"Treasure hunting undoubtedly came with its risks: treacherous terrain that could crumble at a touch, ancient traps that just begged to be triggered, and Chloe and Nadine’s most pressing issue - ruthless warmongers."

During an escape from Asav and his men, Nadine gets injured. Chloe insists that they take a break so that she can tend to the wound for her and, despite Nadine's initial complaints against it, they both end up being grateful for the opportunity to just talk. A little bit of soul searching and bonding ensues.

Notes

Dedicated to bri-notthecheese over on Tumblr for being a wonderful human being, without her and our amazing Chloe x Nadine conversations this probably wouldn't exist so thank you!

Based on a prompt I saw on Tumblr - "It's just a cut, really." - and the whole list can be found here [x]

Edit: annsfinks has drawn an INcredible piece of art inspired by this story that you should definitely check out! [x]

Hope you enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

Treasure hunting undoubtedly came with its risks: treacherous terrain that could crumble at a touch, ancient traps that just begged to be triggered, and Chloe and Nadine’s most pressing issue - ruthless warmongers.
They’d been cornered by Asav and his men yet again, this time in one of the smaller buildings of the city. Nadine had been eager to press on, but Chloe had wanted to stay for a few moments and study some of the more intact aspects of the structure and religious paraphernalia.

Evidently that had been a mistake, as Asav appeared – along with his men - at the same passage the two of them had entered through only minutes earlier.

Nadine had noticed them straight away; she’d had her eye on all the passageways – always on guard, which Chloe was increasingly grateful for. Chloe however had been attempting to translate a scripture engraved in the wall, not noticing anything wrong right up until the moment she heard guns cocking and Nadine telling her to run.

It had all gone downhill from there; Asav ordered his men to fire – impatient after Chloe and Nadine’s continued escape and evasion of his forces – but Nadine was faster, hailing down bullets as she ran to cover behind a disintegrating block of stone that must have fallen from the roof.

Chloe was close to their only exit – another passage leading out to the other side of the building – which she’d managed to reach just as Nadine crouched behind the debris. Now out of the line of fire Chloe had called over to Nadine to make a run for it, before continuing through the passage herself.

The gunfire continued as Chloe ran, coming in bursts as each side attempted not to get hit, until finally there was a pause that Chloe could only hope was Nadine making her getaway. The gunfire quickly picked up again after that, unrelenting as Chloe reached the passage’s end – accompanied by the worrying sound of cracking stone.

Chloe finally looked back, only to find Nadine running towards her at full speed as the passage roof began to collapse around her. The bombardment of bullets had shattered the already fragile structural supports, causing the passage to cave in on itself.

Thick dust filtered down through the air from where cracks had formed, along with sections of stone that broke off in layers but narrowly missed Nadine and instead cracked even further once they reached the floor – making it hard for her to run as fast as she was without tripping. She was doing it though; she was nearly out.

Until one piece didn’t miss.

It wasn’t the biggest of pieces, but it had knocked into the side of Nadine’s head with enough force to make her stumble – almost toppling her completely.

Yet still she’d somehow managed to keep running. Nadine was certainly a powerhouse, she’d give her that.

Just as Chloe dared to think Nadine would make it in time - despite the hit she’d taken - the cracks finally gave, raining down large chunks of stone that threatened to hit her again with every step. Nadine was only seconds away when it happened, but they both knew those few seconds would be enough to bury her under tonnes of rubble.

In an instant Nadine was on her toes, throwing herself forward towards the bright daylight outside and into Chloe’s arms.

The passage had completely collapsed soon after, but Chloe managed to prevent Nadine from doing the same. After getting her balance Nadine immediately set off again, jogging further into the undergrowth and away from Asav. Chloe didn’t argue, she’d been just as eager to get away from their pursuer.
Now ten minutes later, after they’d slowed to a walk and still Nadine hadn’t said a word or even stopped for a rest, Chloe began to worry.

“You got hit pretty hard back there, you alright?” Chloe asked as Nadine soldiered on ahead by a few paces, despite staggering slightly every so often.

“I’m fine.” Nadine replied tersely, her body immediately betraying her statement as she tripped on an easily avoidable tree root. Yet still, she simply righted herself and kept moving.

Chloe wasn’t buying her act in the slightest.

“You sure about that? You don’t seem very steady on your feet.” Chloe knew she was pushing it, which Nadine would not appreciate, but she was clearly not okay.

“I said I’m fine, let’s just keep moving.” She was getting frustrated and it showed, what seemed to be intended as confident strides only served to show how badly her legs were shaking.

“Look, you’re clearly not. So why don’t you just sit down and let me take a look at you.” Chloe tried to reason calmly, but Nadine had had enough.

She stopped dead in her tracks, somehow managing to swing around relatively steadily to come face to face with Chloe.

“We don’t have time for this! Asav-”

“Is nowhere to be seen. The tunnel collapsed behind us, neither he or his men are catching up with us any time soon.” It wasn’t entirely true, Chloe had been in the business long enough to know fully well that her adversaries could pop up at any moment – and always the most inopportune moments at that – but all she needed was for Nadine to believe it enough that she’d take a break.

No such luck.

“Then we need to keep our lead, we can’t risk something like that happening again.” Nadine argued back, apparently deciding that they were done talking as she turned to start moving again. She must have moved too quickly though, as a second later she was leaning over slightly and breathing deeply.

“Oh would you just bloody sit down, before you fall down.” Chloe ordered, moving swiftly to Nadine’s side so she could take hold of her and guide her gently to sit on a fallen tree trunk.

When she’d finally got Nadine sitting down, Chloe could see exactly where the rubble had hit her. Her left temple was covered in a thin layer of drying blood and dust, surrounding a cut that thankfully wasn’t too deep – not enough for stitches at least - but cut through right from Nadine’s hairline to the end of her eyebrow.

Not to mention that, with the way she’d been stumbling, it wouldn’t be surprising if Nadine had a mild concussion too – and she’d been carrying on like that for a good ten to fifteen minutes with no break.

Bloody idiot.

“Why the hell didn’t you show me this sooner? If we’d ran into more of Asav’s men you’d be done for in that state.” Chloe demanded in as steady a tone as she could manage, frustrated at Nadine’s stubbornness but not wanting to risk making things worse by arguing fully. They’d done enough of that already.
In all honesty, she hadn’t meant to come on so strongly about it. It could have been a lot worse - it nearly was - but still Chloe felt a small stab of anger at the thought of Nadine’s disregard for her own health.

*It’s just because her injuries are jeopardising the job - you wouldn’t be quite so worried otherwise,* she told herself.

“It’s just a cut; I’ve had worse.” Nadine sighed tiredly, allowing herself to relax a little anyway – well as much as she could, sitting on a rigid tree trunk - whilst Chloe searched around in her belt satchel. Finally, she found what she was looking for; antiseptic wipes and Steri-Strips.

“Yeah, I can see that…” Chloe’s eyes flittered up from the packages in her hands, pointedly signalling towards the scar that ran down Nadine’s throat. She wasn’t sure if she’d expected a reply to that – maybe the story of how that scar had come into being – but she didn’t get one. Maybe that was alright though, she hadn’t exactly been the most open of people either.

Chloe made her way over to sit next to Nadine, making sure she could get the best leverage to deal with that cut by sitting on her left. Nadine seemed to take the hint and turned so that they were facing each other; Chloe immediately set to work opening one of the antiseptic wipes.

“You’re certainly prepared.” Nadine pointed out, seemingly amused by her forward-thinking; Chloe carried dozens of first aid supplies with her everywhere she went – it was just habit now after so many years treasure hunting in the most dangerous places imaginable. She didn’t much fancy the idea of getting tetanus… again.

“Comes with the territory; climbing around ruins for a living tends to leave injuries - a lot of them. I’m sure you’re figuring that one out for yourself. Turn your head a little?” Nadine did as she said, moving so that Chloe could get to the cut easier.

“Right. This is going to sting quite a bit, but you’re a big girl I’m sure you can handle it.” Nadine huffed a little in place of a laugh, but otherwise stayed quiet – her eyes staring off somewhere in the distance.

Chloe took that as her chance to shuffle in a little further, legs coming to rest against Nadine’s. Carefully, she brought the wipe up to the cut and began to clean away the blood that had collected around the wound. It carried on like that for a minute or so, Chloe gently wiping away the layers of blood and dirt as Nadine sat quietly - as if deep in thought.

Eventually however, she no longer seemed content with keeping her thoughts to herself.

“Do you ever look back at the choices you’ve made and wonder how you ended up where you are? How different things could be if you made different choices?” Chloe was surprised at Nadine’s sudden openness but tried not show it, although part of her was wishing she could have been privy to Nadine’s thought process - wondering how she’d ended up at a question like that.

“Sometimes, I guess. I don’t know, I’ve never really thought about it.” Chloe replied offhandedly as she continued cleaning around the cut, it was true that she hadn’t paid it much thought but she was also aware that she was keeping her cards close to her chest. She wasn’t sure exactly how much of her personal life she wanted to share with Nadine, they hadn’t known each other long and a lot of that they hadn’t been on the best of terms for either.

Nadine couldn’t seem to let it go though, if anything Chloe’s words seemed to have made her feel worse about whatever she was thinking of. The only signal that she’d even heard what Chloe had said was a low hum, appearing to fall even deeper into thought.
Chloe didn’t like it one bit; she was used to the confident Nadine, the professional Nadine, the Nadine that took no shit from anyone - not the quietly vulnerable woman sitting in front of her. In an instant, she’d made up her mind on what to do.

She moved her hand away, caught Nadine’s gaze so that their eyes met, and began talking.

“If you’re asking if I have regrets then yeah, of course I do. Who doesn’t? But what would be the point in dwelling on all the things I wish I’d done differently? I’m happy with how things turned out.” Nadine was looking at her with such a fierce desire to accept what she was saying but she seemed to be struggling, Chloe had no clue what was troubling her so much but if she could calm her mind - at least for now - then she’d do whatever she could.

It’s just what’s best for the job, Chloe told herself again.

Even she didn’t know if she was buying that line anymore…

Hoping that she wasn’t overstepping boundaries, Chloe carefully reached across - bringing her hand to rest gently over Nadine’s own, where it sat in her lap. The gentle pressure had her full attention.

“I’m happy now.” Nadine’s eyes widened a fraction, before looking away entirely - her expression shifting to one of confused realisation. After a few seconds she looked back at her, seeming to take what Chloe had said to heart.

“Me too.” A small smile played at Nadine’s lips as she said it, one that Chloe happily returned – taking a few moments before removing her hand and returning to the cut.

After opening another antiseptic wipe, Chloe quickly realised that she needed some sort of leverage in order to clean the cut itself as best she could – wanting to dab away as much of the congealed blood and dust from the inner edges of the wound as she possible.

“Is it alright if I…?” Chloe wiggled her hand next to the right side of Nadine’s head, hoping that she’d understand what she was asking.

A quick nod and its accompanying hum of consent were followed by the feeling of Nadine’s warm skin against Chloe’s hand - which now rested on her right cheek. The extra pressure she could apply by holding her like that, meant that mopping up the remains of the mess caked to the wound was easy enough. Nadine’s eyes fluttered shut sometime during Chloe’s ministrations – from the pain or just pure exhaustion, Chloe couldn’t tell.

Despite everything, Nadine seemed calm – peaceful almost – and it showed in the way her head leaned ever so slightly firmer on Chloe’s hand as time passed, she allowed herself a private smile at that. In a moment of unthinking reaction her thumb briefly stroked across Nadine’s cheek, a movement that could have easily been a repositioning of her hand…

Alright so maybe it wasn’t entirely involuntary, but it’s not like Nadine would be finding that out anytime soon – not yet anyway (Later though? After the job was done and any pretence of ‘professionalism’ could be thrown out the window? Well that was an entirely different story).

“I got it five years ago.” Nadine suddenly said out of the blue, it shocked Chloe out of her thoughts so much so that Nadine – eyes now wide open - must have picked up on her questioning expression.

“My scar. I got it on a recon assignment… with my father.”

Oh.
That explained why Nadine had been so quiet about it earlier, why she’d become so self-exploratory in lieu of a casual conversation. Chloe wasn’t completely familiar with Nadine’s history, but it was common knowledge that she’d inherited Shoreline after her father’s death. Then Chloe had just had to go and open her big mouth expecting some sort of relatable tale, unknowingly stumbling across something to do with what was probably one of the worst moments of Nadine’s life.

*Nice one, Chloe.*

Yet Nadine didn’t seem deterred, so Chloe continued as normal – just listening to the story as she finished up with the cut.

“We had a client who wanted us to infiltrate one of his rivals’ organisations before we went in on the military front, turned out it was a trap. The client had been on the wrong side of us before and wanted payback. Things went south pretty quickly. Long story short we got split up and I got caught, ended up having the client pinning me against a wall with a knife to my throat. I managed to get him off but not before he left me with this.” Nadine finished with a half-hearted gesture towards the scar, waiting for Chloe’s reply.

There was more to the story, that much was obvious from the tenseness in Nadine’s voice - no matter much she tried to hide it behind a casual façade - but Chloe wasn’t going to push it. There’d already been enough soul searching and dredging up of the past for one day.

Instead she finished cleaning the cut, put down the wipe in her hand and went for the response she knew she could always fall back on – humour, with just a dash of flirting.

“Well if it’s any consolation, that scar makes you look incredibly bad arse.” She admitted with a playful grin and a glint in her eye.

The sound of Nadine’s laughter was enough to make Chloe’s heart clench and every painful, tense or awkward moment up to that point *completely* worth it.

“I know.” Nadine’s low tone and utterly confident smile were almost enough to make Chloe breathless, but she covered it as much as she could by focusing on packing away the antiseptic wipes and looking down for the Steri-Strips. She couldn’t hide everything though, the smile refused to leave her face.

*Come on Chloe, this really isn’t the time to get floored by a beautiful woman.*

All that was left to do was to close the cut with some of the strips, which Chloe managed to place quickly, and that was that - Nadine was all patched up.

“There, sorted. How do you feel?” Chloe asked, wanting to make sure there weren’t any other problems that she’d missed – hoping that they could get on the move again as quickly as possible, suddenly aware of how long they must have been sitting there as Asav caught up to them with every second. That thought had Chloe standing again, ready to leave the moment they were both good to go.

“Better, I think.” Nadine must have moved her head a little too suddenly to follow Chloe’s movement, causing her to rub her forehead where it hurt - she must have had one hell of a headache after all that, Chloe realised.

“Here you should probably have some water, might help a little with the headache.” Chloe reached into her belt satchel once again and pulled out her foldable water bottle, thankful that she’d remembered to refill it a little while ago when they’d come across a clean stream.
“You really do have everything in there.” Nadine commented again, still surprised at everything Chloe had managed to bring. She took the water bottle gratefully and began to drink, taking a few seconds to savour the refreshment before it was gone. “Thanks.”

“No problem.” Chloe took the bottle back, took a quick swig for herself, then returned it to her belt satchel. Finally, they were all set.

“Alright then, we better get a move on; treasure’s not going to find itself.” Chloe teasingly held out her hand for Nadine to take, she certainly didn’t need any help getting up but she seemed to appreciate if for the gesture it was anyway. Nadine took her hand, returning the smile that Chloe still hadn’t been able to fully calm from earlier, as they pulled on one another’s grip.

The moment Nadine was up and steady on her feet Chloe let go, turning to jog in the direction they’d been going originally – looking back after a couple of seconds to make sure Nadine would follow.

“You coming?” Chloe called back playfully.

“Right behind you!”

End Notes

This is my first time writing for either of these characters but there’s just so little fic for this pairing and I wanted to write it so badly, so hopefully it’s not terrible or too ooc. Feel free to leave kudos or a comment, it would be greatly appreciated! Thanks for reading!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!