice to meet you. I’m Garnet.” She stretched her hand with a warm smile on her lips.

Peridot hesitated for a moment, staring at that big woman and scanning her from top to the bottom. She never saw a woman so big – well, except for Jasper. But finally she accepted her hand and shook with it.

“You too. I’m Peridot.” She said, her cheeks flushed. She stared at their joined hands – Garnet’s was big and warm while her own was too small and cool. It seemed funny to her. Peridot enjoyed this contact, but remembered that there was another human to greet, so she let go of Garnet’s hand and turned to Amethyst.

“Hey, nice to meet ya. My name’s Amethyst.” She offered Peridot her hand which was soon accepted by.

“Peridot. Nice to meet you, too.” The blonde grinned and scanned the girl in front of her – she seemed okay. “Oh and… Happy birthday to you.” She added. “We brought a bottle of wine. Hope it’s okay.”

The purple-haired girl snorted and slapped her thigh. She had to laugh at how the girl seemed nervous and unsure. “Man, sure is! Thanks. You shouldn’t have.” She then took the bottle that Peridot offered her.

Pearl stood there in the doorway and happily she clapped her hands together, a fine smile played on her cheeks. “Let the party begin then.”

After Garnet finished making the savory, she delivered the filled plates to the garden and placed them on the table in pergola. Lapis helped Pearl bring drinks and glasses there while Amethyst was searching for a radio that she could bring into the pergola. Peridot was sitting in the open space in the back of the garden and was setting up the pyrotechnics which Garnet allowed with pleasure, she was also very excited about it, and so were the others.

“Hey, Garnet, where’s the socket?” Amethyst called as she put the radio on its place, searching for the mentioned socket.

“Under the shelf.” She gestured and smiled right after Amethyst found it.

The small purple-haired girl turned the radio on and tuned their favorite radio station. “Man, I love when everything’s working.” Amethyst sighed with a smirk, patting the radio. “Hey, G, is your sister coming?”

Garnet hummed deeply and rubbed her chin, she pulled back from the table. “Yes. She should be here in a half an hour.”
“What? Sardonyx is coming, too?” Pearl cheered, Lapis gazing at her from her chair. “I haven’t seen that girl in a while.”

Garnet chuckled under her breath. “That’s why I invited her.”

“This is going to be fun.” Pearl grinned. “And how about Smoky, Amethyst?”

“Hey, she had a dayshift today, so she’s probably coming, too.” Said Amethyst and with a huff she dropped herself into her chair.

Seeing Pearl smiling like that made Lapis smile herself. Cross-legged, supporting her chin with her palm, she was watching Pearl with dreamy eyes, watching her every move, every blink of her eyes, when the corners of her mouth turned up, when her teeth shone as she smiled. She even noticed that Pearl had freckles, too, but they were so light that anyone could barely notice. And before she started scanning her like that, she was about to ask something, but she totally forgot what. And she didn’t mind. It was probably some unnecessary question when it vanished that quickly.

But soon Pearl noticed Lapis staring. She chuckled to herself. The look at Lapis was just marvelous – she was just staring at her, eyes dreamy, wide smile on her cheeks. Lapis wasn’t even blinking or paying attention to Pearl when she waved her hand right in front of her nose. Pearl had to chuckle, she couldn’t help it. Even calling her name didn’t help.

She decided to lean closer. Slowly Pearl drew their lips together, kissing Lapis gently, and after a while she noticed Lapis coming back to her senses.

“Pearl?” She addressed her, a bit confused about what just happened.

“What were you dreaming about?” Pearl asked softly, giggling, still being close to Lapis. She leaned on her forearms against the armrest of Lapis’ chair and before Lapis could answer, they could hear Amethyst snorting.

“Probably about getting you undressed.” The girl laughed, slapping her thigh.

Pearl’s cheeks got red and so did Lapis’. Pearl noticed that Garnet couldn’t escape from a grin and also she noticed Peridot finally coming back to them.

“So, we’re set.” Peridot placed hands on her hips and stepped next to the table where the rest was sitting at.

“Nice.” Lapis crossed her arms, smiling.

There came two more honks from the driveway on the other side of the house and Garnet rose from her seat, saying that she’ll check who it is and that she will be right back.

It turned out to be Sardonyx along with Smoky who arrived. Garnet warmly greeted them and led them to the back of her house where others were impatiently waiting and starting the party.

“Goood evening, everybody!” The other dark-skinned woman called into the air. She wore shades, too, dark jacket and trousers and she was holding two birthday bags in each hand.

“Amethyst dear, happy birthday!”

“Hey thanks.” The girl grinned and rose from her chair, heading straight to her with open arms. “Nice to see you, big woman… Have you seen my sister yet?”

“Oh, yes! I brought her with myself. She just needed to nip off, she’ll be here in a minute.” The
woman said, putting the bags down next to the table for a while to let her arms rest. Her smile then widened as she saw Pearl sweetly grinning at her. “Pearl, you came, too! It’s so sweet to see you.” Sardonyx said, offering Pearl arms.

Pearl accepted them and hugged the woman around her neck. “Yeah, you too!”

“Watch out, everybody, here comes the terror!” Suddenly Amethyst called with a chuckle, heading to her older sister who just appeared standing in the doorway of the house – her skin was a bit darker than Amethyst’s and also her hair was, and she had freckles on her cheeks.

“Yo yo, little sis! Happy birthday!” Smoky cheered and shook Amethyst with her hand. “We got you something, you’re gonna like it.”

“Show me, man!” Her shorter sister spurred her and followed her to the table. Along with Sardonyx, Smoky gave Amethyst the bags, soon followed by Amethyst’s joyful yell which could probably hear the whole city. “Oh my god! No. No way! I needed that so much! Thanks, you guys!”

Then, after a few long minutes as Amethyst was trying to calm down from whatever she received as a gift, they all sat at the table and started their party. Pearl introduced Lapis and Peridot to Sardonyx and Smoky. All of them happily greeted each other with shaking their hands and later saying cheers while raising their glasses.

The clock has already struck 6 PM. The time was running fast as everyone was having fun. The sky was clear and slowly darkening, crickets were chirping, the radio was playing, laughing could be heard everywhere around the house and everybody has drank down at least one glass of wine or beer. Well, except for Pearl.

“Pearl, you still haven’t learned to drink?” Sardonyx joked, holding a glass of red wine in her hand, leaning against the table on her elbow.

“Fortunately not.” Pearl shook her head, hands resting under the table in her lap.

“You don’t drink?” Lapis asked, a disbelieving look on its place. She was holding her own glass in her hand, taking the same position as Sardonyx.

Amethyst snorted aloud, already having a third glass of beer digested. “Sure she doesn’t! Even during her eighteenth birthday party she was drinking coca cola, man.”

“No kidding.” Smoky added, later bursting into laughter with her younger sister.

And while their crazy laugh was slowly vanishing, Garnet noticed Peridot staring at the table and twiddling her thumbs. Garnet could see that the blonde was sort of nervous, because there were so many new people around her. So Garnet decided to address her, she had nothing better to do anyway.

“So, Peridot.” She spoke with her deep voice, making the girl raise her head.

“Yeah?” She cleared her throat and stopped twiddling, blushing slightly.

“I heard you ride horses, too?” She asked, but it was rather a notification than a question. She then took her glass and took a sip.

“Well, yes, but… I’m not far as good as Lapis is.” She scratched her nape, looking aside briefly.
“I do ride… Just for fun.”

Then another loud snort came from Amethyst’s mouth, this time it made Peridot wince.
“Well, who isn’t?” She slapped the table with her first, bursting into laughter once again with her sister and Sardonyx soon following. Garnet, Pearl and Lapis joined them soon after.

“Good one.” Lapis snorted.

And finally Peridot let herself laugh at that, too. She had to admit that Amethyst was really good at what she was doing. This was kind of a different level of jokes than hers. Or maybe it was all caused by the third beer?

“Hey.” Peridot chuckled, suddenly remembering her pyrotechnics lying at the very back of the garden. “It’s dark already. We could blow out some petards.”

“What-petards?” Smoky gasped excitedly, rising from the seat.

“Oh, man!” Amethyst stood up quickly, too, shifting the table a little because of it. “What petards??”

“The ones from the box we brought.” Lapis said, taking a sip of her second glass, she then put the glass back down on the tabletop with Pearl watching her movements.

The purple-haired girl yelled so enthusiastically and headed straight to the back of the garden where she noticed Peridot preparing something earlier. "Hell yeah! Let's do it!"

The rest of the quests stood up, too, and followed the cheerful girl to the other side of Garnet’s wide garden, well, except for Pearl and Lapis who remained sitting in their chairs.

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

• Peridot and Lapis came to the birthday party
• Sardonyx and Smoky appeared on the party
• Lapis and Peridot met Sardonyx and Smoky for the first time

♦ 11th week (Friday)
Pearl sighed softly, watching the others disappearing into the dark while traveling across the garden to the very end of it where Peridot’s pyrotechnics were. Lapis was watching, too, Pearl noticed. She was smiling, her dark eyes were shining in the moonlight, freckles dancing on her cheeks. Pearl couldn’t even describe how much beautiful Lapis was. In her eyes she was just perfect. Every time she was with her, the energy that she always felt was very pleasant and harmonic and she never wanted to let go of it. She just longed for being with Lapis, to breathe the same air, laugh at the same things or just to make an eye contact. These things were so important to her and she always felt like she was loved and wanted.

Fortunately for Pearl, their chairs were close enough for Pearl to reach Lapis, so she shifted a bit closer in her seat, gingerly she wrapped her arms around Lapis’ and laid down her head on her shoulder, snuggling to her and closing her eyes.

Lapis’ eyes opened wide with a flutter. She turned her head towards Pearl and hummed happily underneath her breath. She then placed one gentle kiss on the top of the girl’s head and then laid her own head on hers. “What, are you tired, kitty?” She whispered, taking Pearl by her hand and pecking the back of her fingers.

Her response was negative, but she chuckled softly. She tilted her head up, so she could see Lapis, and stroked her cheek with the hand that Lapis was holding. “I’m just really glad you’re here.”

Lapis breathed out a grin, briefly looking towards their friends and then back at Pearl. “Me too.” She blinked slowly, now leaning down to Pearl and placing a tasteful kiss on her lips, still holding her smooth hand.

A great wave of warmth flooded Pearl, her cheeks turned red and she couldn’t escape from a giggle as the kiss ended. She appreciated Lapis’ presence so much, more than anyone else’s. For the first time in her life she felt like everything was like it was supposed be – namely right.

She stroked Lapis one more time and returned the kiss. Her arms soon appeared around her neck and tugged Lapis closer while Pearl started to kiss her constantly.

The equestrian’s arms surrounded Pearl waist, but unfortunately there were two armrests between them, she couldn’t pull Pearl closer yet. She felt sad, because she knew that she had Pearl only for herself now and that she couldn’t even tug her close. And the more this was making her upset, the more she was focusing on making her kisses perfect, so Pearl could at least enjoy what they had.

Pearl thought that although Lapis had already drunk two glasses of wine, she was very gentle and careful towards her – stroking and scratching her back fondly. Usually Pearl was trying to make as less contact with drunk people as possible, because she was afraid of them and of their affected behavior. But now she perceived that alcohol probably had different consequences on different people, and Lapis seemed really sweet and cautious to her, for now.

They’ve been kissing for a while and both of them paid too much attention to one another that they haven’t noticed that the firework already started. But soon the loud banging of petards brought them back to earth and off of the love ecstasy they were experiencing. Then they could
They pulled apart, followed by a quiet squelch of their lips, extremely slow and with a hint of discomfort because none of them wanted to get away from the other. They kept their hands on their places, longing for more contact and staring at each other. Both of them knew that they couldn’t do this right in front of others, although they were surely paying attention to the firework. Then they decided to save something for later by one last kiss.

Pearl’s heart was beating as loud as those petards banging in the sky and was probably even making as colorful firework inside her chest.

“Pearl?” Lapis let out in whisper, now staring at the color-changing sky.

“Yes?” She reacted. She turned her head to Lapis with a smile, still catching her breath after the kissing.

Lapis bit her lip and blushed lightly. There was a question on her chest and it was important, really important to her. She’s been thinking about that question, thinking about how to formulate it and how to say it correctly without stuttering or forgetting the words. Her heart was aching for so long because she so longed for the answer for several long weeks and she was thinking about it every night before falling asleep, in the morning after waking up and during a whole day working in the stable. She loved Pearl so much – that much that she almost couldn’t express it with words nor even a kiss. She just wanted to make sure that Pearl loved her back the same way.

“I…” Lapis cleared her throat nervously, then yet one more time. She noticed Pearl beautifully looking at her with a warm wide smile across her cheeks and eyes half-closed. ‘Damn me…’ Lapis cursed to herself. She found Pearl more and more beautiful every time, every single second while being with her.

Finally she made herself speak, but before she did, she cleared her throat again. “I’m not sure if I’ve already personally asked you that, but…” She lied, she knew she hasn’t, but she needed to mask her nervousness somehow. After a moment she finally caught her breath and courage to ask. “Will you… Date me, Pearl?”

Lapis left Pearl sort of stunned after that. Pearl wasn’t expecting anything like this kind of question whatsoever. Her eyes went wide and her jaw slightly dropped down.

Although Lapis was shaking really badly and nearly sweating, she was looking at Pearl and waiting for her response, but for good ten seconds nothing happened.

Lapis’ hopeful expression was slowly turning into a sorrowful one as she was receiving no answer. But all of a sudden she jolted and winced slightly at the quick and unexpected movement that Pearl made – Lapis hasn’t even managed to blink twice and she found Pearl’s arms wrapped around her neck and squeezing her so firmly that she almost couldn’t breathe. And on a top of that Pearl was that quick that Lapis hasn’t noticed that the girl was already kissing her, passionately.

Her dark eyes turned backwards at the pressure of Pearl’s lips – that kiss felt so damn good. She never experienced Pearl kissing her this hungrily like she was now. Also Pearl was pressing her body towards the other that much that Lapis had a feeling like if her chair was going to fall over with both of them. But then Pearl pulled back, gulping for air and so was Lapis.

“… Wow…” Lapis gasped, eyes wide, cheeks burning. “Honestly… I wasn’t expecting anything like that at all.” She was shaking her head in disbelief while Pearl was standing in front of her and looking down at her.
Her pale cheeks turned red as well. Her smile was enchanting and wide, long from one ear to the other one. The girl then started giggling at Lapis’ expression, she was flattered, because her plan worked out very well. “Lappy, are you alright?” She chuckled and squatted down in front of her chair, placing her palms on Lapis’ knees.

“For a moment…” She blurted, eyes fixed to nowhere while she was spasmodically squeezing both the armrests. “I felt like I was going to pass out… That was… Something.”

Pearl kept still and watched Lapis, still chuckling under her breath. The look at Lapis and the way she was confused was just so priceless.

After a few moments of friendly taunting, Pearl decided to stop. She spoke kindly to Lapis and stroked her knees with her thumbs several times. “Sure I will date you, honey.” She smiled, her voice was low and sweet.

Lapis’ squeeze weakened and also her eyes seemed less milky. She blushed. “Really?” Lapis asked and straightened in her seat. And as a response she received a smile, bright and honest, charming and warm.

“Yes.”

Lapis smiled to herself. She suddenly felt like everything just came real, like if an unreachable dream came true. She wasn’t able to express how flattered and happy she was. She was convinced that everything was right and that the best had yet to come. She finally felt like home – finally.

“Pearl, I…I…” Lapis grinned joyfully, cheeks and eyes shining. She leaned forward and hugged Pearl tightly, nuzzling her neck. She then let out a relieved exhale, squeezing Pearl yet more and giggling – and giggling was the only thing which was expressing how happy she was, she couldn’t do more at that moment. There were so many emotions and they were overwhelming her as much as she wasn’t able to formulate any words.

The skinny girl hugged her right back as she was squatting between her thighs. She let her head lay down on Lapis’ shoulder and then she contentedly hummed to herself, letting them fall into a harmonic silence – the silence they loved above all.

“I love you…” Lapis whispered. She could feel a lump stack in her throat and there were tears in her eyes, too. She couldn’t even remember when she felt this happy recently.

Pearl sighed through her nose with a giggle, making her smile widen. “I love you, too.”

They stayed like that for a while, silently breathing with eyes closed and hugging without anybody disturbing them. Until…

“Wohohooo, look! We’ve been away just for fifteen minutes and there are orgies already!” Amethyst yelled into the darkness while running back to the pergola with the rest following her.

Pearl immediately stood up and jumped away from Lapis, letting her and Lapis’ cheeks burn – right, kneeling in between Lapis’ legs in the dark probably wasn’t good looking.

“Amethyst?” Pearl panicked slightly and tried to sit back in her chair, but she almost missed it and fell down, because she had her back turned towards it. “We-we were not–”

“–Youuu can’t hushhh that up, P!” The girl sat down in her seat with a huff. “I saw you.” She blurted and pointed at them. There was a hint of drunkenness in her voice, too.
Right after Amethyst, there came Garnet and took a seat, speaking slowly, so the purple-haired
girl could understand her. “Amethyst, you should watch how much beer you’re drinking.” The
woman proposed.

“Pff, chill ouuut, I’m fiiine!” She let out aloud, she then turned her head up and swung herself in
her chair.

“Just let her be, sis.” Sardonyx said, sitting down at the table. “It’s her day today, right?”

Garnet said nothing for a moment, watching others sitting down in their chairs. “Yes. But if she
throws up in my bathroom you’re going to clean it.” She notified coolly, but chuckled in the end.

“Deal!” Sardonyx nodded and grabbed her glass. “Cheers!” She called and raised the glass, then
drunk it all down.

Smoky imitated her and also drunk her glass and Peridot with Garnet stayed still, watching
them.

There was a silence for a while and Lapis was nervously drumming her fingers against the
tabletop, wondering if she should say something, because almost everyone was watching her, and
if not, then they stared at Pearl.

Lapis cleared her throat. “The… Firework was really pretty, Peridot.”

But before Peridot could answer, Amethyst sputtered. “Pretty, you say? I bet you weren’t even
watching. You… Were busy!” She barked, later bursting into laughter.

Peridot smirked and let out a snort. “I bet.” She said, placing her folded arms on the table.

Pearl and Lapis bit their lips, giving one another a look with a corner of an eye, avoiding
looking at each other directly and getting embarrassed even more. But soon Amethyst’s taunting
made Pearl feel bad, she felt ashamed, awkward even, although she didn’t do anything wrong.
She had to hide behind her hand and pretend that she wasn’t there. It was hurting this time.

Lapis noticed it. She noticed Pearl’s sorrowful expression and her glassy eyes. She decided to
act immediately and she spoke straight to the small girl who was sitting across the table.
“Amethyst…” She admonished her. And for her surprise the girl stopped, though it took her a
moment before she did.

Then they appeared in another silence, but soon there started another conversation and
everything was right on its place. Peridot accepted Garnet offering her a drink, Amethyst, Smoky
and Sardonyx were talking about their jobs. Even Pearl joined their conversation a bit later while
Lapis was talking with Peridot and Garnet. Food was dwindling very quickly and so was wine
and beer. It was 11 PM already, but the weather was still warm. The only things which were
slightly annoying them were mosquitoes flying around them and thrusting into a shining bulb of
the lamp that was hanging above the table.

Pearl took a little break from talking and just listened to others, enjoying how they were smiling,
joking and laughing. She was glad that even Lapis was having fun – and the act when she
admonished Amethyst really surprised her. She really must love her, Pearl thought.

And while Pearl was supporting her chin with her hand, holding Lapis’ hand under the table
with the other one and listening to surroundings, she started to pay more attention to the radio that
was playing in the background. She was listening to it for a bit, crooning for herself and swinging
her head to the slow rhythm. She closed her eyes and listened more carefully to the sound, singing
along with the singer and moving her eyes underneath her eyelids like if she was imagining something, smiling beautifully. But unfortunately for her, the song ended sooner than she could enjoy it entirely. She opened her eyes again, appearing back in reality. But despite this, she was still smiling. And later she noticed Lapis petting the back of her hand with her thumb under the table – this was just so, so cute and comfortable.

“Hey, P.” Pearl could hear suddenly and it made her turn her head to Amethyst.

“Yes?” Her head rose from her palm.

“That one’s your favorite.” Amethyst raised a glass of beer and beckoned towards the radio.

Pearl raised her eyebrows and paid her attention to the radio once more, realizing that Amethyst was right – the upcoming song really was her favorite.

She exulted and stood up, taking Lapis’ hand, which she was holding, with her. “Lapis, come dance with me.” She asked, jolting in an enthusiasm.

Lapis turned her gaze towards the skinny girl and thought for a few seconds, humming. “Pearl, I… I’m sorry, I don’t dance.” She tried to refuse cautiously with a slight shake of her head.

“Lapis, please.” Pearl groaned, now holding her with both of her hands and tugging Lapis gently up to make her stand. “Just one dance.”

“Pearl, I…” She shook her head. She knew that she can’t dance and this was maybe the only thing that she knew about herself very well. She knew that she would only get embarrassed in front of everyone. “I really can’t.” She said sadly, complicating Pearl making her stand up.

Amethyst then snorted and rolled her eyes, watching these two with interest. “Hey, you Lapis.” She chuckled, holding another full glass of beer in her hand. “It’s not going to work, bae. She’s gonna keep begging you unless you concede.”

Lapis froze for a second, realizing that there was probably no way out now. She swallowed and gave a brief look to Pearl who was smiling and pleading her with her eyes, and then she looked back at Amethyst who was biting back a laugh.

“Go for it, Lapis.” Garnet spurred her gently and gave her a smile.

"Yea, we won't watch." Amethyst proclaimed, but everyone could guess she was just making fun of her.

‘There’s no escape, Lapis…’ She said to herself and exhaled, eyes closed. It took her a moment before she actually made herself rise from her seat, but then she gave Pearl a defeated smile and stood up.

Pearl exulted in a high voice and jumped several times on a spot joyfully. She then led Lapis deeper into the garden, but far enough so they could still hear the music.

Lapis was so against dancing, but she knew that she was doing a good thing now. She would do anything to make Pearl happy, maybe even if it was hugely against her will. What to say; she loved her, and she was ready to do anything for her princess.

“Pearl, I…” She tried, but Pearl was too excited to pay any attention to her. “Pearl.” She tried again and Pearl finally raised her head.

“Yes?” She grinned, holding Lapis’ hands.
Lapis sighed and looked aside for a while before looking back at her friend. “I can’t dance… I-I have no idea how to do it.”

“Like… At all?” She asked, her smile a bit weakened.

Lapis felt too ashamed that she rather didn’t say anything, but despite it Pearl’s smile was on its place once again and she spoke to her softly.

“I will help you.” She whispered. “Just watch my steps.”

“… Alright.” Lapis nodded.

The skinny girl slowly moved Lapis’ left hand towards herself and placed it on her right shoulder, then Pearl’s hand surrounded Lapis’ waist and she pulled her against her chest.

Lapis’ cheeks immediately turned red, her stomach was tickling from the inside and she started to feel nervous about others watching them.

Pearl made a first step and with a smooth move of her pelvis she pushed Lapis back to make her imitate her movements. Lapis was naturally very alert and partly it was caused by her contact with horses, too, so she could learn and adapt quite quickly.

For her fortune this song was slow and so she could easily learn steps with a slight help from her dance partner. Pearl’s movements were really smooth and gentle, Lapis noticed. She also had a feeling like if Pearl was born for this, she was dancing very well – Lapis could tell, although she had no experiences in this industry. She was guiding Lapis and supporting her for the whole time, showing her the right direction and helping her to make right steps at the right time. Lapis was sort of clumsy at first, but the longer they were dancing, the better she was doing, and Pearl could notice that. She was whispering to Lapis, saying soothing and encouraging words to her and this sweet encouragement was making Lapis feel less nervous and more confident.

But before they could enjoy the dance entirely, the song was slowly coming to end. Pearl so wished that the song could last forever, she was enjoying this moment like anything before. Dancing with Lapis was one of her dreams and now she couldn’t feel happier. She would love to dance again, again and again with her, but she didn’t want to torment Lapis, although she noticed her smiling at her during the dance every so often.

Soon the song was over and they both stopped, but remained standing in their positions. They were breathing softly and looking at each other, wondering what to do now. Pearl had a plan, but it was up to Lapis what she decides to do.

Lapis admitted that it wasn’t that bad at all. She wouldn’t dance voluntarily for sure, but after this, if Pearl asked her again, maybe she would dance with her. Now she just needed a little break and sit down after this performance for a moment.

“Lapis.” Pearl breathed out, grinning at her. “You lied to me!”

“What?” She chuckled, her forehead was sweating, also her hands.

“You said you can’t dance.”

“Well, I can’t.” She shrugged, cheeks getting warm. “I was just following you.”

Pearl had to laugh briefly at that. “Stop joking.”

“I’m not.” The equestrian shook her head and let her hand slid down from the girl’s shoulder.
along her arm, so she could take Pearl’s other hand, too. “You’re just a great teacher.”

Pearl hummed at that, smiling down at Lapis and giving her small peck on her forehead. “And you’re a great student.”

Chapter recapitulation:

• Lapis asked Pearl if she will date her
• Pearl and Lapis were dancing to slow music

♦ 11th week (Friday night)
The wall clock read two and a half an hour past midnight. The party was over and everyone was already asleep – except for Pearl.

She was lying in her preferred place in Garnet’s big house – in a great living room where one wide bay window with a bed built-in was. This was her most favorite spot and she so loved sleeping in there. She could easily watch everything that was going on around her and she liked this benefit. This window also didn’t have curtains, so Pearl could see the entire garden perfectly, too.

They all could be happy that there was a nice weather during the party, because now the sky was covered with clouds and soon it started to rain. But the rain was easy, drumming softly against the bay window under which Pearl was resting.

The air inside the house was warm and so Pearl casted off the sheets because they were no more needed. She was watching raindrops falling on the glass and a windowsill, how they were rolling down and how the individual streams were merging into one trail of water. She had her hands folded under her head, she was listening to quiet ticking of the wall clock hanging across her bed. And expect for that she could hear someone snoring in one of the three quest rooms - Amethyst, she’d guess.

Pearl was tired, but she couldn’t make herself sleep. It wasn’t even because of the rain – rain was usually helping her to fall asleep, but not this time. She couldn’t even make her eyes close, she was just looking outside, watching raindrops falling down and heavy clouds passing by the sky, watching trees bending in the wind.

Suddenly she noticed a flash of muffled light with a corner of her eye. It was coming from the corridor, but it didn’t make her glance over to find out what it was, even though the light was shining for the next three minutes then. She started to wonder who turned the light on and from where was it coming, but kept still, watching the clouds above and trying to forget about the light.

After the next ten long minutes Pearl finally made herself turn her head towards the source of the light, because she couldn’t make it anymore. It wasn’t disturbing her at all, she was just curious and she wanted to find out what was happening.

She slowly sat up and turned her head towards the source. She noticed a strip of light that was coming from below a door of the middle quest room in the hall. She tilted her head to a side and scanned the door for a moment. Soon she realized that this door was actually Lapis’ and it made her wonder even more why she turned the light on this late.

‘What’s…’ She furrowed her brows and studied the door for one more minute. She was thinking about going to a little investigation, but a thought that she’d get to the door and the light turns off right after was making her think twice before acting.
She gave up in the end and after two more minutes of staring she decided to go check what was going on in the room. She swung down her bare feet from her bed and with a slight help of her hands she made herself stand up by pulling herself away from the mattress. Then, breathing softly, she crossed the half of the living room and appeared in the corridor. She was stepping on her tiptoes, trying to be as silent as mouse, slipping her hand across the wall.

Finally she got to the door and let out a quiet sign, feeling quite like a thief. Gingerly she lifted her hand and took a breath, waiting for the perfect moment. Then she knocked for several times and held her breath, waiting for response.

For a while there was nothing but silence and quiet snoring from the next door, but soon Pearl heard a quiet voice from the right room.

“Yeah?”

Pearl winced slightly, surprised that she actually got any response. She then lifted her hand once again and turned the round door handle around, ready to enter the room.

She poked her head inside cautiously and for her surprise she found Lapis sitting cross-legged on her bed with hands settled in her lap. There was a table lamp standing on a night-stand causing the muffled light.

“Pearl.” She straightened suddenly, staring up at her. Later she noticed a huge smile forming on Pearl’s lips and it made herself smile, too.

“Hey.” The tall girl said, voice sweet. She bit her lip. At that moment she became really grateful that she actually found Lapis in that room and no one else. “… May I come in?”

“Umm…” Lapis cleared her throat, a surprised expression on. She was wondering why Pearl wasn’t sleeping yet, but suddenly she was very happy she wasn’t. She was so glad to see her. ”Sure. Come in.” She gestured.

Pearl smiled to herself and slowly slipped inside the room. She closed the door with a quiet click and then turned to Lapis, leaning her back against the door, arms crossed behind her back.

Lapis froze immediately as she came face to face with her. She then had a lot to do with herself not to make her heart explode. She only managed to sit on her bed, unable to move.

This was the first time she saw Pearl wearing such skin-tight undershirt which was precisely fitting her slim body, pointing out every curve and bone. Right then Lapis realized how skinny Pearl actually was. She was very slim and tall, she had beautiful long legs, thin arms and neck, short hair hemming her jaw with its ends slightly curled up, sparkling turquoise eyes and the most enchanting smile Lapis had ever seen. She already knew all of that, but sometimes she was wondering if it was a reality or just her imagination. But could her mind even create such beauty?

Lapis’ vocabulary then entirely ran out of words. Her cheeks flushed red, breathing suddenly became so difficult to her and the familiar tickling in her stomach was uncontrollably growing. Was all of this caused by all the alcohol that she drunk? Or was Pearl simply that charming?

“I…” Lapis let out, headless. She had to shake her head and try to make herself normally speak, although she was failing so badly just in trying to stop staring at Pearl the way she was. “… I thought you were asleep.” She finally spoke.

“Well.” Pearl bit back a smile, noticing Lapis’ suspicious behavior. “I thought the same about you… But I noticed a light coming from your room.”
“Oh.” Lapis giggled nervously and scratched her nape, giving Pearl a regretful look. “I-I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to wake you up.”

“You didn’t.” Pearl said. She pressed her hands together behind her back and stretched them, intertwining fingers. “Is… Everything okay?”

Lapis sighed, her gaze fixed on the sheets this time. “Yeah… Just can’t sleep.”

“How so?” Pearl asked a bit worried.

The girl just shrugged at that, but later she gave Pearl a big smile. Lapis was really glad for Pearl being there with her for some reason. And Pearl was glad, too.

Pearl blushed at that gorgeous smile and said nothing then, just looked aside shyly and bit her lip.

They both listened to the rain for a while, remaining still in their positions and enjoying each other’s presence for a good minute or so.

Lapis had to grin at the look at Pearl and how she was innocently standing on the other side of the room and leaning against the door with cheeks lightly pink. “So, are you gonna stand there like that all night?” Lapis chuckled.

But instead of a response, Pearl blushed yet more. She looked at Lapis briefly, but soon it caused her a look aside. She was trying to avoid looking at one specific spot, namely at Lapis’ chest which was partly exposed because of her slightly unbuttoned shirt - though everything important was hidden.

Lapis giggled once more at how shy Pearl seemed. She then patted the spot next to her and addressed Pearl once more. “Come here.” She asked with a smile.

Pearl couldn’t refuse to this desire. She wanted to go. She actually really wanted to go. So she swung her body away from the door smoothly and unhurriedly she crossed the room, walking around the bed closer to where Lapis was sitting.

The blu-haired girl adapted to her by shifting herself to the edge of the mattress and hanging down her legs, touching the floor with her feet, but only with her tiptoes, because the bed was quite high for her.

Pearl stood in front of her and fixed her eyes on Lapis’, those deep dark eyes which were gazing back at her softly, blinking slowly and scanning Pearl’s face little by little.

They could hear the rain again – its quiet drumming against the window glass behind the curtains and a wind singing outside silently. They listened to it while watching each other, scanning each other’s eyes and lips, brows and cheeks, noses and hair – everything.

Pearl was standing so close to the bed, but so far at the same time, Lapis thought. Suddenly she longed for Pearl being closer, she needed to feel her. Lapis felt a need to make sure that Pearl was actually there - with her. So she gingerly shifted herself yet more and sat on the very edge of the bed, so she could reach the girl in front of her. Then she cautiously stretched her hands towards Pearl and asked her gently to come closer, also giving her a tender look and a sweet smile.

Without any hesitation Pearl complied and with a warm smile on her lips she made a small step towards Lapis, then another and another until Lapis’ tanned arms surrounded her waist entirely. She appeared standing in between Lapis’ thighs and couldn’t go further. She then fondly placed
her hands on Lapis’ forearms, tenderly she slid them up along her arms to the top of her shoulders and then went into an affectionate hug.

Lapis hugged her back lovingly. She laid her head down to the center of Pearl’s flat chest and closed her eyes, resting there, perceiving and absorbing her warmth. She could feel Pearl’s heart beat, her deep breath. Her abdomen felt hot against Lapis’ chest while mutually pressing against each other delicately. Lapis snuggled to her, keeping her eyes closed and Pearl close to herself. She purred contentedly and nuzzled yet more to Pearl, making her squeeze firmer, but soft enough not to make Pearl feel uncomfortable.

Pearl breathed out happily and while hugging Lapis around her head, she started to pet her hair and toy with it, spilling a blue hair lock around her finger, massaging and scratching her head with fine amount of pressure in random motions.

This process of caressing, later with a slight hint of deliberate tease, was lasting a while now and soon it made Lapis groan at that delightful pressure of Pearl’s fingers. Lapis buried her face in the skinny girl’s chest and murmured something in there, her cheeks were getting warm.

But Pearl couldn’t understand her any single word and so it made her chuckle. And while Pearl was chuckling, Lapis groaned frantically into her chest again and did it once more as those touches intensified.

“Peeearl…” She moaned in there, now feeling weak and defeated as Pearl continued scratching her so fondly. But the longer Pearl was doing it, the more intensive feeling that Pearl was trying to challenge her again was Lapis obtaining, and Lapis was already tired of losing against Pearl in almost every battle, so she decided to surmount Pearl’s greatest weapon now, although she found it extremely hard this time.

She overcame the feeling of pleasure by a determined lift of her head and then in an unguarded moment she bit Pearl into her breast which instantly caused Pearl a loud squeak - for a moment Pearl wondered if she hasn’t woken up everyone around because of that.

“Lapis!” She gasped, heart bouncing wildly, eyes widened in horrify. She had to rub on that bitten spot for a while to get rid of the light pain.

“Gotcha.” Lapis sniggered, a teasing face on.

Pearl shook her head in disbelief, but accepted this challenge. “Don’t you dare biting me, you!” She threatened her playfully and with her hands she pushed Lapis away from herself, down onto the mattress, then she turned on her heels and pretended she’s leaving, just to catch Lapis’ attention.

Of course it alarmed Lapis as she was lying on the bed and watching Pearl going away with a quiet chuckling, so Lapis flung out of the mattress, made several quick steps and grabbed Pearl by her wrist before she was out of reach, tugging her back to herself and clasping her in her arms.

“Well, well... Where do you think you’re going, darling?” She asked in a deep tempting tone. Then after several Pearl's vain attempts to escape from her, Lapis allowed herself to taunt at her and carefully she nuzzled Pearl’s slender neck and placed one affectionate long kiss there, followed by several tiny kisses right after.

“Mmmh, Lappy…” Pearl blushed intensely. Goosebumps flooded her as Lapis managed to touch the most sensitive spot on her neck. Grasped tightly in Lapis’ strong and loving arms, she couldn’t move a muscle. Just trying to escape was hopeless for her and after a moment of urgent trying Pearl gave up and admitted to herself that she was totally helpless. And as she had nothing possible to do, she let herself be kissed. It felt really pleasant after all.
Lapis kept slipping her lips along her long neck, slowly, fondly, from top to bottom and then back up again, pecking inch by inch, kissing her neck deeply with passion, biting and sucking it, but cautiously, lightly enough not to make it hurt.

Pearl’s head was tilted to a side, but those cute nuzzles which was Lapis doing every so often were making Pearl tilt her head towards Lapis rather than away from her. “Lapis…” She groaned, still unable to move, partly paralyzed by Lapis’ lips which were keen but fond at the same time, caressing her, loving her, just as her fingers that were dancing on Pearl’s back, scratching her and stroking. “Lapis-I… I should… I should be going… It’s too late.” She tried, at least to get her attention, so she could escape from her grip, but instead of an approval, Lapis murmured something into her now red skin and sank deeper into it, continuing in kissing – the center of her neck, her throat, the pit just above her collarbone, the spot under her jaw and below her ear where a hot artery was pulsing fast underneath her skin. And while Lapis kept sucking and nibbling one specific spot then, the skin there started getting darker and darker very quickly, becoming numb and aching the longer Lapis kept sucking and biting there, but after several seconds, she let that spot be and continued on the other side of Pearl’s neck which was yet untouched, now causing the tall girl shivers.

“Lapis… It tickles.” She giggled while chills ran down her spine. But Lapis seemed to ignore her objection and continued in what she was doing with a teasing smile.

Then, after a few minutes of this wonderful and sweet treatment, Lapis’ grip suddenly weakened and Pearl could finally move her hands again, so she took that opportunity and gingerly she took Lapis by her cheeks and lifted her head up from her neck, briefly interrupting her from her mission. She studied Lapis for a bit, but she couldn't withstand those beautiful lips which were asking her to touch them. Pearl then sighed and pressed their lips together. She pressed lightly at first, but then she sank into the kiss as deep as she could. She kept kissing and sucking at those delicious lips, nuzzling them, provoking Lapis and gasping into her mouth, swallowing her breath and weak moans while Lapis’ hands were scratching and stroking her back and sides.

Soon Lapis started provoking the girl back by dodging her kisses deliberately. She was challenging her, daring her, provoking, but soon Pearl got enough of teasing and decided to fight back. As quick as a bolt of lightning she pounced on Lapis and bit her bottom lip sharply which immediately caused Lapis a wince along with squeak.

“Ouch! Hey!” She hissed, finding Pearl smirking playfully at her. Lapis furrowed her eyebrows and grinned evilly back at her. Lapis couldn’t just let her win like that, namely she already had a plan.

She lifted one of her hands and then with a fast swing of it she slapped Pearl’s butt. The caused bang echoed in the room yet for several seconds later.

“Ouch! Lapis, what the?!” She gasped aloud, still trying to be as less loud as possible. Now Pearl was feeling not only the bite on her breast, but also a hot print of Lapis’ hand on her left buttock. She then rubbed on that spot to make the pain less intensive with a silent painful hiss under her breath. “Hey, I’m gonna… Oh, just you wait. You’re gonna pay for that! You’re so going to regret it!” Pearl threatened and ran right after Lapis who was now laughing and trying to escape from the certain upcoming punishment. Unfortunately for Lapis, she didn’t manage to run too far when Pearl caught her.

She grabbed Lapis by her wrist firmly, turned her towards herself and dropped them both down onto the bed, pinning Lapis’ hands to the mattress, kneeling spread-legged above her. Now Pearl was the one who had a plan. She was also counting with an obligation to be quiet, but she quite doubted they'd manage to keep up with it. Well, if Lapis could.
The tall girl didn’t even let Lapis catch her breath and she immediately leaned over to her, namely towards her neck, and started tickling her by fast sniffing all across it, over her chest and belly.

Lapis instantly reacted at that with a high gasp, eyes wide in surprise. “Pearl, no! No, no! Stop!” She pleaded, laughing while Pearl kept tickling her with her nose and sniffing wildly across her skin. It tickled so damn bad and Lapis knew that she must be quiet, but it was extremely hard for her. “No! Stop this! It tickles! I’m begging you, oh my god! Stop it!” She cried, trying her best to be as quiet as she could, bucking her legs in the air.

Pearl finally stopped and leaned back a little, gulping for air, cheeks burning. “Why did you slap me, hm? I want answers.” She asked urgently, handcuffing Lapis to the bed, still full of self-confidence.

“I don’t know…” Lapis groaned, failing in biting back a laugh. She could still feel the tickling all over her skin even when Pearl wasn’t doing anything at all.

But Pearl frowned. She wasn’t satisfied with this kind of response. “So you don’t? Oookayy theeën…” She outstretched those words mysteriously and Lapis could feel that this wasn’t a good sign for her. Pearl was leaning back down to her… And she started doing that terrible thing again!

“N-no! Don’t! P-Pearl, please! Don’t do this! It tickles so muuuch, goddamnit! Stooop!” She cried, but quiet enough not to make someone hear them. Tears rolled down her cheeks. This punishment was the worst kind of punishment she could let herself be dragged into. It just tickled so badly!

The girl on the top leaned back once more and grinned down at Lapis whose skin was already burning. “So…” Pearl cleared her throat significantly and fixed her hair, then grabbed Lapis’ wrist again. “I’m asking you again. Why did you slap me?”

“I told you I don’t know.” Lapis tried, gulping for air, but later she started to have a feeling that this answer was wrong, too.

“Oh?” Pearl’s brows rose. “Are you sure?”

“Umm… Yes?” She let out unsurely, a stupid grin on her face.

Pearl hummed amusedly and with a shake of her head she exhaled. “Do you want to risk it?” She asked evilly, leaning back to Lapis slowly.

Lapis’ eyes widened in a pure panic and immediately she shook her head. “N-no! No, just please, don’t do that thing again! I’m begging you!” Lapis pleaded, heart beating fast, laughing uncontrollably.

The skinny girl hummed one more time, leaning away from the girl below her this time. “Okay… So, once more, darling.” She said in a low voice, later turning it into mysterious whisper. “Why did you slap me?”

Lapis really didn’t have a chance in this. She’d better try to answer correctly or at least acceptably for Pearl. She let Pearl waiting for a moment, she was really cautious about words she was about to use. So she decided to start with a compliment – she hoped for it to work. “… You’ve got a nice butt… That’s all.” She chuckled, trying to sound confident.

But Pearl frowned yet again, scanning Lapis’ expression with a distrustful look. “… Is it?” One of her light eyebrows rose.
Pearl seemed dangerous to Lapis at that moment, it was like if she had a control all over her. The tone of her voice and her suspicious look were making Lapis quite nervous, although she loved when Pearl was behaving this way.

She then had to give up. She couldn’t win this – *as usual.*

Lapis exhaled, defeated. “Alriiiight, alriiiight. I just… I just wanted a little bit more of your attention… That’s it.” She admitted and her breath finally started slowing down.

“Hmm…” Pearl rubbed her chin. Then she made herself sit down on Lapis’ pelvis which caused her a slight wince at the contact of the specific part of her body with the girl under her. Briefly her cheeks got red, but she managed to pay her full attention to Lapis once again and not to her own cheeks and to what she was feeling. And now as Pearl was finally comfortably sitting, Lapis’ hands were free, though Lapis let them lying on each side of her head, just like Pearl left them.

Pearl thought for a while before she responded, watching Lapis as she was calming down after all the torment. “And…” Pearl started, voice low once again. She leaned towards Lapis, but this time she let her hands lie free, she only leaned against her elbows on each side of Lapis’ head. “Is this kind of attention satisfying?”

The girl below flushed instantly as Pearl’s breath brushed her face. She felt like a prisoner, surrounded from all sides, but she was starting to get used to this treatment. She wanted to know and experience more of this Pearl.

Lapis grinned widely at the girl above her and fortunately she was close enough to reach her. “Very.” She said and placed one gentle kiss onto her thin lips.
Pearl blushed at that gentle press of Lapis’ lips and watched the girl as she laid her head back down onto bed.

There was something familiar forming inside Pearl’s stomach. It was the tickling again; a heat which was Lapis causing, but this time there was something more, and while she was pressing her whole torso against Lapis’, the feeling was growing faster and stronger every second. Pearl perceived the girl’s breath, her chest raising and lowering right underneath her own. She felt her heart beating along with hers, rhythmically, in the same pace, full of positive and loving energy radiating from it. She watched Lapis’ dark eyes that were closely scanning Pearl’s and studying her face little by little.

Pearl’s stomach felt like it turned upside down as she started perceiving Lapis’ abs intensively. She was pressing lightly against them with her own, feeling their every curve, their warmth. Pearl closed her eyes then and sighed, and as she expected, the feeling grew stronger. It felt like if the contact between them suddenly became more intense, although their bodies remained still.

While Pearl was getting used to this contact and blushing slightly at it, Lapis slowly moved her hands and softly she placed them onto Pearl’s slim waist, petting her with her thumbs fondly. She watched Pearl and her reactions, though she kept her eyes closed, just her breath stopped for a moment. Lapis then continued upper along Pearl’s sides with her hands, gingerly, lovingly, and rested them on her shoulder blades, causing Pearl shivers. Lapis then softly pulled Pearl closer to herself and hugged her. Pearl sighed happily and her hands then surrounded the top of Lapis’ head, she hid her face in the crook of her neck and nuzzled it, enjoying the gentle squeeze of Lapis’ arms around her.

There was a moment when Pearl felt something cold press against her cheek while she was nuzzling Lapis. Soon she found out it was her necklace that cooled her skin. It was such pleasing feeling that Lapis was wearing the pearl she gave her. She really appreciated it.

Lapis exhaled contentedly and snuggled to Pearl, tugging her closer. One of her hands shifted upper her back, up to her neck. She moved her short peach hair aside with her fingers and placed one sweet kiss onto the exposed spot right after, scratching Pearl tenderly along her back with her other hand, being gentle and slow.

Pearl hummed merrily into her neck and nuzzled it yet more, placing there a kiss, too; then one more and yet one more, caressing her skin, brushing it with her smooth lips. Soon her fingers found their way into Lapis’ hair again, scratching and massaging her ever so fondly.

Lapis’ stroking was getting slower as Pearl continued stroking her, her muscles weakened. She loved this feeling so much. She loved Pearl touching her like that, above all. But she was still determined to win against her in this. Deep down Lapis knew she could.
With one of her arms she surrounded Pearl’s waist once more and with the other one she helped herself rise from the mattress and turn Pearl over, laying her down on her back delicately.

Lapis’ body was a bit heavier than Pearl’s and so her weight against her made Pearl gasp. She also gasped at the realization that Lapis was kneeling between her legs and pressing against the spot on the very bottom of her pelvis. It made her blush like never before and left her totally breathless then.

Lapis pulled out her arm from below Pearl’s back cautiously and then placed both of her arms on each side of Pearl’s chest, surrounding her with them and tugging her closer. “Now I got you, sweetie.” She whispered with a sweet smile on her lips.

The pressure of her body was suddenly more intensive, her muscles brushing Pearl’s belly. Pearl also perceived Lapis’ breasts pushing into her lower chest and she was becoming distracted because of this sudden situation. Pearl was that much focused on her sensations that she forgot to pay her attention to Lapis for a moment. Then Lapis’ gentle kisses that were placed onto her neck were the ones which brought Pearl back to present.

Pearl didn’t know what to do. She felt nervous, she felt shy and embarrassed. What if someone comes in and sees them? What would they do? What would Pearl do?

Suddenly she appeared far from the state in which she was before. Now she felt like she was the ‘prey’, but it never felt unpleasant, but quite the contrary.

She felt Lapis’ hands slipping under her back then, tugging her towards her, nuzzling Pearl’s neck and placing soft pecks there, accompanied with quiet smacking.

Lapis became busy with kissing her – kissing her chin, her jaw, her ear, her neck, her throat and collarbones, leaving Pearl breathless and with heart pounding wildly as her kisses became passionate and hungry for her. She started biting Pearl, nibbling curves of her bones, sucking Pearl’s skin and kissing her wherever Lapis considered as appropriate.

There were quiet whines escaping Pearl’s mouth, and she couldn’t even control them because of the way Lapis kept caressing her, stroking and loving her with her hands and lips, suddenly making Pearl breathe again, but only for a brief moment before she started nuzzling and kissing Pearl’s chest, then her breath froze in her lungs once again. Lapis then lifted her head for a while and noticed the mark of teeth where she bit Pearl before – it made her smile to herself, but later on she continued in her previous task.

Pearl could feel that something was different this time. It was like all of those touches and sensations, all those feelings were thousand times more intense than they usually were. The tickling in her stomach was uncontrollably growing stronger, just as her heart beat was getting faster every time a kiss landed onto her body.

Lapis pecked Pearl’s chin, then slid down her pale skin and kissed the center of her neck, continuing down with lightly parted lips and meeting Pearl’s fragile throat, placing more kisses there and on her collarbones. Lapis even helped herself shift Pearl’s sleeve off her shoulder, so the collarbone was entirely exposed. She tasted it, scanned its surface with her mouth, nibbling and pecking it softly. Her mouth then continued lower and soon she reached the hem of Pearl’s undershirt in the center of her chest, but it didn’t stop Lapis from going further. Her fingers were slipping along Pearl’s sides and belly, massaging and petting her tenderly, making tiny circles on her body with her fingertips; light as a feather. Lapis closed her eyes and let those kisses become more eager and affectionate, causing Pearl gasp at the pressure of her mouth against her shivering body. Lapis continued down slowly, along the center of Pearl’s ribcage, kissing her all the way down, then buried her face into the area just between her chest and stomach, but Pearl’s belly
Lapis could notice Pearl’s reactions at those touches and it was only spurring her to go on, so she let her hands slide down Pearl’s sides and then she slipped the tips of her fingers under her shirt, now continuing upper and exposing her stomach, carefully and slowly. With that she was able to kiss Pearl’s hot bare skin. Lapis’ body was aching for touching it, for tasting it. This desire was strong, too strong that it made Lapis lower her head and kiss the girl’s abdomen deeply, and the slow she was slipping her fingers up along her belly, exposing it and placing tender kisses there, the more often she could hear Pearl’s gasps escaping her open mouth - it was such a pleasing noise to Lapis and it was only making her more and more hungry for Pearl as those gasps were getting louder and regular.

Lapis then decided to go back up to kiss Pearl again – this time on her lips, sinking deep into the kiss while her hands were still shifting upper her abdomen.

Pearl groaned into her mouth and her eyes opened wide as Lapis’ hands were uncontrollably slipping up. “Lapis.” She murmured, trying to get her attention, but Lapis seemed to ignore her and continued in kissing and biting her playfully. Pearl’s stomach twisted, her cheeks were already burning. Those hands were still gingerly going up and Pearl’s heart started to beat in alarm as they reached the bottom part of her chest, slightly touching her breasts and still going upper. “Lapis? Lapis?!” Pearl panicked, but finally made Lapis stop.

Pearl perceived massive shivers inside her chest and abdomen, but what was the most disturbing thing to her at that moment was the fact that she could feel her nipples rise because of those touches, and this caused Pearl crossing arms on her chest immediately, getting entirely red and hoping that Lapis hasn't noticed anything. She wondered what would happen if Lapis touched her breasts entirely. What would it feel like? How would she feel like?

“What is it, honey?” Lapis asked and pulled back slightly to see Pearl’s face.

It took her a moment to find courage to speak. A thought that Lapis could see her nipples straightening so suddenly and that it could be easy to notice them because of Pearl’s skin-tight undershirt was making Pearl feel a bit awkward and ashamed. “I-I’m, um…” She stuttered, getting yet redder, trying to find words. “I-I’m sorry, I just…” She pulled her hair behind her ear, quickly enough just to put her arm back soon. “… I’ve never done this before.” She looked to a side shyly, biting her lip.

Lapis stayed still for a while, but then giggled. “What exactly?”

Pearl managed to look back at her, although still red. “I… I’ve never been… Touching like… This. And I-I... All that kissing, I just…” She stuttered, feeling a bit embarrassed.

“Oh.” Lapis gasped, wondering what to say. She was quite surprised by that. “… Should I stop then?”

“N-no, I just… I didn’t mean… I… I just wasn’t sure about how far you were about to go.” She said, grinning awkwardly. "I don't know if this is the right time and place for... You know."

Lapis tried to bite back a smile, but she failed. This fact, that Pearl was still untouched and innocent, kind of amused her. She also knew that Pearl was fragile and careful in these kinds of things, so Lapis had to be especially cautious about every act she wanted to do to avoid any unwanted consequences, and of course she had to respect Pearl's privacy. “So…” Lapis smiled curiously. “What now?”

Pearl shrugged slowly, biting her lips from the inside. She suddenly started missing those
Pearl wanted her to touch her again, even though she was a bit scared and nervous, but nothing so far was doing her feel as good as Lapis and her company. Her closeness was simply so satisfying, Pearl felt safe and loved every time while being with her, perceiving her breath, her skin, seeing Lapis looking back at her and smiling. It was all just so priceless.

Lapis slid Pearl down with her eyes and then back up. She chuckled again at Pearl’s bashful expression and sighed softly. “I love you.” She said with a warm smile.

Pearl’s eyelids fluttered and she remained still for a few seconds, but then she grinned back at her and looked aside briefly, trying her best to get rid of the redness spreading across her cheeks. She noticed Lapis moving her hand towards her and placing it onto her cheek, making Pearl turn her head and look back at her. They went into silence again. They were looking at each other, blinking slowly, sharing the same air with one another for a while, lying silently body-to-body without speaking.

After the trembles inside Pearl’s chest lightly weakened, Pearl finally made herself lift her arms gingerly, moving them towards Lapis. She then hugged the girl around her neck and pulled her closer, kissing the top of her head.

Lapis hummed happily and hugged Pearl around her chest, nuzzling her, later kissing her neck and throat easily.

“Lappy?” She addressed her and laid her head down into pillows, resting for a while.

“Yes?” She looked up and crawled a bit upper to face her.

Pearl sighed with a smile and closed her eyes, petting Lapis’ hair. “It’s late.”

“So what?” Lapis snorted. “Time can’t stop me from loving you.” She said resolutely and then snuggled to Pearl again, purring into her neck.

The taller girl smiled widely at that and hugged Lapis firmer. “Yeah, but…” She started, but her smile almost vanished then. “I should be going.”

Lapis opened her eyes at that, lifting her head from the girl below her once again. “What? Why?” She shook her head, making Pearl open her eyes and look at her, but Pearl didn’t say anything at that, just sighed silently.

“Pearl, stay.” Lapis pleaded, expression sorrowful. “Stay here with me tonight. Please.”

It made Pearl rather think twice before she answered. She couldn’t refuse to that face, to those sad pleading eyes. But there were other things making her worried. What if others see her here? What would they think? What would they say?

“Honey, please.” Lapis groaned. She then sank her face into Pearl’s chest and pulled her closer to herself with her arms. “I won’t let you go.” She murmured in there.

At that moment Pearl gave up trying. She laughed softly to herself. “Okay, but promise me that you won’t snore.”

“What? I don’t do that.” Lapis protested, chuckling, although she knew she does.

“Oh, yes you do, sweetie.” Pearl objected and gave Lapis one sweet kiss into her hair.

Lapis exhaled, defeated, but lifted her head and gave Pearl a kiss back. “Okay, okay. I’ll try my
Pearl giggled and kissed Lapis once more, a bit deeper this time. The blue-haired girl sank into
the kiss and returned it right after, but her plan to keep kissing for the next ten minutes failed,
because Pearl parted their lips with a quiet smack.

“I love you.” She whispered into Lapis’ mouth and brushed the tip of her nose with her own,
later giving it smooch.

“I love you, too, Pearl.” Lapis murmured softly and stroked Pearl’s smooth cheek with the back
of her fingers, making her close her eyes and purr happily. “Good night.”

“Good night, Lapis.” She whispered. And right after Lapis turned off the light, Pearl peacefully
fell asleep.

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Pearl woke up in the morning, better said in the very late morning, with a light headache, even
though she didn’t drink any alcohol during yesterday night – well, compared with Amethyst who
couldn’t believe there were stars in the night sky.

She hummed tiredly. She stretched her hands and after making a contact with whatever it was,
she hugged it tightly, snuggling up to it, convinced it was Lapis’ arm. But later on, after opening
her eyes wearily, she realized that Lapis wasn’t even there and that she was hugging a pillow
instead. Her brows furrowed and Pearl leaned back onto her elbows, glancing round the room. It
was dark in there, because curtains were still shut, although the digital clock standing on a night-
stand read 10 AM and the sun was already shining in the sky. And for Pearl’s surprise, Lapis was
nowhere to see.

Her lips escaped a sorrowful sigh. Later she dropped herself back into pillows with a huff,
watching the ceiling for a bit. For a moment it felt like it was getting heavier and descending down
right onto her when she kept staring at it, but after she shook her head the ceiling was right on its
place again.

She could hear muffled noises coming from the kitchen. She wondered if Lapis was there.

Pearl sighed once more and closed her eyes for a minute or so. She wished she could wake up
next to Lapis – at least once.

Pearl wanted to find out where Lapis was and this desire soon made her get up from the bed.
She opened the curtains, then warm sunrays welcomed her to a new day. There were birds
chirping outside and the sky was absolutely cloudless, there was morning dew on the grass, too.
Pearl crossed the room unhurriedly and grabbed the door handle, taking a look around the room
for the last time. It immediately reminded her of the last night, better said this very early morning,
when they were merrily romping together, kissing and cuddling while everyone was asleep – well,
hopefully everyone was.

The skinny girl had to smile to herself with eyes fixed to nowhere while remembering what was
happening just a few hours ago without anybody knowing. She then turned the round handle and
left the room, closing the door with a quiet click and then heading through the corridor to the
kitchen. The floor was cool against her bare feet, but Pearl didn’t mind since she was still warmed
up from those gorgeous plump duvets.

“Maaaan, my head hurts like hell.” She heard Amethyst groan just before she entered the kitchen
through a round door jamb. And after she did, no one has noticed her just yet.
“I told you not to drink that much.” The tall dark-skinned woman said. She opened a cupboard and pulled out two small ceramic cups, then placed them onto kitchen unit carefully and put the kettle on.

“It’s beer, Garnet! Who would refuse drinking beer?” Amethyst gestured, but while her hands were waving in the air, she hit her head against the cupboard above her. “Ouch! God damn it.” She hissed, rubbing her aching crown.

Pearl sighed through her nose with a grin and went further into the kitchen, but after she entered it, she realized that Lapis wasn’t there either. She probably went back to the stable to take care of horses, Pearl thought. Surely there was a lot to do, just as every day. Pearl then placed her hand on the left side of her neck and stretched it a little – it felt quite stiff after the sleep. “Hey there.” Pearl greeted, still feeling a bit sleepy. She slept just for six hours today – the problem was that when Pearl doesn’t get her eight-hours long sleep, she can be quite sullen, and she honestly didn’t like this kind of state. But she spent the night with Lapis, it was worth it.

“Good morning.” Garnet greeted back, turning to her briefly. “Would you like to have a tea with us?” She asked, but she didn’t even wait for Pearl’s response, immediately she pulled out another cup.

“Thanks, Garnet.” She blushed slightly and rubbed her neck once more, tilting her head to a side to stretch her neck again.

There was a silence for a while. Garnet was preparing tea and Amethyst was just silently sitting on the kitchen unit. It was unusual for Pearl that Amethyst was silent, perhaps her head was hurting really bad today – no wonder when she drunk more than five bottles that night.

She was studying Amethyst’s face, her heavy eyelids and those big violet circles under her eyes – she looked really terrible. Then she noticed Amethyst was staring at her, too. Her eyes were suddenly so curious and fixed straight onto Pearl, expression suspicious and focused.

“Dude…” The small girl let out, still staring at the same spot – somewhere just below Pearl’s head, yet she couldn’t specify where exactly.

Pearl shook her head in confusion, her hand then fell back down after she stretched her neck for the last time. “What?”

“You’ve got like something on your…” She pointed, but froze instantly, a huge grin spread across her face, eyes wide. “Oh man. Wait… Wait, is that?!?” She vigorously jumped down from the unit and headed straight to Pearl. It seemed like Amethyst suddenly absorbed an extreme wave of energy from somewhere.

“What is what?” Pearl made a step back. She felt really confused for a moment. She wondered if all the alcohol that Amethyst digested has already vanished.

“You’ve got a hickey on your neck!” She pointed at it excitedly, getting closer and closer to Pearl. It even made Garnet turn to them.

“What is what?” Pearl made a step back. She felt really confused for a moment. She wondered if all the alcohol that Amethyst digested has already vanished.

“You’ve got a hickey on your neck!” She pointed at it excitedly, getting closer and closer to Pearl. It even made Garnet turn to them.

“What?” Pearl gasped in a slight panic. Later on she remembered the early morning as she was with Lapis in her room, when she was holding Pearl, squeezing her tightly and kissing her neck, and as Pearl was wondering what Lapis was doing there for that long – but now she knew, and she didn’t want to believe it. How could she afford it – her, the innocent and fragile being? “No! I-I don’t!” She objected, but despite it she covered that spot at which her friend was staring, with her hand, in case it was true. Her cheeks immediately turned deep red.
“Hey eyey, show it to me!” Amethyst urged, grinning widely.

“Amethyst, there’s nothing to see!” Pearl stepped back again, just to avoid Amethyst and her sneaky hands which were trying to expose Pearl’s neck.

“Hey, P, come over here!” Amethyst laughed and grabbed Pearl by her wrist.

But Pearl was too weak and tired to fight against her, so she let Amethyst remove her hand from the wide bloody blot on her skin, making the girl gasp highly.

“Wooow, whaat thee heeell.” Amethyst’s jaw dropped and it only made Pearl yet more nervous as she was staring at that bruise like that. “Is that… Lapis’?”

“No, it’s not!” Pearl protested, trying to lean away from Amethyst as far as she could, because Pearl already felt Amethyst’s breath brushing her skin from that closeness. She also noticed Garnet turning to them from the cups again, but before she could come and investigate Pearl’s neck, too, the kettle started hissing and she had to turn back to it.

“Oh, really?” Amethyst asked, a hint of irony in the tone of her voice. “Dude, you couldn’t make it yourself. Besides, you didn’t have it last night…” She smirked at her, knowing that Pearl couldn’t cover it up even if she tried her best.

Pearl rolled her eyes and let a defeated huff escape her mouth. She was angry, but she wasn’t angry with Amethyst. She was angry with Lapis this time. How couldn’t she just tell her about it? Now Pearl felt like a total fool. She didn’t have any slightest idea about it until now, and now she felt like she was betrayed by her own girlfriend. “… It’s… Lapis’.” She growled, frowning a bit, arms crossed on her chest.

“Wohoho, P! You dirty girl!” The girl snickered and nudged Pearl’s shoulder carefully, but soon she continued studying her hickey again, rubbing her chin. “Man, that’s some quality.”

Pearl was really mad, but on the other hand she was glad for that bruise, too. She had a new experience and she was no longer feeling as insular as before. Now she felt like a real adult – a rebel. “Amethyst…” She sighed, rolling her eyes once again.

“No, really! I mean, look at that.” She gestured, and with that she attracted Garnet who finally got to them, holding three cups in her hands while Amethyst was scanning the blot on Pearl’s skin. “That size, that color, that design. It’s–” She gushed over it, but was interrupted by the tall skinny girl.

“–Okay, that’s enough.” She lifted her hands, palms turned to her smaller friend like if she wanted to stop her from her exploring, but then Amethyst gasped again unexpectedly.

“Oh my! You’ve got another one on the other side, too? Damn, Pearl! I always thought you were the innocent one.” She laughed, forcing Pearl to flush the most she could, eyes big as dinner plates. “Our little kitten turned out to be a wild tigress, huh?”

Pearl then instantly surrounded her whole neck with her hands. This was totally embarrassing; totally! She couldn’t feel more awkward right now. “No, no! This is wrong, this is all wrong!” She panicked, shaking her head in disbelief, fingers wrapped around her neck.

“Pearl, calm down.” Garnet soothed her and put the cups down onto table. She stood in front of Pearl and squeezed her shoulders gently. "Don't panic, dear, it's fine. You don't have to be ashamed of it." The woman smiled.

“I-I don’t know… How-how could…” She was urgently searching for words. This felt like a
nightmare – two hickeys at once? How could that happen to her? She must have been dreaming.

Pearl ran out of air, blinking wildly and convincing herself that this was just a dream, but vainly. She realized that this was a new start – a whole new adult world with great consequences from which she couldn’t escape.

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

- Pearl stayed with Lapis in her room over night
- Amethyst discovered two hickeys on Pearl's neck
- 11th week (Saturday morning)


An Unexpected Surprise

Chapter Notes

• Guys, we reached over 1.800 views on this fanfiction! You can't even imagine how happy I am! Only because of you and your kind support I keep writing new chapters! Thank you so, so, so much! Soon my finals will be over and then I'll be ready to post more and more new chapters. And once again thank you so much! Your support means a lot to me! ♥ ♥ ♥ You are the main creators of the story! ;) :3 See you very soon, love you! ^w^ 

Lapis has been in the stable for three hours now. She didn’t sleep much and it was also quite visible in her eyes. But on the other hand she was grinning all the time while sweeping the floor from straw and cleaning stalls. She was thinking about that wonderful night since she got into the stable this morning with Peridot, smiling foolishly with mind full of Pearl and her beautiful body which she was touching and kissing, with an alcohol controlling her mind back then.

Luckily Peridot wasn’t that much interested in asking Lapis how the night was going. She had a lot to do with herself while dealing with the alcohol which was still occupying her guts and all those impressions from new surroundings and people she met on the party. Compared to Peridot’s casual talkativeness she was very quiet today, and on the other side Lapis was rather happy and full of energy, although she didn’t sleep even five hours.

While sweeping, Lapis’ mind was slightly fogged with thoughts about Pearl, about her eyes, her sweet soft lips, her light perfume and her delicate fingers making trails in Lapis' short blue hair. She was remembering those times when Pearl was smiling and giggling, blushing beautifully every time Lapis looked at her or kissed her. Now she started wondering if she didn’t wake Pearl up this morning when she was leaving. Lapis wished that there were no horses and stalls to take care of and that she could just lie in bed next to Pearl and watch her peacefully sleeping and breathing inaudibly, at least just for one day. It was making her heart heavy that she’s always leaving Pearl alone without letting her know that she’s leaving. But she promised to herself that one day she will stay in bed for a bit longer just to see Pearl waking up next to herself.

Then Peridot interrupted her thoughts as she passed by her, carrying a box with brushes and combs and heading to her haflinger’s stall.

Lapis straightened then and stopped sweeping, watching Peridot as quiet she was this morning. “Hey, Peridot, was that even you on that party?” Lapis asked playfully and then continued in sweeping the floor again.

“What?” She turned around, standing just in front of Percy’s stall gate.

“I mean… You were acting strange.” Lapis said, not looking at her. “Better said you weren’t acting at all… Something happened?” Lapis asked once more, although she knew because of what, better said because of whom was Peridot acting the way she was – that means ‘not talking that much’ as she usually was. It was because of Amethyst who took the reins of being the main comedian that night for sure.

“Pff, no.” Peridot waved it off, but the tone of her voice didn’t sound much convincing to Lapis.
The small blonde then put the box down and with her full strength she opened the gate, using the weight of her whole light body, she then took the box again and entered the stall. “Just new environment…”

“Oh, really? Wasn’t that because of Amethyst?” Lapis pointed out with a teasing smile, but because of her merry mood she still couldn’t realize that Peridot wasn’t into talking at that moment.

“No, it was not.” She said with a sigh, almost in whisper.

The taller girl just shook her head and grinned to herself, because she knew that what Peridot said wasn’t true. She knew that Peridot was a good entertainer and that she was considered as one of the best in a comedy industry, but after showing her that she’s not the only one ruling this branch, Peridot seemed to be surprised and hit by that fact. Lapis knew that her little friend doesn’t like losing and it was always hard for Peridot to get along with a defeat. So Lapis rather decided to let her breath and continued in her task, until she saw someone entering the barn with a corner of her eye.

It was Pearl and her sweet, beautiful being just formed a smile on Lapis’ lips as Pearl glanced around the building to find someone. And she did.

She then rushed towards Lapis through the corridor, steps long and arms stretched along her sides. Her expression was quite unreadable for Lapis, but that didn’t matter, Lapis was just so glad that she saw her lovely girlfriend again. So she put the broom aside and leaned it against a stall wall, facing Pearl and watching as how quickly she was approaching her. Lapis also noticed a scarf wrapped around her neck and for a moment she wondered what for, making herself stop and pout like if she was thinking hard. But before she could answer herself, Pearl appeared right next to her with brows furrowed and lips curved down in anger.

“Hey, princess.” Lapis said with a warm grin on her lips, like if Pearl’s face was in its usual state, but instead of a welcoming response she got slapped across her face from her right away.

The sound then echoed in the corridor for another three seconds after and it also made Peridot turn her head towards them, eyes just as wide as Lapis’.

“Wohohoho, holy crap.” Peridot managed to grin nervously and watched Lapis as she put her hand over her cheek instantly. “Well, I-uh… I guess I’m out of here.” The blonde proclaimed and with her lips formed into a tight line she closed the stall and carried the box with brushes back to the storage, leaving those two alone and wondering what was going on between them.

Lapis hissed, her face twisted in pain as she rubbed her cheek. Tears appeared in corners of her eyes. She was confused and stunned by what Pearl just did and she was hugely surprised that Pearl was actually capable of such a thing, too, leaving Lapis breathless.

Lapis lifted her eyes, almost scared to ask for an explanation for this. She swallowed. “… What-what was that for?” She whined and eyed Pearl closely, appearing in a slight shock after that and afraid that there could come another slap from her for not knowing the answer.

There were tears in Pearl eyes, too, but she no longer looked angry rather than sad and confused. She grabbed her scarf and sharply she pushed it down and exposed her neck, so the wide bloody blot struck Lapis’ eyes immediately. “What is this?!” Pearl cried.

Lapis froze on a spot then, wondering how she could make a bruise that large – well, wondering if it even was her work, she couldn’t even remember doing it! But she was aware that Pearl wouldn’t lie to her about this, that someone else might do it instead of Lapis. Also Lapis had to
take into account that an alcohol played a significant role in this, too. It must have been her, she thought, and later she finally remembered. “It’s a… A hickey.” She let out shakily, afraid of getting another painful smack in her face.

“Why didn’t you tell me anything?” Pearl inquired, pushing her scarf back up, crossing her arms on her chest.

“I… Thought you knew about it.” Lapis let out quietly, feeling strange impulses running through her stomach.

“How?!” Pearl called, almost crying. “How could I know? I told you I’ve never done these things before, didn’t I?”

Lapis’ deep feeling of guilt made her look aside very quickly, just to void Pearl’s sharp eyes. There was a lump in her throat and she couldn’t stop herself from biting her lips from the inside, irate with herself because of her mistake about which she was aware of now. She knew very well that Pearl said that and that she’d rather ask for permission back then.

A dead silence filled the room, even horses went quiet for a good minute. Lapis was confused, unable to neither move nor look into Pearl’s eyes again. Pearl was quiet, too, gazing at Lapis and scanning her regretful expression and red swollen eyes.

Pearl’s heart then stopped for a moment. It felt like something just broke inside her. She was no longer angry with Lapis, but now she was the one who felt guilty. She felt a lump in her throat, too, and she couldn’t believe what she’s just done to her. Now Pearl realized how much strength she actually used to scream at her or to hit her that hard, how all that anger inside fogged her mind and didn’t even let her to stop it from letting it out this way. She started to feel horrible – about everything. This wasn’t her, and Pearl was for almost one hundred percent sure that this kind of acting was partly caused by her only six-hours long sleep.

“Lapis…” She whispered, worry in her voice. She furrowed her brows sorrowfully. Pearl wanted Lapis to look back at her. She wanted Lapis to know that what just happened… It wasn’t her, she didn’t mean it to do this way. Pearl was even surprised herself. “Lapis, I’m… I’m sorry. I’m so, so, so sorry.” She then let a tear fall down. She couldn’t help herself but hug Lapis instantly, squeezing her and pulling her close, waiting if Lapis will accept her arms after what she has done. “I’m so sorry… I…” She sniffed. “I didn’t mean to hurt you, Lapis… Forgive me.”

Lapis sighed softly and hid her face into Pearl’s scarf, nuzzling it and finally hugging Pearl back. Lapis could feel she was warm, she felt her arms around her and scratching her back with a soothing pressure, her heart beating slowly and breath slowing down. Lapis could breathe again. But who was the one who felt guiltier now? “No… I’m the one who should apologize.”

“Lapis…” Pearl started, but Lapis continued in her speech.

“I should’ve told you.” Lapis lifted her head, but instead of Pearl’s eyes, she studied her lips which were just at her eye level. “I should be aware of my actions back then.”

Pearl just shook her head slightly. She recognized that Lapis felt bad about it, although Pearl felt like she should be the one to blame as the situation changed.

Pearl bit her lip and the only thing she could do was to take Lapis’ cheeks into her palms and peck her mouth lightly right after.

The smaller girl lifted her eyes then, looking into Pearl’s turquoise ones. She studied them, little by little, wondering what to think. But the longer she was staring into her eyes, the faster her
nerves and quilt were vanishing. She then smiled a little and it made Pearl smile, too. They put their foreheads together then, remaining still.

Suddenly the situation and their nerves eased, but the room was still quiet. After a few moments of staring at one another and realizing how all of this was actually a bit silly, they both started giggling. This whole situation became just so ridiculous to them and all that happened before that as well. The atmosphere suddenly changed and both of them finally felt relaxed again. And on a top of that nothing bad has happened after all. Maybe Pearl only let herself being carried away a little. By the way, Pearl was actually very glad for those hickeys, she was glad for this new experience. She was always shy to talk about adult stuff with her friends, because she was the responsible one, the one who knows what she's doing and the one who isn't getting drunk on parties and making out with strange people. Actually Pearl felt really happy now, she felt like she finally won against herself. And she wanted to win again. After all those experiences with Lapis she slowly started getting used to the true adult world.

Lapis fell into her girlfriend’s arms once more and enjoyed the pressure of her hug, tugging her towards her chest, rocking them both softly. She could hear Pearl hum under her breath at that and she could also sense a smile form on her thin pale lips. “Honestly.” Lapis started, murmuring into Pearl’s shoulder. “I never thought that I could make a hickey that large.”

"Umm..." The skinny girl bit her lip. "Well... Not just one..." She said with her gaze fixed to nowhere, blushing.

Lapis’ eyes opened wide right after in a shock, her breath stuck in her throat. 'Oh hell...' She thought, standing frozen now, realizing that she probably drunk too much vine when she couldn't even remember doing any of it.

But then Pearl chuckled at that. She found this whole situation funny after all.

She closed her light eyes then, but now those hickeys weren’t the main thing stuck in her mind. She was still thinking about that slap. She regretted it – a lot. And the worst thing about it was that she couldn’t take it back. She guessed that this is being the first bad memory for her which she experienced with Lapis.

The skinny girl pulled lightly away, her gaze stopped on Lapis’ afflicted cheek. Pearl exhaled after several seconds of staring at it. “…. Did it hurt much?”

And just as Pearl asked her that, it felt like the pain came back to Lapis for a moment, like if it wanted to remind her of it. “…. Just a bit, but don’t worry about it. It’s fine.” She said softly and started to ignore the pain again.

But Pearl wasn’t convinced this response was right, so she shook her head. “Of course I worry about it. I felt like I almost crashed your face.”

Lapis chuckled at that. Just the idea of it seemed funny to her. Her freckled cheeks slightly darkened. “Nah... Though I didn’t know you’ve got such strength.” Lapis admitted, the tone of her voice suddenly turned into a flirty one somehow.

The taller girl’s cheeks reddened as well. This tone of Lapis’ voice made her body shiver from the inside, hairs on the back side of her neck straightened. She chuckled nervously as Lapis’ gaze started swallowing her, making Pearl feel butterflies in her stomach and hands lightly shake. “Well, neither did I.” She let out timidly, looking elsewhere than where Lapis was. “And I-um… I’m sorry about that slap, though.”

“Hey, it’s fine.” Lapis smiled fondly, assuring Pearl. “I deserved that... I promise I’ll ask you
next time.”

Pearl widened her eyes, surprised by the postscript. “N-next time? Were you planning to make me more hickeys?”

Lapis snorted, smirk on her face. “Maybeee.” She said, rising one eyebrow, though the tone of that spoken word sounded rather like a question.

“Oh.” Pearl breathed out a chuckle, a bit nervously. “Okay, just… Um… J-just go slow on me, I… I’m not used to these… Things. Yet.”

Lapis sighed through her nose calmly and lowered her eyelids, humming under her breath. “Sure.” She whispered. She then got back to Pearl and hugged her yet more tightly. She laid her head down on her shoulder and said nothing for a while, perceiving Pearl’s calm breath, warmth and her slender arms which surrounded her soon after. Lapis sighed softly. “… Pearl?”

“Yeah?” Pearl reacted, nuzzling Lapis’ velvet-smooth hair with her mouth.

“I… I’ve got a lot to do today. I gotta prepare myself for one, uh… Show jumping competition.” She proclaimed, but a bit unhappily. “My coach is coming today, too… He’s got very little time recently and I can’t afford to skip this session, so… I won’t have too much time for you.”

“It’s alright.” Pearl smiled, understanding. “At least I could stay with you until he comes. If you want me to, of course.”

“Sure.” Lapis raised her head then, looking into Pearl’s eyes cheerfully. “I’ll introduce him to you. You’re gonna love him, he’s a nice man.”

“Okay then.” Pearl grinned, wondering who this man could be. Beach City is a small town anyway, it could be absolutely anyone she knows. “I’m looking forward to it.”

“… Oh man, what just happened here?” Peridot laughed while approaching them from behind Pearl’s back, making both girls turn to her. “Didn’t Pearl just slap you a little while ago?”

Pearl immediately blushed, her lips turned into a straight line.

“That was just a… A little misunderstanding.” Lapis grinned foolishly, one of her hands then fell down while the other one surrounded Pearl’s waist and tugged her closer, making Pearl blush more.

Peridot shook her head quickly, smirking with a suspicious expression on. “You two are funny…” She said and then bypassed them, heading to Percy’s stall. She grabbed the gate handle and with a huff she opened the stall, then she slipped inside. “And what exactly happened, huh?” She asked Lapis and pulled a hoof pick out of her pocket.

“Umm.” Lapis swallowed and eyed Pearl with a corner of her eye. Pearl imitated her actions and bit her lip.

Peridot was waiting and even when she turned to them after an awkward moment of silence, none of them spoke. “Hey, let me guess.” Peridot then asked and slipped out of the stall. Holding a hoof pick in her hand, she walked towards them and then stopped in front of them. She scanned both of them closely – especially Pearl and her bashful expression. She squinted. “Hmm…” The small blonde pouted, rubbing her chin and staring at Pearl’s scarf.

The skinny girl cleared her throat. She wasn’t able to neither speak nor look directly at Peridot but rub her hands together.
“I don’t know why, but I smell a hickey.” Peridot frowned, smirk on her lips.

Pearl swallowed and scratched her nape, murmuring something to herself. She remained silence. What was she supposed to do? The fact that she wasn’t responding was only making Peridot convinced that she guessed right and making herself awkward.

“Aahahah, I knew it!” Peridot pointed at her, laughing at how red Pearl’s face was. She laughed maybe for a good minute, catching her breath and slapping her knee, but after that she straightened and fixed her hair by running her hand through it. “Hey, tell me, why do you even wear that scarf, Pearl? You should be proud of that hickey, man, not hiding it.”

“I-uh…” Pearl raised her index finger like if she wanted to point out something, but all of a sudden she was interrupted by a voice. But this voice definitely didn’t belong to Peridot or Lapis. Whose was it then? It was coming from the barn and the voice was also followed by heavy footsteps.

“Oh, there you are! Hello, ladies.” They heard. A middle-aged man with long light brown hair was slowly approaching them. There was a bag hanging down from his shoulder and he was searching for something in there, not looking exactly at present girls.

“Oh, hey, Gregory.” Peridot snorted, putting her hands on her hips. Lapis snorted at that fun-sounding note, but she greeted the man, too.

The older man laughed briefly at that and raised his head to correct the small blonde. But right as he did, he immediately froze. He stared at the third girl, the tallest one, the familiar one – well, more than just familiar. He stared wide-eyed at Pearl, his hand froze in his bag, too.

Pearl swallowed, eyes just as wide as Greg's. Her mouth almost fell open as she saw him. “Y-you?” She let out. Suddenly her body started to tremble uncontrollably. Tips of her fingers were quickly getting cold as soon as her hands and arms were flooded by chills. She couldn’t even tell how fast tears came to her eyes.

There was that feeling again, the feeling which she was trying to forget for too many times ago, but unsuccessfully, fighting it, urgently trying to ignore it, trying to just get it out of her mind – the terrible feeling of betrayal, the feeling of hopelessness and distress, the one which made her life become hell. This was him. This was the man because of whom she lost everything – her life, her hope and her incurable broken heart.

“Pearl?” Greg raised his brows in surprise, slowly removing his hand from the bag, still staring at that girl.

Lapis was watching them both, looking at Pearl, then looking at Greg and back at Pearl. She was slowly becoming confused due to their expressions. Especially Pearl’s expression was making her worried, her terrified eyes were just giving her chills. "Um, you guys?"

“No… No. Not again.” Pearl was shaking her head, making small steps backwards. It felt like a nightmare came back to her, like if the creepiest dreams came true. All that she wanted to do was run away from it as far as she could – if ever. This will be another great battle. She couldn't stand being near someone like him, not after all that happened. She had to get out of there. Right now.

“Pearl, are you okay?” Lapis asked worriedly, taking Pearl by her hand, but Pearl kept shaking her head and stepping away.

Pearl could hear voices. Her mind was fogged with memories and images from the past – those cloudy and cold days, those rainy nights when she used to cry until the sun rose up, how she was
starving for too many days and how weak and powerless she felt, not answering her phone for weeks, hidden in her pantry, curled up in a ball and lying on a cold floor while her cat was crying and scratching the door, hungry and pleading Pearl to come out – all those awful memories were back again, just as her past emotions. There were too many scenes which were forbidding her from coming back to reality, too many.

“Talk to me.” Lapis carefully took her other hand, too, facing her. But this was enough for Pearl to start running.

She slipped away from Lapis’ grip then and ran towards the exit of the stable with tears falling down from her face, making wet dots on the ground behind her.

“Pearl, wait!” Lapis reached her hand, but Pearl was too far to catch. Lapis gasped and stayed staring after her with mouth open. She then turned back to the man with eyes filled with confusion and worry. “What-what’s going on? What happened?”

Greg exhaled sorrowfully and palmed his face. His eyes were closed, but then he opened them and ran his hand through his hair. “… That’s… A long story, Lapis.”

“B-but… What-where…” Lapis stuttered, looking out of the stable after her friend, then back at Greg and Peridot who seemed as confused as Lapis was.

“… I think you should rather go after her.” He said then, voice low.

Lapis didn't have to be told twice and she immediately ran after Pearl, confused, worried, running as fast as she could, calling her name and wishing to get a response.

“Pearl!”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

- Pearl was angry with Lapis because of the hickeys she made her
- Greg showed up in the stable
- After meeting Greg, Pearl ran away and Lapis decided to bring her back

♦ 11th week (Saturday morning)
Scars

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

Lapis found it kind of unfair that her legs were shorter than Pearl’s, and that meant that she
couldn’t reach Pearl even if she tried her best. She could see Pearl running up the hill along the
rope fence before, but she disappeared behind the horizon sooner than Lapis could even reach the
fenced pasture.

The equestrian followed the path along the grazing meadow, running in Pearl’s footsteps and
calling after her, but the constant yelling was making her more and more exhausted, it caused her
lose more energy than if she was running without any word escaping her mouth, and although she
knew that Pearl couldn’t hear her, she kept calling and calling, choking and swallowing the soil
dust spread in the air through which she ran.

Finally she made it to the top. She stopped and took a glance around, but Pearl was nowhere to
see. Lapis leaned her palms against her knees and took a deep breath, trying to stop her head from
spinning. She wasn’t used to dashing like that and she felt like she should take a break, but also
she was worried that she won’t be able to catch up to Pearl if she stays here any longer.

So Lapis took the rest of her strength and started off scooting after the girl again.

Pearl was already far, far enough not to hear any horse neigh or people calling her name. She
was running headless with eyes swollen and watery, tears slipping down her cheeks, her jaw and
neck. Her body was aching, she was all trembling, there was a chaos in her head, in her heart. It
was so ridiculous to her how just a small ‘thing’, a person, could entirely ruin her day just with a
click of the fingers. This wasn’t fair. She thought that she’d already moved on. But she had not.

She ran, without thinking, aimless, without any zest for life. She didn’t care if she’d run over by
a car, by a train, or if she’d fall into another ditch. She didn’t care if she’d get lost, if she wouldn’t
come home or if someone would be looking for her. She felt hopeless, helpless, like if there was
no way to help her out of this mess. She hated when she felt this way, how much energy she was
losing by just trying to fight this feeling or forget. This was like if she was trapped on an island,
surrounded by deep waters full of visions of the past, with dark stormy skies above her head and
lightning bolts lashing her weak body violently from every world side as many loud cries could be
heard until they’re too weak to be noticed, leaving her paralyzed body lying on the ground
without anybody knowing about the storm that’s raging inside of her and poisoning her until
there’s nothing left of her.

Then suddenly her brain stopped filtering all the thoughts as Pearl’s toes sank into a hole in the
ground, making her stumble over. With a loud scream and a slight shock her body headed to the
ground, hitting it extremely hard with her knees first, her elbows, palms and head followed then,
causing a hard thunk and a sharp pain run through her body right after.

Pearl lied there for a few seconds, perceiving the pain in her head uncontrollably rising, just as
quickly as the world around her was becoming blurry and unrecognizable.

“Oow…” She whined in pain, sniffing. She started sobbing even more then, realizing how
intense the pain actually was, but then she started to suffocate herself with the soil dust which she
dispersed into the air by falling into it. She coughed, trying to get rid of the dust slowly lodging in
her lungs, cupping her mouth with her palm, body shivering and aching. She tried to raise her body then, but the harder she pressed against her knees and palms, the more it hurt. Pearl then rolled over to her side to avoid making the pain raise, then she sat up and started coughing again. This feeling of hopelessness and rising pain felt just so terrible and disquieting.

There were trails of blood flowing down along Pearl’s shins, she noticed, and still there was more and more blood coming out of her knees. The abrasions there were quite large, although Pearl managed to hit the ground only once. And her elbows were no different as she checked them both.

She froze then, staring at her knees. She started sobbing, producing more and more tears, wondering what to do. She was sitting on the ground, getting yet weaker as the blood was pouring down from her scrapes. The only thing she wanted to do was to surround her knees with her arms, curl up into a ball and cry as loud as she could, but there already was too much pain to cause another just in need to feel at least a little comfort. So she just bent her legs, placed the back of her palms on her thighs and hung her head, whining and crying into her lap, loudly, yet no one could hear it.

Lapis’s legs were protesting these past five minutes of running, knees buckling so bad that she almost couldn’t even walk now. She exhaled into the air, head turned up to the sky. “Oh my Good…” She groaned, entirely defeated. “Pearl, where are you?” She asked sorrowfully, voice slightly cracking, sweat drops rolling down her forehead. She then bent forward against her knees once more and tried to catch her breath. Her head started spinning unpleasantly again, making her close her eyes for a moment, hoping for it to stop, then there was her throat becoming super dry from constant calling, too.

“Lapis… Come on, girl.” Lapis tried to spur herself, eyes still closed. “Come on, come on… You gotta find Pearl… She needs you, goddamnit.” The girl inhaled deeply and gingerly she straightened, resolutely making a step forward to continue in her journey.

She had no more power to run, there was no chance to do it. She tried to walk quickly at least, but soon she could feel a stinging side pain because of it, so she had to slow down again, making herself frustrated that finding Pearl will last forever like this.

Lapis walked for five more minutes, then appearing on the top of the hill where sunflower fields were spreading below. It was the high noon at the time, the sun was shining bright down on the world, the wind was making the golden sunflowers smoothly dance. There was an absolute silence all around but the wind blowing slightly, making Lapis’ hair flutter in the warm air.

She stopped for a while and stared to the farness, scanning the loamy path as it was narrowing and then vanishing in the distance, watching birds flying above the fields and chirping faintly, she watched the clouds slowly and inaudibly passing the blue sky, until she noticed something which made her head turn a bit lower.

Her heart skipped a beat, maybe more than just one, right as she realized that the something was her. It was the one she’s been looking for.

“Pearl!” Lapis gasped, and finding the last piece of strength, she ran towards her as fast as she could. In a few seconds she finally got to her, but she froze in instant as she noticed the wide bloody trails rolling along Pearl’s shins and hands. She immediately kneeled down to her, Pearl’s face was drowned in tears. “Pearl? Pearl, are you okay?” She took Pearl by her shoulders gently and made her lift her eyes.
Pearl’s throat was full of sobs, full of words she couldn’t cry out. There were so many tears filling her eyes and flowing upon her cheeks, dripping from her jaw down on her injured hands. She then sniffed and wiped her eyes with the back of her hand.

“Jesus Christ, what did you do?” Lapis asked, scanning Pearl from head to foot, watching the blood streaming down from her knees and elbows.

Instead of a response Pearl kneeled on her knees in an effort to toss her hands around Lapis and hug her tightly, but the contact of her knees and the gravel ground only caused her an instant sharp pain and made Pearl fall over right away, but fortunately for her, she fell right into Lapis’ outstretched arms.

“Pearl, oh my god!” Lapis caught her right in time. She pulled Pearl right towards her chest and hugged her tightly, being especially careful not to touch any of her bleeding abrasions.

Pearl hugged Lapis back around her waist, as firmly as she could, and sank her face into Lapis’ chest. The only thing she managed to do was to start crying and sobbing intensely – now she finally felt like she was free and allowed to do it. So she cried, she screamed and cried again, sobbing, gasping.

“Shhh, shhh…” Lapis hushed her softly. She was rocking them both gently, stroking Pearl’s smooth hair and placing sweet kisses in it and watching as her lovebird was literally cracking up in her arms. Just the look at Pearl was making Lapis feel really bad and miserable herself. “Shh, it’s okay… It’s okay, honey. I’m here.” She was whispering repeatedly, trying to ease Pearl’s cries at any cost, because they were almost making Lapis cry, too – her every sob, her every cracked breath was like a knife stab straight into her heart. But then there were these scrapes making Lapis worried. They were getting no better, but quite the opposite. There was gravel and dust in her wounds, deep in the affected flesh, making Pearl hiss or whine in pain every so often.

“We have to get you back to stable.” Lapis proclaimed, staring at the girl’s poor bruised knees. But Pearl instantly shook her head quickly at that idea, tugging Lapis yet closer. Just imagining meeting Greg again almost made her sobs intensify yet more.

“Pearl, don’t argue with me.” Lapis frowned slightly, but still worried. “Just look at your knees. You’re gonna get an infection…” She gestured towards them, watching them for a second or two. “You have to go back with me.”

Pearl shook her head once more and wiped her eyes, then hugged Lapis back again. “I…” She sniffed, clinging on Lapis tightly. “I can’t.”

Lapis stayed speechless for a while, eyeing Pearl and the big tears coming out of her red glassy eyes, her breath was irregular. Lapis wondered what could happen. Why did Pearl run away? Was it because of Greg? Did they know each other? Uh, surely. Why would Pearl run away then? Just because she likes running? Hardly.

“Why not?” Lapis asked carefully in whisper and petted Pearl’s hair gently.

Pearl’s eyes went wide then, her heart skipped a beat. Just the idea that she should say his name was making her feel sick. She didn’t want to talk about what happened, although she knew that it would make her mind ease a bit. There was pretty much going on more than three years ago. The day when she was told what exactly was going on between Rose and Greg ruined her entire life, and yet she was so addicted and devoted to Rose that the pain inside her has still remained occupying her soul until now. It was so hard for her to let go. Still.

“… Is it because of him?” Lapis whispered and perceived that Pearl stopped breathing for a
A silence pierced the air once more as the blue-haired girl waited for a response. It took Pearl a moment to act, but finally she made herself nod faintly without saying a single word.

Lapis wanted to know more, but she knew that this probably wasn’t the perfect time for asking for answers and also she knew that whatever happened between them wasn’t good.

Lapis thought then. She suddenly remembered what Pearl told her once when they were sitting on her favorite rock just above the poppy fields. She told her about one woman, a big woman with pink curly hair and she also remembered that this type of woman Greg once arrived to the stable. Her name was Rose, and after she gave a birth to her son, she passed away.

And right after that Lapis perceived. Her dark eyes stayed wide open after she realized everything. Suddenly everything made sense to her. Pearl always spoke so lovely about Rose and shortly after she became sad. Lapis even wondered if this could be the reason why Pearl did name her cat Rose. Was it her who gave Pearl the cat? That would be all understandable. Pearl must have really loved her, Lapis thought. She felt really sorry for her.

She locked her lips in a tight line then and shut her eyes with a heavy sign. Now she understood. She actually had to admit that Rose was quite attractive woman, and though she saw her only once, Lapis could tell. “Ah, honey…” She sighed again and tugged Pearl as close as physically possible, nuzzling her peach hair softly with her nose, making it flutter every time she breathed out. “I’m so sorry.”

A half an hour passed quickly and Pearl’s sobs lightly weakened thanks to Lapis’ closeness and her hand soothing Pearl by petting her hair fondly, with love and sympathy. But the longer they were sitting on the ground, the more was Lapis getting worried about Pearl’s wounds, they were wide open and dirty. Lapis couldn’t leave them like that, no more.

“Honey, we have to go back… We need to clean your wounds. You can’t stay like this.” She offered thoughtfully, but Pearl only looked at her pleadingly. She didn’t want to go back, not if he’s still there.

“Come on.” She stroked her kindly, whispering. “You don’t have to go inside. We just have to make sure that you won’t get an infection.”

Pearl hummed at that sorrowfully, but she gave up trying then. She knew that Lapis won’t let herself be talked out of it, because Pearl was too important to her and Lapis didn’t want her to suffer.

Now Pearl was scared of going back, paradoxically not because of horses this time, but she let herself be lifted up on her feet. Lapis supported her and helped Pearl up cautiously. Pearl was slightly bent in her knees, the unpleasant pain was still lasting, just as her tears remaining still in her eyes.

“Are you okay? Can you walk?” Lapis asked and surrounded Pearl’s waist with her arm to support her while walking back, she then took Pearl’s hand and tossed it over her shoulder, pulling Pearl yet bit closer.

The tall girl nodded quickly, although every step was rather painful for her. She was limping a little, trying to keep up with Lapis, but Lapis was enough considerate to adapt to Pearl’s pace.

The stable was quite far from them, but they managed to get there in less than one hour. Lapis helped Pearl sit down on the bench next to the stable entrance and asked her to stay there for a
while. Pearl agreed and laid her head back against the wall, trying to breathe deeply, eyes closed.

Lapis headed to the barn and for her surprise she could find Greg still there. He was talking to Peridot and noting something to his notepad while leaning his back against a stall.

“Oh, there she is.” Peridot proclaimed after noticing Lapis approaching them swiftly. Greg turned to her, too. “What happened there, Lap? Where’s Pearl?” Peridot continued.

“She’s outside.” Lapis said and stopped briefly in front of them, not looking at Greg. “Where’s the first-aid kit?”

“What for?” Greg gasped, watching Lapis with a slight frown, a worry was visible in his face.

For some reason Lapis didn’t want to speak with Greg at that moment. She was mad, she was mad at him. He was the reason why was Pearl sad, he was the one who caused all of this. But would he do it to Pearl if he knew she was this fragile and sensitive? She wondered. But still, Greg was a really kind and good man, he was responsible, too, and he always helped Lapis when she needed it.

Lapis exhaled. The sign helped her ease her tensed mind a little. She closed her eyes for a second, tried to calm down and remain breathing slowly. “Pearl fell, her skin is abraded. I gotta get disinfection.”

“Wow.” Peridot let out and chuckled faintly. “That happens when Greg comes on stage.”

“Not funny, Peridot.” Lapis hissed, frowning. Greg furrowed his brows, too, looking at Peridot who rather looked aside to avoid any more astonishment. Greg knew that this situation was serious, and especially when it was about Pearl. He’s got through much, too, and he knew how Pearl felt about his relationship with Rose and especially about him.

“So where is it?” Lapis managed to ask before a horse whinny drowned her voice. “The kit.”

The man hummed and looked towards the exit of the stable, speaking slowly. “I suppose it’s in tack room.”

Lapis nodded with a hum and turned on her heels towards the tack room, heading straight there. But after two steps she stopped slowly. Just now she realized that she was gone for more than one hour and that Greg was still waiting for her in the stable and that he knew that Lapis doesn’t keep her phone with herself, so he could contact her when she was gone. He could have just left, but he had not. He insisted to go through one of many important trainings, even when he’s busy all the time and barely has time for a training with Lapis or other riders. He was probably really determined to do their training today, because he wouldn’t be there then if he wasn’t, Lapis thought.

She turned to him slowly with a regretful look. She scratched her forearm nervously. “Greg, I…”

Greg sighed softly and rubbed on his temples. “I guess we won’t make it today, huh?”

“Greg, I’m really sorry.” Lapis shook her head, crossing arms on her chest. “I can’t leave her there like that.”

The man sighed again, a bit more deeply this time. He put his hands in his hips. “It’s okay… I understand, Lapis.” He said, but Lapis could feel a hint of disappointment in his voice. She didn’t know what to do, she really felt bad about this whole situation. This wasn’t nice from her, she knew it. She knew that this was one of the few last chances to train for Grand Prix, she knew that
Greg has very little time for these things and for her, and this whole unexpected situation just ruined it, finally when he managed to make some time for her. Lapis really regretted it and she was certain that Greg surely wasn’t too much happy about it, too. But Lapis just couldn’t leave Pearl behind, not right now.

“There are many things that I and Pearl went through, and they remain unsorted. It never was easy between us.” He clarified and put his notepad into his bag. “I know that what happened in the past hurt her… And that it was partly my fault, but I don’t want her to suffer. She doesn’t deserve it.” He said with a low voice, there appeared a small sad smile on his lips. “Just go and take care of her today. We’ll agree on other training another time.”

It quite surprised Lapis, her eyes widened. So it was true – the thing with Rose was real. But what surprised her even more was the fact that Greg actually cared about Pearl and about how she felt, but still Lapis wondered if Greg actually knew about Pearl and Rose. This was one of so many questions circling around her head, and there were all types of all emotions, too. She didn’t know what to think, what to say. “But, Greg… We’ve already lost too much time.”

“I know.” He placed his big hand on Lapis’ shoulder gently. “But you wouldn’t leave her there, would you?”

Lapis’ eyes fell to the floor and she bit her lip.

Greg smiled and patted Lapis’ shoulder, giving it a light squeeze then. “Then go. I’ll contact you later.”

“Well?” She raised her head, surprised that Greg actually meant it.

He didn’t say anything, just nodded, and Lapis smiled widely, too. “Ah, Greg... You’re a god.”

The man chuckled at that and removed his hand from Lapis. “It’s no big deal.”

“It is.” Lapis frowned, but smiled yet more. “Thank you, man... Really.”

Greg nodded, saying nothing more and turning on his heels. He headed out of the stable and soon he disappeared.

The rider stood speechless on a spot for a while then to slow down her mind, to release her worries and also ease the excitement that the situation got solved quite well, but there was no time for this, she had to get the first-aid kit and head back to Pearl – immediately.

It took Lapis about thirty seconds to find what she was looking for and then she quickly walked back to Pearl. She got outside and found Pearl sitting still in the same position as she left her, only the trails of blood slightly stiffened.

Lapis kneeled down in front of Pearl. “Oh, honey, I’m sorry it took me so long.” She apologized and unzipped the small red bag.

Pearl half-opened one her eyes and looked down at Lapis, but remained still. With a soft sign she answered in whisper. “It’s okay.”

Lapis looked up at her and shared a little smile with her. “How do you feel?” She asked and pulled a gauze and a bottle with disinfectant within out of the kit. She shook the bottle a little and then instilled the liquid into the gauze.

“Not much better.” Pearl admitted, voice low. She opened her eyes then and perceived the breeze stroking her cheeks before a question popped out in her mind. She was almost ashamed to
ask it, but she asked in the end, a bit hesitantly. “Is… He still there?” Pearl bit her lip, but wasn’t brave enough to look down at her friend.

Lapis was the one who looked at the other then. She wondered what she should say. Should she say what happened there? What Greg said? That probably wasn’t a good idea. Mainly she didn’t want to analyze it into deep, because she would only make Pearl feel bad again, and she definitely didn’t want to cause this.

“He’s left.” She said simply, partly convinced that Pearl won’t ask any more questions then, but for her surprise she was wrong.

“But you've got a training today… Right?” Pearl wondered.

“No, we canceled it.” Lapis opposed, looking at Pearl.

Pearl frowned slightly, still watching the sky above. “But… Why? You said you can’t skip it.” She remarked, a bit surprised.

“Yeah.” Lapis giggled. “But I couldn’t just leave you here like this, right?”

The taller girl looked down at her finally, but said nothing because of the excitement.

“What?” Lapis grinned at her friend’s expression.

“Lapis…” Pearl let out something between a gasp and a groan. “But… Why did you–”

“–Hey, you’re more important to me than some training.” She smiled warmly. “Besides… I can train myself quite well, too, so.”

“Lappy…” Pearl shook her head in disbelief. She looked aside. “You shouldn’t…” Pearl tried, but the end of the sentence turned into a sign.

“Don’t worry about it, honey.” Lapis assured her. “It’s just a small competition. I can prepare myself for it whenever I want. I don’t exactly need a coach for it.” And although she said that, she knew that it was't true. The Granx Prix is not just ‘a small competition’, is it? Honestly Lapis was quite stressed out about it, because Grand Prix was already knocking on the door – there were only a few weeks left!

The tall girl signed once more, this time a bit more softly. She smiled a little then and looked back up to the heavens. “You’re gonna drive me crazy one day.”

Lapis chuckled at that, but said nothing.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Lapis found Pearl nearby sunflower fields and brought her back to the stable
• Greg told Lapis to stay with Pearl and canceled their training

♦ 11th week (Saturday morning + noon)

PS: Hello there, guys! ♥ I succesfully graduated and now I'm gonna add some new
chapters. This fiction is also going to be illustrated, so feel free to check in a short
time for illustrations! ^w^ (they will be visible on my tumblr, too! (cajda-
chan.tumblr.com) Also after I finish this fanfiction I'm planning to write another one
called "My Indigo" about a love triangle between Peridot/Lapis/Pearl!
Thank you so much for support and comments, you're really kind and amazing!
See you soon! ;)


There was a brief moment of silence all around, except for a faint chirping and a whinny of a horse. Pearl closed her eyes and breathed in before breathing out again.

Peacefully she listened to the wind for a while, but suddenly she cried out in pain as something pressed against the open wound on her left knee. Pearl’s eyes went wide as quickly as her head turned down towards Lapis who has pressed the wet gauze against the abrasion, and Pearl winced that sharply that it even startled the girl kneeling in front of her. “Ouch!”

“I’m sorry! I’m sorry.” Lapis took the gauze back for a moment, just to make Pearl calm down. “Maybe I pressed too much…” She bit her lip. “Forgive me… But, you gotta hold on, Pearl. We have to clean it.”

Pearl huffed, and while squeezing the edge of the bench firmly, she leaned back against the wall. She took a deep breath and clenched her teeth, watching Lapis’ movements.

Lapis remained still for a few seconds, scanning Pearl closely, but then she carefully pressed the gauze to the wound again. There came a painful hiss from Pearl at the contact, but this time she held the scream inside and swallowed it down.

Lapis took Pearl behind the crook of her knee and started to brush away the stiffened blood, softly soothing Pearl with comforting words as she was trying to keep the whines inside.

It was hard for Pearl to remain still, because the disinfectant was causing a smarting pain every time Lapis brushed the wound, but soon Pearl started to get used to it as Lapis started off with the other knee.

“You’re doing great.” Lapis smiled at her friend, petting Pearl with her thumb as she held her behind her knee. “We’re almost done down here.”

Pearl let out a sign of relief as she imagined the half of the work being done. She turned her head up to the sky and closed her eyes again, taking a deep breath.

The equestrian smiled a little up at the girl. She then added a new fresh liquid on the gauze, wiping off the rest of the blood remaining on Pearl’s shins. As she finished, she grabbed new piece of gauze and added the disinfectant on the fabric, kneeling up. Earlier she noticed that Pearl’s elbows were scraped, too, so she started off with one of them then, holding Pearl gently by her arm.

Pearl watched how concentrated Lapis was. She had that typical focused expression on, with one brow slightly raised and her tongue peeking out of her lips a little.

It made Pearl giggle softly. She tried her best to be inconspicuous, but vainly. Lapis looked into her turquoise eyes and interrupted cleaning her elbow. “What?”

Unsuccessfully Pearl tried to stop, but there was no chance for her to bit back a chuckle. “You’ve got that expression on again.”

“Which expression?” Lapis inquired curiously, but then continued in wiping off the dirt from Pearl’s wound.
The girl winced a bit at the contact again, but didn’t get distracted by it. “The concentrated one.”

Lapis shrugged with a snort. “Sure, because I’m concentrating.” She proclaimed and asked Pearl to give her the other hand after Lapis added new disinfectant to the gauze.

It meant a lot to Pearl, the fact that Lapis really cared about her and was worried about her that much that Lapis would jump straight into the open fire to save her, this was just warming Pearl’s heart. Lapis was treating her well, she was careful and patient with her, taking care of her whenever she needed any support. Lapis was always there for her and Pearl truly appreciated that. Recently she started to realize who truly was worth loving and paying attention to.

“Ah, my sweet Lappy.” Pearl sighed dreamily and stroked Lapis along her indigo hair. “Thank you for taking care of me… What would I do without you?”

Lapis chuckled softly. “Anything for my baby.” She said and gave Pearl a sweet smile.

Several minutes have passed. Lapis brought the first-aid kit back on its place while Pearl stood in the doorway of the stable, leaning against the jamb. She watched the stable interior. She already got used to that smell, but she never considered it as unpleasant. She was used to the smell of shells and seaweed from visiting her dad as he arrived from the sea back to the harbor with fish and many other ocean products to sell.

Peridot was already gone with a half of the stable left perfectly clean, most horses were grazing in the pasture and some of them were settled in their stalls. The floor was quite clean, too, with only a few straws laying there. The wash stall was used at least twice, still there was a wide pool of water on the ground in it. Although there were horses neighing every so often, this was a really calm place. Once Pearl stood there even the mother swallow flew through the corridor to visit her babies and after a while she flew out of the stable to find more food. Pearl wondered how much the bird babies grew, for a moment she wished for seeing them someday again.

Lapis then got out of the tack room, holding a box with brushes and combs in her arms, telling Pearl that she still has to clean Blue and her stall. Pearl nodded and followed Lapis towards the Hanover’s stall. She leaned her shoulder against the gate’s outer side and peeked inside, watching Lapis and Blue standing there and lashing her tail.

The equestrian pulled two big pieces of chopped apple out of her pocket and handed them to her mare, patting and stroking her along her muscular neck.

Blue took the apples without any hesitance and swallowed them instantly. She then poked Lapis in her back in effort to have another treat as the equestrian was bending down for Blue’s left front pastern to clear her hoof.

“Na-ah.” She shook her head. “Not yet, baby. You gotta wait until I’m done with you.”

Blue’s reaction was rather a frustrated snort which echoed in the stall then for a second, but Lapis just smirked at that. She picked up the horse’s foot and started clearing the dirt from below the horseshoe with a hoof pick. As she was done, she headed towards her rear leg and did the same.

It was kind of entertaining for Pearl. She always wondered how it’s done – cleaning, combing, feeding and all the work around horses and the overall farm industry. There was always plenty of work. It was fun to watch, but hard to do, even for Lapis who was well experienced since she was a little girl. But then in the middle of her train of thoughts, Greg came up to her mind once again.
She would never guess that someone like him would have something to do with horses. Pearl was even surprised herself.

Then, in spite of everything that seemed perfect and peaceful at the moment, Pearl became sad. She was really great at remembering things, especially the bad ones. She would never imagine meeting Greg in a place such like this. Honestly she never thought that she would ever see him again, but she guessed that meeting him was bound to happen, one day or another. He surely appeared in her life for some reason, to teach her and to fill her fate somehow, to teach her the art of forgiveness and help her to move on from the rut.

She felt regretful about everything bad that happened – everything that happened with Rose, what happened with Greg and all that happened this late morning. She felt sorry for putting Lapis into this situation, into this mess. She never wanted Lapis to experience something bad, the only thing which Pearl had Lapis connected with was happiness and joy, but she never wanted to put any heavy cargo on Lapis’ back, she never did. But Lapis was always willing to help Pearl whenever something bad happened. Who knows if it was affecting Lapis somehow? Pearl was only truly grateful for having such a sweetheart by her side. She never knew how she could make it up to Lapis, though, for everything she’d done for her.

“Honey?” Pearl suddenly caught, Lapis’ voice dragged her out of her thoughts. She turned her head to her.

“Yes?” She reacted, lips lightly parted.

“So? Will you stay?” She asked, but the tone of it rather sounded like it was a repeated question.

“Umm.” Pearl’s mouth clapped closed, she thought for a second or two. “… Today?”

Lapis sighed sadly then. She recognized that Pearl wasn’t listening to her, probably lost in her own thoughts. Lapis’ shoulders dropped down just as the corners of her lips turned downwards. She put the curry comb back into the box and slowly she walked to Pearl, with eyebrows worriedly furrowed. “Pearl… Is everything okay?” She wondered, almost whispering. She reached her hand and gently she placed it on the girl’s smooth cheek, petting her with her thumb. Well, actually she could guess what was going on, but she rather wanted to make sure.

Pearl stared back at her for a brief moment before she hid her face in her palm with a deep exhale. Was she actually this distracted? She really had been cogitating too much. This deep thinking was slowly ruining her, burning her from the inside. This wasn’t right. Pearl truly needed to fix this somehow. She knew it.

A soft sniff could be heard from her then, almost unrecognizable. “… I don’t know.” Pearl whined into her palm.

“Pearl.” Lapis sighed sorrowfully. She removed Pearl’s hand from her face gingerly, she then took her other hand and wrapped them both in her own warm hands. “… I’m so sorry.” She said, perceiving Pearl’s psychical pain which was slowly sucking life out of her. Lapis knew about what she was thinking, because the air abruptly turned really heavy. It was hard for Pearl to breathe, just as for Lapis.

“Why am I so weak?” Pearl suddenly let out in quiet sobs, making Lapis clasp her in her arms tightly right after, just to make her feel at least a little bit of comfort and sympathy.

“But… You’re not.” Lapis disagreed. She stroked her along her light peach hair fondly and gave her cheek a soft peck before hugging her once again.
“Yes, I am.” Pearl opposed, hugging Lapis back around her waist. She bit her lip. “Otherwise I wouldn’t cry like a little baby.”

It made Lapis sigh again. She hugged Pearl a bit firmer and offered her to lay her head on her shoulder, scratching her tenderly and placing little kisses in her hair.

Lapis wanted to help, but she already knew that this kind of state was really difficult for Pearl to overcome. But fortunately it was way easier when Lapis was around. Her sympathy was honest, she always listened and did her best to comfort Pearl and to get her through it.

The sun was gradually setting down and white clouds were turning into purple ones, just as slow as the sky was darkening.

The time was showing 6 PM on Lapis’ watch and all the work was finally coming to an end. Pearl offered Lapis her hands and helped her clean a few stalls, trying to fight off all her worries, but unfortunately this one was hard, it was difficult to even focus on stupid sweeping.

She was trying to cover her quiet sobs somehow, at least in order to hide them from Lapis, because she was just so worried about Pearl that she was asking her every five minutes if she was okay while Pearl was mindlessly nodding at that with a weak smile, although the answer was always against her sore heart.

Lapis closed the giant stable gate across the corridor and locked it, she then walked through the hall and made sure that all the stalls were safely closed and that everything was on its place before she entered the barn where Pearl was waiting.

Lapis couldn’t see her friend from the stable hallway, because Pearl was behind the corner in the barn, leaning against the wall and head slightly hung down, arms crossed on her chest. There was no smile on her face, no light, no hope.

“Pearl.” Whispered Lapis as she stood in front of the girl, leaving only a little space between their bodies. She unwound her crossed arms and took her cold hands into hers – it was a slight shock for her just how cold her hands were.

“Hm?” Pearl lifted her eyes, although she didn’t want to. However, in the end she didn’t regret it, because she found Lapis’ eyes looking back at her.

“Wouldn’t you want to stay overnight?” She asked gently, petting Pearl with her thumbs, soothing her.

“I…” The tall girl let out a faint sign and left Lapis’ eyes then, ashamed of her own behavior – being so far from the reality and drowning in the past, almost unable to focus on the surroundings. She just felt so weak and confused. “… I don’t know. I should probably go home.”

“Are you sure?” The rider asked, a little too much unsure about this idea. She didn’t want it to end up like for the last time when Pearl was left alone in her home.

“I guess.” Pearl said, but the answer wasn’t quite that convincing as she wished it to be.

It made Lapis exhale. If only there was something she could do to make Pearl finally feel better, at least a little. “Alright.” Lapis nodded, although against her will. “Do you want to go... Now?”

Pearl didn’t, but she guessed that this could be the right time – time to leave before Lapis notices her dissolving into tears. So she nodded weakly.
It was hard for Lapis to comply due to how miserable Pearl looked, but she did. Pearl pushed herself away from the wall and unhurriedly headed to her car parked on the nearby parking lot, still holding each other’s hands.

Pearl pulled car keys out of her pocket and unlocked the car, stretching her hand to reach the door handle, but before she did, Lapis managed to stop her with her soft voice.

“Here, I’ll drive you home.” She offered and covered the door handle with her hand, so Pearl couldn’t grab it. She then placed her other hand on Pearl’s shoulder and squeezed it gently.

Pearl blinked twice before looking at Lapis. “You’re sweet, Lapis, but…” Pearl swallowed then and took Lapis’ hand which was placed on her shoulder a while before. But she stayed silent.

“No buts.” Lapis proclaimed. “I don’t want you to drive like this.”

Pearl just shrugged at that weakly, she didn’t want to fight. In the end she complied and Lapis accompanied her to the passenger seat. Before closing the door behind Pearl after she sat down, Lapis placed a small kiss on her cheek, just to make the ride more comfortable for her. Lapis sat on the driver seat, buckled herself up and took the keys from Pearl, starting the car, driving her beloved home and making sure that she arrives safe.

The ride was rather quiet. Pearl was staring out of the window, leaning her elbow against its rim and supporting her chin with her hand. She wasn’t into talking too much and Lapis knew that, so she wasn’t forcing her into communicating. She didn’t want to make things worse, although the silence was tearing Lapis apart, with an occasional glance at Pearl with a corner of her eye.

Lapis couldn’t exactly remember the road to Pearl’s apartment and it got yet worse as the sky got dark, so Pearl had to navigate sometimes, and during the whole ride the names of the world’s sides were the only words spoken.

They arrived within fifteen minutes to the parking lot surrounded by giant blocks of flats. Lapis parked the car carefully between two other ones, turned off the engine and then they both unbuckled themselves, getting out of the car, and while Lapis was locking the pickup, Pearl gingerly walked around it to Lapis, then they both headed towards the block where Pearl lived.

It took maybe three minutes before they got there, because the parking lot was full at the time and the last few free places were on the other side of the housing estate, so Lapis had to park there.

Pearl unlocked the glassed double-door and opened them slightly with a click, but this was the only thing she did. She stood still then, head hung down.

Lapis stood there, too, silent and watching her friend, but then Pearl groaned as she realized something and lifted her head.

“H-how are you gonna get home now?” She wondered, gazing at Lapis worriedly. ‘How couldn’t I just think about it earlier? Am I really going crazy? What are we going to do now?’

“Don’t worry about me.” Lapis smiled. “I’m gonna take a walk.”

Pearl shook her head. She didn’t like that idea too much. “No.” Her eyes widened. "I don’t want you to walk alone anywhere this late. It's not safe.”

“Well, buses don’t go this late hour, so.” The smaller girl snorted. “I guess have no choice.”
“But, Lapis—“ She tried, but Lapis’ finger hushed her softly.

“—It’s okay, dear. I’ll be fine.” Lapis then whispered, giving her one convincing smile and a blink of an eye, but for some reason Pearl still wasn’t sure about it.

She watched Lapis still, how the street lights were illuminating her hair and making it look ginger instead of her beautiful ocean blue color, her eyes were sparkling just like two big stars, she was smiling back at Pearl and making her smile herself a little. Lapis had the most beautiful and honest smile, always making Pearl’s heart stop first, then beat as fast and crazy as a locomotive’s driving wheels running on the highest level.

Pearl bit her lip and looked away. She still wasn’t ready to let Lapis go. She needed her close, although she wanted to be alone, she needed to be, but she was also afraid of letting Lapis walk by her own through the city in the dark. What if she gets lost? What if someone ambushes her and drags her away? Pearl couldn’t let go if these ideas abruptly, leaving her own eyes steady and milky.

“So.” Lapis started in a soft voice which made Pearl lightly shake her head and look back at her.

“… I guess I’m gonna go now.” She finished in whisper. She then stepped towards the taller girl slowly, leaving only a few inches between them. Lapis lifted her hands cautiously and in a very slow pace she took Pearl’s cheeks in them, making Pearl lose her breath in the middle of her exhale.

“I…” Pearl half-closed her eyes, managing to finish her exhale but not the sentence.

“Good night, sweetie. Take care.” Lapis asked kindly and delicately she pressed her lips against Pearl’s then, leaving her breathless.

The kiss was soft and careful first, without any force or high fervor, just gentle and temperate. But the longer Lapis’ kiss was lasting, the warmer feeling inside Pearl’s chest was growing. It was like a little bulb lit on inside her and the light was becoming stronger and brighter every second, healing her heart and making it beat again.

Shivers ran through Pearl’s body as she truly started to perceive the kiss, the gentle pressure of Lapis’ sweet lips which were brushing her own and asking for more busses. Suddenly Pearl threw her cares to the wind and forgot about everything, about Rose, about Greg. The only thing she was focusing on were the girl’s gorgeous lips, caressing and loving hers, kissing her slowly and tugging Pearl closer with her hands.

Pearl lost her mind, drowning in a blissful feeling of rapture, rolling her eyes backwards in delight. But everything abruptly faded away as their lips parted. Everything went back to normal, her memories were back and Lapis was suddenly so far away.

“Goodbye.” Lapis said sadly and Pearl noticed her voice slightly cracking.

“… Goodbye.” Pearl repeated, although she felt like it was still too soon to say goodbyes. She crossed her arms on her chest anxiously then. “… Thank you for driving me home, Lappy.”

Lapis faintly nodded, but without saying a word. At least she smiled, but this smile didn’t seem happy at all. The equestrian put her hands into her pockets then and turned on her heels, the weak smile remaining on her lips as she was turning away.

There was a lump in Pearl’s throat, but she wasn’t able to swallow it down, not when she was watching Lapis leaving herself. Every next step was like a knife stab into her heart and the wound from it growing wider as the inches were growing between them.
“Lapis, wait!” Pearl then called out, watching Lapis who was already something about three meters distant from her.

The girl stopped immediately and turned towards her. The wind blew lightly into her face then, making her hair flutter. “Yes?”

“I just…” Pearl swallowed. The feeling of hopelessness and aloneness were uncontrollably rising. She couldn’t imagine fighting it, not tonight, she already felt too weak and empty to face it. Pearl finally realized that she actually didn’t want to be alone, that she needed Lapis, she needed her close and she needed her arms around herself.

Lapis made several steps towards her, wondering why Pearl wasn’t responding this long. She removed her hands from her pockets. “What is it, honey?”

“Could you…” Pearl began, but then thought once more before continuing. Didn’t she want too much? She’s already asked Lapis for so many things. Lapis ran after her when she disappeared, she took care of her wounds and she drove her home. Could Pearl even ask for more? Wasn’t it too much? “I’m-uh, I mean… N-nothing, just… Forget it.”

Lapis furrowed her eyebrows in confusion. She would comply if it really was Pearl’s request, but Lapis wanted to know what was behind it, so she asked softly. “Pearl, just tell me.”

Pearl blushed instantly, and was blushing yet more as Lapis was approaching her slowly, but still she was too far to reach. Pearl sighed defeated then and shyly looked downwards. “… Could you… Could you stay, Lapis?” She whispered shakily, like if Lapis would do something to her if her voice was any louder.

“I…” Lapis’ brows rose a bit in surprise. She wasn’t expecting such a question. Of course she could stay, and she would really love to, but there was a little problem. There were horses to take care of, she would have to get up early again and leave the flat before Pearl wakes up, because Lapis wouldn’t want to wake Pearl up when she doesn’t have to. And although Lapis is trying to earn the greatest comfort for Pearl by leaving her peacefully sleep, it makes Lapis sad, because she can’t stay in bed with her – horses and her job was forbidding her from it. But Lapis sadly wondered for how long would this relationship last if Lapis couldn’t even stay a bit longer with her girlfriend and eventually cuddle when they wake up together.

“Please.” Pearl’s pleading dragged her out of her thoughts suddenly. “… I don’t want to be alone.”

Could Lapis even reject this? Her heart was already too softened not to nod at her lover’s insistence. Lapis guessed that she had no choice. She decided that the horses will have to wait. It was making her heart bleed as she imagined leaving Pearl like this anyway. She had to stay – at least she won’t have any remorse for leaving Pearl alone in this state.

“Alright.” She agreed, voice low and warming. She approached Pearl slowly with a beautiful smile decorating her lips.

After a really long time Pearl finally smiled, and it was the loveliest smile which had Lapis ever seen. Pearl then spread her arms and quickly she wrapped them around Lapis. She hid her face in the crook of her neck and sniffed, but not because she was sad, but quite the opposite. “Thank you.” She murmured gratefully and the most beautiful feeling overwhelmed her right as a great weight was lifted from her heart. Finally it was easy for her to breathe again.
Chapter recapitulation:

- Lapis took care of Pearl and cleaned her wounds
- Lapis drove Pearl home
- Pearl asked Lapis to stay at her place over night

♦ 11th week (Saturday afternoon + night)
Pearl unlocked the door silently with a turn of a metal key and let the door open. An empty dark space was spreading in front of them, it was like a portal to another dimension with a soft waft of a verbal aroma welcoming them.

The skinny girl entered the flat first, following her own shadow as she was walking further with the corridor light impacting her back.

With a realization that Lapis has never been to Pearl’s place, a curious smile curled up on Lapis’ lips. She scanned the door frame excitedly with hands folded behind her back, peering inside in effort to make a picture of what could Pearl’s apartment look like, although there was pretty much dark but the street light slightly illuminating the interior.

Pearl switched the light on and removed the keys. She threw them in a small straw basket placed on a shoe cabinet under wooden pegs bedecked with jackets. It seemed like the jangle of the thrown keys attracted little ragdoll cat and so made it immediately check who broke in.

Rose trotted towards the main door and welcomed her owner with a quiet meow with no doubt that it could be someone else, then ran straight towards her legs and started nuzzling them with her dark grey nose and flexible back, meowing once more to get Pearl’s attention.

"Hi, honey." Pearl smiled a little and took the cat in her arms. She petted it gently along its back and placed a small kiss on its forehead. Little Rose started purring and nuzzling Pearl’s jaw happily, like if she was her whole universe, settling in her arms while massaging them with her paws and leaving light claw marks on her skin.

The blue-haired girl still stood outside the flat, curiously peering in, but as she noticed Pearl turning towards her, she straightened.

"Come on in." Pearl beckoned with a small grin on her lips, watching Lapis.

The girl nodded quickly. Her body gently swung forward and she stepped over the threshold to the inside. The verbal fragrance grew a bit heavier as she went further, though it never felt irritating but had a quite good impact on her senses.

Yet from the little foyer Lapis could guess that the flat was perfectly clean and well organized. Even this hall was looking decent, neat, with a wide crystal-clear mirror by her right side and well sorted shoes, by their color, type and use, in the shoe cabinet.

"You can put your jacket here." Pearl gestured then, voice low, a shy smile on her face.

"Oh.” Lapis’ head dropped from the wall as she was excitedly scanning the whole foyer interior, looking at Pearl. “Yeah, thank you.”

Pearl gave Lapis a smile, a little less shy than before, but conversely her cheeks turned a bit red. She crossed the hall and closed the door while Lapis was removing her jacket and putting it on a peg, and once again Pearl caught herself staring during that process, but fortunately for her Lapis didn’t notice.

"So.” Pearl cleared her throat with a small shake of her head, pulling aside the nasty images
she’s created in the back of her mind as Lapis’ jacket was taken off. “Would you like something to drink? … A tea?”

“Um, yeah. Why not.” Lapis shrugged, but had a smirk on her face. Her arms swung down from the peg after hooking her jacket, swinging freely past her body as she slowly walked through the hall towards Pearl.

Just now Pearl seemed to notice how seductively actually Lapis’ pelvis was moving while walking. Has Pearl noticed it before? She would have noticed it for sure… ‘Or not?’

“So, this is your cat?” Pearl caught while her mind was fogged with thoughts. Lapis suddenly appeared right in front of her, leaving Pearl clueless how did the girl get to her so quickly.

“Oh, um, yeah.” Pearl let out, actually choosing random words just not to stay speechless. “This… Is Rose.”

“What a sweet kitty.” Lapis hummed, already petting the ragdoll. Lapis always wished for a cat when she was little, but there were allergic issues which her adoptive father had, so they couldn’t afford to have one. Little Lapis was sad, but at least she had horses close by to fight off her sadness. And although Lapis’ first adoptive dad left and a new man, with whom Lapis’ mother gave birth to Lapis’ sister, appeared in her life, she never thought of having a cat again. Lapis was satisfied with what she had.

“She likes you.” Pearl giggled softly, watching her ragdoll nuzzling Lapis’ palm while being petted.

Lapis smiled back at her girlfriend, sharing a brief look with her from behind her blue bangs.

“So, um.” Pearl swallowed her breath. “Let’s head inside.”

Lapis agreed with a nod and followed Pearl deeper into her flat. The tall girl turned on the living room light after putting her cat down. The room, which was slightly illuminated by a street light just a few seconds ago, was now shining bright. Everything was perfectly alphabetized, perfectly sorted and clean, there wasn’t a single dust particle in the air. Everything was just right and it almost made Lapis feel uncomfortable how perfect everything was – but maybe it was just because it was pointing out how messy Lapis actually was, especially when it came to her room which she shared with her sister at aunt Agate’s house. And because Lapis wasn’t spending there too much time, the room practically became Deedee’s. Well, at least she kept the room clean.

“Welcome to my home.” Pearl spread her arms, as much as the corners of her lips, turned to Lapis who was left stunned.

“Oh my.” Lapis swallowed, but grinned. “It’s so… Clean.”

“Tell me about it.” Pearl chuckled ironically, putting hands on her hips. “When anxiety strikes, I’m taking a broom.”

“Oh, Pearl…” Lapis shook her head, sad smile on her lips. She was watching Pearl, and Pearl was watching her back, for a minute or so, until the taller girl spoke, stopping the brief awkward silence.

“I’m gonna… Make you that tea. Make yourself at home.” She then offered and gestured towards the sofa, a small but honest smile on her lips.

“Thank you.” Lapis nodded gratefully and watched Pearl leaving the living room, heading to a narrow room which seemed to be the kitchen.
“Which one would you like? I’ve got a green tea, white tea or…” Pearl stood on her tiptoes while searching in cupboard above the kitchen unit. “A fruit leaf tea.”

“You know, I think I’ll have the fruit one.” Lapis called out from the living room. That room had something into it – Lapis really liked the old-looking design. The interior and the furniture had light colors, usually faint pink and white. ‘What a lovely combination.’

After she scanned the living room entirely and fully enjoyed its essence, she headed to the kitchen with little Rose trotting silently behind her.

“Okay.” Pearl grabbed the leaf tea and closed the cupboard. She put the kettle on and put the pieces of dried fruit in a tea strainer.

Lapis quietly approached her. She stood behind Pearl’s back, watching how gracefully was Pearl manipulating with everything she touched, with ease and care, like if everything was made of fragile glass and only a small pressure would break it. It was just so enchanting how careful she was, it was curling up a smile on Lapis’ lips.

As the tall girl was slowly working, Lapis pressed her chest against her long back, tossing her arms around Pearl’s waist and resting her chin on her bony shoulder. Lapis then started rocking them both softly, from side to side, gently squeezing Pearl’s body to give her a soothing feeling of safety while she seemed to be busy with making tea.

After a moment of getting used to this unexpected contact, Pearl hummed happily under her breath and hugged Lapis’ arms with her own.

There was such beautiful warmth pouring from Lapis’ body into hers while they were joined together as one. Pearl closed her eyes and ignored the kettle hissing as it started. She tilted her head and rested it on Lapis’ instead of sousing the tea.

Lapis let the corners of her lips turn upwards yet more. She inhaled cautiously then. Pearl’s sweet perfume tickled her all the way down her throat and then filled her lungs. Pearl’s smell was unique, she would recognize her blind-folded between millions of people, she would recognize her face on a single touch, because it was soft like a velvet, its every curve was specific.

Pearl then opened her eyes as the hissing was slowly vanishing in the air. She raised one of her hands, the other one still holding Lapis’, and took the kettle. The strainer full of fruit on the bottom of the cup gingerly started to rose up as the boiling water was spilled inside the mug. The transparent liquid started turning into dark red color, making spirals and complex shapes as the molecules under the surface were dancing.

Lapis watched Pearl, scanning her every movement. Nothing could be hidden from her eyes as she was looking over Pearl’s shoulder. But then Lapis’ eyes darted to her face. Unfortunately, Pearl was looking ahead, spilling the water into the cup, seeming concentrated not to overflow it.

Lapis, in order to catch the girl’s attention, nuzzled her neck a little bit which made Pearl instantly put the kettle back down on the kitchen unit, almost making it slip out of her squeeze and fall down on the floor, but Pearl’s reflexes saved the day.

Shivers inside Lapis’ stomach intensified and Pearl could feel the same in her own guts. Pearl’s perfume was traveling through Lapis’ senses and easing her nerves.

Lapis’ lips and the tip of her nose were brushing her pale skin and making goosebumps flood her body along with something making Pearl’s stomach turn upside down as those lips were slowly wandering along her neck, making her scarf loosen with one of the hickeys being exposed.
Pearl gasped silently to herself, eyes half-closed. Her cheeks grew warm. Even the concentration of spits inside her mouth was growing bigger as Lapis kept nuzzling, her hot breath slipping across Pearl’s slender neck. She swallowed the spits down.

Though it was really sweet, and Pearl couldn’t get enough of it. Simply put, this was the key to throw all worries away and appear in presence.

Soft kisses were placed on the surface of her skin, leaving no evidence behind them as Lapis moved her lips further to kiss another spot. Her fingers were softly scratching Pearl's sides, causing quick impulses running through every part of her body and goosebumps taking its place all over her skin.

“Lappy…” The girl whispered, fighting not to let her eyes be closed, but failing. “Your tea’s gonna get cold.”

This fact seemed to be the last thing to be bothering Lapis at that moment, so it only made her chuckle. “Oh no. What are we gonna do with it?” She wondered dramatically, but whispering, still nuzzling Pearl’s neck.

A soft giggle left Pearl’s mouth, she then nuzzled Lapis back with a grin present on her lips. “I’m afraid that you’re going to drink it, honey.” She joked.

“Right.” Lapis chuckled, giving Pearl one last kiss on her temple. She then let go of her, but remained being gentle as her hands were slowly shifting away from her body, and took the cup. “Thank you for the tea, sweetie.”

“Yeah, you’re welcome.” Pearl shrugged shyly, gesturing towards the living room for Lapis to follow her.

They both took a seat with Pearl offering Lapis to sit first since she was the quest.

Lapis placed her cup on the table, so she could settle comfortably on the mattress first, then she took the cup back into her hands and leaned against the back of the sofa.

The pale-skinned girl tried her best not to look like she was staring, but at least she managed to watch Lapis only with a corner of her eye, not to look suspicious. Meanwhile her cat approached them, jumped on the couch and instantly settled down in Pearl’s lap, snuggling and purring loudly. Pearl’s hand was then placed on the cat’s back and started petting her.

Lapis noticed and chuckled softly to herself, leaving a light blush on her own face. Her smile conjured up a smile on Pearl’s face, too.

A brief silence filled the room as none of them was speaking, only a soft purring was echoing in the interior slightly. Lapis was drinking her tea quietly with an occasional glance at Pearl with a corner of eye. She held the mug in both of her hands which were resting in her lap before taking another sip. The tea tasted really good even without sugar or honey and it smelled just lovely. Every time Lapis pressed the cup to her lips and smelled the liquid, its aroma ran through all her senses – it felt so refreshing and mind-easing.

The desire of wanting to go closer to Lapis was occupying her stomach. She so wanted to finally let go of Greg, of Rose… Though it was so hard, and she knew she can’t stay like this forever. She has Lapis now.

She sighed and let her body fall against Lapis’ lightly, resting her head on the smaller girl’s shoulder.
“What is it, kitty?” Lapis put the cup down in her lap, placing a soft kiss in Pearl’s peach hair.

“It’s nothing.” She shook her head a little, whispering. “I’m just really glad you’re here with me.”

Lapis sighed with a smile. “Me too.” She said and wrapped her arm around Pearl’s shoulders, pulling her closer.

“… Thank you.” Pearl snuggled to her, perceiving the comfort of closeness between them. “Thank you for everything, Lapis… Huh, what would I do without you?”

Lapis thought, but let a brief silence fill the room before Pearl continued.

“I… I’d really like to move on, but…” Her eyes closed and an exhale left her, her arms were wrapped around Lapis waist then, and Lapis squeezed her in her arms a bit firmer to make Pearl know that she was there for her, putting the cup on the table before doing so.

“It’s hard… She meant a lot to me, you know. It’s just difficult to let go… To forget.” Pearl nearly whined.

“I know, sweetie.” Lapis nodded faintly, sympathetically listening to her girlfriend. She knew that Pearl needed time, but she was determined to help her no matter how long it could take. Looking at Pearl drowning in her emotions was making Lapis’ stomach twist uncomfortably. “I don’t know what exactly was between you and Rose, but… I think that you deserve to move on. It just makes me feel bad watching you so distressed and without any idea how could I help you… I don’t want you to suffer, Pearl. You don’t deserve it.” Lapis admitted and exhaled sorrowfully, thinking. “It was hard for me, too, when my mom passed away… And it took me so long to get over it.”

“Oh… Lapis.” Pearl murmured, realizing that she wasn’t the only one whose heart was aching, that Lapis knew exactly what pain she could feel. But this was even worse, because he was her mother, the one who raised her and was taking care about her the whole life.

“It’s okay.” The girl smiled a little, tilting her head, so she could get a bit closer to Pearl, or at least have that feeling. “But how I felt back then, it was… Horrible. I can’t imagine going through that again. But I know that you’re strong, Pearl, and I know you can let go just as I did. I know it takes time, but believe me, you’ll feel much better then. And though…” Lapis finally smiled. “I’ve got you now, and now I have no reason to be sad… Because you’re here, with me... And that’s what really matters to me.”

It opened wide Pearl’s eyes. She turned her head upper towards Lapis. She was smiling beautifully down at her, scanning her turquoise eyes closely, letting Pearl’s hair flutter a little as she was breathing through her nose.

A new wave of hope washed Pearl immediately. She realized many things, and though yet long ago. She realized that the real happiness in her life was Lapis, giving her hope, and Rose, only causing her heart hurt. Pearl didn’t want this to be this way. She wanted to feel free, liberated, to finally live her own life uninhibitedly, with Lapis – her sun, her everything, the one who truly cared about her and loved her back the same way.

“Yeah.” Pearl nodded faintly, a little tear decorated the corner of her eye. She snuggled to Lapis, cheeks bright red. She sighed then, thinking for a little moment. ‘… Rose is gone, but Lapis is here… Who is worth living for? The one who makes me cry? Or the one who makes me smile?’ Pearl asked herself, although the answer was certainly clear. ‘I gotta let go. For both of us.’ She said to herself resolutely, lifting her head up to see Lapis’ face once more. One of her hands found
its place on Lapis’ freckled cheek and stroked it with her thumb gently. Her eyes met Lapis’, she looked deep into them, seeing pure love and profound understanding, kindness and beautiful light, a new future. ‘I love her so much… I’m choosing her.’ Pearl decided, eyeing Lapis closely, realizing how enchanting she was, how beautiful eyes she had, a stunning smile which was like a drug for Pearl, a remedy, making her hanker for it and never let go of it, because that was the only thing that always made Pearl feel better and kept her alive.

Her lips were pressed to Lapis’ ones then, lightly, giving an extra care into the kiss and letting a tiny gasp escape Lapis’ mouth later on. ‘… Goodbye, Rose.’ Pearl closed her eyes. She pressed her lips harder on the girl, running her hand into her blue hair and tugging her yet closer. Her other hand soon followed and suddenly her body grew heavier on Lapis. The small space between them was slowly getting tighter and tighter, and so it made the ragdoll escape right on time before it could get squashed between them.

Lapis murmured something into the kiss which Pearl couldn’t recognize what it was because of her concentration. The blue-haired girl's eyes were wide in surprise. She had to support herself from falling aside to the mattress, but although Pearl’s body was very light, Lapis couldn’t hold both of them on her hands for too long.

Her arms suddenly buckled and they both appeared lying on the couch. Lapis almost couldn’t catch her breath, because this whole time Pearl didn’t allow her to do so. She was kissing her deeply, giving special care into every kiss given to her, silently gasping for more while butterflies in Lapis’ stomach were performing acrobatic tricks and her eyes rolling backwards in delight.

“P-Pearl.” Lapis tried, pulling Pearl gently away at least to speak. “What’s the matter?” She let out in chuckle.

“Oh, s-sorry. Maybe I let myself be carried away a little.” She chuckled nervously, looking away and eventually trying not to get embarrassed too much.

“Oh, I see.” Lapis grinned, lying still on her back and watching Pearl as she was lying on her body.

It was always so special to Pearl – every time they connected, it felt like they were two pieces of puzzle and were fitting perfectly when the joined. Pearl loved that, and so did Lapis.

“I just…” Pearl thought. There were many words occupying her mind, but she wasn’t able to formulate any logical sentence as she realized that she's never actually been like this, better said lying on Lapis like that. “I, I…”

Lapis giggled to herself, trying to bite back a smile. Pearl was just so adorable, especially when her cheeks weren’t obedient.

She took Pearl’s cheeks into her hands then, gingerly, and locked their lips together once more. The mush of words inside Pearl’s head then instantly fell into pieces, like if a cloud of sandstorm fell to the ground and there was nothing in the sky but beaming sun. Her mind eased, such as her tensed muscles, and her eyes flutter closed.

She knew she chose the right person.

Chapter End Notes
**Chapter recapitulation:**

- Lapis stayed at Pearl’s place
- Lapis met Pearl’s cat
- Pearl decided to let go of her previous crush and start off a new path

♦ 11th week (Saturday night)

**PS:** It's been way too long without posting anything and I'm mad at myself a little because of that, because I thought that I'll finally have a bit more time, but it seems like it's quite the opposite… :D I have to admit that I had no big inspiration so far, so I can't say that I'm for 100% satisfied with this chapter. Also that's the reason it took me so long to finish it. :C I rewrote it twice, but it's still not what I wanted I guess. T__T Though I hope you guys liked it at least a little bit more than me. :'3

Enjoy your summer holidays! ^w^

Love~
A digital watch standing on the cabinet next to the sofa showed 5 AM as Lapis wearily rose her head to check the time. This was the time she was usually getting up and getting ready for another day full of working in the stable. But today was the exception, she decided.

Lapis sighed happily. A large smile appeared on her lips as this was the first time she could afford to sleep a bit longer than usually. She loved that idea, in fact this reality.

As she was lying on her belly, supporting herself with her elbows, she realized how comfortable it actually was in these duvets, lying on this soft mattress without any worries was making Lapis want to fall asleep again, although usually during this time she was brisk and full of new energy, ready to spread it all around.

Lapis looked ahead, watching shut curtains through which were only a few stripes of light breaking in. It was dark inside, but not as dark as she couldn’t recognize the surroundings.

Her gaze slid down from the wall to the floor briefly, listening how quiet it was all around, although this apartment was placed nowhere else than in the middle of a busy city. Watching the interior so quiet and peaceful, Lapis wished for waking up in a place like this more often, though the stable noises were never a big deal to her while waking up.

Lapis scanned several more things which caught her attention during darting her eyes round the room when she ended up looking down at the girl sleeping right next to her.

She was lying on her front, too, with one arm tossed over her head and the other one hidden under her chest.

Lapis hummed merrily to herself and with a soft huff she laid her head down in pillows again, watching Pearl as she had no idea about Lapis being awake and smiling at her, as her chest was widening while inhale and lowering while an exhale.

She was really cute, Lapis thought, noticing one of Pearl’s undershirt’s shoulder straps has fallen from her shoulder slightly. Lapis lifted her hand slowly and helped the strap back up, touching Pearl’s skin very lightly and making her shoulder jolt a little at the contact of Lapis’ fingers.

There was a silent chuckle which Lapis wasn’t able to bite back. She blushed faintly, looking at Pearl and how the activity of her body intensified after giving that strap back. Pearl started shifting her body and moving her fingers as her arm was still hanging over her head. Sometimes she moved her leg or the other, pouted or wrinkled her nose as if something tickled it. But she was quiet all the time, not knowing about anything that was happening around her, sleeping peacefully.

Lapis couldn’t describe how happy she was. She never felt such a pleasant feeling in her stomach. This was a joy, a pride, she was so glad that Pearl was finally able to move on, although both of them knew that years of sorrow couldn’t be forgotten after just one night. It will take time, but this first step had been finally made and from now everything will go easier. Lapis knew it, she could feel it deep inside. She believed in Pearl, she knew she’s strong, and Lapis knew she can do it. Lapis was surprised herself how quickly Pearl got used to the horses and that she even offered Lapis help with cleaning stalls. Such warming, exhilarating feeling.
Lapis smiled to herself, eyes half-closed. Her eyes fell to Pearl’s lightly parted lips, white teeth shining through them. She was murmuring something softly, but not enough recognizable for Lapis to say what it was. So Lapis just lay there, for a few more minutes, trying to solve the enigma and mysterious words falling from Pearl’s mouth until she found herself falling asleep again.

Lapis woke up to a quiet sound of water streaming down which was coming from the bathroom door at her feet. She listened to it until she noticed the water stopped drumming after several minutes.

As she was lying on her side, turned towards the wall, she blinked off the mass from her eyes. Gently she ran her hand through her short cyan hair, smoothing it against the back of her neck with a quiet sigh. The girl cleared her throat softly and forced herself to turn on her back then. She was cautious not to hit Pearl with her arm as she was turning over, but noticed that the girl wasn’t there. ‘Oh, of course.’ She chuckled to herself, realizing that Pearl was actually using the shower.

Lapis yawned softly and stretched her arms above her head to wake up her muscles. She also stretched her legs, like if she was making a snow angel. She exhaled at the comfort she had, these soft covers and puffy pillows were just so delightful to lie in. She couldn’t remember when she managed to sleep so well recently. Suddenly she started to feel a desire to fall asleep again, but the sound of a door cracking open and light footfalls kept her eyes open.

“Look who’s awake.” She could hear a honey-sweet voice. Pearl was grinning at her as she was approaching the sofa on which Lapis was lying. “… Our morning bird.” With a soft chuckle she sat down beside the girl, placing her hands on each side of her body and supporting her own.

Lapis rolled her eyes, however she smiled, a light blush spread along her cheeks. “Morning.” She murmured, voice a bit hoarse because of the long sleep. She perceived Pearl getting closer and leaning against her elbows, their chests slightly touching.

The ends of Pearl’s hair were wet and also the roots around her face, Lapis noticed, and she smelled so beautifully, too.

“Good morning, sweetie.” Pearl whispered, staring deep into Lapis’ eyes before she could feel her tanned arms being wrapped around her neck.

“You smell just so lovely.” Lapis admitted, speaking slowly, keeping her voice low. She ran her fingers through Pearl’s hair and brushed through it softly, combing it towards Pearl’s nape.

Pearl blushed a little, the gentle pressure of Lapis’ fingers made chills ran down her spine. She cleared her throat and shook the feeling off, but her cheeks remained red. “Did you sleep well?”

“Like never before.” She confessed, faint grin on her face. “Wish I could sleep here more often.”

Pearl giggled at that. She guessed that sleeping on hay every day probably wasn’t as comfy as she thought, and not even healthy. It was hardly imaginable for her to live like that, although Pearl really liked sleeping in the attic. It was prettily cozy in there.

“You’re always welcome to stay.” Pearl offered and gave Lapis one small kiss on her lips.

It rolled Lapis’ eyes backwards, although the pressure of her mouth was very light, but Lapis returned the kiss right after before Pearl could pull back even an inch.
Pearl hummed happily, smiling at the starlight in front of her, looking back at her. Pearl found herself lost in the depths of Lapis’ eyes, searching for air bubbles, for daylight, unable to reach the surface. She felt like if a siren song overwhelmed her mind and kept her down, stuck in deep waters, floating between streams. Her breath slowed down, as if it was freezing in her lungs, slow like a poison streaming through her veins. She was closing her eyes. She started leaning towards Lapis, letting a breath escape her parted lips. Their lips gingerly joined once more. They were changing kisses more delicately, gingerly, letting soft smacks and gasps fill the room as they kissed.

Lapis lost her breath, though Pearl’s was the one filling her lungs. Pearl was kissing her really cautiously, Lapis noticed, gently, like if she was afraid of breaking her if she pushed any harder, but Lapis loved that. She’s never been kissed so finely, so tenderly by anyone before. She could do nothing but enjoy every time she had an opportunity.

“Ummh… Mhuh.” Pearl groaned into Lapis’ mouth as she pulled Pearl deeper against her lips, holding Pearl by her jaw and neck with her hands. She tasted her lips, inch by inch, and even dared biting Pearl, lightly enough so it wasn’t any painful but rather teasing.

“Uhh.” Pearl gasped silently. “Mm-Lapis.”

“Aham?” Lapis smirked, clasping Pearl’s lip between her teeth and stretching it.

“S-stop biting… Me.” She pleaded while being nibbled on her lip, although she quite wanted the opposite to happen, though her cheeks betrayed her on sounding convincing.

Lapis sniggered at her pleading and bit Pearl once more. “Make me.” She teased, because she honestly wanted to see Pearl try.

Pearl had no idea what should she do, so she was simply waiting for Lapis to act. And once Lapis tried to get near and bite again, Pearl managed to bite Lapis sooner than she could.

“Ouch! Hey.” Lapis frowned. Immediately she ran her finger over her lips like if it would relief the pain. “How dare you.”

The girl above her smirked victoriously, raising her chin up proudly. She leaned back and straightened her back, looking down at Lapis.

“You’re gonna pay for that, I’m telling you.” Lapis threatened. She sat up, too, in effort to grab Pearl by her hand and pin her against the couch, but Pearl was quicker and managed to escape Lapis’ clutches right on time. She ran around the table with Lapis snatching after her. But as Pearl guessed, she wasn’t able to run anywhere far, because her apartment was way too small to escape from Lapis.

She ended up in the kitchen where she was backed up in corner.

“You won’t escape from me now.” Lapis declared as she was slowly closing the space between them.

Pearl tried to slip out from Lapis’ spread arms which were approaching, but before Pearl could do so, Lapis’ hands were slapped against the kitchen unit, Pearl imprisoned in between them.

“Any last words?” Lapis murmured, scanning Pearl’s expression little by little as she was leaning closer, ready to strike, teeth shining bright at Pearl, and though Pearl should look rather fearful of possibly anything that could happen, she grinned confidently instead and made Lapis insecure about the following events.
It took Lapis a while before she could get out of the ecstasy caused by an extreme amount of sweet kisses from Pearl. She caught herself heading wrong direction at least twice while making her way back to the stable. The world around her seemed like it was faintly rippling, like a mirage, like a boiling air quivering above hot road while being melted by summer sunrays. Everything was so bright, the air was pleasantly warm and birds were softly singing their songs while jumping from one branch to another, people were chatting in the streets as Lapis was passing them. Although everything was on its usual place as every single day and night, it suddenly seemed all… Brighter and happier. It was such a joy for Lapis to breathe, to close her eyes as she walked or let the wind brush her hair and make it flutter in the air. Simply put, everything was absolutely perfect and beautiful. When for the last time was Earth such a peaceful place?

Lapis finally arrived to the stable, almost making herself thrust into the wall when walking through the doorway. There were a few people inside, she noticed. Or was is actually one person and their illusions applied all around? Lapis wondered.

“There you are!” Lapis caught, though quite muffled. She walked further, passing a few stalls before she realized that the voice belonged to Peridot.

“Where were you, you chump?” The blonde snapped Lapis out of her thoughts, however she kept that foolish, enchanted grin on her face.

"Um, hey.” She greeted, rubbing on her eye wearily like if she just woke up. “I was… With Pearl.” Lapis clarified. Just the mention of her name made small golden bells ring in her ears and her heart flutter.

"Guh, of course.” Peridot rolled her eyes, hands placed on her hips in annoyance. “Now where’s your phone? Why weren’t you answering it? Greg was here and was looking for you for fucking sake everywhere. We were worried something happened to you.” She reproached.

“Uh, w-wait…” Lapis tried to put everything together, shaking her head slightly and massaging her forehead, but guessed it took her too long, because Peridot cleared her throat in effort to get her attention again. “What—what time is it?” Lapis rubbed the top of her head, wondering.

“It’s **noon**, Lapis!” Peridot spread her arms like if to put an extra meaning into it. “You should’ve been here six hours ago.”

“Oh…” Lapis froze for a moment, her pupils shrank tiny. Suddenly it felt difficult to remain in that delightful state she’s been in the last few hours. “Gosh, it’s just a few hours, Peridot... It happens.” Lapis shrugged it off, but the feeling inside her guts started turning into less pleasant one.

“Jesus, then keep your phone with yourself at least!” The smaller girl exhaled, running her hand through her blonde hair. “Hey, I know that Pearl was a mess yesterday, but at least send someone a message next time if you’re not coming.” She asked, her voice turned calm then, as if a relief overcame her. “… Is she okay though?”

“Um, yeah.” Lapis nodded faintly, hands crossed on her chest – the one habit she couldn’t get rid of. “She’s fine.”

“Good to hear.” Peridot sighed softly. “Blue’s grazing by the way. She’s groomed, too.” The girl proclaimed, pointing her thumb behind herself, towards the rope-fenced area ahead of the stable.
“Oh… Thanks.” Lapis blushed, looking away, eyebrows furrowed as she felt a bit regretful for being late.

“Don’t thank me. Opal took care of her.” Peridot declared, heading to the horse which was standing in the middle of the hallway with a lead rope clipped to its halter and tied up in a safety slip knot to a stall bar, so the horse couldn’t get away while being groomed.

‘Opal’s been here? Man, I haven’t seen her in a while.’ Lapis thought for a moment, later on wondering where her phone could be. Likely she left it in the attic – well, in the best case.

So Lapis headed there and gently grabbed the ladder in her hands, freezing for a second or two. She remembered Pearl climbing up the ladder several weeks ago. It turned her cheeks red immediately as she imagined those graceful movements, though she wasn’t supposed to look at her from below, but… ‘Whatever… It happens.’ Lapis bit her lip and shook those images off before she finally decided to continue upper.

The attic looked exactly as Lapis left it but a few bales of straw missing from Lapis’ hand-made front wall. She started off with pillows, but below them she only found her diary. She tried her luck searching in the tangles of her blanket, but neither the phone was there. She turned every blade of straw upside down, she checked all the shelves, but only a box of gluten free brownies was lying there. She decided that the phone should’ve been downstairs, so she slid down the ladder and searched in the barn first. She slipped into the storage, scanned every bucket, every box and shelf, but no luck there either. She then entered the feed room which was right under the attic, because it already happened several times that her phone slipped through the wooden floor of the attic right into a bucket with oat before. It still kept Lapis amazed how that was even possible. Still, not a single sign of her phone.

Lapis pouted, one brow furrowed. The tack room was the next option then, she decided. She walked through the corridor. On that occasion she patted the horse which Peridot was grooming and also stole one apple from the bucket standing nearby.

“Hey, put that back!” Peridot barked, but part of the apple was already bitten off and Lapis’ middle finger risen as she was entering the tack room on the end of the stable.

The tack room was one big pile of mess, at least for Lapis. Yes, every saddle and bridle was on its place, hooked on long metal racks and pegs, but everything around it was making the room look like a junkyard. There were cans with lubricants and oils for leather surfaces, rags, cleaning supplies, such as hoof picks, brushes and combs which should’ve been in storage and certainly not in this room, ear nets, saddle pads and many other things which Lapis couldn’t even recognize because of this massive amount of items.

‘How am I supposed to find my phone in here?!” Lapis panicked, almost choking up with the piece of fruit inside her mouth. She swallowed it down and took a deep breath. At least those apples were cut in half, so Lapis could eat it quite quickly and start off with searching again. Those sweet juices somehow made Lapis feel like she obtained an extra point of energy, which definitely came in handy at that moment. So she walked through the room to the other end and started there, searching in boxes, checking all shelves, cabinets, raking through the hills of things all across the table, searing high and low, checking up the area where Blue’s tacks were and…

“Eureka!” Lapis exulted as she found what she was looking for. She pulled the phone out off a small leather bag which was attached to Blue’s saddle. There were several more things inside, too – hopefully not any spoiled food.

Lapis checked the screen to see if there were any missed calls. There were five in the final count and two messages, she noticed – three calls from Peridot, two calls and one message from Greg.
and the last message was from Pearl.

‘Would it be foolish if I opened Pearl’s message first?’ Lapis pouted, inconspicuously glancing over her shoulder if someone was watching, but fortunately the room was empty-handed but her inside.

She sniggered to herself and tapped the most recent received message – Pearl’s one. It read: “Take care on your way back. Love you, sweetheart.”

Lapis caught herself blushing while reading it. She tried to get rid of the redness spreading across her cheeks by shaking her head, though she knew it won’t work even if she tried her best.

She launched the typing box and started cautiously tapping letter by letter, taking an extra time to check if there were any grammar mistakes to fix, plus adding several kissing emojis at the end of the message, then sending it off.

Then there was a message from Greg, urging Lapis to call him whenever she’s free, so she scrolled down her contacts and dialed his number. The phone rang at least ten times, making Lapis wonder if Greg will manage to pick it up before the dialing ends. But finally a man’s voice echoed there.

“Oh, Lapis, hello!” Greg greeted. It quite sounded like he was in a hurry. “Is everything okay? I couldn’t get in contact with you anywhere.”

“Yeah, uhh…” Lapis mentally kicked herself, rubbing at her eyes. “Man, I’m so sorry. I left my phone at the stable yesterday.”

“Oh, I see… But that's okay. I'm glad you were able to call back.” Greg said calmly, but then there was a silence on the other side of the line for a while. “… How is Pearl?”

Lapis swallowed, but only because she was a bit surprised by this question. “She’s… Okay. I guess.”

“I’m glad to hear that.” He admitted, but his voice sounded yet less happy then. “Also, I’ve got a bad news.”

“What happened?” Lapis asked curiously, turning towards the door and walking out the room.

“It’s just…” The man sighed, making a brief pause before continuing. “I won’t be able to make it to the stable the next two days, Lapis. Do you think you can make the training on your own?”

Lapis wanted to exhale. A disappointment overwhelmed her right away. It was such a discomfort skipping all these trainings, like if the Grand Prix meant nothing whatsoever. They had very little time, Greg was always away, Lapis wasn’t able to keep her phone with herself and neither could they agree on any possible date to meet.

Though Lapis swallowed down the exhale which was bubbling in her throat, because she was actually the one because of whom yesterday’s training was canceled. “Yeah… Of course.” Her head dropped disappointedly, just as her smile.

“I know we’re losing a lot of time like this, but I’ll try my best to get to you as soon as possible. I’m giving you my word.” Greg promised. “Grand Prix isn’t just something we can shrug off, but I’m sure we can do it… That you can do it, Lapis.”

“… Yeah.” Lapis sighed softly to herself, running her hand through her hair, brushing her bangs back.
“Now I gotta pay the blacksmith, buy new oat and deliver the two horses we bought from Andy two days ago… You know me. Lots of things going on.” Greg chuckled, but sounded a bit nervous somehow. “And also… Uh… I’m sorry for yesterday, though. But don’t worry, we’re gonna get things back in order.”

“Yes. Sure.” Lapis nodded, not actually paying too much attention to what he was saying. She left the stable and headed towards the grazing meadow spreading in front of her.

“Thanks for your call, Lapis. I’ll see you in a few days.”

“Yeah. Looking forward to it.” Lapis half-smiled, though she’d rather turn that smile upside down. She stopped walking.

“Me too.” Lapis heard. She could sense a grin on Greg’s face, too. “So, see you soon, Lapis. Take care.”

“See you.” The girl closed her eyes, and as the other side of the line went dead, she finally let that exhale out.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

- Lapis walked from Pearl’s place to the stable
- Lapis was searching for her phone

◆ 11th week (Sunday)
Lapis stared at the hill towering in front of her. There were horses, grazing without any worries, without any responsibilities or duties. They didn’t have to deal with any problems, didn’t have to worry about food or getting cleaned, because there was always someone who’d take care of them eventually.

She stepped forward, taking a few steps before she got to the gate and opened it. She entered the grazing area and walked atop the hill where the maple tree was standing. She saw Blue grazing along with a few horses nearby, but her mare didn’t seem to notice her owner. Lapis linked her thumb and forefinger together and pressed them against her lips.

A loud whistle filled the air and several horses below the hill raised their head, including Blue, because she was practically the only one that was called this way. As she saw Lapis she immediately headed towards her, trotting excitedly up the hill.

The realization that Blue was as happy to see her owner as Lapis did her, made the girl smile. She decided to head down towards her horse and greet her.

“Hey, girl.” Lapis grinned, stretching her arm towards Blue’s dark muzzle which immediately connected with her. “Sorry for being late.” Lapis apologized, but it seemed like Blue didn’t care about this fact that much.

Since Greg wasn’t coming today and there were plenty of hours until the sun sets down, Lapis decided that she and her mare had many important things to do. But first, Lapis took herself and Peridot for lunch, then had a brief break and then helped clean the rest of the horses. And since today was one of the hottest summer days, they decided to shower the rest of horses remaining in their stalls, too, and send them to the meadow to graze and dry.

All that took several hours before it was all done, but finally Lapis could afford to spend some time training. So she headed back for Blue and took her to the stable where Lapis removed the mud from her hooves and tacked her up, making sure that every strap was perfectly secured. She also changed her pants and slipped her feet into pair of riding boots, so the riding would be comfortable. Lapis honestly loved shorts, but combining shorts and leather saddle was the worst option she could undergo. She was never going to make the same mistake again, especially in summer.

While taking their way to the indoor arena building, Lapis managed to steal a few apples from the same bucket as before without anybody noticing. She took one for herself and two for Blue. They got outside the stable, walked around it and entered the riding arena.

The huge double-wing door was wide open and a child’s titter could be heard as Lapis entered the hall. She noticed a woman standing on the right end of the arena, holding a lunge in her left hand and in her right hand she held a lung whip. A horse was circling around her and the rope, which was attached to horse’s bridle, was stretched enough to make only a small arc. The animal was slowly trotting and carried a child on its back and the child certainly seemed excited about it, Lapis thought. She smiled at them from the distance as she watched them.

“Ah, Lapis! Hello.” The woman suddenly called. She also wanted to wave, but realized she was not empty-handed.
“Opal, is that you?” Lapis narrowed her eyes, only to reassure her eyesight it really was her. “Heck, I haven’t seen you in millennia!” She expressed and squeezed Blue’s sides, trotting towards the woman with blond ponytail tied up on the back of her head.

“Same, same.” Opal grinned. She continued leading the horse with an occasional glance at Lapis.

“How was the Europe Cup vaulting, woman?” Lapis asked and stopped as she considered the mutual distance between both horses as optimal.

“Hey, got fifth place.” The woman said, but didn’t sound much happy, though.

Lapis’ brows rose curiously. “Individuals?”

“Yeah.” Opal nodded, but gave her attention to the kid for a moment.

“Well, that’s not bad, is it?” Lapis shrugged.

“Ah, it could be better.” Opal forced a sigh, but a small smile appeared on her cheeks. Once again she turned to the kid. “We’re now going to change the direction, okay?” She told the child and asked the horse to stop. The little girl nodded quickly and it seemed like her smile even brightened after that. Opal walked to the horse, clipped the snap hook to the right side of the bridle and turned the horse around. She then walked back to the center and made the horse trot again.

“Though I heard you won the World Cup. Is that true?” She asked Lapis.

“Um, yeah.” Lapis blushed. She wanted to scratch the back of her head, but realized she couldn’t do it because of the riding helmet. “First big gold.”

“Congratulations then.” Opal bowed slightly.

“Thanks.” She smiled shyly. “And now hurray to the Grand Prix!” She threw her hands into the air, but the smile on her face rather turned into a nervous chuckle.

Opal frowned slightly. “Grand Prix?” She turned to Lapis. “Isn’t it… Too soon?”

“Not for Greg… Obviously.” She slowly put her hands down, but wasn’t able to look at Opal for some reason.

“What do you mean?” The blond woman glanced over at Lapis for a second.

“It’s just this, uh… Greg…” She started, trying to formulate what she wanted to say. “He just appeared in the stable, God knows from where, at some random hour, and notified me that he signed me to the Grand Prix this October.”

It seemed like Opal froze for a moment. “This October?” She stared at the blue-haired rider. Her expression made chills run over Lapis’ arms. “Is he crazy? It’s within three months… Are you sure you can make it?”

“Honestly…” Lapis’ shoulders rose, but froze as they were up, looking elsewhere but Opal. “…I don’t know.”

“… Lapis.” She sighed heavily, her look turned worried. She wished she could just put the lunge down and go to Lapis to talk to her between four eyes. “This isn’t funny. Grand Prix is a competition based off of the highest levels of fences. It’s not difficult only physically, but psychically, too. You’re too young and inexperienced for this… No offence.”
Lapis rolled her eyes, although she knew that Opal was right, and even Lapis herself was convinced that what she said was true. “… I know that.”

Opal saw her sorrowful face, but couldn’t even get to her and comfort her. “Lapis… You should really talk with Greg about this.”

Lapis bit her lip. ‘I already tried.’ She sighed, her eyes went close for a while. She knew she had to talk to him, to tell him that she’s not ready. But he already paid the starting fee and signed her and her horse. There was no escape. She couldn’t just quit a few weeks before the competition starts. That was ridiculous. “I’ll talk to him.” Lapis said, although she knew she won’t. She forced a grin and tried her best to sound convincing.

“You really should, Lapis.” The woman smiled at her, but neither her smile was convincing.

“Yeah.” Lapis breathed in before she sighed. “Anyway, is the left side free?” She gestured towards the other side of the arena.

“Sure. I’ll be done in a few minutes anyway. I can help you build the fences if you want.” Opal offered.

“That would be sweet.” Lapis smiled, honestly this time.

In less than thirty minutes they managed to build an acceptable jumping course. Opal reminded Lapis to talk to Greg about the competition, to which Lapis nodded as quickly as possible, simply because she didn’t want to talk about this topic.

They said goodbyes to one another as Opal decided to leave because of her other duties. Also Lapis thanked her for taking care of Blue this morning and for helping her build the course. Opal saluted to that and left and Lapis started off with trotting poles to warm Blue up.

An hour passed. Lapis cursed to herself because she didn’t even have a stopwatch to check her time average. But that didn’t matter that much. All that mattered was that she knocked down less than ten fences during the first hour. The upcoming hour unfortunately wasn’t that successful. She managed to knock down five poles within a quarter an hour.

“Shit!” Lapis hissed through her teeth as another pole fell down. She kicked Blue’s flanks violently. “Come on, Blue. We gotta try more. We can’t give up yet.”

Blue snorted, ears turned stiffly backwards. Running constantly for an hour was causing her losing her energy very fast. Also Lapis was slowly getting tired from dismounting to fix all the knocked obstacles and climbing back up repeatedly, only because there was no one around to help her fix them.

And since nobody was there to coach her, she had to help herself – as usually. Besides she had to make it up to herself for yesterday, Lapis decided. So no matter how tired she was, she was going to give everything she had into it, even if blood came running from her nose and ears.

Soon the world around became the familiar tangle of blurs, objects and surroundings were moving each in its own pace. And because there wasn’t any source of water nearby, it was getting worse and worse with Lapis’ dehydration, but Lapis determinedly stood in stirrups, knees squeezing the knee roll firmly, heels being pushed downwards.
Lapis was very bad at checking if she was breathing during riding, just like forgetting about checking the time which was practically the most common and worst habit she had.

There was this sentence occupying her mind, the one that Opal said as she pleaded Lapis to talk to Greg about the competition. Lapis wasn’t for hundred percent sure about undergoing the Grand Prix, too, but that was one hour ago. Lapis was an adult and she had enough experiences in this branch, she though, so why couldn’t she try it? She wasn’t a kid anymore, she could do whatever she wanted and learn new things. No, she wasn’t coming back, she told herself. She’s taking this challenge, she’s gonna compete no matter what happens and nobody will stop her. From now on she’s taking the training extremely seriously. Lapis was determined to show and prove everyone that she’s got guts for this, that she was born for jumping.

So she clenched her teeth and spurred Blue to run faster. They were jinking between fences, jumping over them, finishing and starting new round over and over again. Lapis started being rather irritated by knocking the poles down more and more often as she kept repeating rounds unless there were no faults, but unfortunately that never happened and it wasn’t getting any better, but quite the opposite.

“Fucking… Ugh!” Lapis cursed, tugging the right rein sharply to the right to turn her horse and repeat the jump after she returned the pole to its place. These fences were high. She was used to smaller ones, but the Grand Prix fences were yet higher than these she had in front of her at that moment, so she couldn’t afford to lose any single one if she wanted to win.

“–Lapis? Lapis, hello?” She heard someone calling in the middle of her train of thoughts, and after she jumped the last vertical, she noticed there was Peridot approaching her.

“What?” Lapis frowned, wiping her sweat-stained forehead, directing Blue towards her friend.

“God, please tell me you’re not like this since the last time I saw you today… Again.” Peridot prayed, but a hint of irony could be noticeable in her voice.

“What if I am? Who cares?” Lapis simply shrugged that off. She’s already been through many situations like this one, so somehow she could sense that the usual life lecture from Peridot was coming to the topic any second, so Lapis turned around and headed towards the first jump of the course in effort to avoid giving Peridot an opportunity to say something smart, but unfortunately that failed.

“Jesus fuck, are you serious right now?” Peridot shot back. “It’s been two hours! Stop that stupid ass of yours and take a goddamnit break. Can’t you remember the last time you blacked out here?”

Lapis clenched her teeth and fists, trying to ignore her. Suddenly she could feel one of her eyelids twitching a little.

“Can’t you hear me?” Peridot stomped, visibly irritated, hands put on her hips. “Get down from that horse and come here immediately! You shouldn’t risk your health like that and especially train when you’re tired.”

“Aha, so now everyone’s a teacher, huh?” Lapis couldn’t help but burst into an ironical laughter. “Everyone is lecturing me and telling me what I should or shouldn’t do! And you know what? Fuck off! I don’t need your help.” She shouted, waving Peridot off and kicking Blue into her sides – surely they hurt after these kicks.

It left Peridot speechless. She wasn’t expecting such fury from Lapis whatsoever. She could do nothing but let her mouth drop, but she was able to collect herself after several second. “But,
like… Dude, do you seriously want to end up like your mother?”

Lapis froze. Immediately an adrenaline ran through her body and she realized she was lucky she managed to hold onto her horse, because Blue slide stopped right in front of a fence and almost made Lapis fall over. After Lapis’ breath finally returned to her, she sat back into the saddle and straightened. She then slashed Blue’s buttck furiously with the whip she was holding and turned the animal around. “Don’t put my mother into this! She’s got nothing to do with it!” Lapis spat and prepared for jumping the obstacle once more, asking her mare to canter, but she noticed Blue refusing to obey her commands, so Lapis slashed her once again and this time yet more aggressively.

“And what do you think was the reason she couldn’t make her horse jump the fence right then?” Peridot objected. And then immediately, at the same time, they both imagined the exact same moment – the one and only which was fateful for Blue Diamond, back in the past. Chills suddenly ran down Lapis’ body, just as Peridot’s, after catching a flash of image they saw on their own eyes five years ago.

Lapis said nothing, forcing herself to fight off that nightmare-like memory, but failing.

“Because she was overdoing her training!” Peridot continued her speech. “She was exhausted, Lapis. She was sick!”

“That’s enough!” Lapis yelled, her voice visibly cracking, tears bursting out her eyes. “It wasn’t her fault!”

“And whose fault was that then?” Peridot called. She could feel tears in her own eyes as well.

“Go fuck yourself!” She cried. “Leave me alone!”

“Lapis, listen, I just want to help you!” The girl explained. Her heart sank at the look at Lapis fighting the obstacles, knocking down poles one by one.

She jumped the last fence of the combination she was taking, walking pass Peridot. “Then stop it!” She sobbed. “I don’t want your help… Not a help like this.”

Peridot sighed sorrowfully. It was tearing her apart, because she knew exactly how this was going to end. She watched Lapis distancing from her and heading towards another combination. Peridot couldn’t help but let out another exhale, arms crossed on her chest like if in defense. “… You’re gonna hurt yourself one day… And hopefully I won’t be there to watch that.” She murmured, but no one could hear. She turned on her heels slowly and then left the arena, hoping for Lapis to end up okay.

Lapis became very angry – angry with everyone and everything. A scream was choking her, she almost wasn’t able to breathe because of the huge lump in her throat. She couldn’t stop imagining what happened to her mother – how she was lying in dirt and nobody knew if she’ll survive until the next day. She remembered everything, every damned detail – how the whole arena went silent but mother’s horse whining in pain and limping around, her mother lying on the ground and stained with loam, with helmet cracked and fallen off, with her spine strangely twisted and head turned backwards…

“Fucking, fucking hell!” Lapis cried from the top of her lungs. She made her horse stop and then let herself burst into tears. She undone her helmet and hurled it against the floor, letting the tears stream down her cheeks and sobs fill the room. She tried to wipe away the tears furiously, but
never managed to stop them from spilling out from her eyes.

She slipped down from the saddle, but her knees buckled and she fell down to the floor. She felt weak, she couldn’t even make herself stand up. She just sat there on the loamy surface, dirty, swallowing her cries and sobbing. Lapis wasn’t able to get rid of those horrific memories whatsoever. All of a sudden she realized how Pearl should’ve felt back then. It just wasn’t fair.

Lapis had to get out of that place – immediately. So she took the last strength she had and stood up. It was hard, because her knees were buckling and she was all shaking, too, and Blue wasn’t in the best condition as well. She was sweating, a steam was coming from her coat as it was all wet and hot. Her legs were shivering, her nostrils and mouth were wide open, ears turned backwards, but at least Blue must have felt relieved that she wasn’t moving anymore.

“Aww, Blue…” Lapis sobbed. She could feel very unpleasant feeling in her guts. She realized what she’s done and felt extremely ashamed of it. Because of her Blue looked like one big mess. “I’m… I’m so, so, so sorry.” She cried and hugged Blue around her neck tightly in an apology, but Blue did nothing – she was just glad she was able to stand.

“I’m sorry, girl.” Lapis sniffed. She leaned back and took Blue’s cheeks in her hands, looking into her dark eyes. “I didn’t mean to hurt you.” She murmured, and it was a good sign for her that Blue’s ears turned towards her and were no more turned backwards.

Lapis led Blue back into the stable, but left her standing out her stall as she was untacking her and bringing the tacks back to their place. She then gave Blue a quick shower, dried her and cleaned her hooves before saying good night and heading towards the attic.

It was already dark outside and the stable was empty-handed, expect for her and Peridot. Lapis walked pass the girl on her way to the attic, but said nothing. Lapis was still mad about what Peridot said, about the topic she brought up, so Lapis didn’t bother to talk to her after that nor even look at her as she walked by. However, Lapis heard Peridot murmuring something, probably some apologies or perhaps something about how dumb Lapis was, but Lapis’ mind was already somewhere else to think about what Peridot might say.

Lapis tried to hide her tears welling in her eyes, though. She didn’t want Peridot to think she’s weak or possibly think whatever about her. So without saying any goodbyes Lapis climbed up to the attic, lit up the room with her phone before she found the lamp, which was basically a bulb hanging from the ceiling, to switch on. It was casting very low light, but at least Lapis knew where things were - it was enough for her.

The stable light turned off, Lapis noticed, so her bulb was the only light source at the whole building. She also heard footsteps downstairs in the barn, inconspicuous and silent.

“… Good night, Lapis.” She could hear Peridot’s voice from below, and she also sensed a lump stuck in her throat. “… I’m sorry.”

Lapis remained silent. She didn’t want to answer. She practically had nothing to say, though there were thousands of words she wanted to spat at Peridot or maybe just punch her into her face.

She simply sat there, perfectly still, and waited until she could hear quiet footfalls again, slowly vanishing in distance. Lapis heard a car engine being turned on, and as the car slowly drove away, the whole area drowned in a dead silence.

Lapis sat in hay, cross-legged, staring somewhere into darkness, ignoring tears soaking her clothes as they were streaming down along her skin. She wished things could be the way they were, she wished none of this happened, wished for her mom to be there.
A sob was bubbling in her throat, willing up slowly, but Lapis fought it off, shaking her head. She then turned around and reached out for the pillows lying behind her. They were lifted, Lapis carefully pulled her diary out from below them and laid the pillows back down.

It was an old diary she owned, with bent corners and stained with several colorful blots, practically from times when she was learning to ride a horse for the first time. Since that day Lapis was noting everything and every day. She wrote about what she’d learned and whom she’d met, she wrote about what’d happened that day. She collected pictures of horses in there, a photo of her and her mother holding hands or photos where Blue Diamond held a big gold trophy that she won, a photo where she was standing in the middle of a sunflower field with her horse and was beautifully smiling.

"Looks like I'm not over it after all…” Lapis sighed as she saw all those photos that were reminding her of all the great moments when her mother was still alive. She suddenly wanted to bring all those times back.

She closed her eyes and imagined how beautiful it’d be if their family was all back together again, laughing, playing guitar while telling stories by a fireplace like they used to.

But Lapis suddenly realized something and her eyes went open, her brows furrowed sorrowfully. ‘… What if none of that happened? Would I even meet Pearl then?’ She wondered, but in the end she concluded that maybe things were okay this way. Perhaps this was a lecture, or one big chapter in her life, making Lapis certain that this book wasn’t by far finished just yet.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Lapis' friend Opal showed in the stable
• Peridot and Lapis had an argument
• Lapis was browsing through her diary and old photos

♦ 11th week (Sunday)
Then and Now

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It was 1 AM and Lapis still couldn’t make herself fall asleep. She was rolling from side to side, her eyes weren’t able to close because of the amount of tears welling in them.

An old photograph she held in her hand, her watery eyes fixed on it, scanning over it little by little. There were sunflowers, a full field of them, a cyan cloudless sky and a woman with her horse standing between those beautiful golden flowers. The woman was smiling, her eyes were shining with joy, but yet with something that Lapis couldn’t recognize. Was it a doubt? A fear or perhaps worry?

This photo was taken shortly before the accident happened – Lapis knew exactly where and at what time. It was 2 PM, down the hills where sunflowers were growing, where Lapis and her mother would take a ride with their horses, though it was a different horse Lapis was riding – Blue was yet growing in her mother horse’s belly back then.

It was perfect, Lapis remembered, when they were racing together, crossing the fields with wind in their hair while the sun was beaming down on them, hooves drumming against the ground and leaving dust floating in the air far behind them. Lapis even remembered the day when Blue Diamond took her and their horses to the beach for the first time. Lapis loved that. She could still recall that day as it was yesterday – when they rode along the sea shore, leaving horseshoe prints in the sand and watching the sea as it was sweeping those footprints away and leaving no evidence behind while the red sun was slowly setting down behind the horizon of dark blue waters. They walked in the sea, riding their horses bareback, letting the salty water wash over their ankles and being caressed by the cool ocean breeze.

Moments like those were irreplaceable, priceless and just... Perfect. But no one could take those times back nor replace them with others. Those days were over, though Lapis would do anything to bring them back.

An hour passed, but not even lying on her front helped Lapis to fall asleep. She was tired, but at the same time she was not, and it was still pretty soon to get up and work. Everyone and everything was surely peacefully sleeping, not perceiving how slow the time was going for Lapis.

The girl sat up slowly. She looked through the long dark hallway bordered with stalls. It was pretty silent there, though occasionally she could catch sounds of hay rustling in the distance.

Lapis looked outside then. She heard crickets chirping there, nothing more, and nothing less. She wanted to go there. She wanted to go outside and feel cool grass between her toes. She wanted the kind breeze dry her tears, wanted to inhale the fresh evening air. She wanted to watch stars, since the sky was nicely clear and full of them. Sometimes Lapis wish the stars could talk, so she could speak to them and they would whisper back, tell stories and listen to one another all night.

Stars always reminded her of Pearl – of the night when they first kissed. It was beautiful, Lapis recalled with a soft sigh and a faint smile. Pearl’s eyes shone brightly then, just as Lapis’. None of them could think about anything else but the kiss, blissful and divine, although innocent first.
Lapis suddenly wanted Pearl to be there. She wished for her closeness, for her touch, her lips and the pleasant scent of herbs which she always brought with herself. She wanted to toy with her smooth peach hair, run her fingers through it and watch Pearl smiling as the touch would feel comforting to her.

Lapis sighed, wiping the rest of the tears remaining on her cheeks. She decided to go outside. She returned the old photo to her diary, but before she closed it and hid under the pillow, she went through all the pages to the last one where a few recent things were noted. There were several articles about the Grand Prix competition, about the fear Lapis carried inside because of the fateful day unpleasantly, slowly closing in. However, there were several positive articles as well. Most of them read about Pearl and the days she and Lapis spent together. Re-reading them was so mind-easing for Lapis, and it always drew a smile on her face no matter for how many times she’d read them.

Also there was something which caught Lapis’ attention – it was today’s date. It was 10th September already, which meant that Pearl’s birthday was within two days. It slightly alarmed Lapis, although she knew about this event quite long ago. But what disturbed Lapis the most was that she hasn’t exactly thought about any particular gift for her girlfriend just yet, though there was a bunch of ideas, but plushy teddy bear, bouquet or box of chocolates were quite inappropriate options, Lapis decided. She wanted to think of something else, something unique, something special, something that Pearl would appreciate, because she honestly deserved to be gifted with something extraordinary.

So Lapis closed the diary then. She took a deep breath and headed downstairs, hoping that she’ll make out something good eventually. She had two all days, so she could practically spend them by shopping, though that would be definitely the last thing she would think about, because shopping was a total nightmare to her.

Lapis climbed down without any hurry. She walked outside bare-feet. A few seconds later she reached the grass, perceiving its cool blades brushing against her toes, her heels and ankles. The air was quite warm, but was pleasant to breathe. Lapis found one perfect spot under a large tree standing next to the main driveway. She settled down under the tree and leaned her back against its trunk, crossing her legs underneath herself and putting her hands in her lap, fingers intertwined. She took a deep breath and listened to all the crickets around her.

Millions, maybe billions of tiny stars were shining down at her, singing their silent song, floating somewhere in outer space – what a magnificent look it was.

The stars were faintly twinkling, making Lapis’ eyelids heavy the longer she was watching them. She tried to count them, but fell asleep counting less than a half a hundred – finally she could peacefully close her eyes and have the rest she deserved.

The day came by quite quickly. At 5 AM Lapis’ watch started beeping and woke her up, but she decided to sleep at least for one hour more, because three hours of sleep simply weren’t enough for her. Lapis also found herself still sitting under the tree. Maybe it would be better to head back inside before someone finds her there. So Lapis wearily rubbed at her eyes, slowly stood on her feet and went to the barn, continuing up to the attic. And though it was 5 AM, the weather was warmer than any day before, so it didn’t allow Lapis to cover herself with blanket, but she didn’t mind. Instead she let her knees bump against the floor, falling asleep immediately with face buried in hay.

Her eyes opened again, but a bit later than she expected. She overslept one hour, she noticed. Now it was 7 AM and she couldn’t afford to sleep any longer – stalls were waiting for her.
With a groan Lapis made herself wake up entirely. She climbed down with a yawn and entered the storage. Slowly she opened a closet and grabbed pair of clean clothes, then headed towards a small washroom on the outer side of the stable.

Closing the old creaking washroom door was one thing, but locking it required strength – one could easily break their fingers, because it was just so hard to turn the key around, and for some reason when one wanted to lock the door, they must turn the key the opposite direction.

Lapis put her head under the faucet and washed herself, both hair and face, she then filled her hands with water and drank it greedily – there was no time to waste. She filled her hands with water once more and splashed her face again, then took a towel and dried herself with it. She took the clean clothes and put them on, returning the used ones up to the attic, so later she could take it home and wash them clean.

There was no time for breakfast either. Lapis did her best to cover only thirty minutes by getting herself ready, because she should’ve been working at least two hours already.

There were a few people at the stable, already cleaning stalls and tacking up their horses. Lapis greeted each of them while passing, and each of them with less than three words. She didn’t bother to start any time-shortening conversation, she had a lot to do today. Now when Greg was nowhere near, she had to take everything in her own hands and spend her time wisely, because the Grand Prix was getting closer every second.

Hours went by as Lapis worked, with picking used bedding from stalls with pitchfork and throwing it to the wheelbarrow she spent the entire morning and a bit of afternoon. She managed to do a great deal of work and as she considered her job done, she let a victorious grin spread across her cheeks.

Two hours later she came back to the stable from shopping and hoped that the gift she bought will be satisfying enough for Pearl. Lapis really loved it herself, so she decided it must work. There weren’t many great ideas of gifts that popped up in her mind because of time chasing her, however, she was quite delighted with what she got.

And finally she had some time for training, though the weather wasn’t any amiable but rather hot. Lapis decided to go easy then, having brief breaks to rest and drink enough water. She also decided to use outdoor arena for training instead of the indoor one, because the air inside was just too muggy and unpleasant to move in, not even mentioning breathing in there.

Lapis took a box with cleaning supplies and entered Blue’s stall. Before she started clearing her mare’s hooves, she brought some oat and filled the trough inside the stall with it, making Blue busy while she was manipulating with hoof pick, but made sure Blue doesn’t eat too much before the training starts.

After Lapis was done with hooves, she returned the box back to its place and brought Blue’s saddle in. She tossed it over the Hanoverian’s back along with the saddle pad and tightened the girth. Then she headed to the tack room for bridle and after giving the bridle to Blue, she was all set up and ready for a lesson.

Lapis took Blue’s reins and led her out the stable, meanwhile she checked if her helmet was well done. As she did so, she then entered the outdoor arena. She put her left foot into stirrup and gracefully swung up to the saddle, settling in comfortably and straightening her back. Lapis pushed her heels downwards and with a slight move of her pelvis she asked Blue to walk, then
trot and finally canter.

For warm up exercises she was jumping smaller cross rail fences and which took her something about twenty minutes, then she went for higher ones and kept heightening them the longer they were practicing.

Lapis checked her watch and after revealing that one hour already passed, she thought of having a quick break before continuing. But before that, there still were a few fences to jump, so Lapis narrowed her eyes and paid her maximum of attention to the couple of last obstacles.

She clicked her tongue and kicked Blue gently in her flanks as the distance between them and the fence was appropriate. They departed up off of the ground, leaving particles of dirt behind them, flying through the air like an arrow and landing safely on Blue’s front legs. “Yeah! Come on, girl, keep going.” Lapis spurred joyfully, turning Blue towards another fence.

Blue listened, ears turned back towards Lapis and obeying her commands. The mare felt left rein tugging her to the side and Lapis’ right foot pressing to her flank, leading her towards an oxer.

The Hanover’s sides were squeezed right on time and made the horse jump over the obstacle, landing successfully on the ground and finally heading to the last fence.

Lapis clicked her tongue once more, making her horse loose off the ground straight into the air. Lapis rose from the saddle and leaned forward against Blue’s neck, keeping her body balanced while rushing through the air, then leaned back as her horse flew over the fence to the other side. A bump of hooves could be heard as they hit the ground.

“Yes.” Lapis waved her fist triumphantly in the air, cantering around, letting Blue slow down into her own pace.

And all of a sudden Lapis caught someone’s hands clapping and calling from the distance. She turned towards the voice while cantering along the arena fence and found her lovely Pearl standing behind it, grinning from ear to ear.

“Yeah! Good job, Lappy!”

“Pearl.” Lapis’ eyes went wide. She felt her cheeks warming up a little and she was also quite surprised seeing Pearl here.

“You did so great, darling.” Pearl kept clapping and her smile yet widened as Lapis directed Blue standing behind it, grinning from ear to ear.

“Thank you.” The rider bit her lip, making her cheeks turn darker shade of red. She stopped her horse and slipped her feet out the stirrups, sliding down from the saddle and hit the ground.

Pearl blushed slightly at the look at Lapis, at the look at her wet shirt which perfectly copied her abdomen muscles, losing her senses and forgetting to clap as Lapis was approaching her in a slow pace. “… H-hi.” Pearl swallowed nervously, realizing that Lapis already arrived.

The blue-haired girl got to the wooden fence, reaching her hands over it and taking Pearl’s cheeks in them, scanning her beautiful light blue eyes. “Hi, love.” She said in a low, warm voice, giving Pearl one soft kiss on her lips. Somehow she sensed Pearl losing her breath - she found it so cute. “Wasn’t expecting you here this hour.” She admitted after checking her watch, realizing it was already quarter to seven. “What brings my girl here?”
Pearl giggled, averting Lapis’ eyes briefly before she took her tanned hands into hers and slid them down along her neck, smiling. “You of course.”

“Aww… My little sweetheart.” Lapis sighed through her nose, blushing slightly, letting herself be hypnotized by Pearl’s big eyes. “… How was your day?”

“As usual.” The taller girl admitted, remembering all the things she’s done today. “I did some cooking, cleaning and shopping… You know me.”

“Yeah.” Lapis chuckled briefly, finding herself lost in Pearl’s eyes once more, unable to escape from them.

“… You-um, did so well today… During the training.” Pearl observed kindly after a moment of silence.

A moment passed and Lapis managed to snap herself out of the enchantment, frowning a bit and thinking. “Wait, you’ve been watching me? For how long?”

“Mm, half an hour it could be… You didn’t notice?” Pearl chuckled, astonished. “That’s why you seemed so surprised after spotting me.”

“Uuuh…” Lapis’ eyes darted away embarrassingly, feeling guilty enough to let her face burn. ‘This is awkward.’ Lapis swallowed, searching for words, but fortunately Blue disrupted their conversation by poking her head in – Lapis was saved.

“Oh, Blue!” Lapis chuckled nervously, reaching her hand to pat the horse’s neck, avoiding Pearl’s eyes and trying to shade this awkward situation somehow. “There’s my girl.”

Blue shook off the few flies flying around her head, then started nuzzling Lapis, stretching her lips and toying with her owner’s blue hair at the back of her neck, making it flutter as she blew hot air out her nostrils.

Goosebumps ran down Lapis’ spine and she couldn’t escape from a shiver, which made Pearl giggle softly. Just the look at them was so amusing.

But then Pearl noticed Blue turning her head towards her, making a quick flash of adrenaline run through her veins as the animal’s pitch-black eyes looked straight into hers.

Blue stretched her neck towards the tall girl, scanning her carefully, sniffing, making a step closer to eye the girl closely.

Pearl’s heart beat speeded up for a moment, but didn’t last too long as she told herself to remain calm. She slowly reached her hand and cautiously she brushed the tips of her fingers against Blue’s smooth nose, petting her for a while. It conjured up a smile on her face. “… Hey, Blue.”

Lapis smiled to herself while watching them, watching Pearl getting braver and braver every day. She watched as carefully Pearl was while petting her Hanoverian with smile on her lips, seeing joy and no fear. “She really likes you.” She told Pearl, voice warm and honest.

“I… Like her, too.” Pearl admitted, although a bit unsure, still paying respect to the great animal.

Lapis hummed softly, still watching them both getting along very well – after these several months it was just so heartwarming.

“Hey.” Lapis suddenly spoke, turning to Pearl with a light smirk on her lips. “Come in.”
“In?” Pearl’s brows raised. She watched Lapis taking Blue by her reins.

“Yes, climb over the fence.” Lapis asked. She turned Blue away from the fence and waited for Pearl to come.

Pearl, although having no idea what was going to happen, didn’t hesitate and jumped over the fence happily, following Lapis further to the center of the outdoor arena. “What’s your plan?” She asked, smiling widely and not even guessing what could Lapis’ intention be.

Lapis stopped and scanned Pearl briefly, from head to toes, then undone her helmet and handed it to the girl in front of her, cautiously, but poor Pearl didn’t quite get what was going on.

“Why are you giving me that?” She asked, taking the helmet, but soon enough she realized she was probably doomed because of taking it.

“I want you to try something.” She said and took Blue’s reins again, one hand placed on her hip, smirk on her face.

Pearl froze instantly, almost dropping the helmet, eyes wide as dinner plates. “… It’s—it’s not… What I think it is… Is it?” She trembled, a bit terrified of Lapis’ response.

“Oh yeah, babe.” Lapis chuckled, but lightly enough not to startle Pearl too much. “You’re gonna ride her.”

“No… No. No, no, no. There’s no way.” Pearl shook her head violently, taking a step back.

Lapis giggled softly and instead of a smirk, there was a comforting smile on her face. She let go of the reins and made a step towards Pearl, taking her hand gently. “Pearl, listen, I swear I wouldn’t put you into anything dangerous. Your safety is my priority and if something bad happened to you, I would never forgive myself.” She said honestly, brushing her thumb against the back of Pearl’s hand. “You’re a brave, young woman, Pearl. You’ve already proved that to me.” Lapis smiled yet wider during the speech. “… And I know you’re brave enough to do this. I believe you can.”

Pearl swallowed hard. She really appreciated Lapis’ praise, however, she wasn’t that much comfortable with trying riding a horse just yet. Though she definitely didn’t want to let Lapis down – the one who truly believed in her since the beginning.

“Lapis…” The girl let out a sorrowful sigh, eyes darting over to Blue and then back at Lapis.

“Shh.” Lapis hushed her softly and stepped closer to the girl, taking her cheeks in her hands tenderly. “I’ll be there with you the whole time… You have nothing to worry about, trust me. I know you can make it.”

Another sigh left Pearl and her eyes briefly turned away. She knew she could trust Lapis, but could she trust herself? She was scared, but she also found a part of herself that was telling her to try, and she was quite afraid to admit that she wanted to.

“But… If you don’t want to… I won’t force you of course.” The equestrian finally said, although still hoping.

Pearl wished for this option to be offered, but there was also something inside her spurring her, giving her a chance to prove herself that she’s not a coward.

So she took a deep breath and closed her eyes, collecting all her will and trying not to let herself back out of it. “Okay, I… I’ll do it.” She bit her lip, eyes remaining closed.
“Really?” Lapis blinked several times in surprise, watching her friend opening her eyes slowly.

Pearl nodded faintly. She felt her hands slightly trembling. “B-but promise me that you’ll be there with me.”

“The whole time, I promise.” Lapis assured her gently, she then took her riding helmet from Pearl’s hands carefully and put it on Pearl’s head, buttoning it under her chin. Pearl couldn’t help but closing her eyes until the helmet was done, hoping for not experiencing a heart attack or worse.

“So, are you ready?” The smaller girl offered Pearl her hand.

“... Let’s get this over with.” Pearl tried to joke, but her cracking voice kind of failed her.

Lapis chuckled softly and took her girlfriend by her hand, leading her to Blue’s left side.

Pearl followed slowly, trying her best to convince herself that everything’s going to be okay, but her legs felt like they’ll buckle any moment and stop her from getting further.

“Okay now, watch what I’m doing.” Lapis asked.

Pearl nodded quickly, rubbing her hands nervously together while Lapis stood next to her mare.

“While I'm holding the reins, I turn my back towards her head, and then I put my left foot in the stirrup here.” She gestured for Pearl to know, then she put her left foot in. “Then I place my left hand on the pommel and grab the cantle with the other one, and then just swing up.” She explained and demonstrated later on, but didn’t sit in the saddle yet, just laid her abdomen on it for Pearl to imitate her later and get used to the height. “The saddle’s gonna slip under you a bit when you mount, but don’t worry about that, it’s well attached.”

“Yeah, I already know that one.” Pearl chuckled, but released that information immediately because of Lapis’ butt pouting right in front of her, leaving her stunned. She swallowed, feeling a drop of sweat rolling down her forehead.

Lapis chuckled, too, and continued in demonstrating without noticing Pearl staring at her the way she was. “So, now when I’m up here, I toss my right leg over her croup and sit up in the saddle. The last thing I have to do is to put the other foot into stirrup and… That’s pretty much it.” Lapis said, pulling the reins back to keep Blue standing, because she was used to walk automatically after Lapis mounted her. “So, are we ready to get on?” Lapis asked again, looking down at Pearl and noticing she was staring headless. “Pearl?”

“Um, uh-yeah.” Pearl shook her head quickly to shake off the nasty images in her mind from seeing Lapis’ butt pouting from this close. “I think I’m… ready. I think.” She finished a bit sheepishly, chuckling nervously.

“Great.” The equestrian exulted and slipped down from the saddle after removing her feet from stirrups, still holding Blue’s reins. She turned to Pearl and offered her hand, smiling. “Shall we?”

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:
• Lapis remembered the times when her mother was alive
• Lapis bought Pearl a birthday gift
• Pearl was watching Lapis training
• Lapis demonstrated mounting a horse

♦ 12th week (Monday)
Once more Pearl swallowed, wondering why she actually let herself agree to this. She had hard times reassuring herself that nothing wrong was going to happen. Lapis promised her that. But for some reason the fear inside her didn’t let Pearl fully trust her promises. She was fighting that fear, trying to get control over it, yet it was difficult.

She watched Lapis who was gently offering Pearl her hand, perceiving how soothing and warm her smile was, eyes loving and trustful. Lapis’ kind support held Pearl on her feet in these kinds of situations and Pearl certainly didn’t want to disappoint her, so she decided to undergo this. There was no way back. She had to do it.

Pearl sighed softly, biting her lip, but accepted Lapis’ hand eventually. She let herself be led to Blue’s side, listening carefully to Lapis’ advice, though still she was watching Blue with a corner of her eye, ready to run away if anything unexpected happens.

“Okay, so.” Lapis started and stood behind Pearl, taking her tenderly by her hips and making a gasp leave Pearl’s mouth. “Turn your back to her head.” Lapis asked and with a gentle push of her hands she turned Pearl to the right, so her back was turned towards Blue’s front. “Now put your foot in stirrup and then grab the pommel along with cantle. I’ll help you up.”

Although Lapis’ support was really sweet, Pearl would rather recommend Lapis to watch her horse instead of her. She was quite distracted by the horse just standing there loose by itself. “Lapis, I really appreciate your support, but… Could you please hold your horse rather than me?” She asked bashfully, though she loved those hands pressing gently at her hips and the warmth they were spreading all over her skin.

Lapis chuckled a little. “Don’t worry, she’s not going anywhere.” She said and spurred Pearl to grab the saddle.

Pearl hesitated for a good moment, but she managed to put her left foot where it was necessary, grabbing the leather saddle. Meanwhile, Lapis walked to Pearl’s right side.

“I’ll count to three and then you’ll swing up, okay?” Lapis told her and bent down, arms stretched and ready to take Pearl’s foot. “I’ll help you up.”

“I-Lapis, wait, I…” Pearl stuttered, perceiving how badly her body suddenly started shaking. “I don’t know if… What if I can’t do it?”

“Don’t worry, there’s nothing you can spoil. You can do this.” Lapis tried to cheer her up, hoping for Pearl to continue in mounting, but she stopped instead.

“I…” She swallowed, feeling a drop of sweat rolling down her forehead and yet another one bursting out her skin.

The tall girl froze and with a corner of her eye she studied Blue – her every movement, even those which the horse hasn’t done yet, imagining the worst options of events. “… I’m just… I… I’m afraid.” She nearly sobbed, perceiving her heart beat speeding up, feeling like if her heart wanted to jump out of her chest.

“Sweetie, it’s okay. You’re doing just great.” Lapis fostered gently, speaking slow while
looking up at the girl. “I’m here with you, don’t worry.”

“O-okay. Okay.” Pearl nodded quickly, breathing deeply in effort to make herself focus, but her head rather started spinning after that.

“So, are you ready?” Lapis asked once more, just to make sure.

Pearl inhaled and her eyes went close, but she nodded. “Yes.”

“I’m so proud of you, sweetheart.” The blue-haired girl said, smiling at Pearl.

For some reason this simple sentence heartened Pearl; her cheeks turned red. Suddenly she felt so determined, but this feeling left her as soon as she realized that there was a job to do. She prepared for the total change of her life.

“One, two… Three.” Lapis counted and at ‘three’ Pearl bounced off of the ground and laid her abdomen on the saddle – just like Lapis did before.

Pearl was surprised herself that she actually did it, but what disturbed her one second later was Blue who started to move. “Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god!” Pearl panicked, squeezing the saddle violently. “Stop her, stop her!”

“Don’t worry, she’s just balancing.” Lapis chuckled and made sure Pearl remained up and didn’t try to get down. “You’re almost there, hon, just toss your leg over her. I got your back.” Lapis said and spurred Pearl by patting her butt several times as she was hanging over the horse’s back.

With a hard swallow Pearl turned red, biting her lip. “Holy God, please help me.” She closed her eyes and for a moment forgot about Lapis’ hand. ‘Okay, Pearl, you got this.’ She told herself and took a deep breath. It took her a while, she had to finish what she started – she couldn’t back out of this, certainly not at this moment. She was so close to success.

She lifted her leg and tried to toss it over Blue, but for her misfortune her leg glued to Blue’s back as the leg was in the middle of its way. “La-Lapis… Please?”

Lapis, quite distracted by Pearl’s butt, which was exactly at her eyes level, couldn’t make herself pay attention to Pearl’s words – which was in her case quite understandable. But the second time Lapis caught her name being called, she snapped herself out of the other reality she created in the back of her mind.

“Um, yeah?” She blinked those images off, realizing that Pearl needed help.

“Could you give me a hand?” She asked frantically, clinging to the saddle.

“Uhhh… Yes, of course!” Lapis finally got to her senses. She stepped closer, pressed her hands at Pearl’s right thigh and pushed her leg so it slid down on the other side of the horse – Pearl was finally sitting, but still crouching and perceiving shaking sensation inside her guts.

“There.” Lapis grinned, victoriously placing her hands on her hips.

Pearl let out something between a laugh and whimper. Although she was glad she was finally up, she started to shake yet more than before. She stiffened. “I never thought mounting a horse would be this difficult.” She gasped.

Lapis giggled at that and placed her hand on Pearl’s knee as the girl spoke again.
“Can I go down now?” The taller girl let out shakily, eyes far away, although she was staring
down at her trembling hands.


“I don’t know…” She swallowed, trying to get used to the height, but even after some time she
still couldn’t. It was like if a black mass or something around her was blocking her to look around
and enjoy the view. “I don’t understand how you can just… Ride this thing, not even mentioning
jumping over those high fences on it.” She gulped, briefly imagining herself doing so. She so
wanted to close her eyes and pretend none of this was happening, but when she closed them it
was rather worse than keeping them open. She felt so unsafe with nothing around her she could
hold onto. There was just too much empty space all around and no solid ground under her.

“Yeah, it took a lot of practice.” Lapis admitted, remembering all the falls and fractures, recalling
the time she successfully jumped her first fence – she felt just unbeatable.

The longer Pearl sat up there, the faster her mind blinders started revealing the world around her.
There was too much space, she felt like if she was somewhere in outer space, free and alone with
herself. Suddenly, and without even knowing, breathing became quite easy to her. Faint, pleasant
shivers were tickling her from the inside; perceiving a brand new energy, a pleasure streaming
through her body.

Slowly Pearl straightened and dared to glance around carefully, seeing the world from
absolutely different perspective than ever before. She let her fear slowly wash away, feeling warm
breeze in her hair and evening sun shining down at her, soothing her. Suddenly Pearl felt so high,
so high she could touch the sky with her hands. She felt like she could see so far, far away and yet
behind the horizon of large fields in the distance, being illuminated by a golden sunset. She could
do nothing but smile. She felt so happy, so uplifted and proud.

“So, how is it, honey?” Lapis asked carefully, though she saw an enchanted smile on Pearl’s
cheeks.

Pearl sighed – but a sigh of a satisfaction it was. “It’s… Quite nice.” She said, but as if the word
‘quite’ meant nothing – she still stared amazed at the horizon and orange clouds above them and
enjoyed the view.

“I gotta admit it really suits you up there.” Lapis grinned with a faint blush, getting Pearl’s full
attention then.

“Ah-hah.” Pearl chuckled nervously, averting her eyes from Lapis’. “Not as much as you.”

“Aw, stop.” Lapis rolled her eyes, feeling her hands becoming sweaty for some reason.

A brief moment of silence spread around them while Lapis was watching Pearl sitting on the
horse – and she seemed quite calm to Lapis, too. “… Would my princess like to take a ride?” She
then asked and took Blue’s reins – in case Pearl would agree.


Lapis shrugged. “I dunno, ‘round the arena here.”

“Are you… Are you sure?” Pearl’s stomach started forming into knots again once she imagined
it.

“Trust me.” Lapis smiled confidently and blinked at Pearl.
Pearl could do nothing but grab the saddle firmly and stare at Lapis who was obviously determined to walk her horse around with Pearl on its back.

“We’re gonna walk slow.” Lapis said, but Pearl couldn’t make out if that was directed to her or to the horse.

“Just relax and enjoy the ride.” Lapis recommended and once she took the reins, she began to walk, Blue following her lead.

Pearl’s heart jolted and her entire body shivered as she swung in the saddle along with the first step Blue made. ‘Holy God, holy God.’ She breathed out shakily, squeezing the saddle so violently she could pierce it with her fingernails.

They walked slowly, just like Lapis promised, and with every next step Pearl’s body gently swung along with Blue’s. She really tried to enjoy it, but what was disturbing her were the swingy motions of her pelvis which she couldn’t control as Blue was walking. Pearl always wondered why Lapis was doing these movements while riding, she thought that Lapis was doing them in some kind of her intension while Pearl was around, but now Pearl understood that Lapis wasn’t doing them on purpose – it was just happening itself. Pearl didn’t know if she should feel embarrassed or amused because of these movements – somehow they seemed quite coquettish to her.

Suddenly Pearl’s mind started projecting rather unsuitable images for this early evening hour, with Lapis playing the main role, making her breath stick in her throat and cheeks burn. Why was this happening right now?

“How’s it going up there?” Lapis asked all of a sudden, snapping Pearl out of her shameful thoughts.

“Huh?” Pearl shook her head quickly like if Lapis could see those images in it if she didn’t. “Uh… Good, I guess.”

Lapis gave Pearl one smile as a response and turned towards the path she followed.

It took maybe five minutes until they finished the round and Lapis decided that one round was probably enough for Pearl for the first time, so she pulled the reins back softly and turned up to Pearl.

“We're finished.” She proclaimed, but happily, so Pearl could consider the ride being over and successfully done without any damage to health.

“Already?” Pearl asked, sounding a little bit more surprised than she actually wanted. She was surprised they managed to ride round the arena so quickly, although very slow. “Well, that was… Fast.”

“I know right.” Lapis giggled, patting Blue’s neck for a good behaving during the ride.

“So, uh... Can I get down now?” Pearl asked, checking how high she was maybe for the millionth time. "How do I do it?"

“Just like you go up.” She smirked and watched Pearl’s expression slowly changing into an uncertain one.

“Um, alright.” Pearl swallowed, feeling like the way down’s going to be yet more difficult than the way up. “How do I begin?”
“Get your feet out the stirrups and just slide down.” Lapis said, opening her arms. “I’ll catch you.”

“O-okay.” The taller girl bit her lip while hesitantly looking down. She was really looking forward to stand on the solid ground, but yet she had to get there.

Pearl slipped her feet out and firmly squeezed the saddle, tossing her right leg over Blue, and once she was hanging from the horse’s back, she waited for Lapis’ signal.

“Ready?” Lapis asked, gently placing her hands on Pearl’ hips to support her. “I got you.”

“Okay.” Pearl nodded and slowly slid down the saddle, but as she hit the ground, her body suddenly felt so heavy – it felt like she just got out of water after a very long swim. She was thankful for Lapis’ hands holding her – if it weren’t them, she would’ve fallen on the ground for sure.

It felt like she couldn’t put her legs together, like if there was still something between them and forbidding her from doing so.

“Are you alright?” The blue-haired girl inquired as Pearl straightened.

“Yes, I’m fine.” Pearl breathed out a grin and hugged Lapis tightly around her neck, finally feeling safe again.

“I’m glad to hear that.” Lapis admitted, placing a soft kiss in Pearl’s peach hair, stroking her and providing her an extra feeling of safety by hugging her back. “How was the ride? Did you enjoy it?”

“It was… Okay.” Pearl said after a moment of hesitation. For some reason she didn’t want to admit she liked it – maybe she was concerned about having another ride. But the view, huh, it sure had something into it.

It must’ve been hard for Pearl, Lapis thought, and she was surprised herself that Pearl actually agreed to absolve the ride, but still Lapis was so proud of her and happy that she tried.

The rider led her horse into its stall, removing all the tacks, clearing hooves and giving the horse some treats.

Pearl was watching her with a light smile on her face, leaning against the stall wall and watching Lapis working, and she relaxed. The odd feeling of body-heaviness slowly faded away, and finally Pearl could press her legs together without feeling like if she was still sitting on the horse and couldn’t do so.

While watching Lapis walking round the hall, Pearl offered clearing the hallway from straw. Lapis thanked Pearl for the offer and handed her the broom. Since they both were working together, the faster the work went and the sooner they were finished.

“… So.” Lapis wiped her forehead on her way back from the tack room. “We’re done for today. Thank you for help, honey.”

Pearl hummed shyly, cheeks brightening. “No problem.” She scratched her nape, avoiding looking into Lapis’ eyes, not exactly knowing the reason why.

Meanwhile, Lapis slowly approached her and yet she was slowing her pace the closer to Pearl
she was, a faint smirk glowing on her face. “... What do we do now?”

Pearl’s eyes then darted to Lapis, although she was fighting against it. “I-I don’t know.” She responded, but after a while she remembered why she actually came. Unfortunately she didn’t manage to say anything before Lapis took over the speech and gently placed her hands on Pearl’s hips once more.

“Mmm, so now it’s your chance to make out something.” She said, keeping her voice low and eyes fixed on Pearl’s.

Pearl swallowed, finally able to look at Lapis entirely. The tone of her voice started turning her stomach upside down, and yet more the closer Lapis was. Her tanned hands were slipping from Pearl’s hips to her loins gingerly.

“Well?” Lapis whispered, taking step closer and closing the space between them.

Because of this closeness, Pearl was forced to place her hands somewhere, so she chose to put them around Lapis’ neck, scratching her hair gently. “Actually… I wanted to ask if you’d like to come over to my place tonight.”

“So that’s why you actually came?” Lapis chuckled and started to rock them both, gently, enjoying Pearl’s finger in her hair. “You could just call.”

“I know, I just… Wanted to see you.” Pearl admitted and once more she looked aside from those dark blue eyes.

Lapis sighed dreamily with a slight shake of her head. “Aw, you’re just so lovely.”

Pearl hummed softly at that compliment and reddened yet more, asking Lapis once again. “So? Would you like to come?”

“I would love to.” She nodded and smooched her girlfriend’s forehead.

<•••>

They took a long night walk around the town, talking and giggling, walking hand in hand and watching their widening shadows as they walked pass a street lamp. The sky was clear tonight but a few tiny clouds. As girls were passing a city park, they took a seat on the nearest bench and watched stars glowing above their heads, with a wind rustling through the trees behind them, listening to crickets and an owl.

Pearl snuggled to Lapis, wrapping her hands around Lapis’ arm, laying her head down on her shoulder, sighing contentedly. She closed her eyes and inhaled Lapis’ sweet fragrance. She shivered at that pleasant scent and snuggled yet more.

Lapis couldn’t bite back a smile. She placed a soft kiss in Pearl’s hair and laid her head on the other’s, petting Pearl’s thigh with her free hand.

They spent one hour in the park, watching stars and cuddling, maybe even two, but counting hours wasn’t their main focus. Later, during the darkest night, they decided to continue home – partly because of the weather started turning cold, although it was quite hot today.
Soon they reached Beach City housing estate, walked pass the wide parking lot and finally entered the block of flats where Pearl lived.

Calling the elevator took a while and so girls took that opportunity to pay their attention to one another once again, wrapping their arms around the other and changing a few kisses, entirely forgetting about the elevator notifying them about its arrival, being shrouded by darkness as the hall light automatically turned off after capturing no movements.

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

- Pearl tried riding a horse
- girls took a walk around the night town
- Lapis came over to Pearl’s place

♦ 12th week (Monday)
Pearl was pushed against her apartment’s door yet before she could unlock it, but somehow she managed to slip the key into the door lock, although she was urgently returning her kisses to Lapis, running her other hand through her smooth cyan hair, tugging the girl towards herself and gasping for more kisses.

Pearl was way too distracted to remove the key from the door lock once the door was finally unlocked, but realized there were safety cameras installed inside the building, so for her own and Lapis’ good she rather opened the door and raided inside along with her lover.

The door shut closed behind them and Pearl was once again pressed against it, a gasp leaving her after the thrust. A sensation of delight rushed through her as Lapis pressed her body against hers, hands sneaking along Pearl’s slim waist, hips and thighs.

Pearl wrapped her arm around Lapis’ neck, pulling her towards herself, and yet with her other hand she tried to throw the keys into key basket placed on a shoe cabinet, though the ubiquitous darkness was a bit forbidding her from hitting it – she heard the keys fall onto the ground anyway.

Five slender digits ran through Lapis’ hair, pulling her closer and yet scratching her at the same time while Lapis’ hands were travelling across Pearl’s body, slowly slipping under her shirt and up along her sides.

Her hot lips were greedy for Pearl, nuzzling her and daring. Poor Pearl, paralyzed, wasn’t able to focus on breathing. Every time Lapis’ lips landed on her skin, it felt like she breathed life into her. Blood was rushing wildly through her veins, boiling. Every heart beat felt as if a great ocean wave thrust into her.

Lapis’ head lowered down Pearl’ neck while her hands were busy going the opposite direction, exposing the girl’s pale stomach, leaving trails of her fingers on her skin.

“Mmhm-hah…Ah.” Pearl gasped, being pushed against the door.

Lapis kept pushing yet further, pressing her pelvis against Pearl’s a bit harder than before, her sneaky fingers slipped under the band of Pearl’s bra from where goosebumps started spreading right after.

Pearl started trembling, shivers running down her spine. She hankered for Lapis so, so bad, though she was afraid where could all this lead up, but on the other hand she couldn’t deny the fact that she wished for more than just this.

Lapis’ lips smacked as they parted from Pearl’s neck, travelling back up to meet her thin lips. She stole some more kisses from her, fingers still slipping alongside the band towards Pearl’s back.
“Ah-hah.” Pearl groaned when a kiss was stolen from her. She then gave Lapis a taste of her own medicine – biting her bottom lip and stretching it, waiting for it to come back and repeating the action again until it started disturbing the other girl.

“Hey! Be a good girl.” Lapis hissed, keeping her voice low but teasing, and pinched Pearl’s butt as for payback.

“Ouch! That hurt!” Pearl barked, brows furrowed, but grinned. Her arms were wrapped tighter around the other’s neck.

“You deserve it, you teaser.” Lapis murmured and this time she was the one who clasped the other’s lip between teeth, making Pearl growl at her like an angry wolf.

Lapis stretched her lip, then released it, then again, stretched and released, closely watching Pearl’s reactions with teasing grin on her face.

“You better stop it right now.” Pearl threatened, smirking and nuzzling the other’s mouth, rather provoking Lapis to do the opposite she asked for.

“Or what? Are you gonna release your cat at me? Ow, I’m so scared.” Lapis laughed playfully, making a brief pause before scanning Pearl’s face carefully. Lapis licked her own lips – they became dry after being separated from Pearl’s for so long. “… I’d rather deal with this kitty over here.” She whispered mysteriously.

Pearl frowned, an evil smile played on her face. She cupped Lapis’ freckled cheeks with her hands and pulled her lips towards her own, but caught a few bites before Lapis adapted to the same wavelength which she required.

Their eyes went close as their lips met again, but not too long for Pearl; leaving her eyes wide open and pupils shrunk into tiny dots.

Those sneaky hands were slipping across her back, scratching it and discovering more and more places to touch, spreading goosebumps all over Pearl’s skin.

Pearl urgently tried to ignore those wonderful hands by focusing on the girl’s lips, keeping both Lapis’ and her own wet and warm. Pearl couldn’t keep her hands on Lapis’ face for too long; automatically they went around Lapis’ neck once again.

“Pearl.” Lapis sighed between two tender kisses. Her hands dropped down to Pearl’s butt and lightly squeezed it. “Pearl, I want you.” She groaned.

Another kiss followed, deep and tasty. Pearl felt the other’s pelvis pressing against her own a bit harder, leaving her breathless, but rather because of Lapis’ desire than this act.

She’s never been this far, Pearl perceived. Suddenly she started doubting if she really wanted to end up counting stars while being touched on particular places. Was she even ready yet? She wondered if she could stop it yet; stop them, stop that greedy girl from wanting more. But she was so wonderful!

“Lapis?” Pearl managed to blurt before Lapis sank her lips into hers, but she didn’t seem to react. Lapis’ mouth was still busy, swallowing Pearl’s breath and stealing air from her lungs. Her tanned hands were slowly circling along the girl’s buttocks and pulling her towards her own boiling body.

“Hon–” The skinny girl tried, interrupted by another fond buss. “Lapis, w-wait a mo–”
Her heart-shaped lips smack pulled from Pearl slowly, slightly confused expression appeared on Lapis’ face. “What is it, sweetheart?”

Pearl froze, gulping for air and staring straight into Lapis’ bemused eyes. She felt really bad for interrupting these situations. She knew that Lapis was always trying so hard, but because of Pearl’s doubts and innocence it always ended up like this. She quite regretted disrupting this beautiful and passionate moment, but this time, for her fortune, she heard her ragdoll cat approaching and meowing up at them. Pearl was saved.

“Oh, look who’s here to save you.” Lapis chuckled, turning her head towards the faint meowing. She replaced her hands up to Pearl’s hips, as if the cat would attack if it found out about anything that was going on.

“Yeah.” Pearl giggled, very relieved that Rose actually showed up. “Well... S-she doesn’t like bad girls.” Pearl tried to joke, hoping for easing this situation a little bit, but Lapis rather smirked at that.

“Alright, you got me.” She chuckled, letting go of Pearl, although it was quite against her will. She still longed for that girl. She already felt so alone and empty without Pearl’s lips and arms around her neck.

It wasn’t over yet, Lapis decided.

“So.” Pearl cleared her throat, shivering and still a bit randy from earlier, she tried to keep her voice steady. “Shall we head inside?”

Lapis nodded and then followed Pearl further into the flat.

Rose was gently taken into Pearl’s arms as she was heading to the living room, purring aloud and nuzzling her owner’s chest while being petted.

“Have a seat.” Pearl gently offered, turning to Lapis.

The girl nodded thankfully and took a seat on the sofa.

“Are you hungry?” Pearl asked after sitting down onto the couch next to her. It’s been maybe a half an hour since they got home, so as a good host, Pearl considered that asking her girlfriend if she’d like something to eat would be more than suitable.

“Yes, only for you.” Lapis whispered, arms tossed over the back of the sofa, a mysterious smirk on her face.

Pearl’s eyes wide opened and her chin almost dropped, but she tried to remain cool – though fighting against her boiling cheeks was quite impossible at that moment. “I-uh…” She tittered, then swallowed. “And-uh… What about something to drink? Can I offer you something?”

Lapis hummed amusedly. “A tea would be lovely.”

“Alright.” Pearl smiled and put Rose down onto the sofa, then walked pass Lapis into the kitchen. Lapis was trying all her best not to slap Pearl’s butt as she was passing her by.

Making the tea took Pearl only a few minutes before she got back to Lapis. She handed her the mug, softly brushing her fingers while exchanging it. After this contact she couldn’t avoid looking Lapis in the eyes, and god, that sweet face she made turned Pearl’s whole universe upside down.

“Thank you, darling.” Lapis blinked, wrapping the mug in her fingers.
“You’re welcome.” Pearl shrugged with a giggle, taking a seat right next to her girlfriend. She immediately reddened as Lapis’ longing eyes landed on her, feeling a wave of chills wash over her body. “Would you like to-uh… I don’t know… Watch a movie?” Pearl then blurted, mostly in effort to shake off the feeling like if she’d get eaten if she’d let Lapis stare at her like that any longer.

“Umm, yeah, why not.” Lapis shrugged, placing the mug onto the tabletop. “And what movie should it be?”

Honestly Pearl wasn’t counting with this plan working out. Now she was supposed to make out something. “Uuuh… Um.”

Lapis couldn’t bite back a grin, especially not when Pearl’s face looked this adorable while urgently trying to think. The blue-haired girl then shifted a little closer to Pearl, especially gently placing her hand onto her thigh, stroking it as gingerly as she could. “… Maybe I could give you a hand.”

Once again Pearl’s eyes opened wide, drops of sweat forming on her temples. She was almost scared to look at Lapis then. Her fists clenched as that tender hand was slowly stroking her along her thin thigh, rather along its inner side. Pearl swallowed. “Um, y-yeah. That’s-that’s right.” She stuttered. “Maybe it’d be nice if you make out something… Um, I got this box over here. You can pick something from there.”

Lapis watched as Pearl bent down and from below the table she put out a paper box with CDs and old videotapes. Man, those things reminded Lapis of her good old childhood. “Alright… Um, roughly, what should it be?”

“Oh, it’s… Entirely up to you.” Pearl smiled nervously, placing the box onto the table, glad that she was able to distract Lapis for a moment. “I’ll be… Right back.” She said and cautiously she stood up, heading to the guest room where she kept her clothes. She realized she hasn’t got herself a shower today yet and thought this would probably be a perfect moment for it, since Lapis was quite… More playful than usual. Maybe an adequate time distance from Pearl would help cool Lapis down a little bit, Pearl thought. Although Pearl really appreciated this kind of Lapis’ attention, she was quite afraid where it all could escalate to.

“Sure.” Lapis said behind her and slowly started raking through the tapes.

Meanwhile, Pearl entered the guest room and opened the closet, pulling out some clean clothes for her and also for Lapis, so she doesn’t have to sleep in her day shirt as it was for the last time. She also took one towel with herself, in case Lapis would like to take a shower, too. Pearl’s towel was already in the bathroom, so she didn’t have to bother with taking herself one, too.

Once she gained everything she needed, she exited the room and closed the door behind herself, turning to Lapis who was hesitating in picking one of the two CDs she was holding in her hands.

Pearl giggled, cheeks turning faint pink. “So, what do you got?”

“Ugh, I can’t decide between these two.” Lapis sighed, scanning over the scripts of each CD.

“Aha.” Pearl chuckled softly, cupping her mouth, then thought for a moment. “Then I guess I’ll leave it to you. I’m gonna get myself a shower real quick.”

“But Pearl, I really got a hard time deciding right now.” Lapis groaned dramatically, making Pearl chuckle once more.
“You can make it, darling.” Pearl spurred her gently, a sweet smile played on her face. “Also um… Would you like to… Take a shower, too?”

Briefly Lapis stopped scanning over the covers and glued her eyes to Pearl again without even turning her head, light smirk on her lips. “You mean… Together?” She asked and her smile yet widened.

“Ah…” Pearl lost her breath. Well, maybe that was a wrong way of formulating this type of question. “Um-uh… I mean, separately, of course.” She chuckled shyly, unable to shake the red dust off of her cheeks.

“Aah.” Lapis groaned, pretending disappointment. “… Maybe later then, party pooper.”

Pearl just rolled her eyes, but the grin on her lips never faded, leaving clean clothes for Lapis on the couch. She then headed to the bathroom and locked the door behind herself; in case Lapis would be a little too curious.

Finally Lapis was able to pick one of the two movies, and Pearl was satisfied with this option as well.

The bathroom was finally ready to use, so Lapis went and took a quick shower while Pearl made herself something to drink. She noticed that there still remained a few strawberries in the fridge. It would be a shame to let them all spoil when girls could eat them, right?

So Pearl pulled the plastic box with strawberries out the fridge, carefully she washed one piece after another, put them into a bowl and finally decorated them with a pinch of icing sugar. And as if it was the right timing, Lapis walked out the bathroom just as Pearl dropped down onto the sofa with bowl of strawberries in her hands.

CD player and the CD inside it were already prepared as Lapis sat down beside Pearl, tossing her arm that was closer to Pearl over the back of the couch.

Pearl took that opportunity and gingerly shifted to Lapis, laying her head down onto her shoulder, nuzzling her to get the most comfortable position she could and tossed a blanket over their legs.

Lapis’ warm smile spread upon her cheeks. Her arm slipped from the couch only to hug Pearl around her shoulder and pull her closer.

“I brought strawberries.” Pearl boasted in whisper, slowly getting way too comfortable in Lapis’ arms.

“I can see.” Lapis hummed with a slight nod, smiling. “They look just delicious.” She murmured into Pearl’s ear, fondly nuzzling her peach hair, perceiving its faint, pleasant smell.

Pearl slightly shivered as the blown air from Lapis’ nose fluttered her hair. She giggled and snuggled up to Lapis a bit more, grabbing the remote control. “So, shall we?”

“Yeah.” The girl whispered and placed a small kiss onto Pearl’s temple.

As the right option Lapis chose a romantic, psychological movie, since Pearl was the one into romance and Lapis more into psychology. She was glad that Pearl owned this one. Lapis really
liked this movie since the first time she saw it.

But this time, especially for Lapis, the movie was rather a coulisse than something she was supposed to watch. She rather paid her attention to Pearl – giving her a kiss when something romantic appeared on the screen. They were feeding one another with strawberries until the bowl became empty, cuddling through the entire movie, chatting in low voice and whispering sweet words to one another's ear, changing tender kisses with quiet smacking filling the room.

“Mm, you smell like a watermelon.” Lapis extolled at the end of the movie when subtitles were rolling up, inhaling the beautiful fragrance emitting from Pearl’s skin.

“Well, yeah.” Pearl giggled, goosebumps overflowing her body as Lapis’ nose was slipping across her neck. She turned off the TV. “I used watermelon shower gel.” She admitted.

“Mhm.” Lapis hummed, sniffing some more before she straightened to meet Pearl face to face again, whispering. “I wonder how you taste like.”

“Hahah, awfully.” The taller girl guessed, cheeks becoming red because of Lapis’ growing closeness.

Slowly she was shifting closer to Pearl’s lips until she finally reached them with her own, kissing her fondly and carefully. Her hands gently held Pearl’s, slowly making tiny circles with her thumbs over the back of her pale hands, but soon one of her hands let go of Pearl and cupped her cheek instead. Lapis pushed her lips harder towards the other’s, letting the kisses become passionate.

Pearl gasped faintly as Lapis’ lips parted from her, yet still remained close enough to feel her hot breath on her face.

“Awfully sweet.” Lapis panted, letting only a brief moment for Pearl to breathe in before her lips were pressed into Pearl’s once again.

She tasted Pearl a little bit more this time, trying to fight off the desire to bite her, though it was hard to persuade herself.

Pearl, on the other hand, wasn’t afraid to fight back. Once Lapis bit her, she repaid it right after, though these bites were rather careful than teasing. Those kisses that were given to her were tender, slow and affectionate.

Lapis leaned more into Pearl, pushing her backwards. Her hand slowly shifted to Pearl’s back to support her.

Pearl wrapped her arms around the other girl’s neck, letting herself be laid down onto the sofa while being kissed the most wonderful way she could barely even imagine.

Lapis was so strong, although she seemed quite fragile, Pearl thought. She laid Pearl down so carefully that she didn’t even realize she was already lying in duvets. Lapis kneeled over her, one leg on each side of Pearl. She kept kissing her, tasting, biting, but softly.

Pearl couldn’t keep any gasp inside as Lapis shifted lower to her neck, slowly pulling her hand out from below Pearl’s back to support herself while she was leaning over her.

She pressed her chest against Pearl’s, feeling both her breath and speeding heart beat.

Pearl started to feel uncomfortable knowing that her nipples began straightening again, and yet right under Lapis’ torso. She perceived her strong body, her breasts pressing against her own.
Suddenly Pearl realized that neither of them owned a bra at that moment, then flushed dark red immediately.

Pearl's stomach flipped over, heart pounding wildly, breath stuck in her throat as Lapis kissed her all the way down her slender neck. She felt Lapis' hot hand pressing against her belly; she was melting under it like a snow, finally catching her breath, not aware if she should close her eyes nor leave them open. Her mind became one big mush of emotions and thoughts, though she couldn’t identify or control any single one of them.

Lapis smiled to herself, scanning over one of the hickeys still remaining on Pearl’s skin, but then she continued in her task, slipping her lips lower towards Pearl's throat. Earlier, the arm Lapis was supporting herself with, she gently slipped under the back of Pearl’s neck in effort to keep her closer and still, the other one fondly rubbing and tickling her belly. Lapis’ tongue slipped out her lips and began licking Pearl's skin from her throat upwards, leaving a short trail of saliva there.

Pearl’s heart jolted, maybe even skipped a beat or two. This intense contact was making a mess out of her. She needed to hold onto something, so instantly she dug her fingernails into the mattress, letting a gasp escape her lips as she sensed Lapis’ hot tongue again, but this time travelling along her jaw line.

Her light eyes rolled backwards, she was afraid of taking a breath because of Lapis’ chest being so close.

Pearl’s body was shivering, both from pleasure and a bit of uncertainty, but this contact was making her yet more desperate for more of it.

Her hand ran through Lapis’ hair only to pull her towards her lips again. She needed her, and at least for a little moment she wanted to focus on something else than Lapis’ breasts and that wonderful hand which was caressing her stomach so kindly.

Lapis tried all her best to be gentle and slow, however, the growing heat inside her was making it difficult. She so longed for Pearl, longed for her body and those tiny sweet gasps that left her lips always as Lapis managed to hit any particular sensitive spot on her soft neck.

“Ah… Mmhm.” Pearl groaned silently, swallowing Lapis’ boiling breath once she was brought back up to her lips.

Pearl shut her eyes, but even though they were closed, she could suddenly sense a flash of black shadow manifesting right next to her. For some reason it made her think that they were not alone; she could feel a presence, making her feel quite uncomfortable and scared.

She half-opened her eyes. “Lapis, wait… I-I feel like…” She stuttered, making Lapis lean back a bit.

“What?” Lapis asked a little confused, gulping for air.

Pearl turned her head to the right just to find her cat sitting only a few inches away from them on the couch and staring straight at them, slowly waving the tip of her tail.

Pearl’s heart almost exploded in shock, eyes wide, panting. How embarrassing. “Rose, what are you… What are you doing here? Go away, shoo!” Pearl tried, but unfortunately for her, Rose remained still. Pearl then threw a desperate look at Lapis in effort to make her help Pearl solve this sudden situation. “Could you just… Push her a bit?”

Lapis gave the ragdoll a look, then turned back to Pearl with a chuckle. “Why?”
“I don’t want her to watch us—uh… Y-you know.” Pearl blushed, looking aside, imagining those big glowing eyes watching them until the night is over. She bit her lip, feeling chills running over her skin under Lapis’ gaze.

Lapis rolled her eyes, but grinned, turning her head to Rose. “Okay, little girl, I’m really sorry, but you have to go.” She declared, then stretched her hand and gently pushed the cat away from them. Rose then jumped down from the couch and went somewhere out of their sign. Pearl let out a sigh of relief.

“… She must be jealous.” Lapis proclaimed with a giggle, coming back to her lover.

“Why would she?” Pearl’s brow wrinkled.

“Because someone’s just stealing kisses from her mommy.” She said, once again leaning towards Pearl, pressing her lips against hers to steal another kiss.

Pearl then smiled into the buss and once again her hand found its way back into Lapis’ hair, stroking it fondly.

Lapis’ hand started to move again, rubbing and scratching Pearl’s abdomen while her lips were busy with planting kisses all over her face, sweet and gentle smooches and bites.

The blue-haired girl lowered her head down towards Pearl’s neck again, leaving tiny little marks of teeth there, but no hickeys. Meanwhile, Pearl toyed with her blue hair – well, at least she tried to distract herself a little bit, because all these blissful sensations were way too intensive to her. But her trying didn’t stick for too long.

Lapis pulled her arm out from below Pearl’s neck and slowly she sat down onto her pelvis.

Pearl then finally felt free to breathe, but still remained all dazed, no matter for how much air she gulped.

Then other Lapis’ hand joined the one which was already resting on Pearl’s stomach. Though it still was over the fabric, Lapis became stroking it, gingerly, affectionately, watching closely Pearl’s reactions.

She started wiggling a little because of those light touches, because of those delicate fingers which were leaving narrow trails across the fabric, slightly tickling her. Then one of those fine hands gently slipped under Pearl’s night shirt. Lapis smiled as her fingertips sensed goosebumps on Pearl’s skin along with shivers – it made her confident.

Her hand was going up deadly slow, every inch made Pearl’s heart beat go faster, such as her breath. She was shy to keep her eyes on Lapis because of that suspiciously affable smile playing on her freckled face, and yet Pearl was forced to watch that hand slowly shifting up, rolling up her shirt and exposing her belly.

There was this strange feeling again, the one Pearl felt once before – her chest was trembling, heart pounding so wildly it could explode any second, shivers were running down her spine as quickly as her hands were sweating.

Lapis’ hand then reached Pearl’s very chest, resting her hand in the center of it, feeling like if it was burning the fragile skin underneath it because of its extreme warmth.

Pearl was afraid of breathing at that moment, although she knew that she’d blackout if she didn’t breathe in even once.
She found Lapis leaning over to her again, stealing one deep kiss from her, another and another as that hand started to move again, shifting to a side towards Pearl’s breast.

Pearl squeaked into Lapis’ mouth as her nipple came in contact with her hot palm, and yet Pearl tried her best not to cry out as Lapis slowly slithered two of her fingers over it, making the button harden yet more. “Aah-hah, Lapis…” Pearl groaned, trembling.

“Mhm?” Lapis purred, nuzzling and tenderly kissing Pearl’s neck. She toyed a little with the nipple, circling her finger around it and brushing over it every so often.

“A-ahh… Mhmm.” Pearl moaned, only able to grasp Lapis’ head in her arms and pull her towards her chest, feeling like if electric currents were rushing through her body every time Lapis’ finger made another circle, back arched and head turned backwards. “L-Lapis… Lapis, please…” She gasped, yet not knowing what exactly she was pleading for.

It just felt good; so good – way better than Pearl did it herself, because she couldn’t expect any movement of those amazing fingers. It was just so pleasing, making her mind and senses become one big chaos. Pearl was only glad she didn’t pass out.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

- Lapis and Pearl were watching a movie
- girls were cuddling late at night

♦ 12th week (Monday night)
Pearl woke up quite late the next morning, seeing only blue in front and around herself. She realized her face was buried nowhere else than in Lapis’ blue mane – and it smelled so sweet, too.

She smelled again and nuzzled the ocean blue hair yet more with a light smile on her face, tossing her arm around Lapis’ torso and gluing herself to her strong back.

“Mm, good morning.” Pearl heard a murmur as Lapis’ hand cupped hers to give it a few strokes.

“Morning, Lapis.” The taller girl whispered. Her response made Lapis turn around slowly, facing Pearl and her weary, but cute face. Her arm still remained around Lapis.

Pearl perceived pleasant warmth underneath the covers, radiating from their bodies and keeping them warm. She wished they could stay like that forever, right as their legs tangled up together and pulled one another closer.

Lapis’ hand was brought up to Pearl’s cheek and stroked it affectionately, making Pearl close her eyes for a brief moment. “Did you sleep well?”

“Yes.” Pearl blinked slowly. “Did you?”

“Way better than the last time.” Lapis lightly chuckled, watching Pearl and her beautiful shining eyes. “… I really enjoyed yesterday.” She recalled it, stroking Pearl once more and brushing her bangs away from her forehead.

Pearl’s mind darted back to yesterday’s night, refreshing all the sensations that were controlling her body and senses, making her mind almost incorrigible big mess. The way Lapis was touching her, it was just unforgettable, and yet it felt like it was still happening, though it was not. “Me too.” She admitted in whisper. Suddenly she couldn’t fight off the growing desire for Lapis’ hands on her chest again, and yet when they were so close to it right now.

Pearl breathed in to cool down her appetence, a feeling which she’s never sensed before the last night, becoming a little agitated by light shivers growing inside her chest. She blushed even without knowing.

Lapis’ soft chuckle brought Pearl back to present along with her hand stroking her smooth pale cheek. She recognized that Pearl replayed the events in her head. “… Are you free tomorrow?” Lapis then asked, wondering.

“Uum… I-I’m afraid I'll be busy all day.” Pearl thought. “My parents are arranging a birthday party for me. And Thursday will be the same, except I’ll be celebrating with Garnet and Amethyst.”

“I see.” Lapis sighed softly, wondering if she’d be welcomed to the Thursday party, too. But she wasn’t worried that she’d not be that much. She knew that the three of them were closest friends and it was only okay for them to meet up.

“But.” Pearl then continued. “I should be free on Friday.” She said and began scratching Lapis’ back gently, bringing her dark eyes up to hers.
Suddenly a light of hope lit in Lapis. She was thankful for this opportunity. When else could she have a chance to give Pearl her gift?

The freckled girl smiled widely. “Well then, may I invite you over to my home overnight? So we could… Celebrate, too?” She asked.

There was something mysterious in that sentence, Pearl recognized, but she couldn’t make out what it was. It made her feel a little uncertain, but what could possibly go wrong?

“I’d… Love to come over.” Pearl smiled shyly.

“Sweet.” The other girl grinned and pecked Pearl’s lips. “I’ll pick you up once you’re ready.”

Since it was the second half of September already, Pearl had yet several things to get in order before her first day in college. She drove Lapis back to the stable and then headed to the university campus to get everything ready before her first, official accession day.

Lapis didn’t have to bother with school. She accomplished education after three years in college and being an equestrian was now her permanent job. She was so glad she didn’t have to study anymore.

A new bedding was delivered to the stable, Lapis noticed as she walked inside the building. She also noticed that Peridot and several people were storing the bedding up in the attic. Lapis greeted all of them, except for Peridot. Lapis only shot her a look and passed her by. She felt bad about it, but she wasn’t ready to forgive Peridot for what she said back on Sunday yet.

Peridot quite regretted the way she expressed herself, too. She should’ve chosen better wording for what was on her chest. She knew the way that Lapis felt when someone talked about her mother and what happened, but Peridot was sure that what she’d said was correct and wanted to stay her ground. Besides, she wanted to help Lapis, and not let her down. So sooner or later, she guessed that she’d better apologize – well, at least for the tone she used back then.

For today’s training Lapis chose a different horse, because both, she and Greg, decided to sign two horses for the Grand Prix, so each of the horses could afford a break once the ride is successful and use the other horse for the next round.

Lapis certainly wanted to save Blue for the jump-off if she manages to get through all the previous rounds, so for the qualification she chose Lion – a young, but experienced gelding which was in perfect condition and was one of the best jumpers in the stable. But there was a little problem with the horse, too. Namely it was headstrong and mostly it did what it wanted, especially when it was ridden. Lion needed a steady hand, and with Lapis’ self-confidence, determination and ability to persuade others, she believed she could make the horse work in harness.

Friday came by quickly to Lapis, although all the arranging around Grand Prix was rather stressful and exhausting, yet all the medical examinations Lapis had to undergo were making her tired twice as much. Blue and Lion have undergone several examinations as well, checking if both of them were able to compete with the smallest possibility to get injured during the big event. Greg
and the team also had to contact their veterinarian and agree on coming along, get in order everything about transport, pay the entry fee, contact local stable manager to provide them two box stalls for their horses and also book several rooms in a hotel nearby the equestrian grounds, so travelling would not be the main time killer and any big deal.

Lapis’ watch showed 5 PM by the time her job in the stable was done. She packed her things, got into her Kodiaq car and hurried home to clean the mess she’s made since her whole family was gone for vacation. As she arrived, she got herself clean clothes, then dusted and vacuumed the house, washed the dishes and cleaned up her room.

As soon as everything was settled and just before she decided to pick Pearl up, Lapis spent several minutes in the upstairs bathroom by additionally grooming herself, fixing her hair and applying a bit of her perfume which Pearl loved the most.

Lapis was so excited about this day. She was looking forward to see Pearl’s expression as she unwraps the gift Lapis bought her. And of course Lapis couldn’t wait to finally see her beloved Pearl after three long days.

She wanted tonight to be perfect and was determined to do her absolute best to make it work, though she was quite worried that she could spoil something, even a teeny-tiny thing. She was shivering all day because of it, shivering from both excitement and nervousness. But now there was no time for this, Lapis decided. She had to stay cool – especially when she wanted things to work out the way she wished for.

Shortly after Lapis’ watch notified her of 6 o’clock, she was finally ready to set off. She got into her car and started off to Pearl’s place. Lapis was so excited to see her that much that every so often she managed to exceed the maximum speed limit in town. But before she could notice it, she was already standing next to the main door of the apartment building.

She texted Pearl a message once she got out of her car and waited for her to arrive to the parking lot. And before Lapis could count to ten, Pearl was already down the stairs, carrying a bag on her shoulder and giving Lapis one sweet smile after another.

“Hello, precious.” Lapis greeted in low, sweet voice, leaning her back against her Kodiaq. Her hands were resting in her pants pockets, one leg bent and foot resting against the car door.

Pearl was quite stunned by her look – those torn jeans and checked shirt with combination of pink and turquoise color really suited her, and yet especially with that enchanting smile dancing on her lips.

Pearl almost stumbled over while her eyes were fixed on her. The closer to Lapis she was, the slower she went and the quicker her cheeks were turning red.

“What is it?” The blue-haired girl chuckled, noticing Pearl’s suspicious behavior. Slowly she pulled away from her car and headed towards Pearl to help her with the luggage.

“How come you’re more beautiful every day?” Pearl shook her head as if she didn’t believe that Lapis really looked as pretty as she saw her.

“Aw, you’re such a sweetheart.” Lapis smiled and placed a soft kiss onto Pearl's mouth, then bent down to take her bag. “Here, let me help you.”

“Thank you.” Pearl bit her lip and handed her bag to Lapis. “You’re gorgeous.”
“I know. That’s why you love me.” Lapis dared say with a smirk, placing the luggage to the back seat and closing the door. Then she opened the front one for Pearl, gesturing for her to get aboard. “Milady.”

Pearl stood frozen for a brief moment after all that she’s just heard, but then she softly laughed, cupping her mouth before she headed towards the passenger seat. “What a gesture.” She chuckled and gently pecked Lapis’ cheek, then entered the car, leaving faint blush on the girl's face.

“I missed you, honey.” Pearl admitted, squeezing her hands between her knees as she was watching Lapis buckling up.

“I missed you, too.” Lapis smiled and then leaned over to Pearl to give her a tiny sweet smooch again. “You have no idea how much I was looking forward to this day.”

“Were you?” Pearl’s light brows rose.

“Yeah.” Lapis started the car, turning the steering wheel to the side, so she could get to the main road. “This all week was just so boring and tiring. I’m glad it’s finally over.”

Pearl chuckled softly and leaned her elbow against the window, chin resting in her palm as she was looking outside. “Not quite yet.”

Lapis’ dark eyes slightly widened. She turned her head to Pearl and grinned immediately as she saw her smiling back at her.

The ride back took a bit longer then the ride there, but both girls enjoyed it. They were chatting about varied topics while passing through the slowly emptying evening streets, and when they were not, they were simply holding hands – well, when Lapis wasn’t engaging a gear at the time. They talked about everything that happened the past few days they were apart and never missed any detail. They were laughing, giggling, trying to hide their reddening cheeks and avoiding one another’s eyes as one was caught staring at the other. But soon as the ride came to an end, those cute, innocent glimpses did as well, though those shy smiles never left their faces.

Lapis opened the passenger door for Pearl and waited for her to come out, then she took Pearl’s bag from the back seat. She locked the car when she heard Pearl gasp behind her.

“Wow… So, this… Is your house?” Pearl froze on a spot, her chin lightly dropped.

The house was huge, both wide and high, surrounded by neatly-looking garden. It was beautiful two-storey house with an open garage with two parking places right under the balcony and enormous amount of flowers and plants all over the place. And on top of that, the whole area was decorated with outdoor light bulbs that made the whole exterior yet brighter during the actual golden twilight. Pearl so loved all types of lights, especially in the very dark, but still, this looked really pretty to her. She would never stop gasping in amazement how incredibly beautiful this place was. She had to admit it really was something. Now this was how she imagined heaven.

“Yeah.” Lapis grinned and stood beside Pearl, surrounding her slim waist with her arm. “Welcome to my home.”

“It’s so… So pretty and…” Pearl shook her head, still astonished by everything she was seeing, hoping they didn’t have a car crash and neither she was standing in front of Pearly gates. “Those lights... And-and flowers… Lapis, it’s so beautiful here.”

Lapis had to chuckle at the way Pearl tried to express herself. She also couldn’t forgive herself
giving the girl a kiss onto her cheek, tugging her closer with her hand while the other was carrying Pearl’s luggage. “Heh, it’s alright… But I guess I can see why you like it.” She smirked and briefly watched the scenery before she spoke again. “… Do you wanna take moment?”

“Yes, please.” Pearl asked and with a soft, enchanted sigh she laid her head down onto Lapis’ shoulder.

“Is there someone I could say hi to?” Pearl asked right as she entered the house, following Lapis along the hallway.

“Oh, no, no. They’ve all gone for a vacation.” The girl announced, placing the luggage down and slowly heading back to Pearl. “We’ve got… The whole house just for ourselves.” She murmured.

“That sounds just wonderful.” Pearl whispered the last word and tossed her arms around Lapis’ neck just as she placed hers around Pearl's waist.

Lapis leaned over to Pearl, tugging her vautiously towards her body, lightly brushing her lips with her own and waiting for Pearl to join them.

This light touch made Pearl giggle, but she refused to kiss Lapis just yet. Instead she kept brushing her lips from side to side, slowly. She felt Lapis’ breath as her lips parted, hearing an unsatisfied groan from her.

“Pearl, don’t be like that.” Lapis protested, but chuckled, trying to steal a kiss from her, but Pearl managed to dodge her lips before she could.

“Or what?” She grinned teasingly, pecking Lapis’ nose and nothing else.

Lapis just frowned, and with a grin on her face, she shook her head slightly. “Let’s rather head to the kitchen.” Lapis offered.

“I’m right behind you.” The taller girl smirked, and before she let go of Lapis, she finally gave her the kiss she was waiting for.

Lapis led the way and once she reached the kitchen, she let Pearl go inside first. She then gently took her by her shoulders and whispered into the dark spreading in front of them. “Are you ready?”

“For what?” Pearl giggled and cupped Lapis’ soft hands which were resting on her shoulders.

“For surprise.” The girl clarified and slowly reached for the switch.

“I suppose.” Pearl shrugged, leaving a shy chuckle escape her lips, blushing.


“… Ach, Lapis.” Pearl gasped and immediately cupped her mouth.

There were colorful birthday balloons floating all round the room – twenty, Pearl guessed, just as her actual age was. There was a round table standing in the middle of the large room, decorated by fancy tablecloth with flower pattern and sprinkled with red heart-shaped confetti. On the table, there was a small birthday cake decorated with varied marzipan flowers – they just looked so real, Pearl thought. Then a pair of wine glasses was standing on the tabletop along with a bottle of red
wine and two plates with spoons neatly settled next to them.

Pearl felt tears welling up in her eyes. “Lapis, I… I don’t know what to say.” She nearly sobbed at how beautiful it all looked. She felt so honored, so thrilled and just immensely, infinitely happy. “I love it.” She finally let out a sob, turning straight to Lapis to give her the finest and most intense hug she could manage to make. “Thank you. Thank you so much!” She cried, wetting Lapis’ shirt as she vent, squeezing her tightly.

“Wow, Pearl.” Lapis got a slight fright because of it and hugged Pearl back right away. She wasn’t expecting something like this could happen – namely that Pearl could get this touched. “Shh, sweetie, don’t cry.” She tried to hush her, then started to rock her instinctively.

“It’s just… So, so beautiful.” Pearl sniffed, wiping her nose with the back of her hand.

“It’s okay.” Lapis chuckled softly and began scratching Pearl’s back soothingly.

Pearl raised her head, her expression rather looked like she disagreed with her. “… It’s perfect.” She sighed.

She stared down at Lapis, swallowing her with her eyes. ‘Why is she so amazing? Why is she being so nice to me? Do I even deserve it? ’ Pearl wondered, shaking her head without even knowing.

Pearl sniffed for the last time and leaned towards Lapis once again, pressing her lips against hers. She kissed her gingerly, making Lapis’ mind become one big pile of mush as she began kissing her deeper.

Lapis’ eyes turned backwards. She was fighting against gravity which was pulling her down as she was touching heavens and nearly passing out because of those delightful kisses, feeling so overwhelmed that her hands almost dropped down from Pearl’ back.

Pearl cautiously separated her lips from Lapis’ and finally gave both of them some time to breathe again, meeting her eyes that reminded her of dark blue ocean waters. “… I love you.” Pearl panted.

Redness dusted Lapis’ cheeks after that and a bright smile lit on her lips. “I love you, too.”

“Thank you, Lapis. For everything.” She whispered, giving her a sweet, thankful smile. She turned back to the table, yet still she couldn’t get over how wonderful all that was. She had to count the balloons over and over again – there really were twenty of them. “What did I do to deserve all this?”

Lapis just smiled at that with a soft hum, pulling Pearl into a hug as her back was pressed against Lapis’ torso, chin resting on her boney shoulder. “… So, shall we have a drink?” Lapis asked. She gently pulled Pearl’s peach hair lock behind her ear and placed a soft kiss onto it.

“It’s really sweet of you, Lapis, but…” Pearl bit her lip, afraid that she could ruin this perfect moment with her response. “You know I don’t drink.” She rather whispered.

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“There’s always first time for everything, darling.” Lapis blinked at her and took Pearl gently by
her hand, leading her slowly towards the table. “Don’t worry, this one’s sweet. You’re gonna like it.”

Pearl tried to bite back a giggle, but vainly.

She felt as if she was someone special – she felt like if she was a princess with all this attention. “Alright.” She nodded, smiling brightly.

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“Just give it a chance. It took me a while before I got used to that taste, too.” She admitted.

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It made Lapis laugh briefly. The look at Pearl was just amusing. “You don’t have to drink it all down at once, hon.”

Pearl pulled her nose out of the glass and blushed under Lapis’ gaze, looking shyly back at her. Pearl then decided that maybe it’d be better to put the glass down and save the rest of the wine for
later. She had to admit that it wasn’t bad after all.

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

- Lapis offered Pearl to come over to her home on Friday
- Pearl visited Lapis’ house for the first time
- Lapis fixed a small birthday party for Pearl
- Pearl tasted a wine

♦ 12th week (Tuesday + Friday)
Shortly after Lapis’ watch notified her of 6 o’clock, she was finally ready to set off. She got into her car and started off to Pearl’s place. Lapis was so excited to see her that much that every so often she managed to exceed the maximum speed limit in town. But before she could notice it, she was already standing next to the main door of the apartment building.

She texted Pearl a message once she got out of her car and waited for her to arrive to the parking lot. And before Lapis could count to ten, Pearl was already down the stairs, carrying a bag on her shoulder and giving Lapis one sweet smile after another.

“What is it?” The blue-haired girl chuckled, noticing Pearl’s suspicious behavior. Slowly she pulled away from her car and headed towards Pearl to help her with the luggage.

“How come you’re more beautiful every day?” Pearl shook her head as if she didn’t believe that Lapis really looked as pretty as she saw her.

“Aww, you’re such a sweetheart.” Lapis smiled and placed a soft kiss onto Pearl's mouth, then bent down to take her bag. “Here, let me help you.”

“Thank you.” Pearl bit her lip and handed her bag to Lapis. “You’re gorgeous.”

“I know. That’s why you love me.” Lapis dared say with a smirk, placing the luggage to the back seat and closing the door. Then she opened the front one for Pearl, gesturing for her to get aboard. “Milady.”

Pearl stood frozen for a brief moment after all that she’s just heard, but then she softly laughed, cupping her mouth before she headed towards the passenger seat. “What a gesture.” She chuckled and gently pecked Lapis’ cheek, then entered the car, leaving faint blush on the girl's face.
“I missed you, honey.” Pearl admitted, squeezing her hands between her knees as she was watching Lapis buckling up.

“I missed you, too.” Lapis smiled and then leaned over to Pearl to give her a tiny sweet smooch again. “You have no idea how much I was looking forward to this day.”

“Were you?” Pearl’s light brows rose.

“Yeah.” Lapis started the car, turning the steering wheel to the side, so she could get to the main road. “This all week was just so boring and tiring. I’m glad it’s finally over.”

Pearl chuckled softly and leaned her elbow against the window, chin resting in her palm as she was looking outside. “Not quite yet.”

Lapis’ dark eyes slightly widened. She turned her head to Pearl and grinned immediately as she saw her smiling back at her.

The ride back took a bit longer then the ride there, but both girls enjoyed it. They were chatting about varied topics while passing through the slowly emptying evening streets, and when they were not, they were simply holding hands – well, when Lapis wasn’t engaging a gear at the time. They talked about everything that happened the past few days they were apart and never missed any detail. They were laughing, giggling, trying to hide their reddening cheeks and avoiding one another’s eyes as one was caught staring at the other. But soon as the ride came to an end, those cute, innocent glimpses did as well, though those shy smiles never left their faces.

Lapis opened the passenger door for Pearl and waited for her to come out, then she took Pearl’s bag from the back seat. She locked the car when she heard Pearl gasp behind her.

“Wow… So, this… Is your house?” Pearl froze on a spot, her chin lightly dropped.

The house was huge, both wide and high, surrounded by neatly-looking garden. It was beautiful two-storey house with an open garage with two parking places right under the balcony and enormous amount of flowers and plants all over the place. And on top of that, the whole area was decorated with outdoor light bulbs that made the whole exterior yet brighter during the actual golden twilight. Pearl so loved all types of lights, especially in the very dark, but still, this looked really pretty to her. She would never stop gasping in amazement how incredibly beautiful this place was. She had to admit it really was something. Now this was how she imagined heaven.

“Yeah.” Lapis grinned and stood beside Pearl, surrounding her slim waist with her arm. “Welcome to my home.”

“Yes, please.” Pearl asked and with a soft, enchanted sigh she laid her head down onto Lapis’ shoulder.
“Is there someone I could say hi to?” Pearl asked right as she entered the house, following Lapis along the hallway.

“Oh, no, no. They’ve all gone for a vacation.” The girl announced, placing the luggage down and slowly heading back to Pearl. “We’ve got… The whole house just for ourselves.” She murmured.

“That sounds just wonderful.” Pearl whispered the last word and tossed her arms around Lapis’ neck just as she placed hers around Pearl’s waist.

Lapis leaned over to Pearl, tugging her vauntiously towards her body, lightly brushing her lips with her own and waiting for Pearl to join them.

This light touch made Pearl giggle, but she refused to kiss Lapis just yet. Instead she kept brushing her lips from side to side, slowly. She felt Lapis’ breath as her lips parted, hearing an unsatisfied groan from her.

“Pearl, don’t be like that.” Lapis protested, but chuckled, trying to steal a kiss from her, but Pearl managed to dodge her lips before she could.

“Or what?” She grinned teasingly, pecking Lapis’ nose and nothing else.

Lapis just frowned, and with a grin on her face, she shook her head slightly. “Let’s rather head to the kitchen.” Lapis offered.

“I’m right behind you.” The taller girl smirked, and before she let go of Lapis, she finally gave her the kiss she was waiting for.

Lapis led the way and once she reached the kitchen, she let Pearl go inside first. She then gently took her by her shoulders and whispered into the dark spreading in front of them. “Are you ready?”

“For what?” Pearl giggled and cupped Lapis’ soft hands which were resting on her shoulders.

“For surprise.” The girl clarified and slowly reached for the switch.

“I suppose.” Pearl shrugged, leaving a shy chuckle escape her lips, blushing.


“… Ach, Lapis.” Pearl gasped and immediately cupped her mouth.

There were colorful birthday balloons floating all round the room – twenty, Pearl guessed, just as her actual age was. There was a round table standing in the middle of the large room, decorated by fancy tablecloth with flower pattern and sprinkled with red heart-shaped confetti. On the table, there was a small birthday cake decorated with varied marzipan flowers – they just looked so real, Pearl thought. Then a pair of wine glasses was standing on the tabletop along with a bottle of red wine and two plates with spoons neatly settled next to them.

Pearl felt tears welling up in her eyes. “Lapis, I… I-I don’t know what to say.” She nearly sobbed at how beautiful it all looked. She felt so honored, so thrilled and just immensely, infinitely happy. “I love it.” She finally let out a sob, turning straight to Lapis to give her the finest and most intense hug she could manage to make. “Thank you. Thank you so much!” She cried, wetting Lapis’ shirt as she vent, squeezing her tightly.
“Wow, Pearl.” Lapis got a slight fright because of it and hugged Pearl back right away. She wasn’t expecting something like this could happen – namely that Pearl could get this touched. “Shh, sweetie, don’t cry.” She tried to hush her, then started to rock her instinctively.

“It’s just… So, so beautiful.” Pearl sniffed, wiping her nose with the back of her hand.

“It’s okay.” Lapis chuckled softly and began scratching Pearl’s back soothingly.

Pearl raised her head, her expression rather looked like she disagreed with her. “… It’s perfect.” She sighed.

She stared down at Lapis, swallowing her with her eyes. ‘Why is she so amazing? Why is she being so nice to me? Do I even deserve it?’ Pearl wondered, shaking her head without even knowing.

Pearl sniffed for the last time and leaned towards Lapis once again, pressing her lips against hers. She kissed her gingerly, making Lapis’ mind become one big pile of mush as she began kissing her deeper.

Lapis’ eyes turned backwards. She was fighting against gravity which was pulling her down as she was touching heavens and nearly passing out because of those delightful kisses, feeling so overwhelmed that her hands almost dropped down from Pearl’ back.

Pearl cautiously separated her lips from Lapis’ and finally gave both of them some time to breathe again, meeting her eyes that reminded her of dark blue ocean waters. “… I love you.” Pearl panted.

Redness dusted Lapis’ cheeks after that and a bright smile lit on her lips. “I love you, too.”

“Thank you, Lapis. For everything.” She whispered, giving her a sweet, thankful smile. She turned back to the table, yet still she couldn’t get over how wonderful all that was. She had to count the balloons over and over again – there really were twenty of them. “What did I do to deserve all this?”

Lapis just smiled at that with a soft hum, pulling Pearl into a hug as her back was pressed against Lapis’ torso, chin resting on her boney shoulder. “… So, shall we have a drink?” Lapis asked. She gently pulled Pearl’s peach hair lock behind her ear and placed a soft kiss onto it.

“It’s really sweet of you, Lapis, but…” Pearl bit her lip, afraid that she could ruin this perfect moment with her response. “You know I don’t drink.” She rather whispered.

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The stair steps were creaking as Pearl followed Lapis upstairs. For some reason Lapis wanted to keep the light off, and that certainly made the trail Lapis went difficult to find, though Pearl coped that quite well.
Once Pearl heard a door opening, she saw faint blue light that permeated through the dark, wafting from the open room towards her along the hall.

Lapis stood next to the open door and gestured for Pearl to enter the room, Pearl’s bag hanging down her shoulder.

Pearl blushed and with a slight nod she swung her body in, hands folded behind her back. Lapis followed her and put Pearl’s things aside of a bed, closing the door.

“So, this is where I sleep.” She said proudly, watching Pearl standing still and darting her eyes round the room. It was immersed in Lapis’ lava lamp’s blue light. The room wasn’t big, but rather comfy as the stable attic. There were two high-framed beds, one on each side of the room, hemming the wall. Between the beds, there was a writing desk with a laptop, tiny cactus and a small bookcase hanging on the wall right above it. There was one large closet in the room, a fancy seating bag and a rectangular carpet in the center of the wooden floor.

“You’ve got two beds?” Pearl asked, a bit disappointed this was the first thing that actually popped up in her mind. She really liked the room – it was simple, but stylish.

“Um, no.” Lapis chuckled. “One of them is sister’s. We share the room, but basically it’s just hers. I show up here twice per month, so that’s why.” She explained, hearing Pearl humming.

“I see.” Pearl nodded, rubbing her chin between her thumb and forefinger. “So, which one is yours?” She turned to Lapis, asking her in effort to find out in which bed she was about to sleep.

“That one.” Lapis gestured towards the one that was farther from the window, on their right side. “But… We can always join the beds together if you want.” She offered as if she knew the reason why Pearl was actually asking.

Pearl smirked, but had to hide behind her hand, taking a moment to process the offer. She hummed, scanning over the room again. “Mm… I think one bed will be enough.”

She noticed Lapis’ head turning to her, but couldn’t make out what expression was on her face – hopefully the one she was expecting to find, namely an approving one.

“You know…” Lapis snickered briefly, coming to Pearl from behind and placing her hands gently onto her hips. “It’s actually not a bad idea.” She spoke softly into her ear, then kissed it.

Pearl blushed faintly. She found Lapis’ arms hugging her around her waist. Her own hands then dropped down to hold onto Lapis’. Pearl smiled. “… I really like the room.” She confessed after a brief moment of silence.

“I appreciate it.” Lapis whispered, the corners of her lips curled up. She rested her chin against Pearl’s shoulder, recalling the mess that was in this room just an hour ago.

“I do appreciate it.” Pearl emphasized. “I appreciate everything—I mean… Those lights, those balloons, the cake and wine…” She sighed dreamily. “It’s just… Amazing. You are amazing.”

Lapis blushed at the compliment and looked aside shyly. “And it’s… Not quite all yet.” She remarked and Pearl’s eyes grew wide.

“What? There’s more?” Surprised, she turned her head towards Lapis.

The smaller girl nodded, but that was all she did besides the remaining smile on her lips.

“But, Lapis…” Pearl tried, but Lapis was already on her way towards the writing desk ahead of
“No buts.” She declared gently, then grabbed a handle and opened one of the three drawers there.

Pearl couldn’t guess what, but noticed Lapis pulling out something from there, but in the end her curiosity led her to the girl and the mystery she was holding in her hands.

When Lapis turned around, she carried a beautiful grin on her lips, holding something reminiscent of a square box that was wrapped in a wrapping paper and tied up in big layered bow.

Pearl gasped, mouth immediately cupped with her hands. She could feel tears welling up in her eyes once again. “Lapis…” She sniffed, processing the surge of emotions.

“Happy birthday once again.” Lapis whispered cautiously and handed Pearl the box.

“Lapis… I-I can’t. I can’t take it.” Pearl shook her head, but chuckled. “I don’t even deserve this much… Attention.”

“Of course you do.” Lapis persuaded and carefully stepped closer to Pearl, offering her that beautiful box.

“Ach, Lapis.” Pearl sighed.

A soft grin was Lapis’ response, making Pearl accept the gift and refuse no more.

Pearl sighed again, defeated, though there still was a smile on her face along with a faint dust of redness. She took the ribbon and pulled it to untie the bow, then removed the cover and put it onto the tabletop. Out the box she pulled quite big matt-glass ball with a tangled cable connected to it. She also noticed some ornaments decorating the glass, but in the muffled light of the room she couldn’t recognize or specify what these ornaments were.

“Is it a table lamp?” Pearl asked curiously, she already liked the design of it, though it was just a ball of milky glass.

“And not some ordinary table lamp.” Lapis introduced.

“Oh?” Pearl looked at her briefly, than back at the glass, interested in its hidden magic.

“Here, let me show you.” Lapis offered. Pearl handed her the lamp and curiously watched her.

Lapis put the round lamp onto the writing desk and plugged the cable into socket, then headed towards the window to switch off her blue lava lamp. “We’re all set.” She said, shutting the light off, and walked back to the desk. “Ready?”

“Yeah.” Pearl giggled, biting her lip and shivering as an excited child. She sat onto her girlfriend’s bed and waited for her to switch the lamp on.

“Here we go~.” Lapis proclaimed melodically and turned the light on.

Suddenly Pearl understood those ornaments she couldn’t recognize before. The room lit up in shapes of stars, planets and constellations; decorating every surface, ceiling and all four walls.

“Oh-my-goodness.” Pearl gasped, her eyes brightened. She gaped up excitedly, recognizing all the constellations as in the real sky.

“Now you can watch stars even if it’s cloudy outside. Pretty cool, right?” Lapis chuckled and
“Now you can watch stars even if it’s cloudy outside. Pretty cool, right?” Lapis chuckled and joined Pearl on her bed.

“It’s the coolest thing I’ve ever seen.” Pearl admitted. She couldn’t put her eyes away from the star-spangled ceiling. “… Ah, thank you, sweetheart.” Pearl swallowed the lump growing in her throat. She leaned over to Lapis and tossed her arms around her neck, leaning softly into her and eventually making both of them fall onto the mattress.

A light kiss landed onto Lapis’ lips just before Pearl pulled back to lean against her elbows and look Lapis in the eyes. “Could we leave the light on overnight?” Pearl asked wishfully, grinning brightly.

“I always wanted to kiss under a night sky.” Lapis wiggled her eyebrows.

Pearl laughed briefly at the look at her, but then leaned closer and began kissing Lapis once again, unable to stop smiling the whole time, kissing the girl sweetly and carefully.

Maybe it didn’t seem like it, but Pearl was incredibly astonished about the lamp. She didn’t even know that these types of things existed until now. She watched the ceiling while Lapis held her hand. Pearl simply couldn’t get tired of that view, even though the light was just a simulation of the real sky. The more the accuracy of it fascinated her, because it looked so real.

Lapis took a chance to clean the kitchen while Pearl was taking a shower then; cleaning the dishes and putting party leftovers into fridge.

The cake was different from these Lapis was used to, but still it was delicious even when it was gluten-free. The taste of it was yet remaining on Lapis’ tongue, and the red wine either wasn’t bad – Pearl conceded and even thought of tasting an alcoholic one next time, although she knew that the taste of it will certainly be a bit different.

When Lapis got upstairs after getting the kitchen in order, Pearl was already waiting in the bedroom, sitting on well made bed with hands squeezed between her knees. She looked down from the walls as she noticed the door opening.

“Darling, I’m gonna take a shower now. I’ll be back in a minute.” Lapis announced, knowing about the bathroom being already free to use. But before could Lapis gather her things and head to the bathroom, something stopped her on her way there yet before she could leave the room.

“Sure.” Pearl’s whisper sounded in the silence and made Lapis turn her head towards it.

Pearl was silently sitting on the bed, gazing at the floor. After several seconds she realized that she was being watched by Lapis who stood frozen in the doorway. Pearl could feel her dark eyes on her, yet it made her heart flutter.

“Pearl.” Lapis let out a sigh, struggling to stop herself from taking a step towards her. “You look just… Enchanting.” She blushed. Pearl’s nightwear, consisting of an undershirt with baby panda and panties decorated with lace, looked more than just cute on her.

Lapis swallowed, partly because of the growing amount of saliva inside her mouth and partly because she wanted to focus on something else before she could possibly lose her mind and end up lying down on the floor in daze only because of Pearl’s beauty.

“Thank you.” Pearl bit her lip, resisting blushing.

Stammer out all the words that were on Lapis’ tongue at that moment took her quite long, but
soon enough she managed to snap herself out of the stupor and get herself to the bathroom. The worse part of it all was trying not to slip in the shower corner while spending time with imagining particular things – namely Pearl stripping out of her clothes. Lapis was imagining this quite often though, but why was she feeling odd by that this time?

Pearl waited for her, sitting silently and still on the high bed, barely touching the floor with her tiptoes. She watched the bright night sky, scanning over the star clusters, planets and all the constellations which consisted of tangles of dots connected with lines.

After a few minutes, Pearl thought of changing her position, and as this idea became inevitable, she shifted backwards and leaned her back against the wall, hands folded in her lap. She began counting stars, not aware of the smile growing on her face.

Several long minutes passed and Pearl could finally hear the door opening along with light footfalls, however, Pearl remained counting stars above her head, feet swinging as if she was listening to some slow, inaudible music.

There was a muffled rustling in the background, but Pearl’s eyes never left the ceiling – she was way too fascinated to look elsewhere than the projected galaxy.

The rustling suddenly fell silent and Pearl started wondering what could Lapis be doing, but before Pearl could find out herself, she could sense a figure stand in front of her. Pearl’s head slowly dropped down to look at the figure standing there, and her jaw nearly followed.

Lapis was it, seeming calm, with a confident expression on her face, though she was boiling from the inside, shivering both from nervousness and excitement, yet she was trying her best to make it as less visible as possible.

Pearl began having a hard time with restoring her breathing. She was neither able to breathe nor blink at that time. She felt like her eyes could fall out their sockets any second. Her hands started sweating.

Lapis wore beautiful, simple night robe, long just as to cover the upper part of her thighs. One sleeve was a bit lower than the other, thus Lapis’ freckled shoulder was lightly exposed, such as her chest, yet the particular parts were hidden from Pearl’s sign. The robe was perfectly hemming Lapis’ body and was neatly tied up in one big bow at her waist. Pearl never thought that red could suit Lapis this well.

Pearl’s chin finally dropped and she managed to catch a moment to breathe in after a minute of staring.

“… Are you ready to unwrap another gift, Pearlie?” Lapis smirked and ran her hand through her blue hair, brushing her bangs away from her forehead.

“…” Pearl swallowed an inhale, eyes wide as dinner plates. Suddenly she realized she was no longer leaning her back against the wall. She started wondering if she should join it again to cool down and come back to her senses, though her body decided to continue the opposite direction. She shifted to the edge of the bed, feet hanging from it once again, but that was all she was able to do for now. Her breath stuck somewhere between her throat and lungs and still she couldn’t find herself blink even once.

Lapis chuckled, perceiving that Pearl was just as shocked and nervous as Lapis was herself, only Lapis had an advantage of controlling herself so that one could barely notice that something
was going on inside her. “I don’t bite.” She then announced playfully as Pearl didn’t seem to react any dramatically.

“… I’m afraid you do.” Pearl remarked, tittering, yet still she was getting used to the view which was practically Lapis’ low neckline.

Lapis grinned and ran her hand through her hair once more. “I won’t. I promise.” She pledged, though that smirk on her face was making Pearl rather unsure about it.

Pearl eventually became able to blink, yet somehow she couldn’t remember when her hands managed to take the ends of Lapis’ satin belt. She realized it later when she sensed Lapis’s knee gingerly sliding over the bed sheets along her thigh.

Lapis let out a sigh and grabbed Pearl by her jaw with both her hands, pulling her into a kiss – gentle first, but the more busses was Lapis giving, the more eager and passionate they were.

Pearl’s heart started beating in alarm as Lapis brought her other leg up to the bed and straddled above Pearl’s thighs. It was rare for Pearl to sense a sudden wave of lust rushing through her body, and in some way she felt like this feeling wanted to get control over her. Pearl didn’t know why. Was it because of Lapis’ night outfit? Was it her blissful fragrance or just her attitude? Or was it simply a combination of all these options? That would be definitely way more understandable in that case.

Lapis carefully sat down into Pearl’s lap and with a slight wiggle she settled in, keeping their lips joined together and setting Pearl’s heart on fire.

For some reason Pearl felt relieved that she sensed Lapis wearing underwear, but on the other hand, she wondered if that was the only thing Lapis was wearing under her robe… And Pearl quite wished it was.

Pearl’s hands tugged at Lapis’ waist and pulled her body closer, yet she let a small space between them, just so she could manipulate with the ends of the satin ribbon. Pearl toyed with them for a bit until her hands found their way towards Lapis’ butt and lightly squeezed it.

Their lips separated for a moment, just so Lapis could bit her lip while enjoying Pearl’s hands holding her so kindly, but then she rejoined Pearl’s sweet lips again. Lapis bit down at them carefully, kept tasting and nuzzling them. Her tanned fingers were toying with Pearl's peach hair, stroking her cheeks and jaw line as silent smacking of their lips could be heard.

Pearl enjoyed Lapis’ tenderness along with those light, fond busses she was giving her. Pearl’s body began trembling and instead of blood, she felt like there was lava running through her veins, bubbling and exploding. Lapis kept gasping for more, stealing Pearl’s breath and kisses as her pale hands were travelling all over her back, butt and thighs.

Pearl was curious about what was hiding behind the red cloth, but she was too shy to investigate. Perhaps if she’d ask Lapis for permission, she could try to explore the unexplored, yet still she couldn’t get over those delicious kisses and neither had time for questions. Her mind was too distracted and focused at the same time.

Lapis’ hands slid down Pearl’s slender neck, scanning her collarbones with her fingertips. Her full lips moved down to kiss Pearl’s neck and throat. She could sense Pearl swallow as she reached it, and it tugged a smile on Lapis’ lips.

Then Lapis’ hands slowly travelled down along Pearl’s chest, delicately brushing over her nipples. Pearl’s response was just a soft, innocent whine which was immediately followed by
another one as Lapis repeated the action.

Chills ran over Pearl’s fragile body, leaving her shivering with eyes shut and mouth locked in a tight line.

Carefully, Lapis’ hands slid lower and rubbed at Pearl’s abs ever so fondly while her lips became busy with kissing her mouth again. Her fingertips hid under the hem of Pearl’s undershirt and started inconspicuously slipping up.

For the first time in her life, Pearl wished those hands went faster, but unfortunately they were shifting the slowest way possible – and it was so irritating! Pearl let out a dissatisfied groan, urging Lapis to increase the speed, but Lapis refused to comply with a teasing smirk on her face.

Pearl wanted to feel Lapis’ kind fingers, those that were treating her so well the last time, but the time they were arriving was lasting longer than an eternity. Once again Pearl moaned and let Lapis be aware of her growing frustration, but Lapis minded to tease Pearl for a bit first, one hand slipping up while the other remained tickling Pearl’s abdomen.

Lapis was touching her flat chest, leaving nothing untouched but her breasts. Lapis’ lips pressed harder at the other girl and with a light press of her hand against Pearl’s chest, she forced the girl to lie down onto her back.

Her hand eventually ended up on one of Pearl’s breasts. Slowly she circled her fingers around the small, soft nipple. The pressure of her fingers then became lighter with every next circle – certainly in effort to make Pearl’s pleading more frequent and urgent.

Pearl’s hands greedily ran into Lapis’ hair to pull her closer, kissing her deeply. She kept pleading for more kisses every time she received one, feeling waves of goosebumps flowing over her skin. She sensed electric impulses running through her entire body, she could feel her very core gathering something inside her – a liquid? Well, the most important thing at that moment was that the harder was Lapis massaging her belly, the fuller of that liquid Pearl felt.

Lapis’ lips slid down from Pearl’s lips to her throat again, leaving marks of her teeth all over her collar bone then. She kissed the center of her ribcage and gingerly continued lower to explore more, placing there kiss by kiss with every next inch until she reached Pearl’s belly. Then, for a moment, Lapis stopped and stared at it, thinking. Her hand rejoined the other just above Pearl’s pelvis, then Lapis grabbed the hem of her night shirt. She looked at Pearl hesitantly. “… May I?”

Pearl knew exactly what her intention was, and almost instantly she nodded at it, however, the world started spinning just as Lapis began rolling her panda shirt up. Pearl arched her back enough to help Lapis effectively strip her out of her shirt.

Once her shirt was off, Pearl laid herself back down, but now it felt like everything has stopped – her heart, her breath, the time. Pearl wasn’t aware of where she should put her hands – well, certainly she couldn’t cross them on her chest. She was almost afraid of looking up at Lapis, though she wanted to. She was curious about the look of her expression, though she was extremely shy and embarrassed. This was the first time someone saw her topless. Pearl never felt this ashamed of her flat chest, until now when it was entirely exposed right in front of Lapis.

Eventually, as Pearl gathered enough courage, her eyes darted up to her girlfriend. A corner of Pearl’s lips slightly curled up as she blushed.

Lapis’ eyes sparkled. Her heart stopped, then couldn’t find a regular rhythm. As she considered the moment of staring was lasting too long, she cleared throat and bit her lip. “You’re… So beautiful, Pearl.” Lapis flushed.
Pearl shyly looked aside, redness spreading across her cheeks and tips of her ears. She then sensed a shadow leaning over to her, and recognized it was her beloved Lapis. Her heart started pounding wildly when their chests connected – the cotton robe felt pleasant against her skin. “Thanks…” Pearl flushed yet more. She hugged Lapis around her neck as she started planting kisses all over her pale face and neck.

It quite tickled, and Pearl couldn’t stop giggling. Lapis’ hair was brushing her skin so lightly, just as the tip of her nose and lips were, wandering over her chest and exploring its surface. Lapis dared biting Pearl’s breasts, carefully and gently. She bit down at the tiny stiff button there, hearing Pearl moan at the very first contact with it, and placing tender kisses there, yet resisting to lick it.

Pearl trembled twice, refusing to be any louder or pass out. She bit her lip hard and clutched onto Lapis’ hair, getting used to that soft, warm tongue tasting her then.

“Oh… Mmmm.” Pearl’s eyes closed shut. With every slip of that wonderful tongue she felt like a bolt of lightning ran through her. Pearl wondered if clenching Lapis’ hair hurt her. Well, certainly, because Pearl’s grip was getting tighter and tighter with every next lick. Her eyes rolled backwards. “Lapis… Mmmhm.”

A moment later, Lapis considered that it’d be more than suitable to treat the other side as well, so she shifted her head a little bit and started working on it, and yet more thoroughly.

“Awh-mmmm… Mhm.” Pearl groaned. She perceived Lapis’ hand returning to finish its previous progress, toying with her nipple and massaging it while her lips worked on the other one.

Pearl could almost see heaven. She felt like she could touch the sky, yet still she couldn’t believe this. Was all this just a dream? This perfect, glorious moment? All the heavenly touches and treatment? Hopefully not.

It was hard for Pearl to keep her breath steady, to keep all these moans inside. Her grip on Lapis tightened yet again and Pearl decided to bring her up, so she could cry into her mouth. It was hard to persuade Lapis at first, because what she was tasting was extremely delicious, but eventually she acquiesced and sank into Pearl’s lips.

The core of Pearl’s body was boiling, ready to explode. All these senses were so strong, making her sweat, making her cry, pant and tremble. Once she was even in doubt if she could hold it together like this. Those touches were just too delightful to keep her feet on the ground.

Lapis gave Pearl one last kiss and pulled away to let Pearl catch her breath – she was obviously done even after this, Lapis thought. It made her smile.

Pearl sighed, taking a moment to come back to earth. She closed her eyes for a minute.

“Are you okay, dear?” Lapis asked, grinning down at her.

“Yeah.” Pearl breathed out a smile. Her eyes opened, just so she could find Lapis’ cheeks to take and pull her back to herself.

Lapis was just as red as Pearl. Even in the faint light of the stars she could see it.

Once again Pearl’s lips moved forward to meet Lapis’. Faint smacking was circling round the room, just as their quiet gasps.

Pearl’s fingers travelled down along Lapis’ neck, then slid down her chest and finally reached the ribbon – she couldn’t help it, but the material was just enjoyable at touch.
Pearl resisted looking at Lapis’ low neckline which was practically right below her eyes. It was tugging them there like a magnet, but she never looked.

Lapis could sense Pearl faintly tugging at the ribbon, and she could guess her intention, too, so Lapis leaned back and straightened in her back to give Pearl a hand then.

Pearl stared at her hesitantly, darting her eyes all over Lapis, scanning over the curves of her perfect body. The starshine up the ceiling behind her head made her look like she was someone saint, like if she was an angel – and very attractive one. Pearl inhaled and then breathed out, ready to make a move.

Slowly she pulled the ends of the ribbon away from one another and untied the bow. The edges of Lapis’ robe spread to sides, and with a faint shrug and help of her tanned hands, Lapis let the night robe fall from her shoulders, revealing a magnificent view.

Drops of sweat were rolling down Pearl’s forehead, she was unable to accept what she saw. Lapis’ body was at most perfect, seeming fragile but tough at once. But one specific spot was forbidding Pearl from looking elsewhere this time – her chest. It was certainly different from hers, Pearl thought. Lapis’ breasts weren’t big, but neither they were small. The size of them was just fine to grab in one’s hands. Her breasts just looked different hidden under clothes than exposed - thank God, Pearl sighed enchantedly. She was melting like a snow. Pearl tried her hardest to snap herself out of the ecstasy, feeling awkward about staring at Lapis like that, though it rather amused the girl.

Lapis leaned towards the girl below her and leaned against her elbow on each side of Pearl’s head. Her lips kept Pearl busy for a while then, even when her slender hands started to wander – a blissful hum sounded in Lapis’ throat as Pearl slid her hands over her breasts, yet doubtfully at first.

Pearl wondered if she could make Lapis feel as good as Lapis could make her, but she was afraid of spoiling something, doing a wrong move or something Lapis would dislike. However, she decided to risk it. Pearl felt like this was a perfect moment to pay Lapis back for everything she’s done for her, to prove that Pearl appreciated it. Lapis deserved it – for the whole time she was waiting for Pearl, waiting for a moment like this.

The tips of Pearl’s fingers met Lapis’ two buttons, feeling their smooth surface. Lapis let out a soft groan, and it was a good sign for Pearl. She continued then, making tiny circles around her stiffening nipples, brushing over them and pinching them ever so kindly. It was a bit strange, but it also felt good, and not just for Lapis. Pearl enjoyed it, too. She never had an opportunity to do this type of activity with someone else.

She was swallowing Lapis’ sighs while kissing her. Suddenly Pearl wondered, how come she’s never tried a French kiss? But could she want this from Lapis? Would it be better if she’d rather done it instead of asking first? That didn’t matter. Pearl’s body was aching for it way too much to ask questions.

Her tongue slipped out her lips then and lightly brushed over Lapis’. The blue-haired girl quite seemed to be taken aback because of it, however, she was pleased and kindly joined Pearl.

It was interesting, Pearl thought. The kiss was soft and wet. She continued and investigated Lapis’ mouth further, licking and tasting her sweet tongue with her own.

“Wow, Pearl.” Lapis gulped once she departed from her. “Why didn’t you tell me you’re into these things?” She joked.
Pearl shrugged, blushing. “I’m just… Experimenting.”

Lapis smiled sweetly, unable to resist giving Pearl another kiss, and then laid her head down onto the pale girl’s chest, nuzzling and settling in.

Pearl hugged Lapis around her head, pressing her towards herself affectionately, blue hair tickling her chin. Then she looked up at the ceiling, recalling the moment Lapis reminded her of an angel as the stars were shining from behind her. She remembered the moment when she felt like touching heavens.

“… Lapis?” She muttered, cheeks turning darker shade of red.

“Yeah?” Lapis reacted, but remained still, eyes closed.

Pearl swallowed, getting ready to get out the particular words on her chest. “How does… First time feel?”

First, Lapis’ eyes slowly opened, then her head rose from Pearl. Lapis tried to remember. “Well, for most people… Embarrassing. I guess.” She chuckled, then watched Pearl quietly. “Why are you asking?”

Pearl said nothing, feeling already too embarrassed to answer that. There still was this feeling at the bottom of her pelvis. She knew what that was, and wondered what the right option to do with it would be. Well, she could guess.

She shot a quick look at Lapis, but couldn’t stay looking at her for too long. She flushed entirely, looking aside with her lip clenched between her teeth.

“… Do you… Wanna try it?” Lapis asked carefully, and for her surprise, it didn’t take Pearl too long before she nodded.

“Ah, alright.” Lapis gave it a faint nod, placing a tender smooch onto Pearl's mouth.

Slowly she rolled over to Pearl’s side. As Lapis was lying on her side right next to Pearl, she supported her head with her hand while leaning against her elbow, settling in a comfortable position for both of them.

Pearl suddenly felt cold when Lapis’ body was away from hers. She shivered, but rather from an excitement than because of the cold air around her. But then it rapidly changed when Lapis’ hot hand landed on her chest. Pearl turned her head to her and her heart jolted. It was really happening.

‘Oh my god. Is this actually happening? Is she really going to do it?’ Pearl asked herself while staring at Lapis. She began shaking. ’… Am I really going to do it?’

Lapis watched her for a moment, gathering as much information from her eyes as possible. She could feel that Pearl was slightly frightened and nervous, so she gave her a little bit more space yet. But then she gingerly started stroking Pearl with the tips of her fingers, visiting the two small hills with yet smaller ones in the center of them. First she brushed over one nipple, making several tiny circles around it, then slid it once again and again and enjoyed its hardness. She watched carefully Pearl’s reactions; her mouth which she was urgently trying to keep closed, but was failing.

Another nipple was it then, Lapis smiled and listened to Pearl moaning right next to her ear. Why was this sound turning Lapis on so quickly? She would like to know.
She squeezed the nipple between her thumb and forefinger, turning it like if she was changing the volume. What surprised her was that it kind of worked on Pearl that way.

Feeling pleased with what Lapis heard from her girlfriend so far, she decided to go on. She left those fine buttons be and continued down, along the center of Pearl’s ribcage and belly, but stopped at the pelvis area.

Pearl was wiggling under her fingers, trembling, and with throat full of whines, yet she was still strong enough to keep them inside.

Her fingers tickled Pearl. They were gingerly slipping from side to side just above the hem of her underwear, stroking and scratching her the tenderest way possible. Lapis loved this game; little teasing never hurt anybody. But Peal seemed to feel the opposite, and at that her body slowly started to jolt once at a time. However, those jolts became more frequent once Lapis’ fingers reached the cloth of her panties and slowly slid down Pearl’s crotch.

Again, Lapis leaned over to Pearl, giving her lips a smooch, but then her head lowered to meet her chest. Her lips were slipping across her soft skin, kissing it and biting with her teeth. Her hot, wet tongue brushed over Pearl’s stiffened, yet smooth nipple. She tasted it, licked it slowly and affectionately, chewed it and caressed. She kept changing directions, pressure and speed of her tongue as she worked on that nipple.

Instead of letting out a cry, Pearl instantly cupped her mouth with her hand and shut her eyes, but realized it was more effective like that, so she rather let her eyes open to avoid passing out just yet. This feeling, these sensations were sending her straight to Heaven. That tongue was just so wonderful, fantastic, devine even, making Pearl's head turn backwards.

Lapis stroked her over the cotton barrier, then again and again until she finally heard Pearl moan full-fledgedly. Carefully Lapis rubbed at her clit, and slowly got used to the rhythm of Pearl’s whines as she began pressing harder against her.

It was hard for Pearl to hold her hands over her mouth, but where else could she put them when Lapis was already doing her job?

She then caught Lapis turning her head to her. There was something in her eyes – a question, an act waiting for permission for Lapis to continue, and as a response, Pearl let out a shaky gasp.

“You’re doing just great.” Lapis spurred and placed a soft kiss onto Pearl’s cheek. Her hand began to move again, but upwards this time, just to cross the line of privacy. Lapis’ head dropped at Pearl’s chest again, and she continued in the unfinished work.

Lapis then slipped her digits into the lace-decorated panties. All that Lapis could feel was Pearl’s incredibly smooth, shaved skin. It was forcing her to stroke it, caress it and examine, enjoy it – it was such pleasure to touch that spot. Lapis couldn’t forgive herself for teasing Pearl because of it, but then her fingers slipped lower once again.

“Mmmhmmm-mmm… Ah-hah, Lap… Lapis.” Pearl wiggled, jolting again and letting out a groan. She didn’t want to make these noises, and honestly she wasn’t even aware she could be this loud, until now. It was just happening itself. Pearl really wished that there was no one that could hear them.

Lapis brushed over the girl's labia fondly, massaging it and stroking, already sensing a bit of wetness in the middle. Briefly she rubbed her clit with the heel of her palm, sensing vibrations of Pearl’s body and her veins pulsing wildly underneath her palm. Still Lapis kept eating those wonderful nipples, sucking and licking, realizing that this was very quick and effective recipe to
It took Lapis a bit of time, and finally she considered that there was enough torturing. She got her middle finger ready and extremely gingerly and carefully she inserted it into Pearl.

“Mmhm-ah-ahah… Aaah.” Pearl cried out, clinging onto the bed sheets, back arched, her walls tightened.

Lapis’ finger wandered deeper the second time, and thanks to the wetness, it slipped really finely and smoothly. The more often was her finger sliding upon the walls in and out, the further into Pearl it went, and so intensified the girl's cries.

Lapis was so careful, so slow and gentle, planting kisses over Pearl’s face and chest to calm her down, but all those senses inside Pearl were too strong even despite this, and yet they grew twice as strong after Lapis added another finger – now Pearl could literally count the stars.

It was odd feeling, Pearl thought for a while, but yet it was so delightful and so different. This time, those fingers weren’t hers. She couldn’t expect any single movement of them, neither the pressure or speed, and so the more it was arousing her. “Oow, Lapiiis…” She whined, eyes shut.

“Shh-shh.” Lapis hushed her softly, joining Pearl’s lips and placing one more kiss there. This time Lapis remained connected to her, in case Pearl would let out a cry because of the increasing speed of her fingers. And of course Lapis did the right decision.

Lapis’ mouth perfectly muffled Pearl’s groan and the one that followed right after as well. She was thrusting into her walls, sensing a surge of wetness coming down at her digits, her palm and out Pearl’s tube. Lapis kept stroking and thrusting, faster and harder until Pearl’s final cries arrived, beginning calling for God and all the saints.

Pearl grasped Lapis’ hair and pulled her against her chest, squeezing her firmly and letting out the last few moans as the climax of her arousal washed over her. She crossed her long legs then, thereupon Lapis’ hand was forced to slow down and eventually stop. Her fingers stayed stuck between Pearl’s wet walls.

Series of innocent aftershocks got control over Pearl after that, but she could finally breathe. Slowly her back joined the mattress again and her grip on Lapis weakened.

Lapis tried to pull her digits out, making her girlfriend shiver for the last time. Lapis sighed and laid her hand onto Pearl's abs.

The pale-skinned girl inhaled first, then let out an exhale, gathering back all her senses. “… Oow.” She whimpered, but Lapis rather chuckled at that.

“Are you alright?” She asked, watching Pearl closely.

Pearl hummed and closed her eyes for a while, pressing her hand against her hot forehead. “… Why does my head hurt?”

“Your head?” Lapis giggled.

“Yeah… And well, not just that.” The girl admitted, and despite the light pain up and down, she grinned.

“Don’t worry. It’s gonna pass.” Lapis reassured her kindly and fondly she stroked Pearl’s hair then.
Pearl smiled, but again started paying attention to the wetness rolling down her skin. She looked up at Lapis, placing her hand onto Lapis’ that was resting on her belly. “Lapis, should I… I mean… Do you want me to—”

“—On, no, no, Pearl. I’m okay.” She interrupted gently and leaned to Pearl to steal a kiss. But after that response, Pearl rather seemed unhappy with it.

Lapis cleared her throat, light blush dusted her freckles. “Well… Unless you want to, of course.”

Something in Pearl’s eyes lit up then, Lapis noticed, and so she let her decide what will happen next.

Chapter End Notes

**Chapter recapitulation:**

- Pearl received a star lamp as a birthday gift
- Lapis wore a red night robe
- Pearl experienced her first time

♦ 12th week (Friday night)
When Pearl woke up, she was turned towards a wall. Her back was bare, but she was snuggling to a soft duvet, pressing it against her chest.

Slowly she opened her eyes, realizing that she was resting in Lapis’ warm bed. She projected yesterday’s night in front of her eyes and smiled to herself. Her eyes then closed again and she inhaled, letting the homely warm air wake her lungs.

She nuzzled the pillow under her head, tightening her grip on the duvet. A faint waft of someone’s breath ghosted along her back and shoulder. A familiar arm was wrapped around her waist then. It was Lapis’ hand, Pearl recognized and let her smile get wider. Pearl took Lapis’ soft hand and along with the blanket she pressed it against her chest.

Lapis hummed happily, though a bit tired. She crawled closer to her girlfriend and placed a sweet kiss onto the back of her neck, snuggling to her.

Light goosebumps ran down Pearl’s spine, though despite this, she wanted one more kiss, and even without asking she got what she wanted almost instantly.

“Good morning, first timer.” Lapis murmured, leaving another light kiss on the girl’s nape.

Pearl blushed at the designation, but couldn’t hold back a chuckle. “Good morning as well, sweetie.”

“Did you sleep okay?” The equestrian asked, nuzzling Pearl’s neck and pulling her against her torso with her strong arm.

Pearl’s breath stuck in her throat for a while, just as she sensed Lapis’ perky breasts pressing at her back. “Y-yeah. More than great.” She admitted. She wanted to turn over and face Lapis, but the press of her chest against her back was way too comfortable to do so. “How about you?”

“Can’t complain.” She murmured into her nape, sending another wave of chills down Pearl’s spine.

In the end, Pearl managed to turn around, yet one of the hardest decisions it was. “… You’d better.” She remarked playfully and wiggled her eyebrows, biting her lip with a smirk.

“What-are you challenging me again?” Lapis wondered aloud, slowly backing Pearl into a corner as she began leaning over her fragile body.

“Depends.” Pearl grinned and let Lapis imprison her between her tanned arms as she leaned against her elbow on each side of Pearl’s head.

“Pearl…” Lapis frowned, but a teasing smile played on her lips. She leaned closer and whispered. “… You little devil.”

Deciding what to eat for breakfast was at most difficult, inasmuch as Pearl was full of cake since Wednesday and she didn’t want to see any cake ever again. Though, she appreciated Lapis’ move
on that one, so she couldn’t afford to refuse eating the leftovers. It would be a shame to let that delicious cake spoil anyway. After they were full of their meal and cleaned the dishes, Pearl packed all her things and as soon as she was ready, she skipped downstairs and got into Lapis’ car awaiting her arrival.

Lapis drove Pearl to her place, planted several kisses onto her face while she was unbuckling, and Pearl, thankfully hugging Lapis and repaying her all the kisses she received, said goodbye and wished Lapis safe travel to the stables.

While calling the elevator, Pearl was crooning a random, slow melody under her breath, imagining the night before today’s morning, holding the star lamp tightly in her arms and tapping her tiptoe against the floor to the rhythm of her song.

She inserted the key into door lock and then entered her flat. Little Rose was already waiting for her, purring and nuzzling Pearl as soon as she got inside, and as if Rose was any interested in her owner’s activities, Pearl began telling her a story about all that happened while she was gone.

Today Lapis decided to practice jumps with Lion, but of course she took care of Blue and let her out to the grazing meadow before starting the training. It took Lapis a while before she finally made Lion accept the fact that there’s no way avoiding the practice.

Greg arrived to the stable today as well and helped Lapis fixing up the fences to a suitable jumping court and so getting ready for the Grand Prix qualification which was closing in very fast. Peridot didn’t hesitate and put her hand to the plough, too, helping fixing the fences Lapis has knocked down. Eventually she even apologized to Lapis for her behavior back when they argued, and Lapis conceded that what she said herself back then was a bit across the line, too. But now they were okay again.

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Another week came by quickly; days were getting shorter, nights became longer and restless. Lapis couldn't find a calm, deep sleep. With every next day she was intensifying her training, sleeping less, and the longer she was standing in the saddle, the more the lack of sleep was taking its roll.

Pearl was such a priceless support for the whole week and the week after that. When Lapis became way too concentrated and determined, and wasn't planning on leaving the saddle, Pearl immediately intervened and sent Lapis to get some rest as if she was a little kid. Pearl was bringing her food, water, giving Lapis massages, giving her soothing kisses to relieve Lapis from stress and doubts, she was singing her to sleep when it was difficult to her – simply put, she was taking the best care of her champion.

Lapis felt important, she felt like she was someone. She was extremely grateful for all that Pearl was doing for her, and that certainly had a great, visible influence on her results.

Eventually the third week was slowly coming to an end and Pearl decided to help Lapis with packing up for the GP week. They agreed on meeting up at Lapis’ place on Friday morning. As Pearl arrived by bus, she offered to make snacks for the trip. She also cooked a lunch while Lapis was busy with gathering her things in her room.

Pearl filled two glasses with fresh water and then began upstairs, opening the door with her bottom while she was holding the glasses. She then placed the glasses onto Lapis' writing desk and flopped down onto her bed. “… Are you nervous?” Pearl asked with a faint smirk on her lips,
despite knowing that Lapis was utterly freaking out.

“Um-quite?” Lapis panted, throwing clothes into her equestrian suitcase; such as breeches, show jacket, white riding shirt, helmet and many other things she needed to fulfill the requirements to compete.

Today was the day before qualification. Today all the entrants were asked to arrive to the show grounds to settle in, meet up with judges and managers and become acquainted with the whole equestrian area.

Lapis was so excited, restless, and tensed, darting over her room from side to side and gathering her things. Pearl kindly helped her with fixing all the things Lapis recklessly threw into her luggage, since Pearl obviously didn’t have anything else to do but stare at her bustling girlfriend.

Lapis rushed to the side wardrobe room and brought in another bag to fill, then stopped in the doorway on her way back. “… Aw, Pearl, you’re such a sweetie. What would I do without you?” She blurted between two gasps as she saw the pale-skinned girl neatly folding a pile of her riding clothes.

“Just don’t stress.” Pearl said as she started a second pile with Lapis’ red show jacket. “Remember I recommended packing up a day before?” She teased and added a pair of riding gloves onto the pile. Right then Pearl realized how small Lapis’ hands actually were – how cute.

“Yeah, that’s why I’m stressed out right now… If only I had listened to you.” Lapis regretted and started filling her bag with underclothes, pajamas, hygiene supplies and other personal items for the week.

Pearl giggled and added the last piece of clothes into the suitcase. She stood up from Lapis’ bed and slowly walked towards her, softly placing her hands onto her hips. “Don’t worry. We’ll manage to pack up everything on time. Just give yourself a little break.” She offered and placed a gentle kiss onto the back of Lapis’ head. Seeing Lapis so stressed the past few days even made Pearl feel unpleasantly herself.

Lapis sighed, shivering restlessly. “Pearl, we’re leaving within five hours, and I still have to pack up Blue and Lion, and–”

Pearl had to roll her eyes at the long must-do list that Lapis began dictating her. She then grabbed Lapis’ wrist and turned her towards herself, taking the piece of clothes she was holding in her hand and throwing it somewhere nearby the bag.

“What are you-Pearl-I-I don’t have time for–” The equestrian protested, but Pearl hushed her.

“Just slow down, Lapis.” Pearl requested gently. “Calm down for a second… Trust me. Take a deep breath.”

Lapis sighed and rolled her eyes before she did so, but kept a grin on her lips.

Pearl held her fondly by her shoulders, watching Lapis’ eyes close. “… And one more.” She asked, feeling a waft of warm breath ghosting upon her slim arms as Lapis calmly breathed out. “… There.” Pearl whispered, astonished that she could feel Lapis’ tensed muscles relax.

The girl took another deep breath, this time on her own, then smiled sweetly up at Pearl, finally feeling a bit relieved.

“Come now, just take a brief pause.” Pearl said, leading Lapis towards the bed. “You’ve been pushing too hard on yourself the last week, you deserve a little rest.”
“Alright, mom.” Lapis chuckled. “… So, what do I do?” She asked with hands put in her pants, standing and watching Pearl as she sat down onto the mattress right next to her bag.

Pearl leaned back against her palms and shrugged. She wore a daring smirk on her lips, and she couldn’t resist to pull her slender legs slightly apart.

Lapis flushed at that, unable to erase the wide grin that grew on her face. She stepped forward with a snigger. “…You’re right. Maybe I could afford a little distraction.” She murmured and slid Pearl’s knees with her fingertips.

“You bet I’m right.” She wiggled her brows, then wrapped her arms round Lapis’ neck and tugged her down with herself, sinking into mattress and deep into Lapis’ lips.

The room fell into silence, only quiet smacks of their lips along with rustling sounds of hands sliding one another’s body could be heard.

Lapis’ body shivered underneath Pearl’s light touches. She gasped, departing from Pearl for a moment. “You’re such a sweet distraction from responsibilities, you know?” She revealed and bit down at her own lip, grinning.

Pearl just shrugged at that, smiling back at her. She would like to answer after all, but the press of Lapis’ lips against her neck made Pearl release just a tiny squeak. Lapis then brought up her hand and removed Pearl’s collar from her throat, kissing it ever so tenderly and continuing upper, biting down at her ear and jaw line.

“You do have a thing for biting, don’t you?” Pearl giggled, humming at the light kiss Lapis placed onto her neck.

“Maybeee.” Her dark brow rose. She planted another kiss onto Pearl’s skin. “I love the way it makes you wiggle.”

“Ah, I can’t help it. It tickles.” Pearl justified.

“Mm, does it?” Lapis sent Pearl an evil grin, and Pearl instantly knew what she was about to do. “… Is there any possible way to back out of this?” Pearl tried, although she knew there wasn’t.

Lapis bit her lip and slowly shook her head, swallowing Pearl just with her sharp eyes as she was leaning over to her.

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Once Lapis gathered everything she needed, they arrived to Pearl’s place, so she could pack her things and get ready for the trip as well. Packing up took Pearl visibly less time, because most of the things she’s already placed into her bag the day before.

“I’m so glad you’re coming with us, Pearl.” Lapis smiled and loaded Pearl’s luggage into her Kodiaq’s trunk once she was prepared.

“Well, I can’t miss such an event, can I?” Pearl shrugged and closed the trunk door. She followed Lapis and got aboard, placing a travel cage with Rose within it into her lap and buckling up, ready to hit the road.

On their way to the stable, they stopped by Garnet’s place and handed Rose over to her. Garnet offered Pearl to take care of her cat while she’s gone. She also mentioned that Steven, her new
kitten, will at least have someone to play with. Garnet was so excited about it herself and promised Pearl that she’ll take as much photos of them as possible.

Before they left, Garnet wished them safe travel and especially good luck to Lapis, then they shared a few hugs and finally headed to the stable to prepare the horses.

Greg and the team were already there, awaiting Lapis and getting things in order. Pearl had to bite hard at her lip once she came in contact with the older man. Eventually they greeted each other, but that was all. Pearl knew it was rude from her, but she then pretended as if he wasn’t there. She rather stood aside from the group of people and silently watched.

Nearby the group of four people, there was a big masculine woman, Pearl noticed. Her skin was tanned and tattooed, and her hair was tangled in rainbow dreadlocks. She was standing next to a tall red roan horse, holding its foot and fixing it a new horseshoe.

Pearl swallowed at the amount of muscles she saw. She even found herself blushing while watching the way those muscles were moving as the woman was nailing the horseshoe to the horse’s hoof with a hammer.

She had to shake her head. Pearl decided not to pay too much attention to that woman, though it was hard to look elsewhere than her strong arms, yet even when she looked away, she could still see flashes of them in her mind. 'Damnit, stop watching her… What would Lapis think of you? What would she—'

“—Hey, Bismuth.” Pearl could suddenly hear a familiar voice. It was Lapis', and she was talking to that woman, offering her a fist.

“Greetings, champion.” The farrier said and bumped into Lapis’ fist with her own. She then shot Pearl a quick look, then turned her head back to her blue-haired friend. “Who’s that little bird over there?” She asked, but so that Pearl couldn’t hear.

Lapis also briefly looked at Pearl; her little blush then tugged a smile on her freckled face. “That’s… My girlfriend.” Lapis said proudly, folding her arms on her chest.

“Pff-what?” The woman sputtered with a brief laughter and continued battering the nails. “Such a cutie? Can’t be.”

“Trust me, she is.” Lapis' brows raised, just as her chin.

The farrier chuckled and dropped the horse’s foot down, then picked another one and began rasping the hoof. “Then you wouldn't mind introducing us sometime, would ya?”

“So you could steal her from me, sure.” Lapis snorted, rolling her eyes.

“Aa please, you know I’m not like that.” Bismuth shook her head and started fitting a new horseshoe. She cleared her throat. “By the way, Priyanka was looking for you.”

“Oh? Do you know what she wanted?” The blue-haired girl asked, putting hands into her pants, glancing round the hall to possibly find her.

“Nah. All that she said… Was that you can… Find her in Rain’s stall.” The woman revealed, focused on nailing the horseshoe.

All of a sudden, Lapis gasped excitedly, her eyes started to sparkle as she remembered
something. “Have Rain…?”

The big woman chuckled. She guessed what Lapis got excited about. “Not yet, but she’s close.” She smiled, beckoning towards the mentioned horse’s stall. “But who knows? You can go and check.”

“Sure.” Lapis grinned, full of hope and excitement. She then darted over to Pearl and grabbed her by her thin wrist.

Yet before the girl could notice it, Lapis was leading her to the other side of the hall.

“Lapis? Where-where are we going?” Pearl gasped, almost unable to keep up with her, realizing that the big woman was watching while Lapis was dragging Pearl behind herself.

“I wanna show you something.” Lapis proclaimed, and once they arrived to Rainbow’s stall, the one across Blue’s, Lapis found an open gate and peered inside, just to find their veterinarian manipulating with a dapple gray mare inside the stall box.

“Hey, Priyanka.” The girl greeted and quietly entered the room, letting go of Pearl who just stuck in the doorway.

“Oh, Lapis, there you are.” The vet straightened and gave Lapis a faint smile. She was a middle-aged Indian woman, wearing a medical coat, with a stethoscope tossed over her neck. After a moment the woman noticed Pearl nervously stepping on a spot, thereupon Lapis immediately intervened.

“Umm, Priyanka, this is Pearl, my… Great friend.” Lapis rather said, unsure whether she should reveal what exactly was between them or not. She hoped Pearl didn’t mind this designation. “…Pearl, this is Dr. Maheswaran, our vet.”

Pearl swallowed just as the woman’s dark, impenetrable eyes began scanning her, but despite her steely-cold gaze, her voice turned out to be quite warm as she spoke directly to her.

“Nice to meet you, Pearl.” The vet offered her a hand. It took Pearl a moment to accept it, because the woman was deep in the stall and Pearl’s never been in a stall with a horse – except for Blue. However, she realized that this horse was way smaller than Blue; this time Pearl could actually see the horse’s back entirely. The animal also seemed a bit less dangerous to her than the other horses in the stable, and for Pearl’s surprise, she wasn’t even as scared as she usually was next to an unknown horse. The mare seemed calm and peaceful.

Eventually Pearl took a deep breath and entered the stall as well, giving the woman her hand and shaking it. “You, too, Mrs. Maheswaran.” She blushed, yet the rest of the uncertainty deep inside her didn’t allow her to stay near the horse for too long, and so she had to step back after a moment.

“It’s Priyanka for you.” The woman chuckled, making Pearl blush yet more.

“Man, I hoped that she’s already foaled.” Lapis suddenly spoke, stepping closer to the mare and addressing her calmly. Slowly, carefully she stroked her side, hoping for sensing any movements in her belly.

‘Is the horse… Pregnant?’ Pearl’s eyes turned wider. Just now she noticed the actual size of the mare’s belly. There was a new life, a new little horse that is about to see this beautiful world. All of a sudden Pearl couldn’t help but let tears well up in her eyes. She became so happy; happy for the mother, for Lapis and all the people from here.
“Not yet, but it’s going to be very soon.” Priyanka smiled, stroking the animal’s long nose.

“Pearl, come here.” Lapis whispered, quite ignoring the veterinarian’s words, and offered Pearl her hand.

Pearl hesitated, but in the end she walked further into the stall and stopped next to her girlfriend.

“Give me your hand.” Lapis asked gently, and Pearl did as she was told.

Carefully, Lapis took her cold, trembling hand and placed it onto the horse’s side, holding it there. “… Can you feel it?” Lapis glanced over at her, she couldn’t hold back a grin.

Pearl closed her eyes and tried to focus on the mare’s warm skin. She could sense veins pulsing and drumming against her palm, she could feel the mare’s heart beat, and yet something that was faintly moving inside her. “… Yeah, I can… Feel it. I can feel movements.” She chuckled, cupping her mouth with her other hand, feeling a tear wetting her cheek. She wasn’t able to make out why she got so emotional at that moment – it was just a foal! But… Still it was a new life growing there.

Later on, in the middle of a silence, the veterinarian cleared her throat and broke the harmonical moment. “Also, Lapis…” She started. “I need to check on something in Blue’s documents before we go. Could you bring them to me, please?”

“… You don’t have them?” Lapis slightly panicked, her hand froze on Pearl’s.

“I checked twice, but I couldn’t find them.” She frowned worriedly.

“Well, that’s a problem.” Lapis hissed in nervously, running her hand through her hair and thinking where the documents could be. “I’ll check on them right away.”

“You better, or we’re not going anywhere.” The vet joked, though it rather turned Lapis’ smile upside down.

‘I… Honestly wish we’re not.’ Lapis swallowed and rather immediately left the stall to find the documents. Pearl followed her, yet gave the mother horse one last look before she did. She smiled and went after Lapis.

Chapter End Notes

Chapter recapitulation:

• Lapis was packing up for the GP week
• Dr. Maheswaran appeared in the stable
• Bismuth was fixing Lion new horseshoes
• Lapis showed Pearl their pregnant mare

♦ 12th–16th week

PS: Hey, guys! It's been a while since I posted a new chapter. I'm really sorry, but I'm kind of in a strange, melancholic mood recently and my mind is somewhere else than it should be. However, I try to write whenever I can, so stay tuned for the last two chapters + epilogue! ;) Thank you for your support, peeps! It means a lot to me.
:) ♥ Have a nice day!

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