

Promises

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/20250115) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/20250115>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Fandom:	The 100 (TV)
Relationship:	Raven Reyes/Kyle Wick
Characters:	Raven Reyes , Kyle Wick , Clarke Griffin , Finn Collins
Additional Tags:	Canon up to season 3 , Backstory , Fluff , I want nachos , that has nothing to do with the plot but nachos , I Wrote This Instead of Sleeping , jeez I need a new hobby , wicken , they're cute so fight me , Friends to Lovers , Past Finn Collins/Raven Reyes , finn is still dead so ok , finn was gonna die anyways because he went off the deep end , that's probably enough unnecessary tags I think
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2019-08-14 Completed: 2020-07-16 Words: 24,520 Chapters: 2/2

Promises

by [Amalspach](#)

Summary

Raven's grown up with stories about her parent's kind of love and no actual parents. Wick's grown up with something to prove and nothing to lose. Together, they're not half-bad. (Wicken, two-shot, canon until season three.)

Notes

Disclaimer: I don't own the 100 or anything but the plot. All details not stated in the show were fabricated by me, but sadly, I did not produce the actual series. Otherwise I wouldn't be writing this.

A while ago I started this in my documents while I went through season two. I really liked wicken because of the dynamic between the characters and the way the show decided to develop their relationship onscreen. Unfortunately, season three dropped all this awesome development and now my new favorite person in the series was nowhere to be seen. It was then that I began writing this post. (Side note, the title comes from me listening to the song Promises by Incubus, courtesy of my dad's influence. He continues to ruin me for modern music influence; all my favorite songs come from the eighties or earlier. I'm constantly playing catch-up.)

I hadn't meant to make it a full-fledged thing but I saw it again a few days ago and decided to finish it up and submit it. There's a pretty small deposit of stories centered specifically around this couple so I guess I'll be adding to it; seriously, they deserve much more attention. But, as someone who hasn't seen the later seasons (I stopped in season three because I was getting too frustrated with the plot, honestly, what happened dear god) this is only canon up to the end of the second season. Don't read it if you're not a fan of that, I guess?

Anyways, thanks for taking a chance on this and I hope you like it, anonymous reader.

See the end of the work for more [notes](#)

But Not For Me

Raven Reyes' father had told her stories about him and her mother, when they were younger. He was a headstrong young lad absolutely infatuated with the future Mrs. Reyes, a beautiful girl with a slight soft spot for the aspiring astronaut. He'd always get a particularly vivid spark in his eyes when he described her, innocent as a lamb at sixteen, cautiously toeing around him. They'd been friends since the cradle, you see, and their families had lived down the hall from one another. Soulmates, he'd refer to them, taking his wife's hand. Meant to be.

Whenever another guy tried to take her out, her father would step in, even before they were dating. Whenever someone so much as frowned at her, or tried to pick a fight, her father would sock him in the jaw, utterly thoughtless. It got him in some trouble back then but it was worth it, he'd say confidently, to see the smiles of relief that would bloom across her lips, pulling them into an exasperated curve.

"Love, Skylark," he'd rumble affectionately, "isn't about all the fireworks and the frenzy. It's not about the sparkles and the warm pit in your stomach. It's about not hesitating, about putting someone else's needs above your own, about sticking around even when you don't have to, because there's no where else you'd rather be. Your mom and I, we don't always get along, but we always make up. Because love is *knowing*, despite everything, that they make you better. And I've known that since forever." Then Raven would be tucked into bed, nice and snug and incredibly loved, and her father would kiss her on the cheek while her mother smoothed down her unruly curls.

Her father was always there for her until the day a containment breach occurred and he ran out of oxygen, leaving behind a woman that didn't quite learn how to live without her husband and a daughter that didn't understand how she could survive on her own. Her mom, only half a heart, took to the bottle and traded herself and her possessions for favors. Raven took to mechanics, because machines were something she knew she could fix with enough time and patience, and they didn't smell like liquor. Only engine grease, bitter fumes, sweat and tears - the stuff of hard work and creation. Empires are built on technology, and Raven Reyes was too little and too damn stubborn to give up on life at age seven.

It was then when she met Finn, and at first it was a godsend. Finn was not like the other children of her grade, the ones that thought Raven was *too much*, that she felt *too strongly* and she talked *too loudly* about her dreams and her remaining hopes. Raven didn't know how to stop pouring out everything; didn't they think the same things, that the stars were too vast and far away not to be touched, that each scrap of machinery had the potential to become a new world, that the spaces between molecules were fascinating? No, Finn was not like them. Finn liked to build and to mold, like her. He was the boy who lived across the hall, who snuck her rations when her drunken mother forgot, who made her a raven out of twisting slips of silver (not a Skylark, not like her dad's stories, but close enough). If she squinted, it could almost be her parent's tragedy, a romance so long in the making it was practically a fairy tale. Anyways, Finn was *good*, if nothing else. His hand didn't automatically rush to hold hers and he didn't spring into action whenever other boys stared, but that was alright. He was *hers*, for however long he'd stick around, and when she kissed

him for the first time he didn't run away. The dark haired boy had stayed, because she'd asked him to, because he'd furrowed his brow and said the words 'is this what you want' and she'd answered with 'yes, please'.

The problem was, Finn was not her father. When the lockdown happened, when she was in her spacesuit and panicking, he had done the unthinkable; Finn had frozen up for a few seconds, barely noticeable to anyone other than Raven herself. She'd known, right then, that Finn would never be the type of man she'd grown up waiting for, and she'd quietly made peace with that fact. The mechanic was practical; perhaps all the fairytales were wrong. That kind of love only exists for her parents, the type of people who dot their i's and blush across vacant rooms. That kind of love destroys those it leaves behind. This is not it, what she has in Finn, but no one can say it's not sacrificing. No one can say it's not the type that inspires jail time, or even a trip to earth.

If her best friend takes a fall, she'll make one too. Hell, she's the kind of girl that will willingly strap herself into a winged death trap and pray for deliverance in an ancient spacesuit, launching in a coffin of her own making, in order to make sure Finn's not dead. He'd do the same for her, and that's love, right? It's messy as hell, it's ugly and ill-defined, but metal ravens mean something. They're supposed to be a promise.

As it turns out, Finn is exactly the same. She's relieved to see that he's alive, he's thriving, he's got a life he can live free of rules and regulation. The only problem is, when she puts herself in danger again, *all for them*, he's scared solid. Finn's terror is clear, rimming his irises, a great pause coating his thoughts.

When Clarke falls, there is only a blind, reckless sort of determination. There's no thinking, no decisive action, just *him* saving the brilliant blonde.

So that's what it looks like, Raven cannot help but ponder. *That kind of abandon. That's the kind of love they had, didn't they?*

Raven puts Finn to rest. She doesn't need another ghost in her closet, nor is she going to be the sort of girl that hoards another person's soulmate.

She may be cruel, when she wants to be, but she's not the bad guy. At least, she won't be for them.

It's only when the Ark crashes to the ground that she meets Kyle Wick once again.

Wick had never been one to take anything from anyone. He much preferred earning what he needed off of his own merits, thank you very much.

Apparently that had been the way of his grandfather, a man who had once known what it was like to roam the ground before the fallout. As a boy, he'd dreamed of blue skies and open meadows, grass long and lush and spanning out as far as the eye could see. The original Kyle Wick had been an engineer, and a hell of a good one, too, otherwise he never would have made it onto the Ark. But he started from nothing, so the story goes, and he pulled his way up through university and life via sheer pigheadedness and talent and sweat equity.

Wick never wanted to be Kyle Wick the sequel, which is why he went by his last name exclusively. He was proud of his family, but like his grandfather, he was going to do everything he hoped to accomplish with no damn favors, no shortcuts, no excuses. Wick was going to work twice as hard as anybody ever did and he was going to fly twice as far; maybe even down to the ground, if he was clever enough. Ain't that the dream.

When he'd gotten assigned to the bureau of engineers, he hadn't been surprised. This was slaved over, premeditated to a fault. The man had busted his *ass* to get into this job, and he'd continue to work some more. He would laugh and joke, make idiotic puns at his coworkers, but he would do *anything* to continue keeping the Arc up and running. That was destiny.

He met Raven Reyes on an assignment, patching up a few faulty patches of wiring while she detailed the corresponding fuse box. That, too, felt a little bit like destiny.

At first, she was utterly silent, entirely consumed by the task at hand. She was kneeling rather uncomfortably between the wall and the metal tubing he had cut open and begun to reroute, stitching in new cords and snipping the others. Despite the uncomfortable position, though, her brow was furrowed with tightly-wound determination, her tongue slightly escaping the corner of her mouth. *She must be the youngest mechanic in over five decades*, he thought as he'd watched her work. *No fuckin' wonder.*

"Staring at my ass?" she drew out in a deadpan, not looking up from the fuses as she ran her hands across the grooves. "Because I'm not sleeping with you. I've got a boyfriend." Wick had let out a choked laugh, taken by complete surprise. Of course, he had *eyes*, but he had to admit that even to his deluded brain, viscous banging against the wall hadn't been part of the itinerary for the day. (Perhaps if she were unattached, he could have been persuaded to pencil it in, though. Alas, he wasn't a total douche and thus wouldn't be sanctifying this specific corner of the mechanical.)

"Though I'm sure that would be a lot more fun than this, not at all, actually. That a common problem?" He responded with instantly, shaking his head as if in confirmation of the words.

The brunette blew a strand of hair out of her face, squinting at a dent in the metal. She didn't double-take at all, merely raising an eyebrow as if surprised he hadn't known. "Oh, you'd be surprised. Pervs, all of them." (She clearly thought he was a naive idiot. She might not be wrong.)

"One of the disadvantages of being young and beautiful?"

She snorted, then, not the least bit amused. "Hand me a wrench, won't you?"

"Your wish is my command, Grease Monkey."

"You think you're very clever," she'd said, rolling her eyes and shoving him lightly. "It's adorable, really."

"Almost as cute as me dropping a pipe-bomb into your bedroom tonight," he answered with faux-cheer.

"Too much collateral damage. You'd get caught up in the explosion." She didn't skip a damn beat.

"Have a little faith," he gasped dramatically, hand over heart. The girl held out her hand, brushing him off.

"Still need that wrench." Wordlessly, he handed it to her, letting their fingers brush far longer than strictly necessary. The woman didn't concede an inch, and that more than anything put him off. Wick wasn't a womanizer, but he knew how to win over the occasional girl when he wanted to. It was easy - a smug comment there, a veiled compliment, and the caveat, a warm puppy-ish smile, were usually enough to make any females in the vicinity swoon. However, the mechanic was both un-single and almost insultingly immune to his charms, a combination that simply *didn't* occur in nature. Whatever she was made of, it was tougher stuff than what he had experienced.

Suddenly he wanted to slice her open, just like the piping, and see why that was. He had only felt an intense burn for something once, that *need* for something so fiercely that it boiled your blood, and it was when he looked out over the deck of the Ark and saw the wide expanse of open space, ripe for the taking.

"The world is yours, son," his father had told him, and he'd done everything in his power up until now to explore the whole of it, to learn what made engines tick and why molecules behaved the ways they did and what stars were made of. He'd surrender a year of his life for a second to touch real dirt, a living machine called 'earth' beneath his feet, for a *second*.

And god, he wished he knew this girl the way he knew his sciences.

"I'm Kyle Wick," he told her in that moment, and she actually turned away from her cramped corner to smile tiredly back.

"Raven Reyes," she replied with, and he should have known just by looking at her - it fits like nothing else would. It's a bit unnerving, how much she interests him already. "Awful to meet you, Wick."

('Wick'. Not 'Kyle Wick the Second', but Wick.

She got him in one.)

"Hate you too, boo."

"Damn engineers," she muttered beneath her breath, not upset in the slightest.

"Damn mechanics," he repeated in a singsong voice, returning to his job. It was the start of a disjointed but easy camaraderie that they both fell into instantly.

"Hey Reyes, bet I could twist off these bolts quicker than you."

"I could do that in five seconds blindfolded, Wick, that's not exactly a challenge."

"It's not a challenge, it's a bet."

"Find a new bet then, I'm already done," she huffed, unscrewing the last screw. *Damn*, she was fast, and a lot stronger than she looked.

"Fine, then, I bet you I'm better at having fun than you."

She grunted, rolling her eyes. "It's not a bet unless there's stakes, genius. Now you're just being stupid."

"You're a real stick in the mud, huh?"

"And you," she responded, batting her eyelashes falsely, "are nothing but charming. What a pity that I'm taken."

"Why thank you, 'milady." The engineer smirked, wiping fresh engine grease off his palms. "I dare you to fall madly in love with me, Rae, that's the deal."

"That's not how this works, *Kyle*, that's not a bet either."

"I bet you it is." He clinked his tongue out at her. "Admit it, you're just infatuated. Can't say I blame you, with this physique."

"Get back to the bypass mainframe, tough guy," the mechanic snorted, shoving his face and leaving a sooty hand print behind.

He walked around like that all day. Though she hated to admit it, he managed to make her smile. That didn't happen for just anyone, unfortunately.

Sometimes, Kyle Wick adopts people. He just clicks with them, finds a like mind, and he stubbornly decides to never let them go.

Raven Reyes becomes one of his favored few when she, on their third joint project, spritzes the ex-head engineer in the face with blackened grease and Wick laughs so hard he can see stars. She doesn't apologize to the stunned man, nor does she feel bad when *he* so clearly invaded *her* breathing room and hadn't been watching where he was going.

"That," Wick wheezed out in between strained laughs, "was *fantastic*, Raven."

She throws a stray bolt at his shoulder. "Get up or it's you next, Wick."

The mechanic would never admit it - he knows her much better than she thinks - but he's her friend, and she's probably not even mad about it. She thinks he's the brightest idiot she knows. He thinks she's nothing less than absolutely astonishing.

"Kiss, marry, kill: Jaha, Kane, and Abby."

Raven pretended to consider that statement for longer than five seconds.

"Kiss Abby, marry Kane, kill Jaha," she answered, blowing a strand of hair out of her eyes.

He grimaced with much regret. "Of those three options, you pick *Kane*? Why?"

"Jaha's too old for me and I'm not into girls, so I doubt a marriage of convenience to our esteemed councilor Abby is going to work out. I guess I'd feel bad if she died, though, she's got a daughter our age. Really, there's only one way to go about it." She smirked. "Your turn. Me, my boyfriend, and head of engineering. Who gets knocked off first?"

"The boyfriend, obviously," he replied. "Can't murder my boss, but really it's a pride thing. I can't have my wife date another guy on the side, huh, princess?"

"First and last time you get to call me princess, sweetie."

"Babe, you can call me sweetie all you want," the man grinned, and when she smothered another smile behind a frown and a well-placed jab from a screwdriver, he took it in stride.

Raven hadn't been good at trusting people, but Wick was the kind of person you trusted easily, without warning or consent.

Maybe it had been his cheesy non-serious pickup lines or the way he fought with her endlessly (because he had, quite frequently and without a pinch of malice, though some sparking anger began to flash in his eyes whenever she'd mercilessly tear apart his invention concepts), but she found an unlikely ally in the blonde engineer. When they're assigned together, they trade stories and jokes and sips of coffee, smuggled in and paid for with traded ration cards.

She wouldn't say they were friends, exactly, because she didn't know how to make those, let alone keep them. Wick, though, was fascinated with her past, with *her* as a person, and every single time he learned more he acted as if some sort of secret had just been unearthed. At the time, she had had Finn, and he was supposed to be enough. Her and him, crusaders from the hall, two idiots against the world. Girls like her were lucky to sink their teeth into even that much.

However, if she were ever forced to name it out loud, she would reluctantly say that she enjoyed the company.

(So yes, they *were* friends despite the squabbling and squirming.

So what the hell did that have to do with anything?)

"Blue or red, Rae, you got six seconds left."

"I'm not picking, Wick, that's stupid."

"C'mon, I told you I'd chuck red out of the pantheon! Four seconds."

She grimaced with faux disdain. It's no good anymore - he can see right through it in a heartbeat. "Is this really necessary?"

"Blue or red, Reyes, quit stalling."

"Blue, alright? I'd rather never see the color blue again than never see red." He whale-moaned behind her; her taste was horrific and he regretted associating with her.

"Blue is supposed to be the color of the *sky*, Raven, the water by the sea. If I ever go to earth, I want to see miles and miles of *blue*, stretched out behind real grass and real trees, real sand beneath my feet." He shook his head, jolted from a rather pleasant fantasy he tried not to entertain himself with fully. "How *dare* you pick red, Raven, you utter hack."

"I just . . ." the brunette started, but when she realized what she was going to tell him, she paused. That was too much, even for whatever Wick happened to be. "I prefer red. Fires, brick walls, whatever. Pick a reason." Sensing he'd hit a nerve, he instead came over and gently ruffled her hair.

"Hey, red's pretty neat, too." He scrounges up a blueprint out of nowhere, brandishing it like a coveted prize. He poured his heart and soul into this latest schematic and it would truly be an honor to get it debunked by this clever girl with too much on her mind. "Want to nitpick, brainiac?"

Slowly, Raven grinned at him, ripping the paper from his hands. "It's a theoretical nightmare, Wick. Is it even made to operate outside zero g? Because a shuttle of this size and style would have to be propelled by . . ." When she smiles, something loosens in his chest. Good goes around, he supposes. But then, maybe it's just nice to focus on fixing up a mortal engine as opposed to a machine. She's a fine-tuned piece of machinery, that's for sure, and he'd give anything to learn how to make her tick.

(What she doesn't tell him until she accidentally stumbles into the engineer's block half-asleep is that her mother's eyes were blue. "Cornflower blue," she'd mused, dead to the world, "except for the drinks. When she drunk, it was . . . it was *grey*, greeeeeeey . . ." She trailed off, exhausted and clearly out of her conscious mind. He would call her behavior drunken, only Raven didn't drink a lot - probably because of her mother.

"C'mon, space ranger," he prodded gently, carefully picking her up and escorting her down the Ark. In the quiet hours of the night few remained awake, which was fortunate - fewer questions, fewer lies he'd have to make up. It was about as peaceful as life could get inside the metal monstrosity: a dark haired girl with warm breath musing across his chest, her thin, nimble fingers tucked against her breastbone. In any other scenario, he may have smiled.

When he finally got to her unit, Finn was waiting across the hall, pacing back and forth with worry. Wick had never really talked to Raven's beau, mostly because there was no reason to, but he came across as . . . alright. Adjusted, the right person at the right time. Nice enough, attentive enough, and if he treated Raven okay then there was no room for Wick to say anything.

Not that he had a right to say anything. Not that he wanted to.

"Thanks, I was beginning to think something might have happened," the other boy breathed, relief easing away some of his wrinkles. The dark haired welder cared about Rae, and that was all she needed at the moment. Someone to look out for her.

Though she might be sprawled out in his arms, Wick was not her someone.

"No problem," he managed, trying to display some semblance of sincerity. "Anything for our resident queen mechanic."

"Cornflowers," the young mechanic muttered, cheek tucked into the side of his shirt as he handed her off. "Lots and lots of blue . . ." Wick was hesitant to leave but her boyfriend seemed to have a handle on things. He knew where Raven kept her painkillers, what drawers her pajamas belonged in, how to put her into bed. Wick did not.

"Let's get you out of those boots, Raven," Finn soothingly told her, coaxing her back to moderate lucidity, and the engineer walked back to his quarters alone.)

Raven was always used to being alone. To someone else, that might sound melodramatic, but it wasn't so much depressing as it was an uncompromising fact of life. She wasn't good at making friends, nor was she good at keeping them. Finn stayed because she asked him to, because she laid out her intentions in no uncertain terms and told him that if he wanted to hang out with her he better decide if he was in or out.

Her comrades at the mechanical headquarters are not like that and neither are the polite acquaintances from whom she picks up supplies. Friends come and go, save Finn, and when someone looks into Raven's eyes and tells her, 'I'm here to stay', she nods and smiles and thinks to herself *liar*. However, if there's one thing she can say about Kyle Wick it's that he's not afraid to be brutally honest. He says, "Not bad, Raven," and the brunette can believe him. She doesn't know if he really *cares* about her, not the way her father's stories always led her to believe people should behave, but he's a someone who cheers her up whenever Finn isn't around. He notices when she cuts her hair and he delights in her squeals whenever he manages to get the jump on her (which isn't often, admittedly, so perhaps some pride is deserved). He's the sort of person that could make a girl get used to being less alone, and that's dangerous. Up in the Ark, death lingers around every corner and she can't focus on Finn+Raven and work and living while trying to puzzle out someone else, too.

Still, he understands her, and that's more than she could hope to ask for from a boy like him with a smirk like *that*. Wick is a good person, despite being . . . well, despite being *Wick*. She doesn't know how serious he is or what he hopes to get from her, but willingly or not she's along for the ride. She'll bite; they are, impossibly, friends.

Ish.

She walked into the room and it's - he can't help but *notice* her in a way that has nothing to do with being seen. She never does anything, never lets him have an inch of leeway, but his eyes go to her all the same. Sure, he checks her out, but he keeps his hands to himself because it's really not like that at all. He sees unexpected strength, spirit, humor, and a dash of brilliance,

and when she teases him - no one really gets a jab in like Raven Reyes. So whenever she's rerouted over to engineering for the day, he makes note of it in his schedule and remembers to take the late shift.

"Haven't seen you in a while, Grease Monkey," he told her casually, trying not to let her know just how fond he'd grown of these joint assignments. (God, he *lived* for them, but he'd never let *her* know that, of course - she had a boyfriend, after all.)

"I guess not, huh?" she sighed, eyes glossy. There was no sniffing, no idle hands or sloping backs, just the lack of an insult, and that alone was enough to tell him something was wrong. He scrutinized her face, eyes narrowing at the points, and he saw the first crack in the facade: a smudge of eyeliner on the side of her temple, almost invisible, brushed away hastily by the pad of her thumb.

"Are you okay, Rae?" he asked, attempting to remain pragmatic and at least pretend he still gave a flying frick about the maintenance tunnel repairs they were slated to do.

"I just . . . it was a day, Wick, and I just cried a bit, it's fine. I'm still able to work today so don't worry about carrying my ass." At that moment, the engineer had to sit down. Somehow, his companion had cried earlier today and some utter screw up penciled her in for an assignment. Raven could *cry*, period, and forget to wipe away the evidence.

That wasn't Raven - Raven was hard as nails, fierce with words and with wrenches and with wires. Raven Reyes did not cry, and Wick was not afraid to bash some heads in to keep it that way.

He set down his tools and inched over to her much like one approaches a wounded animal - not that anyone on the Ark knew what that was like, of course, but they'd all seen documentaries. There is fear there, the possibility of a final kill, but succeed he must. No one should ever leave a hurting Reyes to her own devices.

"Raven Reyes," he spoke firmly, gripping her shoulders and practically breaking her neck back into position (she was doing her damndest not to meet his eyes), "you are a horrible liar." At first she bit her lip, clenching and unclenching her hand, but then she smiled wobbly, skin stretched far too thin.

"Finn's in the box," she replied, and when her eyes water over this time he is present and ready for it. They sink to the floor, his arms pulled tight around her, and though she doesn't completely go to pieces he still feels the dry heaves of her lungs, knows that a few splotches of mascara are going to remain on his shirt until next laundry day. She does get up, eventually, and stiffly stretches out her limbs - the floor was cold and uncomfortable, inhospitable in most capacities. He followed after and warmed her up a package of hot chocolate, the old powdery kind he'd been saving for his birthday. She doesn't, in fact, get much work done, despite her many protests, but he convinced her to lie back and take careful sips while he pounded nails into the barren walls. He wouldn't say she was all better, nor was she necessarily broken to begin with, but by the end of the afternoon Raven was far more stable, more grounded and with a renewed sharpness in her gaze.

"Wick, I -"

"My pleasure, Raven," he shrugged her off, handing her one of his flannels. "You'll need this. The heating systems are getting repaired tomorrow and it's going to be freezing tonight. Promise you won't get into too much trouble without my thorough supervision?"

With a lopsided, almost real grin, she slid into the sleeves. Normally she'd protest to this blatant favoritism, but normally they pretended to be at each other's throats. Sometimes you needed a tangible reminder that someone was on your side, that you weren't all alone in an unfeeling universe. He could be hers, if she wanted him to be.

"No promises, you complete tool," she called back, and he didn't see her on his shift schedule for another three weeks, after which the mechanic seemed infinitely better. He never got back his plaid flannel, though, and he never pressed for it either.

(There are few people in life Kyle Wick will not hesitate to protect and even fewer he will sacrifice for thoughtlessly, without even knowing what he's doing. Up until that point he'd never given up a rationed bag of cocoa mix he'd been squirreling for five months or a flannel his dad gave him when he was nine and the cuffs pooled over his wrists, but for one Raven Reyes with a beaten-down smirk and tired eyes, he hadn't blinked.

That was the first time he seriously considered the fact that he might be in trouble.)

The first few months without Finn are torture, absolutely devastating to Raven. She gets a handle on it after a week or two has gone by, is able to shove it down into a drawer with all her other regrettable memories, but there are still moments when the creeping guilt escapes its careful box and screeches '*your fault your fault your fault all your fault*'. She visits, because she should, because Finn at least deserves that, but she knows that he would not be held if he hadn't tried to surprise her. It is all the more crushing when she leaves his holding cell and lets out a gasp of relief, ever so grateful to be free despite not being worthy of the luxury.

Raven Reyes suffers because here is another example of someone she loves, hurting, without reprieve. And though it's not entirely her blame to carry, she was not enough to save him.

It's times like these when she needs levity, work, and an excuse to scream. She's very fortunate, then, that she's more frequently assigned to one Kyle Wick; with him, she often partakes in all three.

Wick normally doesn't get involved with girls on a more serious note. It's not that he sleeps around a lot, either - he's not exactly a womanizer, though he's had a few casual flings to his name. But the thing is, he never saw the point in falling in love, going through all the old-fashioned courting rituals of an era long past, and then getting married and having Kyle Wick the Third and dying at age fifty. In the Ark, people die daily. You look around their suffocating spaceship and you see low oxygen radars and crumbling machinery and dwindling rations. Wick cannot afford to fall for some nice girl and live out a half-baked dream when it's hard enough just to take care of himself, to ensure the survival of the ship. He cannot bring a baby into this world and ask it to be grateful. He's not that selfish.

It's too hard is really what it boils down to. How is marriage going to fix anything, and how is he going to be able to keep going on when his hypothetical beau leaves or dies or fails to keep up with him and his expectations? He doesn't need another hole to patch up; it's just not *fair*. Wick has endured enough pain to last a lifetime, thank you very much. He will not mess this up because there won't be any relationship *to* mess up.

And then Raven Reyes showed up and now she's getting better, getting stronger again. He thinks a big part of her emotional recovery is snorting at his cheesy jokes, leaning on his side when she's exhausted, complaining about his latest inventions. Regardless of whether or not she knows it, the unsinkable Raven Reyes needs him.

Whenever she awards his efforts with a smile, no matter how small, something flips in his stomach. Something needy, pulsing, that wants to be let out. His hands go sweaty and his ears grow hot and suddenly he's smiling back without any conscious thought.

Oh no, he thinks to himself as he looks deep into his bathroom mirror, *I need her, too*.

(It was one thing to acknowledge that she was pretty, talented, witty, and strong. It was another thing to start to like his attractive mechanic friend in a way that was slightly more than platonic. *Need* is a whole other ballpark, one he was quite certain he never wanted to enter. It's too easy to strike out on an open field, and he just can't take those sorts of risks. Raven never got the memo; she's lording over the pitch, waiting to pull a fast one on him.

She's really something, isn't she?)

When she launches off into space, she tries her best to concentrate on Finn, on the ground, on Abby's message. Instead, in her fiery vessel, she finds herself thinking about all the people she's left behind. It was her father's home, her mother's (not the drunken slag she became but the proud woman she used to be, the one with a mighty laugh and happy blue eyes, the one who loved stories and magic), and Finn's parents'. There was all her acquaintances in the mechanics' chambers and all the neighbors with small children who played in the hall when the evening came. She remembers being seven and alone and being seventeen and a natural mechanic, the youngest in decades. She recalls touching the stars in a fit of adrenaline and then doing it a thousand times over through legal channels, how the guilt would slip off her shoulders for a few seconds whenever she zipped up a spacesuit.

At the end of all that Raven thinks about all the plans over the next week that she was supposed to complete, all the repairs she will not be there to do. With a crooked smirk she thinks about Kyle Wick, rewiring the central control system all on his own. *He's going to whine all night*, she muses, *about how I stood him up*. The ridiculous thought is almost enough to make her wish she could turn back. In that moment, surrounded by molten metal and the infinite black of the cosmos, she realizes with a start that the person she will miss the most is probably an infuriating engineer.

(His father's flannel is still tucked into her bag. Though she didn't think to grab it, she stowed it away without even second-guessing it, instinctual as a sigh.

It feels good when she's on the ground. Nights are cold and Raven is in dire need of a warm embrace; somehow, Wick has saved her ass again.)

"Where is Raven Reyes?" he asked the scheduling manager. Wick, though trying to hide it, is mentally besides himself. Raven is not the type to miss an assignment, even if she's dying. "She was supposed to be blocked in with me for core system repair and reprogramming this morning. She's usually very punctual."

She's usually very punctual. God, he's a real tool when he's angry. Or jealous. Or bitter.

Or just scared out of his mind, as the case may be.

"Reyes, Raven," the distracted woman echoed, numbly clicking her fingers across her tablet. With a frown and a crease of her brow, she showed him the results. "It says her contract was reneged for the day. She's either been called back in by the council or the mechanical head for reassignment or she's out of commission. Either way, she's not showing up to work. You're on your own today, kid." She looked him up and down with mild sympathy, pursing her lips. "Do you want to file a complaint or coordinate with the mechanics for a new partner? I can have someone pulled in for an hour or two."

"Reneged," he swallowed. Wick took a step back.

(Breathe, he has to remind himself. In, out, in, out, all the air rushes through like clockwork. A brilliant machine, the human body.

If only his chest wasn't so tight and heavy all the sudden, so full of horrible and consuming worry.)

"I don't need another partner, thanks," he told her, trying to regain careful control of his lungs. Instead of working, Kyle Wick took his first off day in months, probably to the great disdain of some other reassigned engineer. He toured all the common areas, her quarters inside and out of the mechanic's wing, her workshop, her astronaut prep zone, and the less than legal back alleys of the ship. Raven Reyes had vanished without a trace, and it hollowed out a very specific, very vital section of his heart. Somehow, no Raven meant no more illicit smiles, no more not-so-fake-flirting now reserved only for her, no more shredded blueprints. And the absence of all those things meant, quite simply, no more Kyle Wick.

(When he does eventually find out where she has been sent, he still dreams of earth. He's always wanted to touch the dirt, to roll down a hill and climb up a tree and see if snow is as cold and pillowy as the stories say. He wanted to see if the starry sky was as never-ending and gleaming as he'd been told it was and if skinny dipping in moonlight really did turn water and shadows into a second skin. He wanted so *much*, so much that his senses would be full of it, so much that every glance was a new adventure, a symphony of sound and sights and splendor.

After knowing she's on the ground, he also dreams of campfires with two sticks roasting over the flames, climbing willowy trees with familiar laughter coming from down below, brushing a thumb across her cheek. She's taken, but that doesn't matter too much to his brain, which

insists upon these impossible things with a yearning rivaling just about anything he's wanted before.

He thinks, just once, about tangling his fingers in a cinnamon colored hand, passing her a coffee with the other. She'd be sitting at her desk, exhausted and wrapped up in one of his old jackets, and he'd come up behind her and produce the caffeine and rub her shoulder and just *grab it*, because her fingers were there, because he wanted to. Because she'd smile through all the exhaustion and her pinkie would glide over his and it would just be as simple as Raven and Wick, just taking her hand.

Following thoughts like that, landing on earth becomes less of a distant fantasy and more of a goal, solid and unyielding. If Reyes is down there, he'll just have to chase her. Kyle Wick is many things, but a quitter is not one of them, and he won't quit on her.)

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Hi I forgot to post this over on AO3. It's long and probably riddled with typos. I'm so sorry.

But now I have the satisfaction of looking at the 'chapter 2 of 2 posted' notification and pretending I've accomplished something else today, so there's that.

Wicken is cool. I gave up on the 100 long ago, but I remember really liking that ship.

I don't know, but here's this. Thanks to anyone who read and reviewed the first part, it means a lot.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Raven chose Finn because he was the boy across the hall who snuck her sandwiches and asked how her day was. She chose him because he decided to be her friend long before she deserved one, and she chose him because she said, "stay," and he listened.

Finn chose Clarke because she was brave and beautiful and tried her best to keep things together on a hostile terrain, despite constant failure. Finn chose Clarke because she was measured and logical and *there* in ways Raven couldn't be. Finn chose Clarke because he found someone who he truly clicked with, who wanted all the same things and said all the right, reasonable words. The second Clarke fell, he did not hesitate to catch her.

Raven and Finn put together don't have that. But Raven has her wits, her body and mind, and her endless supply of grit, so she lets him go. He might be the boy she thought she loved, but he's not *in* love with her, and that makes all the difference.

She gives them her blessing, more or less, and tries her damndest to forget silly little things like first kisses and her hand in his and the meaning behind carved metal ravens. It will be hard to come back from knowing all that, a lifetime's worth of love, but she'll survive. Out here, she needs all the friends she can get, and she won't let Finn slip through her fingers because of a stupid breakup. After all, she's still his best friend, and he'll be needing some solid advice in handling a strong girl like Clarke. Heaven knows he's a hopeless case.

The Ark hits the ground for the first time in almost two hundred years.

Everything is different now.

Somewhere, a blonde girl thrills at the idea of reuniting with her mother and a reckless boy recalls days of serving as a soldier, a dark haired warrior clutches her grounder boyfriend a little tighter, and a bloodied fighter with a bird around her neck wonders if this is where things start to get better. Soon, he will see her again.

Soon.

When he finally sees Raven Reyes, he is shocked by how beaten down and *tired* she is. She's still a knockout - she always is - but now she is muted, her lips drawn in a flat line. His resident mechanic is limping, her boots are grimy and ripped, and her eyes are dim and measured like he's never seen them before. The world has chewed her up and spit her out and she has been through her own hell incarnate. Wick hadn't expected to see her so defeated, so vulnerable and helpless. Even when Finn was locked away she hadn't seemed so easy to break, so hard to read.

If he could, he would scoop out every single thing that ever made her cry, fill her brain with nothing but stardust and warm, golden memorabilia. He wishes she would have had the simple, if not unfairly constructed, childhood that he experienced, or even just a better family. He wishes she hadn't had to fight so many battles by herself, that it hadn't cost her so much to save so many others. He wishes he could have been the one to meet her across the hall; it would have been so much simpler, then, wouldn't it?

He does not mention the leg. He does not mention the fact that Finn is no longer dating her.

The Raven he knows is not this depressing shell. So he does what he often does for her; he swallows helium to make her laugh, make her smile, and gives her some work to do. She smirks and calls him stupid and *there she is*, out of faith but not out of spirit.

Wick will do almost anything to put his favorite mechanic back together, and he's not going to stop until she's all in one piece.

(Later, he starts drawing up schematics for a new leg brace. She'll tear it apart - of course she will, she wouldn't be Raven if she wasn't basically a monster - but he'll still design one and stubbornly insist that she wear it. That's loyalty; annoying someone until they realize you're on their side. Stuck to the skin like a fever you can't sweat out.)

Of all the things to remain constant in her life once the Ark crashes, Raven never could have thought that the one unshakable, unchangeable rock would be Wick. Wick is the smartest idiot she knows. He is spontaneous yet genius in all the ways she simultaneously admires and scoffs at, and he continues to push her to her limits with each new invention or gadget.

Wick knows her, though, and he pulls her back when she's swimming out too far. She finds it incredibly annoying, how he understands her physical drawbacks better than her, how he can just look at her and sense that she's about to do something stupid. Raven's never been held accountable for in this way - it's completely exhausting. Is this what it's like to have an overbearing mother? Raven supposes she wouldn't know.

After a while, she must relent, because he is quite possibly the one good thing about everyone being on earth. She hadn't realized just how much she missed her resident engineer. He's good at grounding her, isn't he? But in a way that makes her feel lighter.

"Your brace is a piece of crap," the mechanic tells him anyways, stubbornly steadfast.

Later, he smirks in a way that's barely a smirk. "I knew you'd say that."

She wouldn't be surprised if he had.

When he sees her, it isn't that his heart trips over itself, because it doesn't. It only stutters slightly before grasping for words.

Anything more implies love, and now would be a terrible time, wouldn't it? She is Finn-less, and she has to watch him chase after Clarke. It must be a maddening sort of torture, and no matter how much she claims she's accepted it, he knows it must sting.

If someone was lucky enough to claim the heart of Raven Reyes, they'd have to be an idiot to give it up. They'd be able to have it all: all of her grins, all of her fire, all of her care, all of her embraces, all of her kisses, and all of her love, plain and simple and explosive in its force. Raven loves people like she'll never let them go. Once she has you, you're hers forever. It takes a lot of love to allow someone to leave, to allow them to find someone new, someone who isn't you. Wick knows that some deep, unbidden part of herself is raging a savage song of, *Why wasn't I good enough? Why am I never good enough for anyone to stay?*

It's enough to cleave anyone in two, but she remains standing and whole, despite everything.

Maybe loving her wouldn't be the worst thing in the world. In fact, it might just be the best.

But she is still hurting. His job is to make her smile, not to love her.

So instead of pursuing a (single) mechanic, he calls out to her, "You messed up, Reyes! Your input valve is lined up wrong!" She storms over, somehow all the more intimidating with her brace, a girl of mist and fury.

"Wick, you complete imbecile, no I did *not*," she seethes, but her irises dance, happy for once to be told she's incorrect.

The engineer hopes desperately that it is enough.

When Finn dies, Clarke weeps for the boy she loves, gone down the wrong path and now facing the consequences.

Raven Reyes weeps for that boy, the one she had once thought she had a future with, but mostly for the child she met across the hall, so full of warmth and kindness and wonder. That person made life bearable; he gave her not just the resources but the reasons to survive. She weeps for the best friend she'd lost somewhere along the way and the man he might have one day become. What if she never wanted to touch the stars? He wouldn't have been in the Box, he wouldn't have become one of the one hundred, and he wouldn't have fallen for Clarke. He would have been normal, perhaps have even had a normal life on the ground once they landed.

But then, if she hadn't had a dream, she never would have had a reason to launch herself out of a shuttle. The people here would have died without her. There would be no ground to land on, not without their go-ahead, and everyone would be dead. If Raven and Finn were the catalysts, then it was all unavoidable. Finn had to die.

She starts crying anew in light of all that - it may not be her fault, but Raven will miss the old him. The dreamer who turned scraps of discarded metal into beauty, the friend who could read her like an open book, the one who gave her outer space for her birthday.

Throughout it all, Kyle Wick holds her, never telling her tears to cease, never complaining about his shirt, never insisting that she chin up and bare it. He simply puts strong, firm hands around her, hands that say they aren't going anywhere. He rubs small circles into her shoulder and, when she starts to eventually calm and sinks to her knees, whispers, "I know you're hurting. I know it's painful. He was your best friend. He was a part of you. But you are going to live. He would want you to live. You're too good and too strong and too damn stubborn to give up now. You are going to do incredible things, Reyes, and you are going to be happy. Finn would want you to be happy." She clutches at the engineer's shirt too tight and hiccups in deep breaths of air and tries to nod. It's a wobbly, lopsided thing, but his eyes look nearly saturated with relief.

"Thank you," she finds it within herself to whisper back, tucking her head into the crook of his neck, for the first time of the night feeling the chill of the dewy grass and the dark settle on her shoulders like a cloak. It's late. Nearly everyone else is gone, Clarke shepherded away by her family and friends an hour ago. Raven can't bring herself to be humiliated, but she marvels at the fact that someone can be there one minute and gone the next. Like a magic trick gone wrong.

"It's my pleasure, Raven," he replies softly, finally pulling her to her feet and then picking her up gently, one continuous fluid motion. He feels a strong sense of déjà vu and recalls the last time Finn made her break down.

"I can walk," she protests halfheartedly, but he shakes his head.

"Of course you can," the man agrees, "but you don't have to. And right now you don't want to. I'm happy to help." She wipes her nose again with the back of her hand, another tear rolling its way across her cheek rebelliously.

Raven, as a rule, doesn't like relying on people. She doesn't like the idea that she can't do everything on her own. It turns her insides, the thought that she's entirely at someone else's mercy. Weakness is not befitting of girls who grow up parent-less and wild.

When Wick holds her, it doesn't feel like a pity favor. He never makes any compassion look like pity. He gives so much of himself to everything he does; it's a sign of strength and security, not a bleeding heart. It's the hallmark of a good person.

"Okay," she sighs, loosely wrapping her arms around his neck. "Okay." It's not really surrender if you're not really losing, is it?

The inventor settles her into his bed, tucking her in like her father might have, once upon a dream. It doesn't occur to her to feel anything but safe as she sleeps through her grief, not when Wick is sitting in a silent vigil by her side.

He is gentle with her, afterwards.

Usually Wick treats her like she's indomitable, because she is, but occasionally he is reminded that Raven Reyes is only human. But his version of going easy on her isn't coddling or an insistence of sleep and warm meals. His version of gentle is pulling her out of bed every day and asking her, "What do you want to do today?"

She'll look at him, every morning, incredulously. "You've got a few screws loose, you know that?"

"C'mon, Grease Monkey, there's got to be something," he'll say, tugging it out of her with a sideways, sincere smile. "We've got work, but after, you're not going back to bed. You've got too much world to see."

"I hate being productive," she sighs, pulling herself up, and throughout the day, she'll go through the motions, a shadow of the brilliant dark haired beauty he knows. Eventually, though, she remembers how much she loves what she does. He lets her go about her tinkering without nitpicking (except for when absolutely necessary, and half the time he's awarded with the twitching of her lips - the ghost of a smile). And then, near the end of their assignments: "I guess I've never seen a real rainbow before. An earth rainbow, I mean. It's pretty stupid, I know, but . . . no, I guess I don't have a reason. I always thought it was something my dad would enjoy watching with my mom. He was this big optimist, a real 'silver lining' guy, and I . . . he'd love it." She draws her knees to her chest, fiddling with her necklace absentmindedly. "If I ever see everybody again, after my life is over, then I'd want to tell them how it looked. It's not the same, but it's better than nothing." Wick wants to squeeze this girl. He wants to know how someone with so much hurt and so much pain can make it through all of it and still remain selfless, independent, and genuinely good. He wants to take away every bad thing that she's ever had happen and crush it in his palms, banishing it to ashes.

Instead, he settles next to her on the ground, slumped into herself, and says, "Not stupid at all, Raven. Not even a little bit." She rolls her eyes, fixing him with a soul-searching look, and he extends a hand. "Let's go. I have an idea."

In the newly built garden of Arkadia, a rudimentary irrigation system was being installed. Luckily, the day was clear and bright, not a cloud in the sky. Though the adults around him shot them disapproving glares, Wick disconnects a valve and, with the press of his foot angling it, send a stream of water into the airy afternoon. His pant leg is soaked, but there it is: a hazy, ill-formed, organic earth-bound rainbow. Its colors seem to flicker and blur with the jet, some parts are easier to see than others, and it doesn't last for long, as Wick does feel some guilt on behalf of the people around them actually working and soon twists the piping back into its proper place. But the look on miss mechanic's face - an awed, surprisingly happy grin - is worth it all.

Every day he does the same thing. Every day he refuses to leave her alone, refuses to let her stay in bed and feel sorry for herself, or fall into a deep lapse of depression - she deserves more than that. Finn, troubled as he was, would want the very best for her. Wick wants her to continue living long enough to see all that's out there.

One day they find a bird in the long grass of rolling hills, and another they skip stones. At night, they sneak outside to look at the beautiful open expanse of space from the perspective of earth, the moon a halo of light around her ruffled bedhead wisps of hair. They're all things she wants to do yet is reluctant to say, not knowing quite what to do with a whole new world of scents and sights and sounds to explore. But doing them gives her something to look forward to, something good to hang onto, and he starts to see her return to herself.

Raven Reyes doesn't trust easily, nor does she surrender herself to someone else's care so effortlessly. However, Wick sneaks in and distracts her thoroughly and she finds, despite a lot of crying, despite a budding pit in her stomach, and despite her losses, she is able to smile when he is around. Occasionally, she'll laugh at a particularly terrible and insultingly nerdy joke, and his irises light up like he's seeing the sun shine from behind the clouds for the first time in a thousand years.

It's a powerful thing, that look. She imagines a look like that is the reason why he had a reputation with the ladies.

Luckily, she remains immune. Mostly.

Happiness feels wrong when there's so much to be grieving over. A lot of lives have been lost, and not just Finn's. There are still people missing, and it's taking a heavy emotional toll on everyone. But just this once, she is owed a bit of happiness, so when that afternoon she tells Wick, "I've never blown on a dandelion before. My dad said they're supposed to grant wishes," he replies with, "I bet the hills just outside have plenty." She allows herself to feel excited, to feel like a little girl who still believes in unadulterated joy and magic, and to feel extreme gratitude for the man who works with her every day. He doesn't make the sadness disappear, but he shows her the ways in which she can still fight against it, and Raven doesn't know what she'd do without that.

"Argon," he shouts out impossibly, cocking a smile. "Are we just naming noble gases?"

"No, *helium*," she repeats incredulously, and oh, look at that, she's found the solution to their latest problem yet again.

Damn, she's on fire.

He loves seeing her eyes light up like they used to, when she is convinced of her own worth and utility and not thinking about Finn.

He desperately longs to press his lips to the corner of her mouth, to sear a mark where it will stick.

But he's no monster, and she's still reeling from the death of her best friend, and the timing isn't right.

(When it is, though, he vows, I'm taking my chance. Life is too damn short to worry about a near miss.)

When she's excited, she throws her arms around his neck, laughing and soaring internally and simply *proud* of herself in a way she hasn't been in weeks.

That's when Raven senses his breath ghosting over her lips, mingling with hers, and feels the press of his forehead mirroring hers. They're close. Close enough to kiss, if she wanted to. The only people she's ever let get that close are a few casual hookups and Finn, when they were devoted. For the first time, she recognizes a stirring in her gut, a tug of desire in her stomach. If he were to slot his mouth to hers, back her against the table in her jubilation, she would let him, surprisingly enough.

In lieu of Finn, Wick may just be her best friend. This in and of itself is slightly surprising; yes, he is the person who has steadfastly supported her and made her smile the widest and most frequently. Yes, he can read her like a book when he wants to and yes, he is a good human being with similar interests and a drive to rival her own. Yes, he aspires to give her homemade rainbows and dandelion wishes, and yes, she can admit that she'd be lost without him. However, he's *Kyle Wick*, the idiot who faux-flirted with her on their first mandatory assignment, the idiot that thinks stoichiometry is a turn on. Raven never expected that guy, the not-so-suave 'I'm the best engineer in our generation' would also be the guy to hold her while she cries her eyes out. But he is, and she'd be an idiot to lose that.

So she pulls away, quickly, and tries to pretend that she wasn't thinking about how his lips might feel moving against hers.

(It happens again and again and again; when she's at her happiest and most celebratory, her first instinct is to grab somebody. When you live alone, a hand to hold becomes a luxury. Raven seeks him out, throws welcome arms around him until they're tangled, and notices how close they twine together. He gets bolder every time, willing himself not to make a move, but she sees the struggle in his eyes when he runs his nose across hers, the beginning tease of something more to come that simply can't be made good on.

She thinks she likes him. Quite a bit. More than she's liked anyone in years.

It's absolutely terrifying. The mechanic thinks she might just die from the strain of it all. She's lived so long without asking for anything, but now that she *wants* someone, it's suddenly the hardest thing she's ever had to pass up.

Alone is fine. Alone protects her. Remember the last time she kissed her best friend and asked him to stay?)

He wonders when exactly one of them is going to break. Wick doesn't know if the timing is perfect, or if Finn would have cared, or how much she's thought about it, but everyone who

sees them together shares a very pointed, knowing look, the kind that speaks volumes: *You aren't fooling anyone.*

He's not trying to, even if she doesn't see it that way. The engineer hopes, far harder than he has before, that one day she will see just how far gone he is. How it isn't a joke or a fling or some false confusion, but a real and genuine thing that stalls in his chest.

Soon. Soon. Something has to give.

It's stupid, she knows. Raven shouldn't feel at home in someone's arms, in someone's grin, in someone's voice. It's all too juvenile, and she's a practical person. That sort of doe-eyed romance was never for her, so why should she linger on it? Because she's convinced herself that this man is different?

People don't just stay because they want to. They have to be chased down and asked, and she's so tired of chasing. Having to ask Wick to stay would kill her. She'd never want to force someone to love her just because she feels . . .

Well, she feels like *this*. Warm, like her insides are slowly melting. Bright, like her leg still works and she can do anything. Cared for, in a way she's barely felt before. He pulls it all to the surface, and the way he looks at her - she swears he feels it too. Pure electricity, born of strange circumstances and improbable people.

(Oh hell.

Is she already in too far?)

The sex is mind-blowing. She tastes like sweat and determination and *Raven* and the noises she makes drive him crazy. She's much better than he'd ever imagined she could be, and his ingenious brain has dedicated hours to predicting the exact ways she'd arch, the sloping trail of her spine, the circle of her mouth as it curves into an 'o'. Her nails are on his back and her lips are to his ear and when she whispers, it's his name, breathy and wanting.

It's *his* name, rolling off her clever, scathing tongue. *His*, and Wick has no idea why or how or what made her change her mind, but she'd said she was certain. She was sure that he was what she was going to take tonight, and he was more than happy to let her.

She is unlike anyone else. Being with her, next to her, inside of her is unlike having any other woman with him. She's ruined Wick for all the rest, and he hopes she knows that, really *knows* that.

She falls asleep pressed into the side of his shoulder, thoroughly debauched and exhausted, wrapped up in his sheets. He glances down at her, tucked so neatly against him, and wonders how life would be like if he got to keep her. If Raven let him love her for the rest of their lives.

(That's a long time to love just one person, isn't it?

If it's her, he doesn't think he'll mind.)

But just as soon as he has her, he loses her. The next day he sees her tug on all her clothing, and he realizes that this is what she does to most people. As soon as she starts to love them, starts to let them in, she runs, because everyone she's ever loved with all of her lion-fierce heart has left. Her father was the victim of a horrible accident, her mother became a shameless alcoholic, and Finn was stabbed through the heart by Clarke. Her track record is dismal, and now she's deemed him close enough to do damage. If she lets herself love him, he concludes bitterly, she'll be preparing for the next disaster. And she doesn't want Wick to become a new Finn.

He wouldn't be, though, because Kyle Wick is many things, but a quitter isn't one of them. He would not stay with her just to leave when another offer comes along. He never wanted a wife and children and the whole domestic nine yards, but now he's thinking that a future, a real future with someone, may not be so bad. If it were anybody else, it wouldn't work, but it's *them*. They work well together. They are a great team.

"If you want to do this, I'm in," he says out loud, finally, though it comes out quieter than he wants it to. "But I'm not going to play games, you know."

She doesn't quite know what to say, and those two quintessential instincts - to stay or to flee - war in the pits of her eyes. There is enough fondness in them for her to want to come back, and he can see it clear as day. She wants to trust him. She wants to be able to give in.

That's probably why it hurts all the more to see her leave.

(It's like a knife to the gut, watching her slowly walk away.

What hurts worse is having to work with her, breathe her in like air again, knowing what her moans sound like, or how her hair slipping through his fingers felt.

What pains him worst of all is having her act, over and over again, like it all meant nothing. Business as usual.

They do have a war to fight, after all.

Man up, Kyle. What would your namesake say?)

She wants to apologize. Wants to say that it wasn't just a fling, wasn't just because she was lonely. Wants to grab his face and pull it down to hers and collide her mouth with his, desperate for more. Raven likes him, she really does. She had been trying to be brave, to just chase after what she wanted, but she'd forgotten that fear is a very powerful motivator. Strong enough to remind her that people leave, and Wick is still just human, and it hurts less to fall apart if she's the one who flees first.

It's better this way, even if his eyes beg her to come back.

She tries to pretend it means less than it does.

"I liked you better before I slept with you," she says aloud when his subtext gets dangerously close to the problem just beneath the surface. It cuts like a knife, which is just what she intended.

(It hurts both parties involved all the same. She's just a much better actress.)

When the explosion occurs and the bullets fly, he curls himself around her. It's not something he actively remembers thinking about; it's more than life on the Ark had little meaning. Wick had never wanted to grow his family because the thought seemed akin to a life sentence. After a while, metal walls feel more nauseating than familiar. It's enough to give anyone claustrophobia. He'd worked and slaved and invented and schemed and done everything right, become the best engineer in the program, and then that was it. He was waiting for his own grave. He'd seethed silently but finally made peace with the fact that all life had to offer was a better job title and a sense of irony.

Raven had reminded him that there's more out there. She had dreams, big ones, enough of them stowed away inside her to cleave the ship in two. When he talks to her, acts like a child around her, inevitably pulls a loose, unencumbered smile from her lips, it places some inscrutable feeling at the forefront of his chest, his eyes, his heart. She continually shows him that there's something to live for, because being alive when she's at his side, or berating him, or even just saying his name, is somehow thrilling. He never knows what will happen next. He wants her like she's the thing he's been waiting since forever to find. Without her, the world loses some of its color. His mind is less quick, and he doesn't flirt shamelessly with other women like he used to. Wick has been completely taken in, somehow or some way, and he can't recall when or why, save that Raven's the most incredible, invincible person he's ever had the pleasure of meeting. He doesn't think he can survive without that, not now that he's had a taste and knows how much *better* she makes him.

So yes, he curls himself around her, a perfect human shield. Wick reasons that, if he has to choose between dying bloodily or making it out alive but Raven-less, there's really no choice at all.

The blonde engineer thinks, for a grand ten seconds afterwards, that that might have been the worst of it. They'll still need to escape, yes, but they survived the explosion. Raven is alive, and mostly whole, and if she's still alive then he's able to keep going. If she's living, he has to keep going for her. She'll need all the help she can get.

But then, they are taken into a very specific room and chained to the walls.

"What's going on?" he mumbles aloud, smelling the blood and the latex and the sickening sterility of the operation table, ominously lording over the space. Fear streaks up his spine, frigid and potent. "What's going on?" he asks again, louder and far more afraid.

"They're human taxidermists," a man nearby replies, urgency in his tone and terror in his eyes, which well with telling tears. "They're cutting us open for our bone marrow. Spinal extractions."

"Bastards!" Wick spits, mostly to himself, looking at all the faces they were unable to save. How many fathers, mothers, teenagers, *humans* had they already gotten to? How many more had to die? These were people he knew, people he grew up with, and he feels an immense sense of failure in this moment. Helplessly held in the back, about to watch the next unfortunate soul be strapped down to a sanitized table, dissected like an animal. Wick wants to scream, to howl at the injustice of it all. He wants to rip limb from limb.

And then he sees that a horrified Raven Reyes is being placed on the table, wrangled into position for a perfect injection, and he cannot hold back. All he sees is red.

"No, no, take me," he finds himself saying out loud, a statement of fact. He soon remembers desperation. "TAKE ME! DON'T TOUCH HER! DON'T YOU FUCKING TOUCH HER!" The man loses track of what escapes his mouth - profanities, pleads, prayers - as he kicks and writhes and struggles. He has never felt hatred so intense, fear so consuming, as he's feeling right now.

She doesn't get to go out like this. Not now. Not like this.

She's too young, too smart, too good, too *Raven* for that.

God, he loves her.

He loves her he loves her he *loves* her, and he hasn't been able to say it.

Not like this, though. Not ever like this.

So Wick continues to fight with all he has in him, because she is worth fighting for.

While she waits for death, terrified on an cold tabletop, she thinks.

About Finn, about her father, about everyone she knows.

All about love, but mostly about nothing in particular.

(Raven Reyes is a horrible liar.

Specifically, she thinks about this: As the explosion knocked them to the floor, him crumbling just a few inches away, she has no idea how she is going to walk out of this facility alive. Her leg is throbbing. She faintly hears him comment on her brace, but that seems inconsequential.

Raven doesn't want to die. She realizes, of all the times to be left alone or left behind, this one would be the worst. Because it makes sense, doesn't it? Wick, despite taking the brunt of the impact for her, has a better chance of surviving if he makes a break for it on his own. It's a logical conclusion.

Once, just once, she wants to be enough for someone to stay. She wants staying to make no sense at all, to be the worst possible decision you could make - she is a mess, and an orphan, and a wild girl who is simultaneously too much and not enough - but she wants someone to

stay anyways. In spite of all the reasons why they shouldn't, she wants someone to love her like her father loved her mother, like Finn loved Clarke. Raven never thought that she'd want that sort of relationship so badly until she just brushed death's hands, felt his breath settle on her neck.

She never got to love someone properly. She never got to live like she wanted to, effortlessly trusting in the people she chooses. The mechanic, more than anything else, craves the chance to have that. But she'll only be able to feel those feelings if she doesn't die here and now, and she couldn't bear being left behind. Not when she's finally found a reason to change.

As if reading her mind, she hears his words: "No, no way," he tells her, voice firm and commanding, "don't even say it. I'm not going anywhere without you."

It's with relief that Raven replies, "What I was going to say is, please don't leave me." All of her is tired and aching and ready to fall back into the concrete. She feels selfish for wanting him to stay, selfish for not insisting he save himself, but this can't be where it ends. Not yet.

That guilt slides away, though, when she looks into his eyes again. For all their tension, for all their recent moments of awkwardness and pain, Wick still *wants* to stay. He is an honorable man, surprisingly, and one of the best she knows. He is still the idiot she befriended in the Ark and the boy she slowly began to like on earth and the genius who agreed to risk his life on this mission with her. He is not going anywhere.

Is this what it is?

Is this . . .)

Faintly, in the back of her mind, she can make out Wick's screams, ungodly in their fury and intensity and decibel range. She can smell it, the acrid stench coming off the electric rods repeatedly burying themselves in his flesh. She wishes she were calmer, calm enough to look over at him and say, "It's okay. You did your best. Save your strength; don't die for me." Alas, she is not, so she allows her final moments to race towards her, both numb and all too vivid.

(He didn't hesitate, she mulls over, To trade his life for mine. He didn't even think about it. The offer just came pouring out.

Raven may not be worth that sort of trade. She doesn't deserve it.

In times like these, she can't help but love him.

Or maybe it's not in times like these, a growing part of her riots, thumping painfully against her chest, maybe it's all the time, and you were too stubborn to tell him.

If she's going to be dying anyways, she might as well embrace it.)

"Raven," he breathes when she comes to, sprawled out atop his covers.

She's alive. He'd carried her down from the mountain, the whole day ordeal, and she's alive. It's all he can ask for.

"Wick," she says, eyes wide to him with wonder. "How did I -"

"Reyes, by now pulling your weight it old hat. It doesn't matter." Thoughtlessly, he smooths a hair out of her eyes, fingers all too gentle. As he pulls back, she catches his hand, drags it down to cup her cheek.

"I'm an idiot," she murmurs, and then she slowly pulls herself upwards, sitting while leaning against the wall, a foot falling from the covers.

"How so?"

"I started to like you," she replies, sighing, "far more than I should have. And life's too short to live with limitations, and I don't think I can do this any longer." She looks him directly in the eyes, fixes him with an inescapable truth. "It's not a game. I think loving you would be entirely too easy, and I'd like to see just how far this thing can go. But before we do that, I need to know that you've got a good enough reason to stay. I can't start loving you and then lose you again. You're too important for that."

Wick searches for the right words, but he doesn't have to search long. They pour out without much thought at all. "You are the most stubborn, obnoxious person on the planet. You've never taken no for an answer, you never back down, you never take the high road just because it looks like a smooth ride. You don't brag, you don't self-glorify, and at times I wonder how the hell you're even human. You'll never hear me say this again, but you're the smartest damn person in the world, better than me, and you smile so brightly sometimes I think I might die." He breathes deeply, hyper aware of her watching every line on his face, searching for an indication that it's the truth. "Or what's worse, when I saw you on that table I wanted to *kill*, because you did *not* get to leave this world strapped to a *freaking* bench while I had to watch. You always demand the absolute best from me, you physically can't settle for anything less, and I can't stop staring. I can't stop rising up to meet you, every single time. You always make me feel needed, even when you're so pissed you want to chuck your wrench at my head, and you don't ever let me give up on *anything*, no matter how stupid. I couldn't stop thinking about you, and I didn't want to stop. Because you're beautiful, so fucking beautiful, and too clever for me to comprehend, and too damn *good* for me to have. Because you make me want to be someone who's better at math, or wooing, or even just *existing* and it's the most damning, overwhelming thing that I've ever felt." He reminds himself to slow down, to come back to himself, to not project sentences at a thousand miles an hour. His heart hammers like a drum. "But I want to keep going, because if I can have just a taste of what being *yours* is like, it'll be worth it. And I'll be hooked." Wick looks at her, really looks at her, and thinks for the thousandth time that she's gorgeous. Big brown eyes, sharp and soft simultaneously, paired with long dark hair and cinnamon skin. Delicate, strong limbs and a fabulous brain. Nothing short of wonderful. "Is that good enough?" he concludes, waiting for something he doesn't know how to verbalize.

Then she sniffs, and smiles, and there are tears as she grabs his shirt collar and slots her mouth on his, melting him into the floor. His hands are quick to settle on her face, rubbing small circles over her cheekbones, committing this moment to memory. There is hope and euphoria and celebration; she is kissing him, and all he can see is *blue*, is gold, and his vision sparks like so many stars.

"Okay," she finally pants, resting her forehead on his, breathless. "Okay, let's do it. You're lucky you're cute."

"Aw," he grins, sounding just as exhausted, "you think I'm cute?"

The mechanic gets a funny, impossibly fond look in her eyes when she says, "I think you're kind, and stupid, and hilarious, and brave, and smart, and cocky, and occasionally terrible. I think you're great." She blushes deeply, a kind of bashful he's never seen her take on. "I wouldn't be here otherwise."

He kisses her again, fiercely, determined never to let her leave bed again. There's nothing else to be done about it.

The next morning, she wakes up in a twisted knot, arms strewn across his chest and midriff, legs thrown akimbo in the sheets. It's some comfort that Wick's are also hopelessly ensnared, his limbs mingling with hers, an almost possessive hand wrapped around her side. Raven feels his warmth on her skin, burning in all the places where his bare body brushes hers, and she relishes the way his ribcage moves in time with hers, a relaxing metronome.

She'd thought, if she hadn't made the executive decision to run as soon as she got up, that soon his arms would feel like a comfortable cage, one that she might be evicted from come morning. That is exactly why she'd found leaving so necessary before. But Wick was never reckless, was he? Spontaneous on occasion, and downright stupid near constantly, but never the type to run her away.

No, Wick is a man who stays, as foreign as that truth seems. And right now, plastered against him, Raven feels inexplicably safe. She feels like she could take on the world.

"Hey," he murmurs. Wick wakes up groggily, burying his face in her neck, inhaling and exhaling against her breastbone. His fingers tap a lazy, gentle pattern across her sides, eventually settling on pulling her closer, not an inch of space remaining.

He's a cuddler, she files away with a distinct fluttering sensation. Or, at the very least, he cuddles with her.

Finn didn't cuddle. He never just left, no, but it was never like this: lethargic mornings in bed, heads resting on messy limbs and hot, familiar breath fanning over bare shoulders. Sharing a bed with Finn was falling asleep with his hand in hers, and waking up about the same. Like children, really, but she hadn't minded; the mechanic had considered herself lucky to even have a hand to hold in the first place.

Wick drapes himself all over her and is about as subtle as a freight train while doing so. She likes it in a way she never expected to.

Raven has the impression that she's been missing out on quite a bit, being with Finn and then hung up on him and his problems. He simply wasn't right for her, and while she misses him, he never would have given her all she wanted from life.

It's a lot of expectation to put on a single person, and she's weary of being disappointed, but Wick has never failed her yet. She chooses to have faith.

"You good, sleepyhead?" she questions with a lilting tone, running her digits through his disheveled hair. He's rumped and exhausted and it's a mess, but it's her mess, and she starts to smile as she sifts through the blonde locks.

"You're here," he mumbles, his voice a physical force that echos through her collarbone. "I'm set."

"Mmmm, okay," she says, allowing it, and he starts to smile too. The moment is good. The timing is right. She's exactly where she wants to be.

"Raven?" he eventually sighs lightly, the telltale beginning of a story. She straightens up, much to his chagrin, and Wick whines softly as she makes to sit upwards. With a groan, he moves his head so it's in her lap, staring up at her face in the pale morning glory.

"You wanted to ask something?" the dark haired young woman says, curious as she continues to thread her fingers across his scalp.

"You wanna know why we got together?" her companion muses.

"I'm sure you're going to tell me," she snorts fondly, prepared for something either profound or profoundly idiotic.

"It's 'cause we've got good chemistry," Wick grins, and after a millisecond she lets out a low, even groan.

"You're *so* -"

"Devilishly charming?" he completes, not a smidgen of regret in sight.

"Lucky that I don't have a hammer with me, at the moment," she offers instead, but Raven melts just a little bit. She's no longer so immune.

"You forget," he tells her, eyes dancing mischievously, "that I can do this now." He pulls her neck down towards the mattress and kisses her, fully and deeply, imprinting his beam on her lips. It slowly evolves to her in his lap, both upright on his bed, planets pulled into close orbit. Hands weave under clothing, unlike last night, when she'd finally come to and both collapsed without the energy to do anything more, but they hold back. There will be time for that variant of *more* later, when her limbs have lost their ache and bruises don't bloom across his wrists.

Raven is okay with this. She has a feeling she could stay here for a very, very long time.

Whenever she gets up, his first instinct is to grab her wrist and pull her back into his bed, an instinct born out of fear that she might not come back. Wick isn't well versed in begging people to remain, and especially not with women. The flings he'd had ended quickly and

without complication; the girls in those scenarios weren't interested in much besides the physical aspect of things, and they simply didn't want wholesome day-after canoodling.

Raven, he wants. In every aspect of life, he wants her there. He can't think of anyone else he would trust with his lab, his dad's flannel, his bed come morning, or his heart. She has, inexplicably, invaded all of them. He can't picture anything more beautiful than the sight of her in underwear and one of his old shirts, yawning and splaying her hair over his pillow. Seeing her, a version of her rough and tumble self all painted in fuzzy, delicate brushstrokes and hazy yellow light flowing steadily in through the windows, does something very specific to his insides. It's indescribable. He can't put it to words.

He couldn't bear to lose that, and so when she inevitably makes a move to go, his muscles coil with the strain of it all.

(This is where the panic sets in, low in his gut, a potent and lethal force.

Come back. Please don't leave. I think I love you, and I never thought I'd love anyone, and I don't want to be alone again.

I want a family. I want ten, twenty, thirty years with you, ones where I just get to love you quietly, just you and me. I want kids - yes, a kid, and yes, more than one - and I want them to look like a blend of us. I want to engineer a tree-house that you'll tweak to your own specifications, arguing about the schematics all the while, and I want the fights we'll have about the house I build to be the exact same way. I want all of your laughs, all of your tears, all of your smiles, and all of your everything from here on out.

I just got you. I've kept a lid on everything I've wanted for so long I couldn't remember how to want things anymore, but you put life into me every day. You've made it impossible to remember what life was like before, and I don't want to remember. I just want you. You're not allowed to go yet.

I don't just think it, I know it. I love you. It's soon, I know, but I think I've loved you since you were first assigned to me at work, brilliant and completely unimpressed. I knew, right then and there, that you were special, and I still know it now.

I would do anything to make you stay. Please stay, please don't leave, and I'll love you forever. Please -)

And then, she always comes back without fail. She'll get dressed, or go to the bathroom, or simply stretch, and then she'll return, sometimes to stay and mingle within the sheets, other times to convince him to get up and join her. Raven never flees hastily dressed with his heart in her again. For her, trust means not hesitating: knowing what you want with absolute certainty and showing up, every day, to prove it.

With time, he is able to train his hands to forget reaching out, trying to stop her from going. After all, she is never going too far for him to follow.

"Get up, lazy," she prods with a smile, and he takes in the sight of her like a plant soaking in the sun. His eyes are full of dark hair and darker lashes.

"Yes ma'am," he agrees, letting her take the lead.

Things move slowly in some places and quickly in others. Sleeping with him in the lab wasn't ever a choice they talked about, but a subconscious decision she makes. After a while she bites the bullet and wordlessly transfers her clothes into a closet with his, and she finds that getting ready for the morning in the same room helps ease the slightly fearful cloud that floats across his irises whenever she gets up before him. Wick is afraid of her skipping out again, she had understood fast, and so she did everything in her power to erase that incident from his mind. Raven stays in longer, changes in front of him, and makes sure to constantly lean into physical contact instead of shying away like she used to.

She wants him, hopefully to keep. Eventually she starts to see him recognize it, that she's not going anywhere, and Wick inevitably comes around. She still rips into his designs with the fervor of a wolf devouring its prey, still rolls her eyes at the worst of his pick up lines, still nudges him as a way of reminding him to get back to work. They're signs of a well-fought, comfortable friendship; they are too close to really be hurt by each other's faux jabs. But now there's also her tracing the softer contours of his face in the morning, eating dinner huddled up in the lab while watching a game rerun, pouring over their favorite earth music, and the intense make-out sessions (and the more-than-make-out sessions where the both come out the other end sticky and sweaty and absolutely exhausted).

"Admiring the view, Grease Monkey?" Wick grins lopsidedly at her; ah, yes, she has been staring.

"Absolutely," Raven deadpans, but she struggles to bite down an amused smile anyways. She gets up and brushes a quick kiss to his cheek before sitting down at the other end of a work bench, prepping her station for work.

They are good.

It's two in the morning. Wick's never been in a serious relationship before, so he's not exactly certain what the protocol is for this sort of thing, but he's fairly certain that this is not how he's supposed to do it. Sadly, they've both promptly taken all the rules and thrown them out the window, so he has no real guidelines.

Still. He can't sleep until he does it.

"Rae?" he whispers, gently shaking her shoulders. She twitches, drowsily frowning, and he repeats it louder. "Raven, please wake up."

"Everything ok?" she yawns, rubbing her eyes intently. "No fires, right?"

"I just wanted to say that I'm in love with you," he laughs, quietly and helplessly. "I love you, is all. I'm pretty sure I will for a while. And I've wanted to say it for weeks, but four months is too soon, right? You're not supposed to *know* that this person is it for at least a few years. But I do." He breathes in, breathes out, and collapses back into the mattress. "Anyways. You can go back to bed now."

"idiot," she yawns again, guiding his eyes back to hers. "I love you, too. A lot. And that whole future thing isn't so dumb."

"No?" The relief that stumbles over itself, lighting his chest aflame, is palpable. *She loves you*, his whole body seems to echo, *she loves you too*.

"Not even a little bit," she smiles, a small and disoriented thing, but he adores it nonetheless. "Sleep with me, Wick, we've got things to do tomorrow."

"Later today," he corrects, but she's already half passed out.

One of a kind, his Raven.

He picked right.

Wick is a romantic.

Raven never would have guessed it. The man openly admits to feeling turned on when she starts reciting the periodic table, so she came into this arrangement not knowing exactly what to expect in regards to dates, affection, and the veritable green mile (aka, being a regular, functioning couple). Fortunately for her, the man she chose is, in fact, a romantic.

Not, of course, the golden era romantic ingenue of the good old days, where women on ancient movie reruns were doted upon with flowers and pearls and a constant barrage of sweets. Wick didn't adhere to the trappings of romance. Instead, he makes coffee runs in the middle of long work days, remembering her preferences to the letter without being told. He continues to bring her dandelions because they make her smile, no matter how small, when she's at her worst. He takes her on small adventures: to some secretive corners of the Ark he's discovered, to a windy hill with enormous trees to scale, to a small cave in the forest lined with streaks of silver she struggles to identify, and far more. All the downright commercial aspects of romance he scoffs at - they're pointless anyways - so he instead focuses on what makes her happy. Raven doesn't like flowers anywhere but in the ground, healthy and living, so he pots a small patch and keeps it in the lab, a small patch of green amongst their steel garden.

He *gets* her, in a way no one else does.

She really shouldn't have been surprised, then, when he takes her to a still, shallow lake in the dead of night, everything asleep except the two of them. In the water, she can make out hundreds of thousands of thin pinpricks of light, twinkling like diamonds amongst big patches of midnight blue. The moon rounds itself out in the pond, big and bright and luminescent, seeming to hoard the most glow to itself. The effect is altogether dazzling.

"I know the thing you miss most about the Ark was being an astronaut," he starts, taking her hand. "Your dream was to be out there, touching the stars, and you knew you'd be giving that up by crashing to earth. I know it's not the same, but it's the closest to the cosmos that I can give you. So -" He never gets to finish that thought; in an instant, she is on him, legs around waist, hands around neck, mouth smothering his.

"I love you," she pants against his cheek, grinning so hard she can barely think. "I love you so damn much, you know that?"

"Love you too, Raven," he gasps, entirely breathless. "Glad you like it."

"C'mon, shoes off," she finally laughs into the open air, slipping hers off. "We've got to touch the stars, right?" He grins widely, compliantly ditching his footwear amongst the rocks. She steps into the water, at first shocked by its chill, then forgetting it entirely as she watches it settle around her ankles once more, the starry night coming into focus while brushing her skin.

He wades in afterwards, gritting his teeth against the cold, but when she takes his hand and rests her head on his shoulder, watching the stilling ripples below, his expression turns wide to her with wonder.

"This is a much better present than mine," the mechanic notes with a frown, eyes never leaving him and the water they're surrounded by, a universe swallowing them up. "Next year I'll do better."

"You did great," the engineer mumbles softly into her hair, "and I loved it. As far as first anniversaries go, this one went pretty damn well."

Raven had known Wick was the closeted sentimentalist at heart for ages. It hadn't been a hard conclusion to come to, given he kept everything from ratty old blankets to ripped up blueprints to his late father's flannels. Armed with that information, she'd created a scrapbook of sorts. In it were pressed leaves from the first tree they climbed, packets of coffee grounds consumed, scraps of discarded scratch-work, shelved blueprints, and the occasional photo of the two of them, taken whenever they ran into someone who still possessed a working camera. At the end of the filled pages - and while there were many, she had only taken up a tenth of the space available - she wrote him a note. There was more, so much more, and for someone personally terrified by commitment, the idea of her making a monument to this thing they'd build together had been just as jarring. However, looking back on everything simply made her proud of the person she'd grown to be, through him. Wick encouraged her to be all the things that made her great, but to be open while doing so. He makes her want to be a version of herself that is worth every inch of the fondness often featured in his eyes, and she has learned so much about being able to trust. People can be good. There exists a version of love that exists for the sole purpose of building individuals up, not tearing them apart.

She's not going to claim that she'd be nothing without him, because that places too much responsibility on one person's shoulders and strips herself of her own agency. But Wick has the power to brighten her day, just by being in it, and she loves him for it. She loves him for many things, but that especially.

They've been together for a year. They've made it this far. She believes they'll continue making it farther.

"Yeah," she finds herself responding, "yeah, it did."

He smiles at her, and she doesn't have to remind herself to smile back; she's already biting down a beam, entirely thoughtless.

"Wrench?"

"Yeah, here."

"Thanks, Wick, but could you also get the -"

"Pliers? They're on your left."

"Good, great, now I just need some -"

"Here's your level, Raven. The engine is going to be good as new, don't worry about it."

"I know, but it's really banged up. I don't know if it's ever going to be the same."

"Ye of little faith. Knowing you, it'll be pristine."

"You think so?"

"Of course I do, Reyes. It's just who you are. You're made to fix things."

"What was it like?"

"Hmmm?"

"Having both parents, all throughout your childhood. I remember my dad, but sometimes I forget what his voice sounded like, or what he looked like. I think I have his eyes."

"Your dad must have been stunning."

"Thanks for that."

"Sorry, sorry. In answer to your question, I think I was happy. I always felt loved, if not pressured to be a prodigy, but I never let that bit get to my head. My mother baked cookies once a month on the weekend with rationed sugar and my father let me sit on his knee during sports reruns. He was looser where she was stricter, and sometimes they'd dance across our kitchen floor to terrible ancient music. I hope they were really in love, not just going through the motions. I hope their final days were good ones. I hope they knew how much I appreciated it, growing up with a support system in a solid household. I never visited much, but I loved them as much as I could. I just knew I wasn't the sort of person they were or they wanted me to be like, and because of that I never understood them like I should have." A hand squeeze occurs. Foreheads press comfortingly together.

"For the few moments in which they made me feel loved, I appreciate them." She pauses, thinking. "I think I get that, in bits and pieces. I've always wondered what it would be like if my father had lived, but there's no use dwelling on it. But seeing them - watching them go to

teacher office hours and ask about your grades, or having someone ruffle your hair when you get back - is something I've missed out on. It sounds nice." Another pause. Another quiet contemplation. "My dad called me Skylark. When we have kids, I think I'd like to use that nickname too. Like I'm passing on the memory."

When we have kids. Not if.

The weight isn't lost on either of them.

"Yeah," his words stretch back to her, "let's do it."

"So I heard this one from the historians' wing -"

"Oh god, I can imagine." Raven sighs. "Okay, let's get it over with."

"How did the hipster burn his tongue?"

"How?" she deadpans. "What a dilemma."

"He drunk cappuccinos before they were cool."

" . . . All I'm going to say is, you're so lucky I love you."

As she sits on a bench, he settles in beside her, hot beverages in hand. He passes one to her, where she, for once, is scanning over a blueprint without condemnation.

"It's good," she pronounces with a small smile, sipping from her perfectly prepared drink.

"Who are you?" he blinks, frowning.

Raven rolls her eyes. "I mean, it could use some work on the auxiliary, but -"

"There's my girl," Wick interjects, a frankly stupid smirk on his face, and she wipes it away with a sigh and a kiss on the cheek.

"I'm just going to give up and read. Care to join?" she asks, and he yawns and nods, because they've been up for probably well over thirty six hours working on a new satellite tower for Arkadia and now they're wired, too awake to even consider sleep. Come to think of it, the fact that he'd gotten new coffees every hour probably wasn't doing either of them any favors.

The dark haired girl sits in bed, leaning back, and he places his head into her lap, allowing his eyelids to fall back as she strokes his hair between page turns. It's comfortable. It's warm and safe and he hasn't felt like this since he was a child, trapped in one of his mother's smothering embraces. She smells like cinnamon and hour-old coffee and engine grease and fresh clipped grass and *Raven*, and he can't help but relax entirely, muscles letting all of the tension of their project flow freely away. Though unconsciousness still seems far off, it now drifts tantalizingly towards him, like the memory of a distant dream. A possibility looming on the horizon.

And then, Raven does something entirely unexpected.

"Let's get married," she says, snapping her book abruptly closed. Warily, he opens a single eye.

"What?"

"Married," she repeats, an inviting red flush drifting up her neck and into her cheeks. "I mean, we've talked about it before, and kids, and we're living together."

"Yes," he answers slowly, utterly confused. Hope pools in his stomach, hesitant and fluttering. "We have."

"And I don't know, I think now would be good," the dark haired woman continues, "because I can't see a future without you in it. I want more quiet nights in, nights that are nice despite being unable to pass out and crushed beneath a ridiculous workload. I want to keep waking up next to you every day and knowing you're mine, mine to keep for as long as we're both alive, for as long as there's breath in my body. I'm only alive because of you, and that's not something I'm saying just because you've physically saved my life numerous times. It's a lot more than that." She clears her throat, holds his eyes steadily with hers in spite of her nerves. "I love you. I really love you, and I know you know that, but I haven't loved anyone quite like I've loved you. I think that this sort of love is the kind that's built on strong foundations, the kind that lasts a lifetime, and I'd like to try having that with you. Having children with you. Growing old with you."

"Raven," he breathes, and it's just her name, but it slips out of his mouth like an endearment, tender in an impossibly vulnerable, earnest way. But he can feel it through her fingertips, hear it in her voice - his girlfriend trembles with love. She's made of it, of steel and smarts and *love*, down to her marrow. She loves much like he does; fiercely, entirely, and without restraint. Raven will not hesitate to die for those she's declared hers, and once you are in, she will love you until you're gone and long after that. Wick hopes to never leave her. He aspires to be here with her long enough to give her a future. He wants her hand in his, tugging her through life, so badly - the desire bleeds down his ribs and sticks to some pivotal part, now an essential component of Wick.

"I've never had a home that was stable. Not since my father died," she swallows, "and I didn't know that a home could be like this. Just a few walls and another person, one who's genuinely good and genuinely caring, and that's all it takes. I didn't know that home was this feeling that remains like it's stuck to the tips of your teeth, unable to dislodge, always on your tongue. I was always told that home is where you live, but I think home is just whenever I'm with you. Because it's that pain in my chest when you place your head across my thighs and I card fingers through your hair, or the way your arms hold me tight every night, or how easily your hands slot with mine. You're a stable home, and I know I'm exactly where I'm supposed to be." The mechanic puts on a brave face, but her whole body quivers with the force it took to deliver those lines. Raven is no longer the same guarded girl she was so many years ago, but she is used to keeping her emotions close to herself, far away from prying minds. She has opened up to him so much in recent memory, but it's still so hard for her to let go of her thoughts entirely. To let him hold the reigns, even if it kills her.

"So, marriage?" the engineer finishes, searching her irises for more. She nods, not trusting her voice completely. "Wait here," he instructs, getting up to grab something.

He comes back with a ring.

"I welded it," he starts, holding up a simple loop of silver with a clumsy 'RR' within the band, painstakingly carved in, "out of a piece of scrap-metal from the Ark. It's not fancy, but your initials are on the inside. I'm not going to pretend I'm perfect, or that we're not going to drive each other absolutely crazy in the next five decades, but I love you. That's the one thing I'm sure about. And my future is going to be inextricably caught up in yours, one way or another." Her eyes dance, the pupils dilating widely. Such telltale traitors - they give her away so easily.

"You want to marry me?" she practically whispers, a tear streaking its way down her cheek.

"I think I've wanted to marry you since the day I met you, Reyes," he smiles, brushing it away with the pad of his thumb. "I was just pathetic. I developed an instant thing for a girl who was too stubborn and too taken to look my way. I had no clue what I was getting into. You've ruined me for the serial single life forever." He gently grabs her hand, strokes its back carefully, and says, "Can I?"

"Yes," she agrees emphatically, and he slides the polished loop upwards, resting it at the base of her ring finger. It's a damn near perfect fit. "I'm going to marry the crap out of you, Kyle Wick."

"I'll believe it when I see it," the blonde grins, and she kisses him forcefully, soon met with an equally involved set of lips.

He's going to marry this girl.

"Sooner or later we should probably start planning things, right?"

"I'm good whenever. Hell, we can elope tomorrow if you want. The only thing I won't compromise on is us."

She snorts, suppressing a smile. "Flirt."

"Only for you, darlin'. You just bring it out of me." A helpless laugh bursts out of his throat as she swats at the back of his head.

"I take it back. You're not charming," she harrumphs. "Now let's discuss size."

"Of what?"

"Well, are we having a big wedding?"

"Riddle me this, Raven: how many people do you actually like being around?"

The dark haired woman's nose wrinkles instantly. She kind of hates most people, with about twenty exceptions total. There's a reason she works with machines as opposed to other partners (well, save for the only one that matters). "Right, right, stupid question."

"Now, we should make a list - I nominate you and I, for starters."

"Okay, so we've got us," she confirms, rolling her eyes, "and we've got to have Kane to officiate. Abby and her daughter should be there - if not for the two of them, I wouldn't be here and neither would anybody else."

"A few work friends from the Ark may not be so bad. No more than five or six, though," Wick adds thoughtfully. "Only three are married. The others won't bring dates."

"Octavia and Lincoln deserve to come, and maybe Monty and Jasper. Bellamy too, if he's willing."

The engineer snorts. "If Clarke decides to show up, I'm sure he'll make an appearance."

"True. Damn, they're taking their sweet time there, aren't they?"

"When hell freezes over, they'll get their shit together." He halts, doing some quick mental math. "So that's a grand total of about sixteen people we actually want to bear witness, aside from us. I can't decide whether that's pathetic or not."

"We chose company based on quality, not quantity." She pauses. "I think it doesn't really matter in the end. I just want you, and maybe some cake, and a little bit of dancing, and a few people who aren't actively trying to kill us. That's all I need." Wick squeezes her shoulder, dropping a tingling kiss to the back base of her neck.

"Agreed."

"Raven?"

"Hmm?"

"Thanks."

She tilts her head, confused. "For what?"

"Trusting me," Wick says - he doesn't know how exactly to verbalize it. "Staying. Loving me in the first place. Letting me love you."

"Wick?"

"Yeah?"

"Thanks for always believing in me. Thanks for thinking I was more than the orphan girl with impossible aspirations and a quick temper."

"Anytime, Raven."

"Well then," she completes, lacing her fingers in his, "don't worry about it."

He doesn't.

She finds his blueprints a week later. They've clearly been worked on a lot, poured over again and again with various pencils in pens, some in different levels of sharpness or potency, some lines scratchy and hard where they should be fluid. Everything looks patchwork yet coherent, as though hours were dripped away on designing and re-designing the remnants of a dream.

They depict a dream, anyhow. A dream house, to be precise.

Raven glances over the intricate plans with no small awe. There is a way to reroute water for a kitchen, a powder room, and a guest bath. There are little etched in bookshelves on the walls and a room dedicated to chemistry experiments, complete with a giant worktable, sinks, beakers, and an accurate periodic table painted instead of wallpaper or traditional block colors. Upstairs is a big bedroom with a deck and trees surrounding it, a ladder to the roof, and a telescope next to a wide reading nook window. She feels her eyes sting when she reads the words 'Skylark's room' above a small empty room in the plans.

He remembered.

Wick had drawn up plans for a house they could live in.

(Home, as she's already stated, has never been a place. She felt it in small, disjointed moments, in the occasional memory of her parents' kindness or Finn's quirked boyish smiles or a particularly satisfying assignment. Wick has become her permanent home, somewhere along the way, but she'd never thought he'd build her a literal three-bedroom combined with an experiment station and a killer kitchen.

Again, home has never been a concrete location, but from the way he'd so carefully stenciled in potted plants to the individual names of books lining imaginary shelves, the house he'd invented looked to her like it could be her home too. With the right person, a house can hold love like a raincloud holds water. It comes pouring out the seams, bursting with life.

Maybe here, she'll experience it that way too.)

When she's finished flipping through them, she stashes them back where they were hidden and pretends she never saw them. She has the distinct feeling they're part of a welcome surprise.

The wedding is chaotic, to say the least.

Kane, as was the plan, officiates. He has clearly never been a pastor before - he treats it like an informal council meeting and speaks heavily, with weight and authority, and Wick can't help but find it funny, this man so unlike a priest trying to rally guests as if they were

delegates. Kane makes a speech, good natured and supportive, about how it's beautiful to see love bloom even in the midst of hard and changing times, and honestly the engineer cannot help but tune out most of it. He is too focused on Raven.

She's not all in white, mostly because she thinks white clothing is too easily destroyed and difficult to remove grease stains from. She typically hates dresses. Today, she wore a faded blue number somehow scrounged up from Abby. It's brighter set against her warm skin, coming in snugly at her waist and subtly flaring out, trailing down just below her knees. Though the neckline doesn't plunge, the v is generous, and the back scoops out and ties above her hips.

All he can see is blue. Her hair is scrapped back into an elegant bun and her eyeliner is flawless and she's in a deep blue dress, and it's all for *him*.

Wick is dying to get her alone, to look at the ring on her finger and know that she's his *wife*, and untie the strings that hold the ancient garment together so he can learn her again with new eyes. He'll never be able to call her 'Reyes' again. It's the kind of thing he's only really dreamed of getting, or thought about fleetingly. Now the moment is here, and Kane is still rambling on fondly, and he really just wants to get to the part where he marries her officially.

The vows are the last hurdle before he gets to kiss her, and the way she's smiling absolutely kills him.

He goes first, so as to expedite the process - of the two of them, Wick is more likely to break down in tears about this sort of thing. The woman he's marrying is absolutely terrifying and can murder a line. What he says is nothing that he planned.

"Raven Reyes," he starts, and then his mouth goes dry. He opens it, and then shuts it again. Wick has no clue what he's doing. And then: "What can I say to you that I haven't whispered into your hair at some point, or mumbled at midnight, or laughed about in a passing conversation? You're so *bright*, so much brighter than I ever thought I could find, let alone have to keep. There's no way that you should have come out of your childhood half as kind and caring and brilliant as you are, but you did. You're a survivor. You're going to live for a million years just to give the world the finger, and I want to be there to see it.

"I can't remember how life was before you. You make me forget what living alone was, and not just because we share a room. It's because I've never smiled as wide or stumbled as hard or even *felt* as much as I do when I'm with you, and I can't go back to that isolated place. I don't know how you got me, but you did.

"Look, men like me? We're helpless. We're all ambition and no direction, no taste for anything better out of life than the next job well done, or maybe a hookup. If not for you, I never would have wanted a real house or a real home or a real family. You make me *better*, just by existing, and I absolutely don't deserve you. I want to spend the rest of my life trying to." He cups her face, watching her lean into his palm, and the softest expression overtakes the curves of his face, eliminating all abrasive angles. "Raven, I think you're the most clever, ingenuitive, sarcastic, determined, insane, gorgeous person I've ever met. I love you, is all."

"Kyle Wick," she begins, and her grin only grows. "First of all, fuck you for making me almost cry in front of the only other people I can tolerate, it's very unfair." Their friends snort and chuckle, probably because they all come from the same satanic roots as her. "Now I'm just going to say, I didn't think I'd ever be here, either. My first instincts in life were to push away when people got too close, because chances are they weren't going to stay. It's so much easier to leave when you can pretend there were no feelings left to hurt."

"Falling in love with you was the hardest, most intentional thing I've ever had to do. It meant accepting that I wasn't invincible, that my life wasn't mine to crash into the wall anymore. It meant learning how to trust another human being in a way I haven't been able to in years, if ever. But no matter how much I shoved and fought and screamed, you refused to go anywhere. You let me figure out how to finally stay on my own terms, let me wrestle with my fears while always holding my hand, and I can't ever thank you enough for it. For being here and convincing me that you weren't going anywhere."

"My dad always said that love wasn't about fireworks and fuzzy feelings, but about putting someone else's needs above your own. It was about not hesitating to be selfless and navigating how to maintain a home. You are mine, now, and I hope I'm yours. Because you've never once hesitated about me, even when I was still putting some pieces together."

"I love you, and when I love something, I latch onto it forever. I make it a part of me. Right now, I have faith that I'm going to love you for the rest of my life, through work and having children and exploring a tangible earth. I love your stupid jokes and your stupid grin and the stupid way you look at me, like I'm something incredible. I love that you're brave and unselfish and smart and *good*, and that you can't back out of anything to save your life. I am so damn proud of who you are, and I'm so damn happy you've chosen me." She clears her throat and looks sheepishly back at their audience. "Maybe that was a lot. I'm really terrible at waxing poetic."

"I liked it," he nudges her, and his fiancée's beam steadily returns.

"Not too bad?"

"Acceptable," he sniffs, and she laughs.

When he kisses her, insides crumbling into the dewy grass, she tastes of fresh coffee and the future. He feels everything and nothing all at once: there's the smell of wildflowers, the stiffness of the breeze, the soft contours of skin beneath his own, the cold and comforting metal of her ring wrapped around her finger, and yet there's a sense of euphoric weightlessness, an awareness that tugs him out of his body and simultaneously curls his toes. It's all disorienting. It's entirely consuming.

She is Raven Wick now, and as the engineer sits down and eats cake and talks aimlessly with their twenty-ish attendees, he lays his arm around her shoulders and she leans into his side, instinctual as a sigh.

They have fights. They do, because no matter how much you love someone, life is not a fairytale with a definitive beginning and end to segments, spun out like a series of five line

fables. The past tends to loop back and bite, a serpent consuming its own tail. What lies ahead it a long and winding road at best, and its promises are cobblestones that sometimes disappear as you walk amongst them. Occasionally street turns entirely to gravel, thin little slivers of broken futures trying to reconstruct themselves into a passable trail, and sometimes the cobbles turn into something unified and permanent, a concrete sidewalk weaving deftly through a forest, plowing proudly into uncharted territory with a confidence that is unshakable.

Raven doesn't know what theirs is, only that she is walking it hand in hand with her husband, and the constant movement isn't always so kind. Her body is weary, her feet ache, and sometimes she stumbles and finds herself bleeding. Love, as she'd known, truly isn't some pretty thing tied up in a bow, waiting to sweep you away. Love requires sacrifice. Love requires strong spirits and brave souls. Love requires choosing someone, over and over again, for all they are - the many good facets mixed with their flaws, their baggage, their quirks, and yes, their bad days. Love also requires being chosen back, consistently, every day and without fail.

Wick (and she's Wick as well, now, isn't she - it's still so odd to think about) has moments in which he drives her up a wall. They squabble like children, and not in a playful way. The mechanic wants to rip every hair from his head. She wants to continue screaming and biting and kicking and making him squirm until she dies. When they have a fight, an honest to goodness *fight*, Raven throws the same all-or-nothing force she has in all of lie into the battle. She is primed for the kill, and despite his best efforts, he doesn't always hold back either.

But afterwards, when she calms down, she takes his hand. She remembers all of the ways in which this man has made her life invariably better, just by agreeing to be in it, and she thinks about all the ways he will continue to improve upon her every day until they're old. Raven isn't perfect, and sometimes she is wrong. However, stubbornness has been her obvious Achilles heel throughout her youth, and she is too smart to let it ruin the one good thing she has built for herself over the past few years. As much as she rages during a fight, it takes more gumption to fight for something than for its demise, and she has a knack for striving for the impossible.

Raven Wick is not just willing to stay, she truly wants to. And it makes all the difference.

"I'm sorry," he'll say first, or sometimes she will, depending on what started it all, and no matter how ugly things may have gotten, there's still room for some small kindness, or a gesture of peace. She loves him, and he loves her, and they are determined to make marriage work, no matter its quirks.

So every time she encounters a bump on their road, the dark haired woman catches her breath, brushes the dust off of her clothing, and staggers back to her feet, a survivor to her last. And every time she crumbles, her eyes never leave his, never stray from the cobbles laid before them that had yet to be walked on. As long as Wick travels it with her, she will do her best to keep moving forwards. She is all in.

"What does it take to make an octopus laugh?"

"Vocal chords, since they're aquatic creatures that don't know how to communicate with the human race?"

"Close, but surprisingly no. Guess again, Raven."

"I don't know, maybe a joke that's actually funny?"

Wick places a hand over his heart, a faux gasp in the works. "You wound me. And here I was, so proud to share my comedic talents with my wife - light of my life, wind beneath my wings -"

"Oh, please," she snorts. "I prefer 'wearer of the pants', personally. It's definitely a more apt moniker."

"Babe, occasionally I have to pretend the honeymoon phase hasn't worn off, let me either wax poetic or finish my bit." With a quirked smile she actively tries to hide from him, she concedes. "Okay, so, what does it take to make an octopus laugh?"

"Gee, I have no clue." He can taste the sarcasm. It adds fuel to his wisecracks.

"Ten tickles." At first Raven just rolls her eyes. Then, comprehension dawns on her, lining her features with equal parts amusement and disappointment.

"I married you," she says slowly, and Wick genuinely can't tell if she's more upset with herself or him in that inciting incident.

"It's cause we're suctioned together," he smiles, proud of his absolutely shitty joke, and when Raven makes good on her usual promise to hurl the nearest disposable tool his direction (this time it was a screwdriver and not the wrench, thank god) he only narrowly avoids both the object and a concussion.

"You think heaven is real?" the dark haired woman questions aloud, staring at the ceiling. "I mean, so many of us have died. It seems like an awful waste of life if everything just ended the second we pass on."

He laces her fingers with his, an action so familiar she hardly feels him do so. "I don't know if I believe in heaven, but I do think there's got to be something like it out there. Some universal constant in which the consciousnesses of everyone who's ever lived are floating around, enjoying eternity. Maybe their souls turn into stars or they seep into the earth or something. Some things seem like they are meant to last longer than the flesh, you know? Memories and feelings prevail even when someone is gone; I don't see why the person you are during life has to just fade off into the abyss if there are other fragments of who they are left behind."

"I hope that's true," she sighs upwards, refocusing her eyes on the collar of his shirt, taking comfort in his sturdy tangibility. Wick is real when all else seems to blur at the edges. "I guess I was just thinking about how my parents used to say that some souls could meet each other again, after everything is done. Or in the next life, they'll come back together,

because even though someone is gone doesn't mean the love has to be." She pauses, lets her breath mingle with his. "I hope my parents got that. I hope that all those people we've seen bite the dust find some peace, seeing their families waiting for them in the great beyond, wherever that's supposed to be. It's the little things that make me wonder."

He draws her tighter to him, the big spoon to her overwhelmed frame. Sometimes his timing is impeccable. "I hope they're happy too, Rae. And I really hope you're able to accept their happiness as a fact of life and not a stipulation to haunt you, Not everything is your fault, or even yours to fix."

"I know," Raven replies, softer, melting like putty. "I'm trying to be better."

"You *are* better," he insists. "You, worrying about them, is good. But you need to trust that as much as you wish those people get their deserved happiness, you should hope they'd lobby for your happiness, too."

"I am happy," she blurts out, and it's not just a conversation cap; it's the honest truth.

"I'm late," she tells him in bed one morning, hair fanned out behind her on the pillows. Wick, at first, doesn't understand - for a smart man, he can be remarkably slow when it counts.

"For a very important date?" the engineer finishes, quirking an eyebrow in confusion.

"My period, genius," she snorts, rolling her eyes. "I was just thinking about how weird it was that I hadn't had it yet and then I realized yes, I'm over a week off schedule. I'm late."

He blinks slowly. First merely a long pause, the second at the pace of a snail. He's processing. "So, you're thinking -"

"I don't know," his wife admits, tugging at her upper lip with her teeth in a fashion that makes his head terribly cloudy, "but it's a possibility. I guess the next step is to talk to Abby and see about . . . well, finding out. I don't know if she has any tests on hand, but if she does, I could take them in about a week. I wouldn't know how soon." Wick hums, remarkably quiet. Raven stares into his eyes, fidgeting. "Okay, please say something. It's weird not being able to read you."

"I'm trying not to hope too hard right now, if I'm being honest," he tells her quietly, hands carding through the ends of her hair. His voice slips, cracks, flops like it hadn't since puberty. "I mean, kids were never exactly my prerogative before, but. Now I want one. I want a version of you and me running around, a brand new person we get to raise and love and bring into the world. That's the sort of legacy that lives on forever. What if we're wrong?"

Raven smiles, almost, and tucks her head beneath his chin. "And what if we're not?"

"Then we'd be parents," he whispers into the air, the sunlight catching the words and stowing them away, as if they were secrets. "Isn't it terrifying?" Despite his fears, he can't help but feel the excitement pool in his chest, perch atop his ribs and refuse to move. He tries to

picture himself as a father; he has only blurry bits and pieces, but they're enticing nonetheless. A real family, one they grow together, is one he is ready for.

"I'm so damn scared," she replies, dropping a kiss to his collarbone. He feels it on a level deeper than the sun-tanned skin. "I'd love it so much."

Wick knows all too well.

"C'mon, Grease Monkey," he says lightly, "there's nothing we can't handle. We'll love the socks off of it, no matter what. And even if you're not, you know," he swallows, "pregnant right now, eventually you will be. And eventually we'll have that. And it's gonna be horrific, and we're going to be a cluster of nerves, but we're going to be so damn *happy* that the rest will start to fade away."

"Is that a guarantee?"

He places her hand on his chest, above his heart. He looks at her a long, long time. "I guarantee there will be struggles. I guarantee one or both of us will, at some point, want to kill each other and/or the child. I guarantee you will think I'm nuts and I'm going to do something very stupid. But I also guarantee that we'll be in this as a team, all the way, and we'll always regret not taking the plunge. I guarantee that nothing is ever going to hurt the two of you while I have a breath in my body because I love you too damn much, and I'll love it too. 'Us' is just about the only thing I'm certain about, and I'm sure as hell not letting it go."

She splays her other arm across his chest, every inch of her pressed against every inch of his side.

"I love you. I know you know, and you know I know it, but I just want you to hear it."

"Love you too, darlin'." Though it hurts to hope, he hopes all the same.

Wick said he has a surprise for her.

When she heard the words escape his throat, stuck though they were, at first she was confused, albeit excited.

When he starts walking Raven up a hill, past recently piped green space, she all but gasps.

The house isn't exactly how it'd been when she'd first seen his sketches, but it's -

She can't put it into sentences, form it into thoughts. It's *beautiful*, the structure and the yard and *him* and she can't -

She doesn't know how to -

"Yeah, even if you're not pregnant," he begins, "we are *not* raising a small child next to bunsen burners and an acid index if we want it to live. And, you know, I don't think you've ever had a home. It's ours, hopefully, if you like it." Wick seems to squirm beneath an anxious sort of anticipation. Not because he thinks she'll reject it outright, but because he's

clearly poured so much thought into all of it, so much precision into the front porch and the carved door and the colored window glass, that he *wants* her to love it like he does. He wants to show her very inch of everything, wants her to feel like she belongs inside. No one's ever done anything like it before, served up so much of themselves to her. It's soul baring.

"I love it," she whispers, hands covering her mouth, and even though she knew he was planning it, the thrill she feels when she walks inside cannot be faked.

"So there's a library," he explains, leading her room to room with a vise-like grip. The engineer's hand isn't crushing hers consciously - it's more like he has to brace himself as a reminder that it's all real, and she's still there. "And two empty bedrooms upstairs - a master and one for, you know, the future - and another two on the first level. Again, if we need them. There's another place upstairs that has a balcony - a little one, and I'm gonna put a telescope - and then our room has access to the roof off the main deck. I figured you could sit outside and dangle your feet off the edge when it's warm out. The water runs, and there's insulation and gas, but I'm working on developing a better heating system for -"

"It's perfect," she cuts him off, grinning, and he slowly smiles back, relaxing entirely.

"So, we have a house," he finishes.

"We have a home."

"Y'know, I'm gonna miss this place," the fair haired man sighs, looking around the ground lab. "Lots of good memories. Lots of hazardous equipment."

"We're moving into a real, grown-up place," his unsympathetic wife comments, "and we work here. We will see it literally every single day."

"But this is where we became an item, fooled around, hooked up -"

"Wow, thanks for that one."

"- got engaged, etc. This is hypothetically where our firstborn was conceived -"

"We won't know until I take the test tomorrow. Also, yet again, what a sales pitch for the Ark, I'm sure all our future progeny will want to hear all about *that*."

His shit-eating grin tells all. "Don't be embarrassed, Raven, I never took you for the squeamish type."

"There's still time for divorce, is all I'm saying," she shakes her head, but her eyes betray amusement. "Now c'mon, quit stalling and hurry up, I want all the mementos in those boxes by four."

The lines are red. Raven holds back a sob.

She can't believe the lines are doubled, can't believe that they form a plus sign. She can't believe what this means for them - only married for nine months and already there's the prospect of another person entering the confines of their relationship. It is something extraordinary.

"Babe," Wick whispers beside her, unable to form sentences. His hands shake like wet leaves, pulled steadily by the wind. "*Raven*," he says, softer than before, rolling her name over his tongue, learning it again. He's hugging her a second later, his grip so tight she couldn't escape if she wanted to. "Raven, Raven, *Raven*," he repeats, and with each call she hears the infectious grin in his voice.

"We did it," she laughs helplessly, and though the tears do fall she finds she doesn't mind. Not when she's certain her husband is just as broken up as she is.

"You're amazing," he breathes, and the mechanic allows herself to be simply happy for once, embracing the luxuries of day-old scruff rubbing over her forehead familiarly and a set of strong arms, holding her up.

"Boy or girl?" he asks, Raven tucked against his side. She's been showing for a month; her bump is small, easy to miss, but it grows imperceptibly every day. Wick tries to commit each transitional size to memory, snapshots of a completely new era of life.

She pauses, pondering the question, a protective hand against her stomach. She doesn't actively realize it, when she covers her midsection and smooths an astoundingly nurturing thumb overtop - her maternal instincts have already begun to kick in. Perhaps it's cliché, but Wick can't help but smile and think that she'll make a great mother, one entirely unlike the shell hers became. Raven is determined to give her family the best lives they can possibly have - their child will be no different.

"It feels like a boy," she finally decides, sighing as she leans further into his shirt, pressing her nose into the newly washed fabric.

"And what makes you say that?" the engineer continues, head tilted.

"The baby feels like it's moving around a lot," she proposes, "and it reminds me of you. A lot of pent up, restless energy."

He hums. "My money's on a girl, then. Any sort of rebellious streak it's displaying now is definitely proof it's a girl - she takes after her mom."

"How flattering," she replies dryly, but she considers. "Let's make a wager."

"Interesting, please elaborate."

"Either way, our baby's going to actively seek to destroy our sleep schedule. Loser has to get up in the middle of the night, no complaints, for the first month. Deal?"

Wick grabs her hand and shakes it vigorously - this may come to backfire on him later, but for once, he *knows* he's right. Raven had better watch out.

"Deal, Rae," he agrees. It's a gentleman's arrangement now.

Terra June Wick is born, as her name implies, in June. She takes a grand total of ten hours to make it into the world and Raven is sweating and aching from places she didn't realize could sweat and ache. She wants to curl up into a ball and die, even with Wick holding her hand the whole damn time. But now she has a child, a little girl, and she sadly can't curl up and die. Not on her daughter's birthday.

"Nice to meet you, sweetheart," Wick beams as he holds her, because even though she's screaming her tiny head off and she's wrinkly and still kind of bloody and brand new, he's absolutely smitten. And then, kissing the crown of her head, he eases her back down into Raven's arms. "I told you we'd have a Terra. And you didn't believe me."

"Save the smugness for when I can think of a better comeback, idiot," the dark haired mechanic says, absolutely exhausted, but the damn near blinding pain is starting to wear off.

They have a *daughter*. It's unbelievable. They knew it would be either Terra June - it was coming to earth that started everything, and their child would certainly continue the tradition of new beginnings - or Henry Kyle Wick - Henry being her father's name, Kyle being her husband's, the two most important men in her life.

What's similarly unbelievable is the fact that Wick was *right* and it's not a sprawling, wide-eyed little boy that she'd given birth to. She feels as though she's been cheated, but one look at the baby settled in the curve of her arms, wailing and so pearly-pink and very full of life, and she forgets to enact revenge against her husband. Terra's eyes are her father's, but Raven suspects she'll inherit her nose and lips, and suddenly she wants to tuck this strange, wonderful little girl against her breastbone and never let her go.

"She's beautiful," Wick says, smile never wavering, his eyes never leaving their daughter, and Raven continues to melt into the bed.

"Beautiful," she agrees, and there's no other way to see it.

"She's crying again," Wick notes almost too casually, and Raven makes a noise like a dying whale. Granted, Wick's never heard one in person before, but he imagines the sound comes from a similar creature: a lethargic, helpless creature beached upon a foreign shore, too tired to continue fighting the good fight. In this situation, though, the shore is their bed, strewn with blankets pulled out of their proper orientation. Raven is decidedly not okay with three o'clock wake up sessions. The engineer, while coping moderately better, can understand why.

"I will suffocate her," the mechanic glowers, and Wick frowns.

"Raven, we want Terra to live, it's not her fault she got two loudmouthed parents."

"I hate it when you're right," she groans, clearly a second from snapping, and Wick is weak for her in a very real, visceral way. Without a word, he starts getting up reluctantly, despite their bet absolutely stating that he was contractually released from graveyard shifts with the baby for the first month. He's just nice like that.

"Go back to bed, hon," he murmurs, walking to the nursery. It's funny; the second he picks her up, Terra is all smiles, not a hair out of place. The lengths she will go to for attention astound even him. "Trying to drive us insane, troublemaker?" he asks quietly, and she gurgles in response. Smart, their daughter - like she could be anything else with a Reyes and a Wick in her blood. "You're lucky you're cute," he warns all the same, kissing the crown of her small head. She's a marvel. So fragile, their baby, but with a personality already so big she vibrates with it. Terra was going to be something when she grew up, and he's honored to see it from start to finish. "Love you too, baby girl," the engineer smiles as she babbles lightly again, rocking her drowsily back to sleep.

"Daddy, daddy, daddy," Terra squeals, running up to their bed. She's all raven-dark locks and wriggly limbs akimbo, the spitting image of her mother. As they'd observed, it was her eyes that gave her away - a match for her father's, and a complete daddy's girl to boot. Raven moans and rolls over.

"Kyle, your daughter is awake," she groans, shaking her husband's shoulder.

"It's four, Rae," he whines lowly, and she only shrugs in response. He's hissing as he attempts to sit up, every joint creaking - probably due to the aforementioned 'four in the morning' part. "Is the house burning down, sweetheart?" he asks the five year old.

"No," the little girl says with sunshine in her voice, "but the sky is."

"Huh?" he yawns, and as the five year old drags him to the deck, he appears to understand. Raven looks on from the bed, caught between wanting to get a better look and wanting to actually continue enjoying what was left of the night - heaven knew between Terra and their second, Astrid, she could barely get sleep for more than two hours at a time. Compounded with the fact that she was pregnant (*again*, and she was *not* looking forward to the delivery process any more than the previous scenarios) and the baby was a determined kicker, Raven was quite certain that she was never going to remain unconscious for a solid ten hours again until she died, or became the victim of an unlikely coma.

Then Wick calls, "Raven, come look!" and the choice is made for her. With an enormous sigh, she all but rolls out of bed and hobbles to the outside world. When her husband takes her hand and points, she concedes that it was worth abandoning the covers. It's a meteor shower, swarms of shooting stars breaking across the early morning darkness like fleeting lanterns, and she yearns to watch them up close, close enough to touch despite the wake of destruction they must leave behind. Combustible dust and ice, but they paint such a vivid picture. They tinge the world with aureate.

With a startled breath, she feels a kick. *It's starting*, she grits her teeth, *he's woken up for the day*. Much as she loves being a mom, so much more than she thought she would, Raven often wants to kill her kids. The unborn one isn't exempt from that fury.

"Is Petra up early?" Wick grins, putting a hand over her stomach to feel for himself.

"*Henry*," she insists, as she has for every pregnancy (and the third time's the charm, so she better be *right* or she's going to rampage with fire), "has decided to join in the fun. Although I have to say, he's in a very determined mood."

"Whatever you say," he says in a non-believing tone, and when it's a boy, he's going to eat those words. Raven can feel it.

(*You 'felt it' the other times, too*, an imaginary Wick laughs, but she ignores him.)

"Mom, when I'm an architect, I'll build you a spaceship so you can see the stars again," Terra promises, her eyes wide with wonder while her tiny hands tug at her sleeve. She claims she wants to make houses, like her daddy, but Raven doesn't think she understands that architects don't typically create spaceships.

The mechanic brushes the girl's unruly hair out of her face and smiles down at her all the same. "Thank you, baby, I appreciate it."

The moment is somewhat ruined with a wail as Astrid takes this as her cue to wake up - again, at *four*.

"I'll get her, you guys keep watching," her companion says, quickly pecking her lips.

"Living the dream, aren't we?" she smirks, and he gets a funny look on his face. Then he kisses her - properly, the ones that melt her thoughts into ribbons and turn her insides to gold - and offers her an expression of inexplicable fondness.

"Oh, absolutely."

Chapter End Notes

So plot twist: they're both right. Raven has twins - Henry and Petra - and she swears she will never have children again.

Childbirth is painful, by the way. I'm not speaking from experience, but shout out to mothers for enduring the most excruciating pain known to man. That sounds absolutely terrifying.

Also, this is far too long. It was meant to be an additional 12k tops and - nope, no, that didn't happen. Damn.

For the probably five people who are actually going to see this, thank you for reading. I aspired to finish this over the course of a week eight months or more after the first half, so it's probably disjointed. I don't know how well style translated over. I just wanted to complete this and say 'look, they were happy'. Hopefully that happened. It's basically nothing but domestic scenes.

So anyways, have a great day and a better tomorrow. Thanks again!

End Notes

So that was that. I didn't edit this for spelling at all by the way so grammar might be terrible but oh well for now. Hopefully the second half will be up soon, and it will probably be far longer than this, but now the backstory's out of the way. With school and life and family things have been hectic, but before the month is up this will most likely be posted together and complete.

Also, this chapter was named after the song But Not For Me, specifically the Chet Baker version (his voice is insanely smooth, I love his cover). I thought the lyrics really fit them. Check it out if you're into jazz or just a really snazzy vocalist. I love old crooners.

Have a great day and a better week, thanks!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!