The Weight of Us

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The Weight of Us

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Summary

Whether she wants it or not Bellamy is falling, or near to it, and when his 'goodnight' starts to sound too much like 'I love you' she knows she has to do something.

Notes

There is a nod to this gifset \underline{x} which may be my favorite thing at the moment. Title and inspiration come from the song <u>The Weight of Us by Sanders Bohlke</u>.

I'm not ready

She sees the way he looks at her.

It isn't obvious, at first, and so it is easy to ignore. He's always watched her, always been at her side when she needs him most, and so nothing seems to have changed. He is, perhaps, *more* present than he used to be, but so is everyone, after. At least his presence she doesn't mind.

But as the weeks go by his eyes linger on her face for minutes instead of moments, the weight of his gaze grows, and she feels the fear creeping in.

She isn't ready for this, has decided she never wants this again. He wasn't supposed to let this happen.

But whether she wants it or not Bellamy is falling, or near to it, and when his 'goodnight' starts to sound too much like 'I love you' she knows she has to do something.

Once upon a time she might have let it happen, might even have welcomed it, but love has no place in her world anymore – not the kind he is offering. She has hardened her heart, shut the gates and frozen them over, and she cannot let him dash himself upon them trying to get in.

It will be better for the both of them. That is what she tells herself.

Things are slightly complicated by the fact that her world has narrowed so that he makes up the most of it. This has happened, too, without her notice or permission. It was just easier, after, to turn to him for comfort and distraction and absolution.

She could not face the looks and whispers that followed her, and so it made sense to let him stay by her side and scare everyone away with his hard glare and ready gun. She could not plan a rescue on her own, and so it made sense to strategize with him, over breakfasts, through shortening afternoons, into cold winter nights. She could not handle her mother's concern, and so it made sense to move from her tent into his. She could not wake herself from nightmares, and so it made sense to let him do it for her, to soothe her back to wakefulness with arms and words and warmth. It has always made sense, and so she has done it, one foot in front of the other, never thinking about where it might lead.

He makes sense too, most of all, but she doesn't have to like it.

So when the whispers have died away, and the rescue has been successful, and the nightmares start to fade a little – when all that is left is *him* – she tries to pull back. He doesn't let her, and that is when she knows that it is more necessary than ever. It may hurt him now, but it would hurt them both too much later on to let him continue to hope.

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Murphy isn't her first pick.

It would hurt him, she thinks, to know this, but it's true. Miller is too loyal, has always been too loyal. Monty's eye is always these days on Miller. Jasper is too young (less than a year between them, but it is not his age that makes her see him this way). Everyone else is too old, too taken, too broken themselves. Murphy is broken too, but either she cares less or she feels of a kind with him enough that it does not matter. She doesn't question which it is, because this isn't about caring or connection, this is about putting distance where she needs to, between her and Bellamy.

At first he laughs at her when she makes the offer, a vein of anger running underneath that lets her know he thinks she's making fun of him. When he realizes she is serious he swallows heavily and looks at her like she is going to be the thing that destroys him, but he agrees.

When he is beneath her, hands shaking on her hips and eyes looking everywhere but directly into her own, she hesitates. All she wants is to avoid breaking the one thing she cannot afford to lose, and she has not stopped to consider the collateral. She looks down at Murphy and for the first time in months *sees* him. She sees the boy and monster both, and she wonders at herself for being willing to use them each so easily.

"I know what this is, and what it isn't," he says when she stills for too long. His words are sure, his voice is steady, and so she ignores the sadness in his eyes and kisses him.

It is easier, after that, to get lost in the mechanics of it, to even find some pleasure in the warmth of him, in his kisses and touch, and to forget. She keeps her eyes tight shut and he lets her, does not ask that she look at him, does not ask that she be here with him the way she fears he wants. There is only one moment, when she has already crested that hill and he is spiraling after her, when he says her name, and it almost breaks her.

"Clarke."

There is too much behind it, too much, and it is not his voice she wants to hear, but she swallows the tears that threaten and if there were other words he bites them back, and it is okay. It is survivable.

After, she rolls away and he lets her do that too, and she knows then that he may not have been her first choice but he was, in the end, the best one. She can feel him moving behind her, hears the rustle of his clothing as he tugs it back on. He stops for a moment when he is done, sits next to her on the narrow cot and puts a tentative hand to her shoulder.

She doesn't react and he sighs, brushes her hair back from her face in a gesture too filled with tenderness. For a moment she fears he will try to kiss her, or hold her, or make this moment last, but instead he stands and if he hears her shaky sigh of relief he ignores it.

"If you need me..." he says before he leaves, lets his words trail off because they both know she doesn't need him, that this is the whole point. He waits anyway, like she might change

her mind and call him back. It isn't until he's given up and lifted the flap of the tent that she speaks.

"Murphy."

He turns back and she cannot meet his eyes.

"Thank you."

He smiles wryly, gives her an exaggerated half bow. "Anytime princess."

She waits until she is sure he is gone before she lets herself cry.

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She doesn't know how Bellamy finds out, but he does, just like she always knew he would. That had been the point, after all.

He doesn't say anything to her directly, doesn't string Murphy up by his wrists or look at her like she's betrayed him. But he watches her differently, lets her keep the subtle distances between them that he used to always fill before.

She finds that she misses him, even though he is still right beside her, and hates herself for it. It is a necessary thing though, she knows, because as much as she misses him even that is not enough to lighten the darkness she carries around her heart. Whatever she could give to him would never be enough, and so it is better this way to miss him a little rather than lose him.

Bellamy still trails her steps, still strategizes and plans with her, still lets her fall asleep beside him. And he still holds her when she wakes up from nightmares, soothing her back from her dreams with arms and warmth and words. But he doesn't hold her after, and his gaze doesn't linger for minutes, only moments.

It is better this way. This is what she tells herself.

Secrets are mine to keep

Chapter by Apocalyptica (MyLiminalHeart)

Bellamy isn't surprised to wake up one morning and realize he's in love.

He thinks maybe he ought to be, that this is the sort of thing that ought to tip the world on its axis, but instead he just feels content. She is asleep still, curled into him with a sweet softness that is never present when she is awake, and he thinks that falling in love with her is perhaps the easiest thing he's ever done.

He cannot pinpoint the moment it happened, because it feels like every moment since they landed on this godforsaken planet has been leading him here. For a second, right as she wakes up, right before she pulls away from him like she always does, he wonders if he would have changed things, done something differently, if he had known then how he would feel now.

But then she blinks those sleepy blue eyes at him and for just a moment there is an openness in her gaze that he feels in his chest, a blooming warmth of a thing, and he knows there would be no changing this. He could have done things a million different ways and it would have still led him back here. Back to her.

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His feelings may be unsurprising but they are still new enough to marvel at and he finds his eyes following her movements more closely, finds himself sitting a little nearer to her at tables and around the fire. He finds reasons to touch her – just a graze of fingers against her hip or shoulder to grab her attention, a gentle hand at the small of her back to guide her through a crowd. He doesn't push, but he can't help but want.

And through it all he knows she doesn't love him back, not the way he loves her, but this too is something he finds he is strangely at ease with.

He isn't blind, he knows she loved Finn – maybe not the way Finn wanted to be loved, but love nonetheless – and knows that his death weighs heavy on her still. He knows her heart is walled off and she cannot think about letting anyone into it yet. But she cares about him, she relies on him, and it is enough for now.

The thing about love, he finds, is that it can patient. And so, then, can he.

Octavia notices before anyone else, and that too is unsurprising. His sister knows him better than anyone, and understands enough of love herself to recognize the symptoms in him.

"Oh Bell," she sighs sadly when she catches him watching Clarke from across the camp.

He stiffens for a moment, unprepared to have this conversation with his sister when he isn't even ready to have it with Clarke, but sighs and gives in when he sees the way she is looking at him.

"It's not a big deal," he mumbles, unconvincing even to himself.

Octavia gives him a pointed look, reminiscent enough of their mother to make him squirm, but puts a comforting arm around his waist and rests her head on his shoulder with another sigh.

"I just don't want to see you get hurt," she tells him, gently like maybe she thinks he hasn't realized yet the futility of his feelings.

But Bellamy knows what he's getting himself into here. There is no guarantee Clarke will ever return his feelings, and there is no obligation for this to all work out. In fact, he is already pretty certain the odds are stacked against him, but when have things ever been different? He's been fighting the odds his whole life, and as he watches her move around the camp, spine straight and face shuttered with a hard-won detachment she has been perfecting ever since that night, he thinks she is worth betting on. Even if he loses, loving her will be worth it.

Besides, it's not like he has a choice.

O gives him another squeeze before she leaves, and he hopes that she's wrong, that these feelings won't lead to pain. She probably isn't though, and he's ready for that too.

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In the end it is Murphy that comes to him to deliver the blow, and it feels fitting somehow that he be the one to do it.

"I slept with Clarke."

The words are delivered quickly, no trace of emotion, though Bellamy can tell there is a depth of feeling Murphy is hiding underneath – can see it swimming in his eyes when they meet Bellamy's own. Murphy has always been good at pretending hardness, but his eyes forever give him away.

The sharp sting of pain isn't jealousy (or, rather, not only that – he is only human after all). Instead Bellamy finds that the hurt is for *her*. That she has felt the need to do this, that she would see it as her only option. Because he knows this was for him, to push him away, to remind him that Clarke thinks herself incapable of love now and wants no part in it.

It breaks him to think he might have driven her here unwittingly, simply because he cannot control his own heart.

Murphy is waiting, braced for a blow, and Bellamy is half tempted to give in to the base instinct to take his hurt out on the other boy. It would be easy to blame Murphy for this, to accuse him of taking advantage of Clarke's grief, of exploiting her. It would even feel good, for a moment at least, to have someone to lash out at for his own bruised ego and cracked heart. If Bellamy had been the same man that he was when they landed on Earth he probably would have devised some punishment, for no other reason than to remind Murphy of the cost of touching what Bellamy considers *his*.

But he is not that same man, and Clarke has always been her own person, has never belonged to him, and in the end it isn't Murphy's fault at all.

So he tightens his jaw against the wash of emotion and restrains himself.

Murphy loses some of his bravado in the face of Bellamy's non-reaction, deflating until he mostly looks like the lost eighteen year old boy he is. Still, he doesn't leave and Bellamy knows he has to say something, has to do something, because while he can't blame Murphy he does need to make sure this doesn't end up breaking Clarke more than it probably already has.

"If you hurt her-" he starts, voice low and colder than he means it to be, but he can't help it.

"It's not like that," Murphy cuts him off before he can deliver a threat.

Bellamy just looks at him, and Murphy sighs but continues.

"She doesn't want...it isn't like that okay? I'm pretty sure it was a one time deal." Murphy looks away then, eyes darting to the med tent where Bellamy sees the tail end of a flash of golden hair disappearing inside.

When the other boy looks back at him there is defeat in his eyes, which only makes Bellamy feel tired and sad. He realizes in that moment that Murphy didn't come to him to gloat, he came seeking some kind of pardon, some kind of *ending*, a finality he didn't get from Clarke.

Bellamy can't give it to him, doesn't have the tools to tie up his own loose ends with her let alone someone else's. He cannot help Murphy because he does not know how to get over Clarke Griffin, cannot give direction in doing so to anyone else. He is pretty sure, at least, that Murphy doesn't love her, except perhaps in the way that all living things love the sun, which means there is hope for him where Bellamy has none.

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He doesn't stop loving her, he's pretty sure there is no getting off of that ride, but he gives her space.

She doesn't go far, and he tries not to show the wave a relief that sweeps through him when she stays in their tent. Beyond any romantic feelings he has for her she is his friend first, and it would have killed him to think of her suffering through her nightmares alone just because he was stupid enough to go and fall in love.

He tries not to hold on too tight though, sets careful boundaries between them that he makes sure not to cross, lest he drive her back to Murphy or worse.

It is hard, some days more than others, but she is worth it.

Let us be brave

Chapter by Apocalyptica (MyLiminalHeart)

Weeks go by, and Clarke begins to settle.

Bellamy continues to give her more space, but he is never far when she needs him and so she learns to live with the strange ache of having him both too close and never close enough.

She knows, now, that if she asked him he would distance himself more, and knowing is enough that she doesn't actually need to ask. She feels safe around him again and the relief of it nearly drowns her some days. She doesn't know what she would have done without him, feels more lucky than she thinks she deserves that she hasn't had to find out. It makes what she did worth it, to have saved them the pain of an unrequited love affair.

Neither of them ever mentions Murphy, and Clarke doesn't seek him out again. She catches his eye sometimes across the fire pit or the yard, and he always returns her smiles. Eventually they even start to look genuine.

And so she moves forward, one foot in front of the other, sure now that she has eliminated Bellamy as a destination. Her heart remains locked in the skybox of her chest, and with the threat of being loved removed, she begins to heal.

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They survive the winter, and Bellamy is so busy helping to keep them all alive that he doesn't have time to dwell on his bruised heart.

He and Clarke are side by side nearly every day, battling cold and hunger and discontent, working to try and find a way to reintegrate their people with those who came down with the Ark now that they are all reunited. This part has always come easy, working together towards survival. Even when he didn't like her much he trusted her to lead with him. *Needed* her to make it work.

The familiarity of it helps to ease the last of the tension between them, and by the time the snow begins to melt and things aren't so desperate every day he finds that it doesn't even really hurt anymore, to love her still.

Octavia watches him closely as the months go by, but she doesn't push him on it. He knows she thinks he's being stupid loving still, knows that she doesn't approve of the fact that he continues to share a tent and, when the nightmares are bad, a bed with Clarke even now.

He wishes he could explain to her that it would hurt worse to force Clarke out, to have someone else (or, worse, *no one*) be the one to hold her when she is sad or scared or stressed. He wishes he could explain to his sister that loving Clarke is still the easiest thing he's ever done. But he knows if their situations were reversed he wouldn't understand, would never want to watch his sister love someone who couldn't love her fully in return, so he doesn't bother trying to explain.

Loving Clarke has always kind of defied explanation anyway.

At first it is hard sometimes, to watch her interact with Miller and Jasper and Monty (even Jackson, who he knows is half in love with Abby and thinks of Clarke as a *child* more than anything), his mind always wanting to push him into wondering if one of them will be another Murphy. But he works through this too, forces himself to let go of the pointless jealousy because she could sleep with all of them and there would be nothing he could do about it, so there is no point in fearing it.

Without ever knowing it, it seems she continues to be the one who forces him to grow up and be a better person, a better man, and if anything he loves her more for it.

He even mends fences with Murphy eventually, and tries not to feel guilty about taking so long to do it when he senses the relief and nearly sycophantic thankfulness in the other boy at being invited back into Bellamy's good graces.

In fact, once they put their past to rest he finds that Murphy can be a valuable part of the team, and even a friend. They have more in common than Bellamy used to like to admit, and while he sometimes thinks they have too much in common still (like when he sees Murphy's eyes tracking Clarke in time with his own) the truth is Bellamy doesn't mind his company.

So the seasons change, Bellamy changes, but his feelings for Clarke are still a constant.

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It is their second spring on Earth when Clarke finds that the chains around her heart have loosened.

She doesn't know when it happened, is surprised to find it *has*, and while a momentary panic threatens at the back of her mind in the end she finds that the crushing fear is no longer there.

The realization comes during the week-long festivities planned to celebrate Octavia and Lincoln's wedding. She is helping Octavia to paint her skin with the Grounder designs necessary for the ceremony, and when Octavia's voice gets watery with emotion talking about how much she loves Lincoln, Clarke thinks it would be nice, to feel that way about someone someday. To be that happy, to be that *sure*.

She pauses her brush strokes and inhales sharply, waits for the sadness or guilt or fear to overtake her, but it is only a distant humming now, easily silenced. It's a quiet change, she doesn't even feel all that different, but is still feels somehow like a victory and her smile is softer when she starts to paint again, her mind for the first time in a long time wandering off into a vague and hazy *someday*.

Bellamy stands next to her at the ceremony, and when he tears up during his sister's vows Clarke slips her hand into his and doesn't tease him at all about how tight he holds on.

Later, at the celebration, they drink too much wine with their friends, all of them laughing and singing, and Clarke feels *happy*. Murphy asks her to dance, twirls her around the clearing until she is giggling and falling against him to keep from falling down. He grins back at her, wide and bright, and there is no trace of sadness in his eyes when Bellamy cuts in and he relinquishes his hold.

The music slows when Bellamy has her in his arms, and his eyes are dark and full of so much, so much, that Clarke feels dizzy all over again. Not scared though, and it feels easy to move closer, to rest her head against his chest, to listen to the beat of his heart in time with the music as he holds her and they sway.

Clarke isn't in love, but she thinks that maybe someday she could be.

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Bellamy is so used to loving Clarke by now that it is as natural as breathing. Most days he doesn't even think about it consciously, and he is long past any of the pain that came with it. It is now just another fact about him; his name is Bellamy Blake, he would die for his sister, he is the leader of the remaining 100, and he is in love with Clarke Griffin.

The urgency of his desire has mellowed too, and while it is always there just beneath the surface, he has learned to control it, to ignore it. When he wakes up with her sprawled across his chest or tucked into the curve of his body, the temptation, the *want*, is no longer as dangerous a thing as it once was.

So it surprises him, how quickly it comes roaring back to life, when he accidentally comes across her bathing in the river.

It is midsummer, the hottest part of the year, a heat made worse by the fact that they are in the midst of trying to set up a new camp and so are working in the hot sun for long hours nearly every day. The split from Camp Jaha had been a long time coming, and despite the exhausting manual labor Bellamy is nothing but glad to be getting on with it.

They had needed each other those first few years, the 100 and the Arkers, when they were all trying to survive. There had been so much to learn and so few resources that it only made sense to pool their knowledge and supplies and work together. But the older the remaining

100 had gotten the more they chaffed at their status in camp, and at the antiquated laws the council seemed to want to try and perpetuate. He and Clarke had worked hard to find compromise, but in the end the groups were just too different – those first few months on Earth had started a schism that could not be undone.

So now they are here, a few miles out from both Camp Jaha and Lincoln's village, trying to build a society from the ground up. If he thinks too hard about it, it overwhelms him sometimes, but he has Clarke by his side and so mostly he feels like anything is possible.

He's called a break from construction, as is their habit at midday when the sun is hottest. Honestly he's probably worked his crew a little too long today, but their current project is building a real clinic and he can't help but want to see it finished just for the look on Clarke's face when it is done. Most of his work crew took off for the swimming hole further up the river, looking to splash and goof around for the hour he's given them, but Bellamy feels the need for some peace and quiet.

Which is how he finds himself down river, where the water bends underneath the shady overhang of trees along the bank, in the exact place where Clarke has decided to bathe.

He freezes at the tree line, and though he knows he ought to look away or call out or *something* he finds he cannot do anything but stare. He has always known she was beautiful, even before he was in love with her it was an immutable truth. It isn't even the first time he's seen this much of her naked, after all living in a tent with someone for the better part of three years lends itself to a few awkward interruptions as well as a certain lack of modesty.

But there is something about her here, hair a golden waterfall down her back in the sun, skin pink from the cold of the water, her face unguarded and smiling, that knocks the breath right out of his lungs.

He doesn't know if he makes some sound that alerts her, or if they are just so in tune that she can sense his presence, but she turns then and sees him. He braces for an angry accusation, waits for her to shriek and cover herself and call him all kinds of names (which, considering the way his mind is spinning, he probably even deserves).

She doesn't do any of this. There is a moment of surprise in her expression, followed by a blush that spreads from her cheeks and neck down to places he is pretty sure he isn't supposed to be looking at, but she doesn't turn away or try to hide herself and Bellamy feels the swell of pure *want* the crashes through him like a punch to the gut.

The only indication Clarke gives that she knows what he is feeling is the self-satisfied smirk that turns her mouth up at the corners (and makes his blood run hotter, if that is even possible). She meets his gaze with the steady, steely blue of her own, and there is a challenge in it that draws him down to the bank before he can even think this through.

"Aren't you coming in?" she asks, voice soft seduction, when he pauses too long at the water's edge, and Bellamy thinks he knows now what those sailors in the stories he used to read to Octavia felt like when they heard the siren's song.

He's pretty sure they all died happy.

He kicks his shoes off quickly, sheds the few items of clothing he has on, and wades toward her. His own smirk comes back when he sees her eyes drifting over him appreciatively as well, the blue of them heating from steel to flame when he reaches her. When he gets close enough to touch he stops again, though it takes a herculean effort not to close the last of the distance. It is important, however, that she be given the choice – he will not push her now, not after all this time.

Clarke doesn't move for a long minute, just looks at him, and he can see the fine tremors running through her. As much as he wants her, he also wants to comfort her, to let her know she is safe here – that whatever she decides is okay. When she bites her lip and lets her eyes meet his again the less noble part of his mind gets a little louder, and so he cannot help the shaky sigh of relief when she finally reaches out and places a tentative hand against his skin, her palm resting warm and solid against his chest, right over his heart.

"Bellamy," she says, and her voice is full of wonder and a little bit of fear, more question than anything.

"Whatever you want, Clarke," he tells her, voice raw and honest. He brings one of his own hands up to cover hers, presses it to his skin and wills her to feel that every beat of his heart is for her alone. "Whatever you need, I'm here."

She takes a shaky breath of her own, blinks back the wetness building in her eyes, and steps in until she is pressed against him, chest to chest, thigh to thigh. He can feel her trembling, or maybe that's him, and his own smile is a little watery when he presses it into her shoulder, arms wrapping around her back to hold her close.

"I need *you*," she whispers against his skin, and Bellamy holds her tighter and closes his eyes against the swell of emotion in his chest.

"Okay," he says, presses a kiss to her neck. "Okay."

He is an hour late back to camp, the crew already back to work without him, but when he arrives hand in hand with Clarke, both of them wearing matching smiles, no one brings it up.

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Clarke sees the way he looks at her.

They have been together for nearly a year now, though she wonders sometimes at that count as it feels as if their story started long before that day by the river. He still watches her when she moves around their new camp, still sits with her at meals, still shares her bed (though it is in a cabin now, instead of a tent) and still soothes her out of nightmares when she has them, though they are infrequent now for which she is thankful.

It is different too, of course, not just because there is kissing and touching and sex, but because he doesn't try to hide the way he feels about her any longer and it spills into every part of her day, the way he loves her. It's more than she ever thought she could have, more than she ever thought she would want again, and while she is always amazed at the depth of his feelings for her there is also a comfortable familiarity to it which makes her think that maybe things aren't so different after all – maybe she's just now in a place where she can see it clearly.

It still scares her sometimes, but she's working on it. And Bellamy is endlessly patient, knows when she needs space and when she needs comfort, never pushes her for anything more than what she freely offers.

She knows it must be hard for him sometimes, to give of himself so fully while she is still getting there, still learning how to love the way she once thought should be simple. But he never complains, never holds back his own love as punishment, and she still feels safe with him – still feels the relief of that every single day.

So it is less surprise and more simple joy to find one day that the last of the walls around her heart have been torn down, and she is free.

Bellamy is across the camp, telling what is probably a terrible joke to Murphy and Miller, all of them laughing like the teenagers they no longer are, and she thinks *I love him*.

It isn't the first time she's felt it, but it's the first time she's thought those specific words, and the power of them brings tears to her eyes. Bellamy has always made sense, he has always been her destination even when she didn't know where she was going, and she feels so incredibly grateful that she is finally ready to be in love with him.

He glances over then, catches her eye and falters for a minute, shooting her a concerned look at what she can only assume is the teary, goofy, ridiculous expression on her face. He says a few more quick words to his companions before jogging over to her, his frown tilting into confusion at her watery laugh when he approaches.

"You okay Clarke? Do I need to hurt somebody?" he asks, only mostly joking, and she laughs again because how could she have ever doubted that she loved him, her brave, reckless, wonderful boy?

"I'm good," she tells him, throwing her arms around his neck and holding on tight. "I'm really, really good."

"Well that's...good?" he says, voice muffled against her skin as she hugs him impossibly closer.

"Yes, it is," she agrees and releases him enough to look him in the eye.

He looks back at her quizzically, but he's smiling at her too, his expression open in a way she has only started to see in the past year – since they set up their own camp, since they became a couple. His eyes are warm, his freckles are darker from the summer sun, and she loves him so, so much.

"I love you, you know?" she says, quiet and sincere and simple, because it is.

His eyes widen and his arms tighten around her, and he takes a deep breath as his gaze drifts over her face, searching out the truth of the words. She lets him look, lets her heart shine through, and matches his grin when it breaks out across his face like sunshine.

"Of course I know," he says, voice teasing and cocky even as his eyes go brighter with the threat of happy tears. "How could you not?"

"I couldn't," she agrees, and kisses him.

Murphy catcalls until she flips him off, but she doesn't stop kissing Bellamy and she can feel his answering *I love you* in every one.

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