

yea, though i walk through the valley of the shadow

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by [ChancellorGriffin](#)

Summary

Post-316. A blizzard, a jug of Azgeda booze, and Abby Griffin finally help Bellamy, Pike and Kane understand that they're better together than apart.

(Or, the one where I picked Sarah in the Valentine's smut exchange specifically so I could write her the Pike smut she's been asking me to write for months, and then added DP because I'm garbage.)

Notes

"sanctuary" by eliza gilkyson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UxhggrsNA7HA> (sung here by lucy kaplansky)

*“yea, though i walk through the valley of the shadow
thou art with me
though my heart's been torn on fields of battle
thou art with me
though my trust is gone, and my faith not near
in love's sanctuary, thou art with me*

*through desolation's fire and fear's dark thunder
thou art with me
through the sea of desires that drag me under
thou art with me
though i've been traded in like a souvenir
in love's sanctuary, thou art with me*

*through the doubter's gloom and the cynic's sneer
thou art with me
in the crowded rooms of a mind unclear
thou art with me
though i'll walk for awhile down this road of tears
in love's sanctuary, thou art with me*

though my heart's been torn on fields of battle

Charles was drunk when they found him.

He was never *not* drunk, in those first few weeks after the City of Light, but he was more than usually drunk today. Kane had quietly demoted him, then finally relieved him from guard duty – it wasn't safe to combine that much liquor with a regulation firearm – but he'd hardly seemed to care. Had seemed, in fact, barely to notice.

He liked to wander off, without ever telling anyone where he was going, disappearing from Polis for long stretches at a time – hours, sometimes even days. After the end of the third week, a frustrated Kane gave up sending out guards to look for him. They didn't have enough spare hands. He and Clarke were busy with Roan and the ambassadors most days, leaving Bellamy and the Millers to lead the guards, and Abby had established a tentative truce with a group of Grounder healers to run a makeshift hospital out of the low-slung, ramshackle building Skaikru had been hastily assigned as their embassy. So after the fifth walkabout, Kane gave up.

"He'll come back when he wants to," he snapped, a little more forcefully than he meant, to a concerned Bellamy. "Or he won't. Either way, there's nothing we can do about it."

"Truce only holds inside the city limits," Bellamy pointed out, arms folded, jaw set. "Ice Nation knows Pike. He's not safe out there alone. Roan can't protect him."

"I know that, Bellamy."

"We have to do something."

"Do what?"

"I don't know, but *something*," the boy retorted hotly, and Kane rubbed his temples with a weary sigh.

"I'm doing the best I can," he said heavily, looking up from his desk and meeting Bellamy's eyes for the first time. "Any better ideas you come up with, I would gladly consider."

"He needs a job."

"I'm not putting him back on the guards, Bellamy. Not until he's himself again."

"Scouting, then," he suggested. "He taught Earth Skills. He kept Farm Station alive on the run. They hunted Ice Nation through those woods for three months. We could take him with us."

"It's a five-day trip, Bellamy," said Kane. "Five days' worth of travel rations."

"Worth it, if we get the real Charles Pike back."

“He’s a safety hazard. He could get drunk and wander off at night and walk off a cliff.”

“He won’t.”

“Bellamy – “

“How can you stand it?” the boy demanded, something hot and sharp like panic threaded through his voice, and Kane looked up at him, startled. “Seeing him like this. He’s a wreck. Hasn’t been himself since the battle ended.”

“I know.”

“A lot’s happened,” Bellamy pressed on, “I’m not saying forgive him – I’m not sure if I could, if I were you – but you used to be friends. Back on the Ark. Weren’t you?”

Kane was silent for a long time.

“You used to be close,” Bellamy repeated. “You used to care about him.”

“Yes,” Kane finally said, his voice soft and sad and heavy, and he suddenly could not look at Bellamy anymore. “Yes, I did. Very much.”

“Then help me *fix* this,” Bellamy pleaded. “We gotta give him something to do.”

Kane stood up and came around the desk, leaning back against it and looking Bellamy directly in the eyes. “This is a diplomatic mission,” he said to Bellamy sternly. “You’re coming with me as the head of the Chancellor’s guard. This is *serious*, Bellamy. I can’t carry Charles Pike on my back if he gets too drunk to walk. I can’t slow down for him. I can’t slap a gag over his mouth if he decides to start slurring insults at King Roan’s council.”

“Take the liquor off him before we leave,” Bellamy suggested. “Five-day walk to the rendezvous site. Let him dry out. It’ll be good for him.”

“Have you ever actually *seen* a drunk dry out?” Kane asked him, eyebrow raised. “It’s not a pleasant thing. He’ll be sick. Miserable.”

“Then bring Abby.”

“Bellamy – “

“Bring Abby,” he said again, a little too quickly, words tumbling out before he could stop himself, “because you want to anyway.”

Kane paused, looking up at him. Bellamy looked back.

It wasn’t a secret, exactly, that he and Abby had been assigned two bedrooms but only used one of them, or that they were quietly negotiating the terms of what they now might be to each other and what that meant about the ring on Abby’s hand. They hadn’t spoken of it to anyone else, but they weren’t hiding it either. It was not a surprise, not really, that Bellamy had figured it out.

What *was* a surprise, to Kane, was how suddenly uncomfortable he felt discussing Abby with Bellamy . . . and how uncomfortable Bellamy appeared discussing her with Kane.

But still he pressed on, rather desperately, as though it was important to him for reasons he couldn't explain. "Bring Abby," he said. "If she'll come. If we get to the border and Pike's in no shape to be seen by the king, Abby can tie him to a damn tree and keep watch while we go meet with Roan."

"None of this is your fault, Bellamy," Kane said to him in a quiet voice, and he saw the boy's shoulders slump a little with weary dejection. "I don't know why he snapped like this, but you didn't do it."

"She's my sister," Bellamy muttered. "She's my sister and she almost killed him because I wasn't in time to save –"

"Stop it," said Kane, something like panic surging through him, and his tone shut Bellamy down with no argument. They had not spoken of that terrible few days, not once. Kane spent a great deal of time trying not to think about it, and suspected Bellamy did too (though neither were successful). The rebellion, Kane's imprisonment, how close Kane had come to execution, the death of Lincoln (and, later, Sinclair - saved from Arkadia only to die in Arkadia, adding Raven to the list of people Bellamy felt he'd failed to protect), Octavia's unspeakable fury and the way Kane, hating himself for it, had stood back and let her channel her grief through her fists, watching with nausea in his stomach as she beat Bellamy bloody on the floor of the cave.

Marcus Kane had lived a complicated life, and the man he used to be had done many things he was not proud of; but even so, despite the stiff competition, he believed it was possible that that moment, there in the cave – standing back to let Bellamy be hurt – might be the worst thing he had ever done.

The Marcus Kane of the Ark would have permitted it without blinking. It would have looked, to that man, like justice.

But the Marcus Kane who fell to earth and learned a new language and lived among green things and built a family had promised himself he would be a new man here, in this place, a man who could be just without cruelty, a man who could be fair but kind. That man should have stepped in, immediate and decisive, sparing Bellamy the pain of receiving those wounds, Octavia the pain of inflicting them, and the others the pain of witnessing it. He should have stopped it, but he didn't, and he still did not know why. Perhaps he never would.

But because it was an act for which he could not possibly expect forgiveness, from either Bellamy or himself, it made it easier for the two of them to get through the day if they spoke about those times as little as possible.

(Other things about which they did not speak: Kane's hands around Bellamy's throat on the floor of the Polis throne room, and the plum-colored bruises they left there. The way Bellamy's hand had reached out across the cold tiled floor, fumbling desperately for the gun he had dropped, less afraid of his own death than that he might actually have to pull that trigger.)

In the end, if Kane were to be entirely honest with himself, that was the reason he finally relented. Not to appease Bellamy, not to give Charles Pike something productive to do and force him to sober up under medical supervision; but because if Abby and Pike were there, then he would not be spending five days alone in the woods with Bellamy Blake, hiding from all the words that hung unspoken between them.

“We leave at dawn,” he said finally. “Go pack him a satchel. And if this goes wrong, it’s on you.”

Pike was sitting alone on a rock outcropping, a leather-covered bottle of *fayawoda* in his hand, when the three of them came upon him.

“We havin’ a party?” he slurred up at them happily, and Kane was suddenly, irrationally furious with him.

“Get up, Charles,” he said shortly. “You’re coming with us.”

“The hell for?”

“King Roan has gone back to Azgeda to meet with his council. I’m due there in five days to meet with them, explain the *praimfaya* threat and the relocation plan. You’re coming with us.”

“Nah, man, I’m good here,” he said, taking a long swig and looking out over the low rolling hill toward the horizon. “Gonna take a walk later. Then gonna drink the rest of this bottle. Busy day. Packed schedule. Maybe another time.”

“Oh, for heaven’s sake,” snapped an irritable Abby, snatching the bottle out of his hands and hurling it, with all her strength, over the ridge of the hill. “There. I’ve cleared your schedule. Now get up, Charles, or so help me God I will push *you* over next.”

Pike looked at Abby. Abby looked back at him.

“All right,” he conceded agreeably. “Lead the way, Doc.” And he swayed unsteadily to his feet, grabbed the satchel at his feet and the one Bellamy handed him, and lurched off down the hill.

“Other way,” called Bellamy, avoiding Kane’s exceedingly dubious gaze and trying to ignore the faint sigh he heard behind him.

“Tell me again where we’re going?”

“Ice Nation,” Abby reminded him dryly. “I believe you’re familiar with it.”

“Little bit, yeah.”

“Good,” she told him, shooting a repressive, silencing glance at both the others. “Then you’re in charge.”

“You ain’t got a map?”

“Why would we need one?” Abby replied calmly. “We have an Earth Skills teacher who lived in Ice Nation territory for three months.”

“’S a big damn territory, Abby.”

“We’re looking for a cave that belongs to King Roan,” Kane said. “He uses it as a kind of hunting lodge in the winters. It’s our halfway point, a little over two days’ walk from here. Half a day’s walk past the Sector Eight border, just on the other side of the snow line. Three waterfalls side by side. The cave entrance is on the west side of the rock face.”

“Yeah,” said Pike, brow furrowed. “Think I know the place.”

“Good,” said Kane. “Then take us there.”

“Gonna be kind of a thirsty walk.”

“Nobody cares.”

“You’re an asshole when I’m drunk, Marcus Kane.”

“We’re wasting daylight,” Bellamy interjected quickly, before Kane could say any of the things he was clearly thinking. “Pike, can you get us there?”

“Yeah, son. I can get us there.”

“Then let’s go,” said Bellamy. “And just like . . . try not to kill each other.”

“I’m not the one with the problem,” said Pike a little defensively, making his way down the hill (the correct direction this time) as the other three followed.

“You don’t think drinking a bottle of *fayawoda* a day counts as a problem?”

“Well, I have to,” Pike pointed out reasonably. “Ran outta Jasper’s moonshine after the first week. What’s a man supposed to do?”

“What the rest of us have been doing,” Kane shot back at him tightly. “Trying our damndest to keep our people alive.”

Pike shrugged casually. “I was a shitty-ass Chancellor, you can say it,” he tossed over his shoulder. “Don’t think I don’t know that’s what you’re thinking. So you win, man. I ain’t gonna fight you on it. Pin’s yours. I’m just staying outta your way.”

“Pike, that’s not what he meant,” said Bellamy a little helplessly, but Abby silenced him with a quiet shake of her head.

“New rule,” she said firmly. “None of the three of you are allowed to speak until we break for lunch, except in case of emergency. I’m tagging along in the hopes of returning with one

fewer patients, instead of three more, and I will not be held responsible if you all start swinging fists at each other.”

Pike stopped in his tracks. “One fewer patients?” he repeated, something sharp and keen in his voice, and for a split-second Kane and Bellamy felt a surge of relief in their chests because he sounded *alive*, momentarily himself again.

Abby realized what she’d done, but it was too late to backtrack, so she didn’t bother. “If you’re asking, am I only along for the ride as your minder,” she told him frankly, “yes, I am. You’re drinking yourself into an early grave and we can’t spare our only Earth Skills teacher. So this is an intervention.”

“I don’t need a minder.”

“Prove it,” she retorted. “I know you’ve got a second bottle in that satchel you think we don’t know about. Make it to the end of the first day without taking a drink, I’ll turn back on my own. Lord knows Jackson would be happier not to have to run the hospital himself for five days. Prove you can handle this trip on your own, and I’ll leave you to it.”

He considered for a moment, then nodded his agreement, reaching into his satchel for the bottle. She shook her head. “Nope,” she said. “This is a test of willpower. You keep it. Within your reach at any moment, or the challenge is pointless.”

“Fine,” said Pike.

“Fine,” said Abby. “Now, *walk*.”

The first day was awful.

Unsure of their ability to keep their tempers, Kane and Pike largely resorted to silence for hours on end. Abby could sometimes get a few words out of them, Bellamy more rarely. The two of them spoke mostly to each other. They weren’t much accustomed to being alone together – which it felt, despite the presence of the two other men, that they were; but they were both desperate enough to push through the awkwardness that they made a greater effort than usual to keep up an intermittent thread of small talk. Nothing heavy, mostly; stories about the Ark, sometimes, about Clarke and Octavia as children. Eventually they stumbled upon the fact that Abby was almost entirely ignorant of Greek or Roman history and mythology, outside of what she’d learned in medical school. So she told Bellamy about Hippocrates and Galen, and he told her about Artemis and Persephone, and that got them from lunch to dinner, and after that everyone more or less mutually agreed to pull out their thin little bedrolls and go immediately to sleep.

Pike had managed to go all of one day without pulling the bottle back out of his pack again, something the others had not failed to note, but which nobody felt comfortable remarking upon out loud. He was sweating a little, and short-tempered, but he soldiered on without complaining, and his sense of direction was as keen as they’d hoped. Bellamy did, of course, have a map with him, and consulted it discreetly at every stop, ready to correct Pike if he had to. But he never did.

They made good time, passing the Sector Eight border and hiking up the hills to cross the snow line midway into the second day. They were an hour or two away from the waterfalls when Pike stopped abruptly in the middle of the trail, sniffing into the air.

“What on earth are you doing?” Kane sighed, exasperated.

“Snow,” said Pike, without looking at him, pacing up and down with his eyes trained upward, squinting, examining the clouds.

“Yes,” said Kane. “It’s everywhere. We can see it.”

Pike shook his head. “Nuh-uh,” he said decisively, kicking the soft little roadside snowdrift with the toe of his boot. “This is nothing. I’m talking *big* snow.”

“What do you mean?”

“Wind’s picking up,” said Pike. “Been getting colder all day. We’re up high enough that the ground’s frozen. Means any new snow will stick. And there’s a hell of a lot of snow comin’ for us in those clouds,” he told them, pointing upwards towards the wall of white they could see making its slow, leisurely way towards them. “North wind, high humidity, freezing temperatures on the ground,” he said, ticking them off on his fingers. “Blizzard conditions. Plus, I can smell it.” Kane raised his eyebrows, grudgingly impressed, and Pike grinned at him. “Earth Skills, motherfucker,” he said cheerfully. “You always did suck at it. Any of you got emergency winter gear in those packs of yours?”

“No,” Bellamy admitted.

“Got a way to make contact with Roan?”

“We don’t have a way to contact Azgeda directly,” said Abby, “but Polis does. I can radio Jackson, and he can get a message to Clarke. She insisted Roan take a radio back with him.”

“Then let’s get to cover, and call it in,” Pike advised. “No way in hell we’ll make it up to Azcapa on foot in the middle of a snowstorm. And we’ve got maybe ninety minutes before those clouds open up and we’re solidly fucked.”

“Is that one of your special Earth Skills technical terms?” Abby quipped, and Pike looked back at her with something like a real smile.

“Technical term’s ‘fucked sideways in the ass,’ Doc,” he said, a hint of mischief in his voice, testing to see if she was shocked by his language, and seeming pleased when she visibly wasn’t. “Let’s get walking.”

They found the waterfalls with no trouble, and just in time, as the white wall of clouds cleared the peaks of the mountains just north of them, close enough that they could see the curtain of white begin to pour down on the tree-lined slopes above. And they found the entrance, a covered overhang of solid stone that led to a cramped tunnel chiseled into the

rock, arranged in clever twists and turns that kept the cold wind from whistling into the central chamber.

All four of them stopped short as the tunnel abruptly gave way to a cavernous open space, and they stared around them, eyes wide.

Whatever they might have anticipated from the description Roan had given (“a cave with a stash of supplies”, had been his words), this was certainly not it. Abby had reflected that she would feel lucky to find a spare jacket in some corner to use as a makeshift pillow, and maybe – if her luck held – a warmer blanket.

She had not expected . . . well, *this*.

“Good God,” Kane murmured. “It’s like a whole house inside here.”

And indeed it was.

A massive, beaten-copper fire pit ringed with flat, comfortable stones sat in the center of the room, heavy dry logs already heaped inside it at the ready. (Ever practical, Kane made his way here first to light it and take the chill off the room.) On the far wall stood a haphazard assortment of cupboards, trunks and chests, which later examination proved to be full of linens, clothes, furs, bottles of water, and provisions. This was a favored hunting lodge of Roan’s, so there was also a cache of weapons, though they left those where they were; but they benefited from the spoils of them, opening a stash of sealed barrels to find everything from savory cured meats to dry fruits to a jug of spiced mead Abby refused to let Pike anywhere near. On one side of the firepit was a kind of living room, with a low wooden table and heaps of cushions; on the other side was an absolutely massive bed, wide enough for ten people, its headboard upholstered in animal hides and a truly kingly heap of furs and pillows.

“You three can go on to Azgeda without me,” Pike announced, grinning, words muffled by the strip of dried beef he was absently chomping on. “I think I’ll just move in here.”

Abby, already immersed in the process of raiding the storeroom for supplies for the night, looked up to see Bellamy still hesitating in the doorway, shivering – though not, she thought, from cold.

She set down the blankets in her hand and made her way over to him. “You okay?” she murmured under her breath.

He swallowed hard and shook it off. “Bad memories,” he said tightly, staring down at the rocky floor of as though looking around took too much effort. “I don’t like caves much.”

Pike overheard and cast a glance over his shoulder. “That where it was?” he asked Bellamy. “A cave? Never did come close to finding it.”

Bellamy nodded.

“Where *what* was?” asked Abby.

“Where they went,” said Pike tightly. “After.” His voice trailed off.

“After you tried to kill me,” said Kane, ratcheting up the tension by saying out loud the thing they were all so palpably stumbling around. He did not look up from the fire. “After Lincoln died.”

Silence.

Pike looked around him suddenly with new eyes, as though he were seeing that other cave too, the way Bellamy was. He looked back over at the boy. “You were knocked around pretty good next time I saw you after that.”

“Octavia,” said Bellamy quietly, as though the word was being dragged out of him.

Pike looked away. “Nothing I can say to make any of it right, now,” he muttered, looking around him with a distant expression as though he was seeing that other cave too. “Can’t argue that I didn’t deserve that sword through the belly.”

“Is that all the thanks I get for my hard work?” Abby asked, arching an eyebrow. “Jackson and I were up to our elbows in blood trying to stitch that barrel of a chest of yours back together.”

“Not sure you should’ve wasted your time,” Pike said bitterly, and even Kane looked up at that. “Everything that happened was my fault. Not just Lincoln. All of it. If Octavia had gotten her way and killed me? Can’t say it wouldn’t’ve been justice.”

“I don’t think it does any of us any good to dwell on that,” Abby said gently, but he didn’t listen. She watched helplessly as he made his way over to the pack he’d dropped by the entrance, pulled out the bottle he’d successfully resisted for two days, and downed nearly a quarter of it in one long swig.

No one said anything.

He wiped his mouth with the back of his sleeve and shot Abby an apologetic look.

“Sorry Doc,” he shrugged. “You tried.”

Then he kicked off his boots, settled himself on the massive bed, leaning against the headboard, and took to the serious business of drinking, ignoring everyone else in the room.

They let him sit there, not quite sure what else to do with him, and each of the three busied themselves with whatever tasks they could find that would take them as far away from each other as possible. Kane tended to the fire with a great deal more thoroughness than it technically appeared to require, blazing merrily into life within minutes. Some peculiar arrangement of the cave’s ceiling, funneling air back and forth, pulled the smoke up high into a kind of natural chimney, leaving them with only crackling embers and warmth and light and the calming, hypnotic scent of good wood burning.

Bellamy tasked himself with stocking up their travel packs – even though, as he informed them after making his way back out the tunnel to the entrance, Pike had been right about the blizzard and they certainly wouldn't be able to depart at dawn as planned; the whole world was a solid cloud of windy white. But it gave him something to do that took him away from Kane, something that had begun, from the first mention of that other cave, to feel like a necessity.

Abby, despite being by far the most grudging cook of the four, took the task of preparing dinner. She would much have preferred relegating the task to Pike, but he was halfway through his bottle, eyes unfocused, staring up at the ceiling, too drunk to be useful even if she'd wanted to ask him. Which, at the moment, she didn't. So she did the best she could, filling a dented iron pot with water and what looked like a kind of spiced porridge, setting it to cook over the fire, then filling a bowl with chunks of the savory preserved meat – dark and gamey and rich; boar, she thought, or maybe deer – and another with dried fruits, nuts, and big herb-flecked shards of a large, crisp flatbread. There was pure, clean water, so sweet it might once have been snow, and the Ice Nation's rich honey mead, which she thought those of them who were not Charles Pike ought to feel free to help themselves to.

The porridge and the fire smelled good, and both Bellamy and Kane were grateful when she pressed small cups of the heavy sweet mead into their hands. After an hour or two, it was as pleasantly warm inside the cave as though it were summer outside. The snow felt miles away. The three of them shed boots and jackets and settled down around the fire, the silence among them still impenetrable but at least a bit more companionable now.

Pike did not join them to eat. Abby called to him over and over, but he waved her off, barely paying attention. Finally, she sighed, scooped a heap of porridge into a bowl, poured some of the fruit and nuts into it, and took a handful of strips of meat and marched over to the bed. "Dammit, Charles," she said, exasperated. "Eat this or I'll dump it on that bald head of yours."

"She will, too," Bellamy added, with something in his voice that might have been amusement, and just for a moment Kane's eyes caught his and they shared the flicker of a smile.

Pike looked down at the bowl. "Smells good," he said grudgingly, and she thrust it into his hand.

"Eat."

"It really is good," said Kane, trying to help. "Our Azgeda hosts have good taste."

"I'll have to remember to thank them," said Pike, his tone perfectly friendly but with something dark hovering at the edges of it. "Didn't get invited to dinner parties much, you know, back when I lived here before."

"Charles – "

"Passed by this waterfall twice, as a matter of fact. Never knew there was a fancy-ass royal hunting lodge inside it. But then, I didn't have time to stop and do much sightseeing, since I

was carrying the bodies of dead Farm Station soldiers back to the ship.”

“Charles – “

“Killed by our generous Azgeda hosts. Subjects of your new friend Roan. Remind me to thank him when I meet him.”

“That’s enough, Charles,” said Kane firmly, as Pike lapsed into silence and devoured the rest of his food.

“We’ve all lost people,” Bellamy muttered gruffly, without looking up from his bowl. Kane looked over at him. “We’ve all seen terrible things. Done terrible things. You’re not the only one.”

“Yeah?” said Pike casually, something defiant in his voice. “Tell me, Bellamy, which of those terrible things could have been prevented if I’d never come to Arkadia?”

This was new, and startling, and the three of them stared at him blankly, unsure how to respond.

“All of them,” he went on, not waiting for an answer. “Every damn one. You lost your girl because the Grounders bombed Mount Weather, Bellamy, but they only did that because Farm Station people were living there. You have blood on your hands from the death of that army – because I ordered you to do it, even though you tried your damndest to talk me out of it. I shot Lincoln. I sentenced Kane. And Thelonious . . .” He shuddered, took a long pull from the bottle, and closed his eyes. “That’s on me, too,” he said in a low gruff voice. “All of it. Every last damn thing that happened to you was because of me.”

“Charles, that’s absurd,” said Abby, but he didn’t seem to hear her.

“I saw Clarke’s chest,” he said, and she froze. All the air went out of the room as Bellamy and Kane’s heads snapped up to stare from Pike to Abby. “I saw those cuts. Surgical precision.” Abby couldn’t speak. “And your neck, too,” he added, taking another heavy swig, his voice getting a little unsteady. “Rope burns. Clarke told me everything. Torturing your own daughter, then almost hanging yourself in front of her.”

“Charles, that’s *enough*,” Kane thundered, rising from his seat, volcanic fury erupting in his words, but Pike barely heard him.

“And you,” he said, turning to Kane. “Don’t think I didn’t see it back at Arkadia. Known you a long damn time, Marcus, and I never seen you look at a woman like that. And she looked at you that way right back. Risked her neck trying to spring you from prison, as a matter of fact. Then the next time you see her she’s hammering nails through your wrists.”

“Stop it,” said Bellamy, horrified, as he watched Abby turn away, clenching her fists tightly to press back tears.

“Saw what’s on *your* neck too,” Pike said to Bellamy. “I was right there, remember? Caught the whole show. Marcus Kane wrapping his hands around his second-in-command’s throat. I

woulda tried to get to you in time but I kinda had my hands full trying not to get murdered by Thelonious. So I just got to watch instead. That was a lot of fun.”

“What the hell are you doing?” Bellamy snapped at him, unable to look at the stricken expression on Kane’s face.

“And she made you believe *you did it yourselves*,” he said, shaking his head, “which is the nastiest part. You’re all blaming *yourselves* for those wounds, like you actually gave them to each other. Couple bruises on your neck ain’t nothing compared to that. I’ve known Abby Griffin all my damn life, and she’d have burned Arkadia to the ground without blinking before letting anyone harm a hair on Clarke’s head. Whatever kinda hell there is for computers, I hope that bitch rots in it.” He took another long swig. “I did it,” he said again.

“All those scars – Clarke’s chest, Abby’s neck, Bellamy’s neck, Kane’s wrists – and the others too, Indra and the Ice King and all those people we found outside the tower – all of that. It was *me*. You wanna blame someone, you’re wasting time blaming yourselves, or each other. Not even worth it to blame the bitch in the red dress for doing what she was programmed to. Nah, you wanna blame someone, blame the goddamned Chancellor who got so distracted by one threat that he missed the real one right under his nose.” He took another swig, closing his eyes. “Not a damn person in Arkadia would have taken those chips if I’d listened to Abby,” he muttered furiously. “If I hadn’t run against Marcus. If I’d paid more attention to Thelonious. If I’d seen the danger in front of me.” He shook his head, with a bitter laugh, and looked over at Bellamy. “It was right in front of my face,” he explained. “*The Iliad*. You had it at the funeral. Our esteemed former chancellor returns from the dead and we open the gates to let him in, without even blinking an eye. Trojan goddamned horse.”

“Charles,” said Abby, first to recover from this extraordinary speech and reaching out hesitantly towards him, but he waved her away.

“No,” he said, “don’t come any closer. Unless you’re gonna hit me. You wanna hit me?”

“I’m not going to hit you.”

“You could,” he said. “I’d let you. I deserve it. I let Octavia.”

They all froze at this.

“What do you mean, you *let* her?” said Bellamy, cold suspicion dawning in his voice.

Pike gave a harsh, bitter laugh. “Come on, kid,” he said, polishing off the bottle and tossing it with a dull clink onto the stone floor. “Don’t play dumb. It was written all over her face.”

“Charles what are you talking about?”

“Coulda fought a little, I guess,” he said thoughtfully, “to make it look real. Thought about it, for a second. But I didn’t want to get in her head, you know? Didn’t want to distract her.

Kid’s got good aim but no focus. And I knew none of you would let her get in more than one shot. So I just held still.”

“Charles, what the hell – “

“You *wanted* her to,” Bellamy murmured, shocked. “You knew she was going to try to kill you. And you *wanted* to die.”

“Wanted’s the wrong word, but I sure as hell deserved it,” he shrugged. “What’s that thing the Grounders say? ‘Blood must have blood.’ Or ‘An eye for an eye,’ as my people used to say. Your mom was religious, Marcus, you oughta know that one.”

“The Grounders don’t say that anymore,” said Marcus evenly, “and my mother would never have said that. And none of us wanted you to die.”

“Really?” said Pike. “Not even when you shocklashed me and threw me in the back of your Rover?”

Kane had no response to this.

Pike shrugged. “S’okay,” he slurred. “Like I said. I deserved it. Hell, maybe it woulda been easier if it had been over that way. Never woulda met Indra, that’s a damn shame. Got kind of a soft spot for that crazy motherfucker. Can’t say I regret missing out on the death by a thousand cuts, either. Still, at least it would be over.” He looked at Kane with something dark and strange in his eyes. “‘Cept you were never gonna make it outta that gate,” he said softly. “Because you were never going to run Bellamy down in that Rover. And he was never gonna shoot.”

He looked from one man to the other, reading them both intently. Kane had been drawn, almost as if against his will, from his place by the fire towards the bed, and Bellamy eventually followed. Abby, fascinated, drew closer, watching the tense cord tying the three men together draw in tighter and tighter. It was not pleasant or comfortable, but she needed to hear what happened next.

“If either of you had been anyone else it woulda been over in five minutes,” he said. “If it had been Sinclair at the wheel, Bellamy would’ve shot. If it had been Hannah at the gate, Kane woulda kept right on driving. But you two . . .” He shook his head. “I was so pissed at you,” he said to Kane. “So fucking pissed. Like it wasn’t hard enough already, to do what I had to do. Like it wasn’t killing me to know I had to sentence you if I couldn’t get your stubborn ass to confess. But then you had to go and do *that*.”

“Do what?” Bellamy murmured, swallowing hard. “What do you mean? What did he do?”

“Sacrifice himself,” said Pike, not taking his eyes off Kane. “The moment you stepped in front of the Rover with that gun, it was over. He *knew* he’d be caught. He *knew* he was going to die. But even to save his own life, he could never hurt you. That’s the man he is. That’s the Marcus Kane I remember. A man who’d swallow that mindfuck plastic chip and get hammered to a cross, or abort a coup halfway to the finish line and hand himself over to be executed, rather than let someone he loves get hurt.” Kane’s eyes were locked on his, heavy and dark and full of some deep emotion, moving closer and closer. “I saw the way he looked at you in that interrogation room,” Pike told him softly. “Saw the way you looked at him too. Then not two weeks later you’ve got your hands around his throat, choking the life out of him, and both of you will have that memory forever. That you tried to kill someone you love. I did that to you, Marcus. To all of you. I was the Chancellor. I had one *fucking*

job, to keep my people safe, and I couldn't do it. Couldn't do it at Farm Station, couldn't do it at Arkadia, couldn't do it in Polis. Blood on my hands wherever I go. People that matter to me. People I care about. All three of you could have *died*. You could have *killed each other*. Because of me." He looked at Bellamy then, eyes shining with unshed tears. "He had his hands around your throat and he was *smiling*," he said, the horror of memory still pulsing in his voice. "Damn right I was ready to let your sister take me out, Bellamy. I'd have painted a damn target on my chest for her if I could have. I deserved it."

There was no possible answer to this.

Both Abby and Bellamy found themselves unable to let go of the thing pulsing and humming inside Pike's bitter, self-loathing speech that pulled their gaze irreversibly towards Kane, who was staring down at the floor with such a naked expression of anguish on his face that it was instantly clear Pike was telling the truth.

Bellamy, though, could not quite let himself believe it. "You've got it all wrong," he said roughly, but there was no certainty in his voice.

"Hell if I do," said Pike. "He's never had much of a poker face. I'll admit at least a little of it was jealousy, but that didn't stop me from seeing what I saw. I saw it, but I couldn't stop myself from coming between the two of you anyway."

"Jealousy?" said Kane, baffled, looking up and meeting Pike's eyes for the first time.

Pike shrugged. "Not proud of it, but there it is," he admitted. "I know we're not eighteen anymore, and it's been a long, long time. Didn't realize how much I missed it."

"Missed what?"

"Being the one you looked at that way."

Kane's eyes widened, and he looked away again, suddenly shy, as a stunned Abby and Bellamy looked from one man to the other, feeling the pieces click into place.

"You and Marcus," said Abby softly, and Pike nodded. "On the Ark."

"Yeah."

"And that's how you knew," she said thoughtfully. "That day. When it all happened. That's why only you could see what you saw. That Marcus would never hurt Bellamy, even to save all of Arkadia."

"No," said Pike softly. "Marcus would never hurt Bellamy, even to save the whole world."

Bellamy couldn't look at any of them, arms wrapped around his chest as though to keep out the cold, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, confused and unhappy and with no idea what to do.

"He doesn't," he finally said haltingly, but trailed off, unsure how to finish. "I'm not – it isn't like that. Like what you said. He's with Abby now."

“Bellamy, stop,” whispered Kane, but he couldn’t look at him.

“No, Kane, it’s okay, I know you don’t – you and me, it’s not – “

“Yes, it is,” said Abby unexpectedly, startling them all, regarding Kane with a searching, thoughtful expression on her face. “I didn’t see it before. But Charles is right. I see it now.”

“No,” murmured Bellamy helplessly. “No, it isn’t like that. He doesn’t. He can’t possibly. Not after – “

“That ain’t how it works, son,” said Pike sadly. “He knows all of it. Every damn thing. And look at him. He doesn’t fucking care.”

Slowly, hesitantly, Bellamy lifted his head and turned towards Kane, taking a step almost unwillingly to bring them closer together. “Kane,” he said, then stopped. Kane didn’t move, eyes locked on the ground, whole body paralyzed in something like panic.

“Marcus, it’s all right,” Abby murmured, stroking his arm and laying her forehead just for a moment and against his shoulder. “We’re all right. Everything’s all right. But you have to tell him, honey, you have to *say* it.”

Kane didn’t move.

“Ask him,” slurred Pike, whose drinking was beginning to catch up with him, leaving his voice blurred and hazy around the edges. “Ask him again if it’s true.”

“Is it true?” Bellamy whispered, and finally, finally, Kane looked up.

His warm brown eyes were glassy with tears, catching the golden reflection of the firelight where they had streaked down his cheeks.

“God help me,” he finally said in a low, aching voice. “Yes, Bellamy. It’s true. All of it’s true.”

And then suddenly, abruptly, before he could lose his courage or change his mind, he cupped Bellamy’s jaw in his big, callused hands – cradling it as gently as if it were a baby bird – and kissed him.

Pike watched with something in his eyes that was some kind of potent hybrid of sadness, longing, jealousy, desire, and profound, tremendous affection. Abby stroked Kane’s back encouragingly with strong, soothing hands as his mouth moved hungrily against Bellamy’s over and over, the soft sweetness of the first kiss deepening into something more urgent, something warm and heavy and potent that made all of them feel as drunk as Pike.

No one had ever kissed Bellamy Blake like this before. No one had ever cradled him in powerful hands like he was a cherished thing. No one had ever admitted he would let the whole world crumble before harming a hair on his head. This had been there all along, he thought to himself in wonder as Kane’s warm tongue licked across the seam of his lips and tumbled them open to slide hungrily inside, stroking Bellamy’s own tongue in a shockingly intimate caress. All along, and he never knew it.

Except, of course, that the longer Marcus Kane kissed him, angling his body to slot his thighs between Bellamy's and press up against him harder and harder, the more Bellamy wondered if maybe he had known . . . if the thing that had been there all along inside Marcus had been inside *him*, too.

They kissed for what felt like a century before pulling apart to catch their breath. Marcus let go of his lips but not his body, sliding his hands down to clutch the boy by the shoulders, breathing wildly.

"This," Pike said quietly to Abby, and she nodded. "This is what I saw. But they were never gonna do anything about it. Because he feels this way about you too."

When Bellamy opened his eyes and stepped back, he saw Abby beside them, holding a bottle of Azgeda honey wine. "It sounds like we have some things to discuss that might be safer away from the bed," she said dryly, making her way over to the fire and waving the others to join her. "Shall we sit?"

through the sea of desires that drag me under

“So you and Kane,” Bellamy began, turning to Pike, but his voice trailed off almost immediately, as though unsure whether he had the right.

“And *you* and Kane,” Pike said back, with a careless, drunken grin. “And her and Kane.”

“*Everybody* and Kane, apparently,” Kane muttered wearily, pacing by the fire, rubbing his hands over his face as though too exhausted and baffled even to think.

They’d made a significant dent in the mead by now, and though none of the others were anywhere near catching up to Pike, they were all three or four glasses in and the stiff silence that had followed that startling kiss was beginning to dissipate. It wasn’t comfortable, not by a long shot, but talking was better than not talking.

“Let’s take this one at a time,” said Abby, the one with the strongest head for liquor and the closest to sober of anyone in the room. Her voice was the faintest bit blurred around the edges but still steady and reasonable, and her presence kept the other three men tethered, feeling quite a bit closer to sane. “Bellamy asked you first, Charles.”

“Started on the Ark,” he said. “In the guards. We were, what, eighteen?”

“You were,” said Marcus. “I was nineteen.”

Pike nodded. “Slept four to a room,” he went on, reminiscing a little, “steel bunks bolted to the wall. Marcus and I were assigned top bunks that joined head to head, with two guys on the bottom who slept like rocks and snored like industrial machinery. Weren’t much in the way of company.” He looked up at Kane. “You hurt your shoulder in training,” he said in a warm voice. “Needed help getting your shirt off. Think that’s how it started.”

“Deep-tissue massage,” Kane reminded him, the faintest hint of a smile at the edge of his voice. “I’d pulled a muscle at the firing range and it had been killing me all day, until you got your hands on it.” Their eyes met, and something passed between them. “It was all over for me, after that,” he said softly.

“Those damn bunks were hard as hell, but sturdy,” Pike said, still explaining to Abby and Bellamy but unable to tear his eyes away from Kane. “Not hard to get a little privacy when your bed doesn’t creak and your bunkmates snore so loud you can always tell when they’re asleep.”

“I’m almost sorry for them, that they missed out,” Abby teased in a light playful voice that did nothing at all to mask how aroused she was by their story. “That must have been a sight to see.”

“Old age caught up to me,” shrugged Pike, “but I was a hell of a lot more fit in those days.”

“Don’t sell yourself short,” Abby murmured, looking from one to the other. “Marcus certainly isn’t.”

And it was true. Something had been unlocked inside Marcus, tugging him back to those memories, and the way he was looking at his old friend – so earnest, so intense – made them all feel a little dizzy, like the decades had fallen away and all that raw, innocent nineteen-year-old desire was still as fierce and astonishing as it had been the first time Charles Pike crawled into his bunk.

But Pike shook his head. “Can’t go home again, Doc,” he said with heavy finality. “Marcus made his choice. Either run down Bellamy and hand me over to the Grounders, or give himself up. Make me execute him. Make Bellamy watch. He picked the second one. Couldn’t hurt Bellamy. Didn’t mind hurting *me*, though.”

Kane was startled by this, staring sharply at Pike with wide, dark eyes. “That’s not fair,” he said, voice bright with hurt. “Knowing what you know now, Charles, what could you possibly have expected me to do differently?”

Pike shrugged, turned away. “Not saying you were wrong,” he muttered gruffly. “Just saying next time don’t forget you’re the person your death is easiest for. ‘Cause for you, soon as it’s over it’s over. Rest of us gotta live with it. Rest of us gotta live with remembering the things we saw, the things we did. Broke my goddamn heart, Marcus, and I didn’t think it had any breakable pieces left after all this time.”

Marcus stared at him, horror written across his face, before taking two long strides across the room and wrapping his strong arms around the man’s back. “Oh God, I’m so sorry,” he murmured. “Charles, I’m so sorry. I wasn’t thinking – “

“Of me.”

“That’s not what I meant.”

“S’okay, Marcus.”

“I couldn’t hurt him,” Kane whispered, something raw and devastating in his voice, and Pike’s arms tightened around his back. “I couldn’t hurt him. I wasn’t thinking about anything else but that.”

“I know,” Pike told him wearily. “I know. It’s okay.”

Bellamy watched, jaw clenched. His eyes were bright with unshed tears which he dashed away unconsciously with the back of his sleeve, like a child. Abby took his hand. “I did this,” he murmured to her. “I’m the one that came between them.”

“Then be the one that brings them back together again,” she whispered, and he looked down at her, puzzled.

“How can you be okay with this?” he asked incredulously. “You’re in love with Kane.”

“Of course I am.”

"And he is with you."

"Yes."

"But this . . ." Bellamy swallowed. "I thought we were . . . that we were talking about me and him – about us, like . . ."

"Sex," Abby finished for him helpfully, like it was perfectly obvious. The men all stared at her, uncomfortably realizing that absolutely no one had the faintest idea how to proceed next. Abby watched them shift their weight from foot to foot, fidgeting and nervous, and finally she sighed. Clearly she was going to have to manage this or they'd still be standing here gawking at her like idiots two days from now when the snow cleared. "Do you want to?" she asked Bellamy, voice direct and unembarrassed. Bellamy flushed and looked away, but the answer was so clear that she nodded crisply, as though he'd given her a proper yes.

"Marcus," she said firmly. "Do you want to sleep with Bellamy?" Kane's face went a little red too, but he collected himself enough to take her by the hand and pull her away from the fire, away from the bed, back towards the door with a look on his face that mingled desire and panic in equal amounts.

"You've had a lot to drink," he began hesitantly, but took that line of inquiry no further when she narrowed her eyes to glare at him accusingly, arms folded across her chest, daring him to finish that sentence. "I don't mean you're *drunk*," he amended hastily, "I just meant - Abby, I love *you*. You're the one I want to spend the rest of my life with. I would never be unfaithful to you. I don't need anyone else."

"You just told me four things," she said gently. "The first three are true. The fourth is a lie." This startled him, and he looked up at her sharply, a question in his eyes. "How is it infidelity if I'm there?" she murmured. "How are you being unfaithful to me if I'm right beside you?"

"But then," he said, brow furrowed in confusion, trying to puzzle it out. "But then isn't it . . . well, it's a bit like *you're* sleeping with Bellamy then too."

"All right," she said agreeably. "What if I wanted us *both* to sleep with Bellamy? Or, all three of us, more accurately," she amended, "since it's fairly clear Charles wants to as well."

"Abby, that's insane."

"Why?"

"Because people don't *do* this."

"Why not?" she asked. "If they want to."

"Abby -"

"Marcus, would you like to watch another man fuck me?" she asked him, and his whole body froze. The blush that had swept over his cheeks before roared back with a vengeance and he could hardly look at her. "Because I'll tell you right now," she went on, "I'd very, very much like to watch you and Bellamy together. Or you and Charles. Or all three of you. I don't

care. But I'm just the right amount of drunk, we all are, and we're trapped here for at least two days with nothing else to do. Not to mention that quite frankly I think the three of you have an almost unbelievable number of issues to work out, and since you've done a terrible job talking through them I think maybe it's time to try this from a different angle."

"Abby - "

"We'll start small," she told him, putting a hand on his arm to hush him. "Charles and I will go out into the hallway and leave the two of you alone for thirty minutes. What you do with that time is up to you. Then we'll come back and we'll see where you are."

"Abby -"

"Thirty minutes," she said, returning to the fire to retrieve Pike. "You can do anything you want, except waste that time." Then she took Pike by the hand and led him away, leaving the other two alone.

Bellamy and Kane stood awkwardly staring at each other for a long moment before either of them spoke.

"We could," Kane began, then coughed and was silent for another half a minute before working up the nerve to continue. "We could just talk, first. For a little while. If you want. We don't have to - " He stopped, desperately wishing Abby was still here to translate for him. "This is all very new," he explained, "and I think the alcohol is wearing off, so if you've changed your mind -"

"Will you please just kiss me?" Bellamy interrupted him. "We're down to twenty-eight minutes."

There was a pause.

"Oh," murmured Kane, looking at him with new eyes.

Bellamy impatiently tugged his shirt off over his head and pulling off his jeans. "Here. This'll help speed things along. Now you."

Kane hesitated for a moment, but the sight of a shirtless Bellamy, clad only in a pair of threadbare black shorts that concealed very little, making his way over to the bed, fortified his nerve. He stripped off his own clothes too, heart pounding, and followed him over. Bellamy reached out for his hand and tugged hard, pulling him heavily and awkwardly down to the mattress, clumsy with haste and eagerness, and then they were kissing, and suddenly Kane couldn't remember why he'd thought this might be a terrible idea. Bellamy's body was lean and smooth beneath him, thighs corded with muscle, arms warm and strong, and it was impossible not to shiver with anticipation at the swell of an impressive cock inside those shorts. Bellamy kissed him like he'd been waiting for this so long he'd nearly given up, kissed him like something extraordinary was happening to him for the first time in his life, kissed him like he wanted to memorize every sensation of the inside of Kane's mouth, the surface of his lips, the texture of his tongue.

When they finally pulled apart to breathe, Kane resettled himself to get more comfortable, pulling the blankets over them and shifting his center of gravity so his own cock pressed down gently against Bellamy's. "Twenty-four," said Bellamy a little breathlessly, as he felt Kane's warm weight settle over him on the bed. "Maybe she'll give us an extension."

"That's hardly fair," Kane reproved him, smiling. "We can hardly leave them standing in a freezing cold hallway any longer than that."

"Just doesn't feel like enough time."

"We don't have to say everything now," Kane murmured, pressing a soft kiss on his mouth.

Bellamy smiled. "I'm okay if we don't want to say anything," he retorted lightly, raising an eyebrow, and Kane laughed.

"I take your point," he said agreeably. "But I don't know when I'll be alone with you again, and there are . . . things to say. Before things go any further than they have."

"Further?" Bellamy repeated, swallowing hard. "Do you mean like . . ."

Kane shook his head. "Not now," he told him. "Thirty minutes isn't long enough to do it right. There's . . . well . . . preparation involved." Bellamy blushed and looked away. "And I don't want it to be like that, between us," Kane went on gently. "Not rushed and hasty, like that. That isn't what this is to me."

"But you want to," Bellamy pressed, and Kane closed his eyes, resting his cheek against Bellamy's to whisper in his ear.

"More than you can possibly imagine," Kane murmured, causing Bellamy's whole body to shiver. "But the right way. The proper way. I can't just . . . just flip you over on this bed and take you right here with Pike and Abby standing on the other side of that wall."

"Sounds fine to me," Bellamy whispered. "Still got twenty-two minutes."

"I'm better when I'm not watching the clock."

"So we have to wait?" Bellamy asked, and couldn't keep the disappointment out of his voice. Kane smiled, eyes warm with impossible affection.

"Not for all of it," he amended gently, running light fingertips through Bellamy's thick dark curls. "Just for that part. Think you can be a little patient?"

"I can try but I can't promise I'll like it."

Kane chuckled, throaty and low and warm, and leaned down to swallow up the boy's mouth once more in a hungry kiss. Bellamy's regret faded a little as Kane's kiss deepened and their bodies settled against each other, cocks pressed heavily together, making them both lightheaded, as though the mead were kicking back in.

"I can't believe this is real," Kane murmured, trickling a soft rush of kisses down the corded muscles of Bellamy's throat, whiskers scratching pleasantly over soft skin. "I can't believe I get to do this."

"You can do anything you want to me," Bellamy breathed, words tumbling out recklessly, and shuddered at the sudden feeling of a pair of hands at the waistband of his shorts.

"I don't want to do things to you," Kane said softly. "I want to do things *with* you."

Bellamy laughed approvingly, cupping Kane's jaw in his hands and pulling him down for a hard kiss. "Damn, that was smooth. You're a whole different guy with four drinks in you."

"Oh God," Kane groaned, resting his head on Bellamy's shoulder. "I didn't mean it to sound like a *line*. I was just . . ."

"Telling me the truth."

"Yes."

"Not your fault that the truth sounds unreasonably sexy when you say it."

Kane grinned. "Sexy, huh?"

"Unreasonably."

"Well, that bodes well for my chances."

"Your *chances*?" Bellamy practically rolled his eyes at him, amused and incredulous. "Kane, I'm in my underwear in bed with you, hard as a damn rock," he pointed out. "You don't have to chase me. I'm right here. Your chances are one hundred percent." Kane flushed a little, and Bellamy tugged him back down, fingers tangled in his hair, for another kiss. "I don't know what it all means, for tomorrow and the next day," he said a little helplessly, when Kane finally pulled away. "I don't know how this all works. You, me, Abby. I don't know how Pike feels. I don't know how we tell people. *If* we tell people. I don't know what we do when the storm clears and we walk out of this place. But for now, we have twenty minutes and I want – *oh*." His voice trailed off in shock as he suddenly felt the strong, firm grip of Kane's big warm hand around his cock.

"I gave it some thought," Kane said dryly, gazing down at Bellamy with something warm and a little mischievous in his eyes as his thumb glided firmly up the vein of Bellamy's shaft, "and you were right. Chances of success, one hundred percent. At least . . ." And he paused to slick his thumb over the pulsing head of Bellamy's cock, making him cry out. " . . . for those activities that don't require any advance preparation."

"Oh, *fuck*, Kane."

"Twenty minutes is more than enough time for this," he murmured. "Just close your eyes."

"Fuckin' *freezing*," Pike grumbled for what felt to an exasperated Abby like at least the twelfth time, pacing back and forth in the narrow stone chamber, midway down the twisting stone hallway back to the mouth of the cave.

"Oh, for the love of God, Charles, you spent three months living in Ice Nation. It's been *seven minutes*."

"Know what I had in Ice Nation? A *coat*."

"Well, I didn't stop you from getting your coat, did I?"

"Sure as hell did. You just grabbed my hand and yanked me out into the cold and now we're standing here with snow up our asses while Marcus and Bellamy get the nice warm bed."

"I'm not explaining myself to you again," Abby sighed. "You know him as well as I do, Charles, he needed a push and he needed to get there without us watching. He's already nervous enough."

Pike muttered under his breath but didn't respond, resuming his irritable pacing. The minutes ticked down. Around twenty-one he began rather passive-aggressively stomping his feet to keep out the cold (and possibly to get a rise out of Abby), and by nineteen he had given up altogether.

"That's it, I'm out," he said, moving down the hallway.

She grabbed his arm. "The hell you are. I promised Marcus thirty minutes, I'm giving him thirty minutes. And so are you."

"Not gonna crash the damn party, Abby," Pike retorted crossly, "I'll stay in the hall. I just wanna get closer to the fire."

"If you go any closer you'll be able to see them."

"So?"

"That's spying."

"Spying's better than freezing. You coming or not?"

Stubbornness inclined her to want to say no, to hold firm to the rules she'd set just to prove she wasn't swayed by him. But a massive, swirling cloud of wind and snow came rushing around the corner just then, sending her teeth chattering, and even to spite Charles Pike's smug grin, she grudgingly conceded she could not hold out for eighteen more minutes.

"Fine," she snapped irritably at him. "But for God's sake, don't make a sound."

But they soon realized, as they rounded turn after turn back down the tunnel towards the warmth, that it would hardly have mattered if he had, since the two in the bed were doing a fine job of it themselves.

"Damn," Pike exhaled in shock, stopping short behind Abby, as they stared together from their place of concealment in the shadows at the astonishing sight of Bellamy clutching frantically at the sheets while Kane's dark head rose and fell between his thighs. "Wish I were getting a closer look at that," he added, low in her ear, the impossibly deep rumble of his voice sending little shivers along the back of her neck.

Maybe that's what it was, that gravelly baritone - combined with Bellamy's frantic cries as his back arched in stunned pleasure and Kane's desperate, hungry groans around the heavy cock in his mouth - maybe it was that symphony of male voices that combined to make her whole body tingle with yearning and leave her feeling more amiably disposed towards Charles Pike than she had in years.

"You and me both," she replied absently, straining her ears to listen.

"Too bad we're all the way over here," he murmured, suddenly so close to her that she could feel the warmth of his breath, feel the pressure of his comfortably solid body at her back. "We're gettin' one hell of a show and we're wasting it."

Abby could feel the heavy, pendulous swell of a cock coming to life, pressed against her hip, and a hot cascade of shivers rolled through her body. "Charles," she whispered, a little warningly, but not really wanting him to stop.

"What?" he protested, feigning innocence. "Not doing anything."

"You know exactly what you're doing."

"We're just standin' in a hallway, that's all."

"Charles."

"They got seventeen minutes, Abby, you really think you can hold out that long with no relief? 'Cause I gotta tell you, I'm not sure I can."

"What are you talking about?"

"You know exactly what I'm talking about."

Abby went hot and cold all over. "You and me?" she whispered incredulously. "Charles, that's *crazy*."

He chuckled into her ear, sensing her resistance crumbling, and stepped in closer, hands gripping her hips. "I'm not asking you to leave Marcus for me," he said dryly. "I'm not telling you to fall in love with me. I'm saying we're stuck here at least another day and interesting things seem to be happening and if you want me to get you off I'd be honored. If not, no harm done and no offense taken."

"That may be the most direct offer I've ever had in my life."

"I'm a man who says what he means."

She didn't answer right away, but she didn't resist either. His palms glided hot and hard over her hips; one pressed flat and low against her belly, holding her against him, the other sliding lower, scratching lightly with the tip of his fingernail against the denim crotch of her jeans, and she couldn't stop the wetness or the heat.

He kissed her neck, and she shuddered all over, desire rocketing through her. *What the hell?* In forty-two years she had never imagined this with Charles Pike. Never, not once. And yet the second his lips touched her skin, it felt so natural, so right. His mouth was astonishingly soft, but he wasn't gentle; he kissed her rough and a little insistent, the way she sometimes liked it, burying his mouth in the hollow of her throat and licking hotly into the skin, making her groan.

"Charles," she whispered, but it wasn't an exasperated protest anymore, it was a plea, and he knew it, which meant he'd won. He chuckled again, his laugh warm and shivery against her skin, before reaching around to unfasten her jeans and tug them off her thighs, sliding a hand into the black cotton panties she wore beneath them. "Oh God, Charles," she gasped, biting her lip to keep from crying out as he deftly, lazily ran the pad of his index finger in slow circles over her clit, teasing it into swollen, aching hardness. "Oh God, oh God."

She sank back against his impossibly powerful broad chest, savoring his strength. He stroked her gently, his chin resting on the top of her head, and she was so overcome she closed her eyes for a moment, dizzy. When she opened them she almost gasped loudly enough to be heard, shocked by the sight in front of her. Kane had pulled back from swallowing Bellamy's cock and was kissing his way wetly, messily up the shaft of it, giving the two in the hallway their first really clear view of what Bellamy was bringing to the table, so to speak.

"*Fuck,*" murmured Pike appreciatively as they gazed at it in mutual admiration – long and slender, almost the length of Kane's but not as thick – and watched Kane's wet mouth glide up and down, devouring it. "That beard's gotta feel good."

"Oh, Jesus, Charles," Abby exhaled, her breath almost panting. His fingers against the fabric of her jeans pressed in deeper, making her gasp. "Oh . . . oh . . . I need . . ."

Pike read her mind, right there with her. "Yeah," he whispered affectionately, kissing her neck again. "Yeah, Abby. I know. I got you. I got you."

"Hurry," she pleaded, hearing the telltale sound of a zipper opening behind her, feeling the rush of fabric moving against her skin, her whole body one desperate "*Please,*" and then all the breath collapsed out of her lungs as she felt the head of a thick, heavy cock bump her thighs, pressing gently against her skin, waiting for her to give the word out loud.

They had thirteen minutes left, and Bellamy was getting close. "Oh God, Kane," he cried out, voice breaking, hands fisting the sheets, back arching in the air as they watched Kane's tongue busily caress the tip of his cock. Abby was so wet she could feel her thin cotton shorts begin to soak through. Getting fucked by Charles Pike was the last thing she ever expected to happen, but she was aching for something more than just the light pressure of his fingers and the cock brushing the back of her thighs was rock-hard, thick, and willing. She leaned into his powerful chest, letting him take her weight, hold her up, and he kissed her neck again.

"Yeah?" he asked. "You sure?" She nodded a little desperately, *please, please*, and then he was right there, gripping her hips and pushing inside.

"Oh," she exclaimed, shock and pleasure mingling in her rough whispered cry. Her knees went weak the moment he slid inside her, and if he wasn't holding her in his powerful arms she would have lost her balance. For something she'd never imagined in her whole life, it was *so good*, the pressure of his heavy cock catching her from behind at just the right angle. They were on the clock, so he didn't waste time, sliding one hand back to her clit and redoubling his efforts there as he grunted softly into her over and over again. He was incredibly thick, pressing her open enough to leave her pleasantly sore, and just rough enough, the way she liked it.

They watched Bellamy's hips lift and lift and lift, his hands frantic, everywhere, grabbing the sheets, clutching Kane's shoulders, tangling in his hair, cries becoming wilder and more high-pitched as Kane's wet groans of hungry pleasure became more audible.

"How you doin' over there?" Pike murmured in her ear. "This good?"

"Perfect," she panted, shivering as he pinched her clit between thumb and forefinger and began to tease it with a rolling circular motion.

"Close?"

"Oh God, yes."

"Me too."

"You first," Abby whispered. "Please. You finish first."

"I'm good, I can wait. I can be a gentleman."

"No, please. It's okay. Please."

She felt him nod into her shoulder, kissing her again. "Almost there," he told her. "Okay if I -"

"Anything you want," she murmured wildly. "Anything."

He let go of her clit then, but just for a few moments, seizing her hips in his hands, clutching her tight. His head came down to rest against her shoulder as he braced himself and then began to go hard, hard, hard, so hard it pushed all the breath out of her lungs, harder than she had been fucked since her wildest nights with Jake, it was incredible, and he took her nearly all the way over the cliff with him when he finally grunted low and hard into her skin and she felt wetness surge up inside her thighs. But he didn't leave her for long, collapsing raggedly against her back to slide his hand back to her clit, resuming his pace in perfect time with Kane's.

Abby and Bellamy came at the same time, his loud, almost pained cries drowning out her fluttering soft ones. "Thank you," Pike murmured into her hair as he pulled her panties and jeans back up for her and zipped her back into them. "Haven't felt that good in a long time."

"We still have two minutes," she said, pulling his arms back around her waist. "Let's just stay like this until then."

"You're the boss," said Pike, and she could tell he was smiling.

When they made their way back to the bed, Kane and Bellamy were curled up in each other's arms. The broken thing between them had been somehow mended, like magic. There were still things to say, but the sting was taken out of them, now that they knew the thing they knew.

Jake and Abby hadn't been a couple who fought much, but when they did, it was messy. Frustrations built up into a simmer, sometimes for hours or days. And when they found themselves in that place, sex had often been a helpful shortcut, slicing through all the silence and frustration and distance and centering them back on what was important. She'd gambled on the same thing being true for Kane and Bellamy, weighed down with months' worth of things they couldn't say, and she'd been right.

She realized, looking at the two men before her, that this would become something very different once all four of them were in the same bed together, once they were no longer a collection of pairs being reshuffled around Marcus but were instead four people sharing intimate space.

Well, in for a penny, she thought wryly, feeling the wetness of Pike warming the inside of her thighs, and she briskly stripped off her clothes with no hesitation, climbing into bed beside Kane. Charles looked from Abby to Marcus to Bellamy, nodded as though making a decision, and then began to make his way over to the cushions by the fire. Abby sighed, wondering if they'd ever reach a point where all three of the men were able to go an hour without punishing themselves for some unknown sin. So far, it didn't look like it. Pike had clearly decided that Kane's orbit had expanded from Abby to include Bellamy too, which felt like leaving him with no one.

"Night," he muttered, and turned his back to go.

Bellamy stopped him, reaching out a hand. "Pike," he said gruffly. "Come on. Don't be stupid."

Pike turned back to look at him.

"Please, Charles," said Kane, looking up at him with something warm and serious in his eyes, and Abby's heart cracked a little at the way Pike's shoulders slumped in relief, grateful, like he'd been rescued from something. A smile tugged at the corner of his mouth as he turned back to them, pulled off his clothes and climbed into the bed next to Bellamy.

Everyone but Kane had come already, sated and sleepy and a little drunk. Bellamy crashed out almost immediately, breath softening into a youthful, almost puppyish snore as he drifted off to sleep. Pike wrapped his arms around the boy's waist, dropped his head against his shoulder, and followed him only a few minutes later, his low rumbling breath soothing and comforting in the dark.

Abby curled up against Kane's back, arms against his waist, and felt pleasantly drowsy - warm, relaxed, impossibly comfortable - but not really tired. She leaned in to kiss the spot beneath Kane's ear, and whisper, "how did it go?"

Marcus rolled over to face her, turning his back to the sleeping pair on the other side of him, to stroke the hair out of Abby's eyes. "So good," he whispered. "Oh God, Abby, it was . . . he let me . . ."

"It was what you wanted." He nodded, and she smiled. "I'm so glad, love," she whispered. "I'm so glad."

"We didn't get all the way there," he murmured, almost apologetically, "there wasn't enough time to do it right."

"In thirty minutes? Good Lord, of course not. That's for tomorrow. We've got all day and nothing else to do. But it was good? It made you happy?"

"It made me happy," he said warmly, kissing her mouth. "Thank you."

"Got one more round in you before bed?" she murmured archly, looking down at the shadowy place between his thighs where his cock was still rock-hard, and his eyes went dark and heavy with desire, pleading with her as she straddled her hips and lowered herself down. She was still soaked, letting him slip in so deep and so effortlessly that it startled him, and when he looked up at her she wore a slightly impish half-smile. He stared, eyes wide.

"You and Pike?"

She shrugged, amused. "In my defense, you were busy."

"So were you, it seems."

"We watched you," she murmured, hips rocking forward to take him deeper, holding his face between her palms as she kissed him. "We watched you together, and we couldn't stand it. It was making us crazy."

"Oh God, Abby," Kane groaned as she rode him, so slippery and wet that he bottomed out inside her with every thrust. "Did he come inside you?"

"Yes," she whispered. "That's him. You're feeling him."

"Jesus," he groaned. "I've never . . . not right after someone else. God, you're so wet."

"I was out of my mind," she whispered in his ear. "Seeing you together. Your mouth on him. I want a much, much closer look next time."

"Abby . . . oh God, Abby, don't stop . . ."

"How long has it been since you've had another man, Marcus?"

"Years," he panted, "there's been no one since Charles."

"Do you think Bellamy ever has?"

"I don't know," he breathed, palming her soft, perfect ass and holding her in place to lift his hips against hers over and over again. She could feel him quiver inside her and knew he was close.

"We'll take our time," she murmured, kissing him. "We'll do it right."

"I don't want Charles to think," Kane began, then stopped, unsure what he really meant. "He was going to sleep on the floor," was all he managed to say, but Abby knew what he meant.

"You fixed things with Bellamy tonight," she murmured. "Now you both need to fix things with Charles. We can save all of that for tomorrow."

"I love you," he whispered as her hips rocked harder and harder against him, clutching him tight and deep until finally, with a low cry, he let go, filling her over and over, frantically rubbing at her clit to bring her tumbling over into orgasm only a heartbeat behind him. As she sank down onto his chest, sweaty and sticky and sated, Marcus pulled her close under the furs, shifting her to the inside like a wall between her and the rest of the room. She fell asleep with his arms around her waist, head resting on her shoulder, and Bellamy's soft sweet breathing - warm and mead-scented - so close she could feel it on her skin.

In all their lives, none of them had ever slept so well.

in love's sanctuary, thou art with me

Abby woke to a feeling of extraordinary warmth and calm, more relaxed than she could remember having been in years. She knew that out there in the world, the nuclear storm was still coming, that Clarke was working hard to hold everything together, that their meeting with Roan only grew in importance with every passing hour, that this was exactly the wrong time to spend two days snowed into a cave while a blizzard raged outside.

But she also knew that she could no longer remember the last time she had actually given herself permission to stop, to breathe, to feel. None of them had. Roan's conference was important, but other things were important too. Love mattered. Love was the thing that would keep them going, later, when things were at their worst. It *mattered* if Kane and Bellamy were learning again how to look each other in the eye, to hold each other close with trust and forgiveness. It *mattered* if Pike came back from the brink of self-destruction.

Hope, she thought to herself, eyes closed, smiling as a pair of warm male arms – she didn't know, or care, whose – pulled her close. Hope was still everything.

A nose nuzzled into her throat, pressing in soft kisses. No beard, tangled curly hair. Bellamy.

"Hi," she mumbled sleepily, eyes still closed.

"Hi," he said in her ear, voice soft and low and soothing. "Is this okay?"

"Of course it's okay."

"Okay, I just didn't know if . . . me and you, we didn't talk about – " She didn't answer, but nestled in closer to him, wrapping her arms around his waist to palm his bare back, and he grinned into her shoulder, getting the message. "So the rule is, there are no rules," he said dryly. "At least, while we're in here."

"Are you asking me, or telling me?"

"Asking. We've all been assuming you're the one in charge. By the way," he added, "you should open your eyes."

Abby opened her eyes.

She was alone in the bed with Bellamy. Charles and Marcus had put their shorts back on and moved over to the fire. They were sitting very close together on the heaps of cushions, deep in conversation. "They've been there for at least an hour," Bellamy whispered to her.

"Are they okay?"

"Think so," he said. "There's been some kissing mixed in, which seems like a good sign."

They watched in silence for a long time, Bellamy's arms warm and comforting around her. The men were too far away to hear, which had obviously been deliberate; they had things to

say to each other that weren't meant for the others. Kane's face was serious and sad, and while they couldn't see Pike's, there was a weighty slump to his shoulders. But he held Kane's hand in his, stroking the back of it absently with his fingers, and after a few minutes Kane lifted his other hand to rest against Pike's jaw, pulling him in closer. Abby caught her breath, and felt Bellamy do the same, as they watched Kane very gently brush his lips over Pike's, slow and soft at first, easing in, but the gravity between them was too much to keep the kiss light for very long, and in a few moments Kane was clutching at Pike's shoulders with both hands while Pike skimmed his palms up and down Kane's bare chest. It went on like that for a long moment before Kane pulled away, breathless. When he looked up they could see his eyes shining with tears, but he was smiling.

Kane and Pike didn't speak of it, and the other two didn't ask, but whatever they had said to each other must have fixed something, because the darkness that had lived between them from the moment Pike entered the Arkadia gates was gone. Really and truly gone.

Hope, Abby thought to herself, watching the three men in front of her putter amicably about the cave in their underwear, stoking the fire, making breakfast, talking quietly to each other. Marcus had her, so he had already had something to live for, something to keep him going; but Charles had lost everything, and Bellamy was afraid he was worth nothing. Last night had given them all back to each other.

They spent a few hours that morning on the radio, both with Clarke and with Jackson, while they ate and tidied up. That took them through to late morning, but left them with an entire day stretched out ahead of them. Charles wrapped some furs around him and put his boots back on (though all of them seemed curiously reluctant to put any real clothes back on, settling instead for underwear and – for Abby – her threadbare bra) to go look at the snow, and confirmed they would be stuck here at least one more night. Yesterday, that would have seemed like disaster, but it certainly didn't anymore.

A collective decision to give themselves something resembling a holiday seemed to overtake them all once Kane finished his radio conference with Clarke and switched off the transmitter. Everything was moving along in Polis, and Roan had been notified of their delay. He would send horses for them as soon as the snow cleared, massively shortening their travel time so the few days they lost would be made up on the return journey.

In short, there was nothing so urgent that it could not keep for one more day.

So they let themselves have time.

Pike did not touch the jug of mead on the table, a fact they did not fail to notice. Instead, he went digging through the trunks and cupboards in the cave's makeshift storeroom, where - to Kane's delight - he unearthed an ancient-looking marble chess set. The way they both lit up at the sight of it melted Abby's heart; she wondered how many hours of chess they'd played in the guards together, and how long ago was when they stopped.

The afternoon passed in a lazy, amicable haze, all four of them alternating in various combinations between the chess table, the food stores, and the bed. Their innate sense that sex was something never to be undertaken within sight of other people seemed to have

vanished entirely, and things Abby had required five drinks to even *contemplate* last night felt effortlessly right comfortable a day later, even without any liquor at all.

Things like lying in bed in the middle of the day, listening with amusement to Bellamy and Pike arguing heatedly over chess strategy, while Marcus rose and fell on top of her, alternating between tossing suggestions like “Knight to D-4, Bellamy” over his shoulder, and taking her nipple in his mouth to make her squirm.

Things like sitting in her underwear by the fire, back pressed against Bellamy’s chest, eating dried fruit by the handful, savoring the low, sweet sounds of Charles and Marcus under the heavy fur coverlets, stroking each other’s cocks, panting and gasping between kisses.

The Ark had no such thing as vacations, in a world where you risked being floated for oxygen resources the moment your utility diminished. It was a life whose defining characteristic was that one must, at all times, *keep moving*. If you were able to pick up a few scraps of happiness or contentment along the way, you were welcome to keep them, but no one had permission to stop and look.

Abby Griffin had never spent a day lazing around in her underwear in her entire life.

They dipped back into the honey mead again with dinner, but very lightly; even Pike only had the same two small glasses everyone else did. But it suffused them all with a glorious, languid heat that Abby felt was vital for the thing she had planned next.

It was too much for daytime. Daytime sex meant soft touches, sweet kisses, gentle hands, talking and laughing in bed and then dozing off for half an hour in each other’s arms.

This was something serious, and it had to be managed properly, and if she told them up front all three of them would spook. So it had to be night and there had to be alcohol and she had to do this right.

Because if she did, she knew in her heart that the last piece of the broken thing between these three men would finally, finally click into place.

And only Abby could get them there.

Abby waited until dinner had been finished, tidied up and put away, before the boys could be tempted back to the chess set again.

She kissed Kane to start with, fierce and hungry, and that clicked everything else back into place, her urgency and desire pulling all three of them with her. Soon she felt Bellamy at her back, lips hot against her neck, as Pike stepped in close behind Kane and slid his hands around and up to stroke hard little circles with his thumbs on Kane’s nipples, swelling them into tight brown peaks against his hand. Kane groaned into her mouth, hardening against her hip, and she smiled, feeling him lick hotly into her as all four bodies began to melt and soften together.

They stumbled over to the bed, clumsy with haste and desire, unwilling to let go of each other, and collapsed into a heap of arms and legs. Abby landed in the middle, bodies all around her, and felt Bellamy unfasten her bra and tug her panties down as Kane rolled her over onto her back and shifted his weight on top of her. Pike reached down between Kane's body and hers to grasp at the rapidly-stiffening cock and stroke it to full hardness, causing Kane to tremble. "I'm gonna want a close look at this," Pike said, settling comfortably down into the pillows as Kane gazed down at Abby, brow furrowed with intense concentration, that face he always made as he entered her, so serious and focused. On the other side of her she could feel Bellamy too watching them with intense interest. She pulled Marcus down to kiss her, then leaned up to whisper in his ear.

"Do you trust me?" He looked perplexed, but nodded. "Then don't come yet," she whispered low in his ear. "I have something else in mind for you. Something you'll love. Something you need. But you can't come just yet."

Can you?"

She nodded. "In fact, I think it would help if I did."

"This plan seems to be working out a great deal more in your favor than mine."

"You said you trusted me."

"I do."

"I promise," she murmured as he sank down against her and his cock pressed her open, "the wait will be worth it."

It was a shockingly erotic sensation, having Bellamy and Charles lying beside them and watching with unabashed desire as Marcus thrust into her, gliding heavily in and out, soft little grunting gasping sounds rushing against her skin and making her shiver. He went slow, to keep himself from getting too close, but he angled himself carefully to find the spot inside her that worked every time, and she came with a high, sweet, wild cry, clutching at his shoulders as he kissed her mouth over and over before pulling out of her.

"Damn," murmured Charles, his earthy baritone in Kane's ear causing the man to shiver. "That was something."

"You're next," she told him, reaching out her hands and pulling him close.

"Same deal as Marcus?"

"Same deal as Marcus."

"What if I bribe you?"

"No deal. Do you trust me?"

"I don't trust many people," Charles admitted candidly. "But you're sure as hell one of them."

"Then come here."

So Charles crawled over Kane (dropping a kiss on his chest in transit) and carefully straddled her. He was a heavy, powerful man, built of solid muscle, and held himself above her on knees and elbows to avoid crushing her. When his cock pushed inside, she inhaled sharply, causing him to chuckle. "Well hello again," he grinned down at her as she wrapped a thigh around his waist to pull him in deeper.

"Hi," she said affectionately, then choked on a raw gasp as he plunged into her *hard*, a little playfully. She smacked his bald head in mock irritation, causing a throaty chuckle to ripple through him. "*Jesus*," she panted, "give a girl some warning."

"I've seen Kane's moves," he complained, "I gotta mix it up a little if I wanna stay in the game. Otherwise he wins by default just 'cause he knows you better."

"It's not a contest."

"It's *absolutely* a contest," Kane piped up unhelpfully from the other side of the bed, and she reached out to smack him too.

"Don't distract him," she chided Kane. "He's very busy."

"Very," agreed Pike, rolling her nipples between his thumbs and forefingers and kissing the hollow of her neck as his hips moved against her. That blissful sensation of pressure as his thick cock pushed her open hadn't abated from last night, and each thrust made her shiver as every ridge and vein pressed hard, hard, hard against her slick, hot walls. The teasing and conversation quieted as Pike began to take the task at hand very seriously, moving purposefully and steadily above her. She could hear Kane's breath quicken, could hear Bellamy inhale sharply, and she knew they would follow her wherever she led them.

Pike slipped one hand down her torso to slide between their bodies and stroke her clit, just like he had last night, and it pushed her over the edge a few moments later as she felt warmth pour out of her onto his hard, pulsing cock. "Oh," she gasped. "That's good. That's good. That was perfect."

"Pleasure doing business, Doc," he murmured, kissing her hot and hard before pulling reluctantly out of her. "Bellamy up next?"

"Yes," she said gently, "but not in the way you mean."

Bellamy's head snapped up and he stared at her. "Abby," he said uncertainly, but she smiled at him.

"It's okay," she murmured reassuringly. "It's going to be okay." She turned to Pike, who had settled back down against the cushions next to Kane. "You care about Bellamy," she murmured, taking his hand in her own. He started a little, as though the abrupt change of her tone from flirtation to seriousness had thrown him off-balance. "From the very beginning. You wanted to protect him. You thought you were doing the right thing, you thought if he stuck with you that he'd be safe. You were wrong about a lot of things, Charles, but that part

was right and true.” She turned to Kane. “And it’s the same for you,” she murmured. “You care about him so much. You fought so hard to bring him back to you. You fought so hard to keep him from losing himself. You thought the Charles Pike you used to love was gone, that he was never coming back to you, but you hoped there was a chance for you to save Bellamy.” Kane looked away, jaw clenched as if to hold back some forceful emotion. “But what none of you realized,” she said softly, “is that Bellamy isn’t whole without *both* of you. It would *always* be off-balance if it were one or the other. It would never fit right. You all need each other. All three of you. That’s the thing you didn’t understand, and that’s the thing we have to fix for anything else to feel right again.”

She pulled a heap of pillows into the center of the bed, far enough away from the headboard that she could maneuver all the way around it, and then guided Kane to lie back, stroking his hair and kissing him. “Abby,” he murmured, but she hushed him.

“Trust me,” she whispered. “Trust me.”

Then she knelt and took Bellamy’s face in both her hands, kissing him over and over. “Do you trust me?” she whispered. He nodded breathlessly. “Have you done this before?”

“Done what?” he asked, face all guileless confusion, and she stroked his hair, leaning her forehead against his.

“Sweetheart,” she murmured. “I got him as hard and as wet as I could. It’s for you. They’re both for you.”

Bellamy went pale, staring up at her with wide, dazed eyes. The penny dropped for Kane and Pike too, and they both looked at her.

“Damn,” Pike swore softly. “Damn, Abby.”

Bellamy swallowed hard, looked hesitant and a little afraid. “It’s been a long time,” he told her uncertainly.

“But do you want to?” He nodded a little breathlessly, and she smiled. “Okay,” she said, holding out her hand, and helped Bellamy straddle Kane’s hips, bracing his hands against the older man’s chest. Kane’s cock, shining with Abby and nearly vertical, nudged against Bellamy’s own, causing Abby to feel shivery all over as she crawled back around behind Bellamy, rising up to her knees to wrap one arm around his waist and kiss his neck, guiding him forward to reposition him at the angle she wanted, opening him up to her.

Then she took Kane’s rock-hard cock, slicked heavily with her juices, and pressed it very, very, very gently – a fraction of an inch at a time – into Bellamy’s ass.

Both men jolted like an electric shock had passed through them. Bellamy’s whole body tensed up and slammed shut almost reflexively, but Abby had expected this and knew what to do. “Stop?” she whispered to him, and he shook his head.

“No, I just,” he choked out, “I just - ”

“Shhh, shhh,” she murmured into his dark curls, kissing his temple, running her hands up and down his arms to ease the tension back away. “You’re doing so good. Just go slow. Slow is okay. You’re on top, so you can control it. Just ease into it.” He nodded, took a deep breath, relaxed a little, and let her slide the tip of Kane's cock back inside.

“Oh God, Bellamy,” Kane groaned, and the sound of his voice did something to all of them. They weren't used to the sight of Marcus Kane, out of control.

“Is this,” Bellamy began, then choked on a harsh, guttural cry as Abby guided him lower, pressing another inch of cock inside him. “Is this . . . does it . . . feel good?”

Kane's hands came up to rest over Bellamy's, which were still braced on his chest, squeezing them tightly in his own. “So good,” he promised him. “Oh God, Bellamy. So good.”

“Marcus,” Abby whispered over Bellamy's shoulder. “You’ve wanted to do this for a long time, haven’t you?”

“Yes,” he gasped as Bellamy closed his eyes and pushed down deeper. “Oh God. Yes. So long. I just . . . I can’t”

“Keep going,” she murmured into Bellamy's neck. “But why don’t you lean forward, so you can kiss him.” Bellamy obeyed, the new angle shocking a low cry out of both of them as Abby let go and moved back to where Pike was kneeling, watching the two men fuck with something like reverence. She pulled Pike close to her and whispered something in his ear that caused his eyes to go wide with shock, shaking his head as though protesting. But the other two didn't hear or see, immersed deeply in each other.

Bellamy hadn't done this since his teenage years, and it had been rough and fast and inexpert, it had felt good but it had hurt, and the other boys hadn't been gentle. It hadn't been like this, with Kane's eyes piercing into his, Kane's hands warm and soothing on his back, Kane's mouth soft and hungry against his own. It hadn't been with someone who *loved* him. So naturally everything was different.

Kane was gentle, slowly stretching Bellamy open, letting him get used to the overwhelming sensation of pain-pleasure, soothing him with kisses and soft touches, holding his hands, coaxing him to relax. Abby moved around to the other side, back where he could see her, and knelt behind Kane's head, taking Bellamy's face between both of her hands and tilting his chin so their eyes met.

“Bellamy,” she whispered. “Listen to me, sweetheart. I know what you need. I can give it to you. We can give it to you. But I need you to trust me. Do you trust me?” He nodded wordlessly, eyes locked on hers. She cradled his face in her hands and leaned in close, resting her forehead against his. “Listen to me,” she said softly. “You blamed yourself for so many things, Bellamy. You’ve been holding onto so much. You saw what happened between Marcus and Charles, and you blamed yourself. You wanted them on the same side. You wanted them to be together. For them, and for you. And you hated yourself because you couldn't fix the thing between them that was broken.” She stroked his hair. “Charles is stubborn, and loyal, and fierce, and he'll do anything it takes to keep his people alive. And Marcus is wise. He thinks before he acts, and he knows how to listen. And you – “ She

brushed her fingertips over his cheek. “You’re young and you’re impulsive, and you looked to both of them to guide you when you weren’t sure what to do. But Bellamy, I know you. You need both of them. At the same time. Together. That’s the thing that will keep you whole.”

She sat back on her heels at this and gave a nod to Pike, shooting him a look Bellamy couldn’t decipher. Pike knelt behind them, guiding Bellamy down to lean his forehead against Kane’s, and gripped the boy’s hips in his.

“She’s right,” he murmured, kissing the back of Bellamy’s neck. “Didn’t know it then, but I do now. Always wanted it like this. Not to take you away from Marcus. For us to have you together.” Then he braced one hand on the mattress, while the other stroked gently around the taut, aching entrance where Kane’s cock slid wetly in and out.

“*Fuck*, Pike,” Bellamy groaned, sinking forward, but that was all he could manage before Pike did something that knocked all the breath out of his, and Kane’s, lungs.

He nudged the tip of his cock directly next to Kane’s, pressing gently against the opening, and both Kane and Bellamy felt their hearts stop as they realized with a shock what Abby wanted them all to do.

“Oh God oh God oh God,” Bellamy whimpered, his whole body tensing up again, and immediately Abby was there, cradling him in her arms, soothing him with kisses, stroking his hair, cupping his jaw in her hands. Her eyes were steady and calming.

“Breathe with me,” she whispered, inhaling and exhaling slowly and loudly until he finally calmed down enough to follow her.

“I can’t . . .”

“You can,” she murmured encouragingly. “You can, sweetheart. This is what you wanted. This is what you needed. And now you can have it. You just need to relax, and breathe.”

“ . . . too much . . . ”

“We’ll go slow,” she assured him. “Slow and gentle. I promise.”

“Abby – “

“We can stop anytime you want to stop,” she said. “I promise.”

He nodded weakly, swallowing hard with some intoxicating combination of lust and nervousness, but obeyed when she coaxed him down against Kane’s chest, opening himself up to Pike.

It was slow going at first, but Pike was astonishingly gentle. He stroked the boy open with a deft touch, sliding careful fingers in around Kane’s cock to coax the tight muscles into softening and relaxing as Kane slid in and out and Abby stroked Bellamy’s hair, reminding him to relax and breathe. It went on for a long time, all three of them united in tending to

Bellamy, soothing him, readying him, murmuring softly, but they were rewarded by feeling him finally begin to soften and yield, opening up space and letting Pike in more and more.

After what felt like an eternity of tender ministrations that left him sweat-sheened and trembling, Bellamy finally looked back over his shoulder to Pike and gave the ghost of a nod. "Ready?" Abby murmured to him.

"I think."

"Okay," she said. "Go ahead, Charles. Gently."

Pike's hand was firm and strong on Bellamy's back, bracing himself lightly as he took a deep breath, gripped his cock – still wet from Abby – in his other hand, and pushed firmly inside. The pressure of two cocks inside him at once was *shattering*; Bellamy gave a cry that was almost a scream, sinking forward to be caught in Abby's arms, as she gripped his shoulders and leaned her forehead against his. "Shhh, sweetheart, you're okay, you're okay, just relax," she murmured. "You're doing so good. You're doing so good. Just breathe. In and out. Just breathe."

Her voice was soothing, hypnotic, and it worked. Pike pushed in deeper and deeper, his cock pressed impossibly tight up against Kane's, stretching Bellamy open farther than he could have imagined possible. Kane's eyes were pressed closed, gasping for breath. "I can feel you, Charles," he whispered, his voice shattered. "Oh God. I can feel every inch of you."

Abby stroked Kane's hair. "This is what you needed," she murmured. "Fuck him together, Marcus. Both of you. Both of you inside him."

Pike, upright and braced on his knees, was the one guiding the movement; Bellamy was liquid and boneless in his arms, and Kane, his back against the pillows, had limited leverage. But Pike guided them both with gentle affection, stroking gentle fingers against the ridge of Kane's cock where it disappeared inside Bellamy's ass until Kane shook beneath them, running warm soothing palms over Bellamy's ass to massage the tension out of his muscles.

They went slow but steady for a long, long time before Pike began to pick up speed. He didn't go hard with Bellamy like he had with Abby, didn't push, didn't hurt him, but it slowly began to crescendo into what could only be described as serious fucking. Abby held Bellamy's face in her hands as his eyes began to lose focus and glaze over, as his groans turned into raw animal cries, sounds none of them had ever heard him make before. "You're doing so good," she murmured to him, stroking his hair. "So good, sweetheart. So good. How do you feel?"

"S'good," he groaned into her shoulder. "So good . . . so *much* . . ."

"Marcus," Pike choked out through clenched teeth, "how you doin' down there?"

"Close," was all Kane could manage, and Pike nodded.

"Me too," he said roughly. "Bellamy, do you want us to –"

"Stay," Bellamy mumbled weakly, resting his left hand over the place where Pike was palming his hip and holding Pike's hand in his own. His right hand cradled Kane's face, stroking the soft bristle of beard, his thumb gliding back and forth over Kane's bottom lip. "Stay."

And he braced himself and held them like that, linked inside him, stretched open to the breaking point, the three of them finally balanced for the first time, locked together with impossible affection, the way it had always been meant to be. Abby watched them, heart turning over inside her chest, as moved as she was aroused. Kane was hers and she was his, no one could dispute that; their hearts belonged to each other. But they needed this, too. He needed to put the ghosts to rest the only way he knew how. He needed Bellamy to open himself up to him in this most achingly vulnerable way, to show Kane their trust had been rebuilt. He had lost the Pike he used to love when Farm Station landed in Azgeda, but the snow and the moonshine and the naked desire had brought him back somehow, healed something. He'd returned to the man he'd been before the ground made him desperate. That Charles Pike - the one Marcus Kane had loved at nineteen, the one who taught him how to fuck and play chess for the first time, the one who'd held him at night in a hard steel bunk, the one who had left the army to become an Earth Skills teacher, trading guns for green things and a classroom because he didn't want to be a killer, the one who had never wanted to become what Ice Nation had made of him - was the Charles Pike they would need now, if they were going to survive. Bellamy had never known him. Kane had lost him. But Abby had brought him back.

Pike came first, grunting low and hard into the back of Bellamy's neck, squeezing his hand tight as he gave a low heavy roar and then burst with incredible force inside Bellamy, making the boy gasp in astonishment at the sensation. Kane was hovering on the edge, and the sensation of a second cock coming while pressed tight next to his own pushed him even further, the swelling pressure and then the hot wetness and then the slick softening as Pike pulled gently out again, collapsing heavily to the mattress, too spent to move. "Marcus," Bellamy whispered, hips picking up speed, able to take him much deeper now, and crying out as Kane's cock nudged hard at his prostate. Kane gave a violent groan, hips rising off the mattress as Bellamy rode him to a volcanic climax before tumbling weakly off.

Pike and Kane - sweaty, dazed and shattered - fought hard to catch their breath, faces flushed, eyes pressed closed, barely able to form conscious thought. And so perhaps they ought not to be faulted for the rather significant thing they had overlooked.

"An interesting fact about male anatomy," said Abby rather dryly, in her Doctor Griffin voice, stroking first Pike and then Kane's faces with the back of her hand with an amused grin, "is that while some men are perfectly able to climax from prostate stimulation alone - "

"Jesus, it's hot when she talks like that," Pike mumbled into the pillows.

" . . . there are others who can't climax without having their cock stimulated as well." She looked down at Bellamy's still-erect cock and then back to Pike. "If it isn't, their climax just builds and builds but doesn't ever go anywhere. And the sensation is fairly excruciating, I believe."

"Shit," said Pike, still too limp to move. "Hang on, Bellamy. Gimme a second."

Abby laughed. "Stay where you are, lazybones," she teased him. "You too, Marcus. Later he can give you a hard time for leaving him high and dry like this, but right now he's about to pass out." She settled herself down on the pillows and reached out her arms for Bellamy. "Poor thing," she murmured, the flicker of a laugh in her voice. "Those cruel boys. Come here, sweetheart. I've got you. Come here." She reached out and took him by the hips, pulling his warm, sweat-covered body onto hers and smiling encouragingly as he collapsed, limp and boneless, against her shoulder. "Just relax," she murmured into his hair, tracing light fingertips up and down the notches of his spine, soothing and gentle, as she lifted her hips and wrapped one thigh around his body and then exhaled a long, low, happy sigh as she took him inside her.

Bellamy groaned, desperate and aching, and it was clear he didn't have long. The mounting pressure had driven him nearly to the brink, but Abby had been right; it had felt so good it nearly broke him, but he couldn't finish that way. So he'd simply circled around and around and around his orgasm without ever getting any nearer, an exquisite torture that had left him shattered.

But Abby was sweet and warm and impossibly wet, and her breasts were soft as she cradled him in her arms, rising and falling gently beneath him, and she ran light fingertips over the slick, sore ache of his ass, massaging and soothing it, helping him relax and recover.

"I'm," he panted, "it's, I . . ."

"Good," she murmured encouragingly. "That's good, Bellamy. Just let go, honey. I've got you. I can take it."

"It's not gonna be . . . I can't . . . oh, God, Abby . . ."

"That's it," she breathed into his ear, hands gentle and comforting against his skin. "That's it. You're doing good. You feel so good."

"I'm sorry," he panted, "I can't . . . I can't do very much . . ."

She laughed. "The boys took care of me already," she said lightly, kissing his hair. "You don't have to do anything, sweetheart. I'm okay. Let *me* take care of *you*."

" . . . Close . . . " he mumbled into her shoulder, voice muffled, and she felt him pulse and throb inside her. She wrapped him firmly in her arms and pulled him tight, hips rising and rising against him, pulling him in deep.

"Let go," she murmured. "I've got you." And as she stroked his back with soothing fingertips, she felt his entire body tense and stiffen, every single muscle braced for impact, his shattered little gasps deepening into heavy groans that sounded like pain, before he finally erupted. "Oh, God," Abby exclaimed, startled by the force of it as he exploded deep inside her with a wild, dazed cry. He came and came and came, filling her up over and over until he finally collapsed weakly against her breasts, dark curls damp with sweat, gasping for breath. She held him tight until he finished completely, trembling in her arms, and kissed his hair over and over.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t,” he mumbled into her skin as he summoned the last of his energy to pull softly out of her and then collapse again, curled up into her side. “You deserve . . . I wanted . . .”

“Hush,” she whispered, feeling him drape his lanky body against her side and burrow up close, already half asleep. “It’s okay. I don’t mind.”

And she really didn’t. She smiled as Bellamy melted sweetly into her, head pillowed against her breast, ready to drift off to sleep. But Pike and Kane, who had finally managed to catch their breath, objected as strongly as Bellamy had, and before she knew it they had made their way over to her side of the bed.

“You did this for us,” Kane whispered, stroking her hair and pressing a soft kiss against her mouth. “Let us take care of you.” And before she knew it, both men had made their way down beneath the furs. Pike took up position directly between her legs to lap gently at the hot, pulsing cunt Bellamy had filled up, while Kane’s big warm body draped heavily over her hips and thighs, leaning down to devour her clit with lips and tongue and beard. Bellamy was too sleepy to offer any assistance, but he held her, drowsily kissing her neck, as Pike ate her clean again and Marcus’ beard made her shiver. It was clumsy work for two, and they bumped heads occasionally, awkward and laughing, but sometimes she could feel their mouths find each other with messy, sticky-sweet kisses against the rosy, damp softness of her cunt. They stayed there until she had come twice, until she was so shivery and sensitive and spent that she squirmed at the faintest touch.

Once they were sure they’d done right by her, they drifted off more or less where they were – Kane’s head resting on her belly, Pike’s on her thigh, Bellamy’s on her breast. Abby stroked their hair, their cheeks, soothed them into sleep, and as she finally felt herself begin to sink down into oblivion – drowsy from orgasms and soothed by the warm breathing of three men holding her close, heart aching with ferocious love for all of them – the last conscious thought in her mind was a fragment of an old song she hadn’t thought of in years:

“Come in, she said, I’ll give you shelter from the storm.”

Her fingers tangled in Marcus’ hair as she closed her eyes, and she fell asleep smiling.

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