

THE *100*

KASS MORGAN



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CHAPTER 1

Clarke

The door slid open, and Clarke knew it was time to die.

Her eyes locked on the guard's boots, and she braced for the rush of fear, the flood of desperate panic. But as she rose up onto her elbow, peeling her shirt from the sweat-soaked cot, all she felt was relief.

She'd been transferred to a single after attacking a guard, but for Clarke, there was no such thing as solitary. She heard voices everywhere. They called to her from the corners of her dark cell. They filled the silence between her heartbeats. They screamed from the deepest recesses of her mind. It wasn't death she craved, but if that was the only way to silence the voices, then she was prepared to die.

KASS MORGAN

She'd been Confined for treason, but the truth was far worse than anyone could've imagined. Even if by some miracle she was pardoned at her retrial, there'd be no real reprieve. Her memories were more oppressive than any cell walls.

The guard cleared his throat as he shifted his weight from side to side. "Prisoner number 319, please stand." He was younger than she'd expected, and his uniform hung loosely from his lanky frame, betraying his status as a recent recruit. A few months of military rations weren't enough to banish the specter of malnutrition that haunted the Colony's poor outer ships, Walden and Arcadia.

Clarke took a deep breath and rose to her feet.

"Hold out your hands," he said, pulling a pair of metal restraints from the pocket of his blue uniform. Clarke shuddered as his skin brushed against hers. She hadn't seen another person since they'd brought her to the new cell, let alone touched one.

"Are they too tight?" he asked, his brusque tone frayed by a note of sympathy that made Clarke's chest ache. It'd been so long since anyone but Thalia—her former cell mate and her only friend in the world—had shown her compassion.

She shook her head.

"Just sit on the bed. The doctor's on his way."

"They're doing it here?" Clarke asked hoarsely, the words

scraping against her throat. If a doctor was coming, that meant they were forgoing her retrial. It shouldn't have come as a surprise. According to Colony law, adults were executed immediately upon conviction, and minors were Confined until they turned eighteen and then given one final chance to make their case. But lately, people were being executed within hours of their retrial for crimes that, a few years ago, would have been pardoned.

Still, it was hard to believe they'd actually do it in her cell. In a twisted way, she'd been looking forward to one final walk to the hospital where she'd spent so much time during her medical apprenticeship—one last chance to experience something familiar, if only the smell of disinfectant and the hum of the ventilation system—before she lost the ability to feel forever.

The guard spoke without meeting her eyes. "I need you to sit down."

Clarke took a few short steps and perched stiffly on the edge of her narrow bed. Although she knew that solitary warped your perception of time, it was hard to believe she had been here—alone—for almost six months. The year she'd spent with Thalia and their third cell mate, Lise, a hard-faced girl who smiled for the first time when they took Clarke away, had felt like an eternity. But there was no other explanation. Today had to be her eighteenth birthday, and the only present

waiting for Clarke was a syringe that would paralyze her muscles until her heart stopped beating. Afterward, her lifeless body would be released into space, as was the custom on the Colony, left to drift endlessly through the galaxy.

A figure appeared in the door and a tall, slender man stepped into the cell. Although his shoulder-length gray hair partially obscured the pin on the collar of his lab coat, Clarke didn't need the insignia to recognize him as the Council's chief medical advisor. She'd spent the better part of the year before her Confinement shadowing Dr. Lahiri and couldn't count the number of hours she'd stood next to him during surgery. The other apprentices had envied Clarke's assignment, and had complained of nepotism when they discovered that Dr. Lahiri was one of her father's closest friends. At least, he had been before her parents were executed.

"Hello, Clarke," he said pleasantly, as if he were greeting her in the hospital dining room instead of a detention cell. "How are you?"

"Better than I'll be in a few minutes, I imagine."

Dr. Lahiri used to smile at Clarke's dark humor, but this time he winced and turned to the guard. "Could you undo the cuffs and give us a moment, please?"

The guard shifted uncomfortably. "I'm not supposed to leave her unattended."

“You can wait right outside the door,” Dr. Lahiri said with exaggerated patience. “She’s an unarmed seventeen-year-old. I think I’ll be able to keep things under control.”

The guard avoided Clarke’s eyes as he removed the handcuffs. He gave Dr. Lahiri a curt nod as he stepped outside.

“You mean I’m an unarmed eighteen-year-old,” Clarke said, forcing what she thought was a smile. “Or are you turning into one of those mad scientists who never knows what year it is?” Her father had been like that. He’d forget to program the circadian lights in their flat and end up going to work at 0400, too absorbed in his research to notice that the ship’s corridors were deserted.

“You’re still seventeen, Clarke,” Dr. Lahiri said in the calm, slow manner he usually reserved for patients waking up from surgery. “You’ve been in solitary for three months.”

“Then what are you doing here?” she asked, unable to quell the panic creeping into her voice. “The law says you have to wait until I’m eighteen.”

“There’s been a change of plans. That’s all I’m authorized to say.”

“So you’re authorized to *execute* me but not to talk to me?” She remembered watching Dr. Lahiri during her parents’ trial. At the time, she’d read his grim face as an expression of his disapproval with the proceedings, but now she wasn’t sure. He hadn’t spoken up in their defense. No one had. He’d

simply sat there mutely as the Council found her parents—two of Phoenix’s most brilliant scientists—to be in violation of the Gaia Doctrine, the rules established after the Cataclysm to ensure the survival of the human race. “What about my parents? Did you kill them, too?”

Dr. Lahiri closed his eyes, as if Clarke’s words had transformed from sounds into something visible. Something grotesque. “I’m not here to kill you,” he said quietly. He opened his eyes and then gestured to the stool at the foot of Clarke’s bed. “May I?”

When Clarke didn’t reply, Dr. Lahiri walked forward and sat down so he was facing her. “Can I see your arm, please?”

Clarke felt her chest tighten, and she forced herself to breathe. He was lying. It was cruel and twisted, but it’d all be over in a minute.

She extended her hand toward him. Dr. Lahiri reached into his coat pocket and produced a cloth that smelled of anti-septic. Clarke shivered as he swept it along the inside of her arm. “Don’t worry. This isn’t going to hurt.”

Clarke closed her eyes.

She remembered the anguished look Wells had given her as the guards were escorting her out of the Council chambers. While the anger that had threatened to consume her during the trial had long since burned out, thinking about Wells sent a new wave of heat pulsing through her body, like

a dying star emitting one final flash of light before it faded into nothingness.

Her parents were dead, and it was all his fault.

Dr. Lahiri grasped her arm, his fingers searching for her vein.

See you soon, Mom and Dad.

His grip tightened. This was it.

Clarke took a deep breath as she felt a prick on the inside of her wrist.

“There. You’re all set.”

Clarke’s eyes snapped open. She looked down and saw a metal bracelet clasped to her arm. She ran her finger along it, wincing as what felt like a dozen tiny needles pressed into her skin.

“What is this?” she asked frantically, pulling away from the doctor.

“Just relax,” he said with infuriating coolness. “It’s a vital transponder. It will track your breathing and blood composition, and gather all sorts of useful information.”

“Useful information for who?” Clarke asked, although she could already feel the shape of his answer in the growing mass of dread in her stomach.

“There’ve been some exciting developments,” Dr. Lahiri said, sounding like a hollow imitation of Wells’s father, Chancellor Jaha, making one of his Remembrance Day

speeches. “You should be very proud. It’s all because of your parents.”

“My parents were executed for treason.”

Dr. Lahiri gave her a disapproving look. A year ago, it would’ve made Clarke shrink with shame, but now she kept her gaze steady. “Don’t ruin this, Clarke. You have a chance to do the right thing, to make up for your parents’ appalling crime.”

There was a dull crack as Clarke’s fist made contact with the doctor’s face, followed by a thud as his head slammed against the wall. Seconds later, the guard appeared and had Clarke’s hands twisted behind her back. “Are you all right, sir?” he asked.

Dr. Lahiri sat up slowly, rubbing his jaw as he surveyed Clarke with a mixture of anger and amusement. “At least we know you’ll be able to hold your own with the other delinquents when you get there.”

“Get where?” Clarke grunted, trying to free herself from the guard’s grip.

“We’re clearing out the detention center today. A hundred lucky criminals are getting the chance to make history.” The corners of his mouth twitched into a smirk. “You’re going to Earth.”

CHAPTER 2

Wells

The Chancellor had aged. Although it'd been less than six weeks since Wells had seen his father, he looked years older. There were new streaks of gray by his temples, and the lines around his eyes had deepened.

“Are you finally going to tell me why you did it?” the Chancellor asked with a tired sigh.

Wells shifted in his chair. He could feel the truth trying to claw its way out. He'd give almost anything to erase the disappointment on his father's face, but he couldn't risk it—not before he learned whether his reckless plan had actually worked.

Wells avoided his father's gaze by glancing around the

room, trying to memorize the relics he might be seeing for the last time: the eagle skeleton perched in a glass case, the few paintings that had survived the burning of the Louvre, and the photos of the beautiful dead cities whose names never ceased to send chills down Wells's spine.

"Was it a dare? Were you trying to show off for your friends?" The Chancellor spoke in the same low, steady tone he used during Council hearings, then raised an eyebrow to indicate that it was Wells's turn to talk.

"No, sir."

"Were you overcome by some temporary bout of insanity? Were you on drugs?" There was a faint note of hopefulness in his voice that, in another situation, Wells might've found amusing. But there was nothing humorous about the look in his father's eyes, a combination of weariness and confusion that Wells hadn't seen since his mother's funeral.

"No, sir."

Wells felt a fleeting urge to touch his father's arm, but something other than the handcuffs shackling his wrists kept him from reaching across the desk. Even as they had gathered around the release portal, saying their final, silent good-byes to Wells's mother, they'd never bridged the six inches of space between their shoulders. It was as if Wells and his father were two magnets, the charge of their grief repelling them apart.

“Was it some kind of political statement?” His father winced slightly, as though the thought hit him like a physical blow. “Did someone from Walden or Arcadia put you up to it?”

“No, sir,” Wells said, biting back his indignation. His father had apparently spent the past six weeks trying to recast Wells as some kind of rebel, reprogramming his memories to help him understand why his son, formerly a star student and now the highest-ranked cadet, had committed the most public infraction in history. But even the truth would do little to mitigate his father’s confusion. For the Chancellor, nothing could justify setting fire to the Eden Tree, the sapling that had been carried onto Phoenix right before the Exodus. Yet for Wells, it hadn’t been a choice. Once he’d discovered that Clarke was one of the hundred being sent to Earth, he’d had to do something to join them. And as the Chancellor’s son, only the most public of infractions would land him in Confinement.

Wells remembered moving through the crowd at the Remembrance Ceremony, feeling the weight of hundreds of eyes on him, his hand shaking as he removed the lighter from his pocket and produced a spark that glowed brightly in the gloom. For a moment, everyone had stared in silence as the flames wrapped around the tree. And even as the guards rushed forward in sudden chaos, no one had been able to miss whom they were dragging away.

“What the hell were you thinking?” the Chancellor asked, staring at him in disbelief. “You could’ve burned down the whole hall and killed everyone in it.”

It would be better to lie. His father would have an easier time believing that Wells had been carrying out a dare. Or perhaps he could try to pretend he *had* been on drugs. Either of those scenarios would be more palatable to the Chancellor than the truth—that he’d risked everything for a girl.

The hospital door closed behind him but Wells’s smile stayed frozen in place, as if the force it had taken to lift the corners of his mouth had permanently damaged the muscles in his face. Through the haze of drugs, his mother had probably thought his grin looked real, which was all that mattered. She’d held Wells’s hand as the lies poured out of him, bitter but harmless. *Yes, Dad and I are doing fine.* She didn’t need to know that they’d barely exchanged more than a few words in weeks. *When you’re better, we’ll finish Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* They both knew that she’d never make it to the final volume.

Wells slipped out of the hospital and started walking across B deck, which was mercifully empty. At this hour, most people were either at tutorials, work, or at the Exchange. He was supposed to be at a history lecture, normally his favorite subject. He’d always loved stories about ancient cities like Rome and New York, whose dazzling triumphs were matched only by the magnitude of their

downfalls. But he couldn't spend two hours surrounded by the same tutorial mates who had filled his message queue with vague, uncomfortable condolences. The only person he could talk to about his mother was Glass, but she'd been strangely distant lately.

Wells wasn't sure how long he'd been standing outside the door before he realized he'd arrived at the library. He allowed the scanner to pass over his eyes, waited for the prompt, and then pressed his thumb against the pad. The door slid open just long enough for Wells to slip inside and then closed behind him with a huffy thud, as if it had done Wells a great favor by admitting him in the first place.

Wells exhaled as the stillness and shadows washed over him. The books that been evacuated onto Phoenix before the Cataclysm were kept in tall, oxygen-free cases that significantly slowed the deterioration process, which is why they had to be read in the library, and only then for a few hours at a time. The enormous room was hidden away from the circadian lights, in a state of perpetual twilight.

For as long as he could remember, Wells and his mother had spent Sunday evenings here, his mother reading aloud to him when he was little, then reading side by side as he got older. But as her illness progressed and her headaches grew worse, Wells had started reading to her. They'd just started volume two of *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* the evening before she was admitted to the hospital.

He wove through the narrow aisles toward the English Language section and then over to History, which was tucked into a dark back corner. The collection was smaller than it should've been. The first colonial government had arranged for digital text to be loaded onto Phoenix, but fewer than a hundred years later, a virus wiped out most of the digital archives, and the only books left were those in private collections—heirlooms handed down from the original colonists to their descendants. Over the past century, most of the relics had been donated to the library.

Wells crouched down until he was eye level with the *Gs*. He pressed his thumb against the lock and the glass slid open with a hiss, breaking the vacuum seal. He reached inside to grab *Decline and Fall* but then paused. He wanted to read on so he'd be able to tell his mother about it, but that would be tantamount to arriving in her hospital room with her memorial plaque and asking for her input on the wording.

"You're not supposed to leave the case open," a voice said from behind him.

"Yes, thank you," Wells said, more sharply than he'd meant. He rose to his feet and turned to see a familiar-looking girl staring at him. It was the apprentice medic from the hospital. Wells felt a flash of anger at this blending of worlds. The library was where he went to forget about the sickening smell of antiseptic, the beep of the heart monitor that, far from a sign of life, seemed like a countdown to death.

The girl took a step back and cocked her head, her light hair falling to one side. "Oh. It's you." Wells braced for the first swoon of recognition, and the rapid eye movements that meant she was already messaging her friends on her cornea slip. But this girl's eyes focused directly on him, as if she were looking straight into his brain, peeling back the layers to reveal all the thoughts Wells had purposefully hidden.

"Didn't you want that book?" She nodded toward the shelf where *Decline and Fall* was stored.

Wells shook his head. "I'll read it another time."

She was silent for a moment. "I think you should take it now." Wells's jaw tightened, but when he said nothing, she continued. "I used to see you here with your mother. You should bring it to her."

"Just because my father's in charge of the Council doesn't mean I get to break a three-hundred-year rule," he said, allowing just a shade of condescension to darken his tone.

"The book will be fine for a few hours. They exaggerate the effects of the air."

Wells raised an eyebrow. "And do they exaggerate the power of the exit scanner?" There were scanners over most public doors on Phoenix that could be programmed to any specifications. In the library, it monitored the molecular composition of every person who exited, to make sure no one left with a book in their hands or hidden under their clothes.

A smile flickered across her face. "I figured that out a long time ago." She glanced over her shoulder down the shadowy aisle between the bookcases, reached into her pocket, and extracted a piece of gray cloth. "It keeps the scanner from recognizing the cellulose in the paper." She held it out to him. "Here. Take it."

Wells took a step back. The chances of this girl trying to embarrass him were far greater than the odds of her having a piece of magical fabric hidden in her pocket. "Why do you have this?"

She shrugged. "I like reading other places." When he didn't say anything, she smiled and extended her other hand. "Just give me the book. I'll sneak it out for you and bring it to the hospital."

Wells surprised himself by handing her the book. "What's your name?" he asked.

"So you know to whom you'll be eternally indebted?"

"So I know who to blame when I'm arrested."

The girl tucked the book under her arm and then extended her hand. "Clarke."

"Wells," he said, reaching forward to shake it. He smiled, and this time it didn't hurt.

"They barely managed to save the tree." The Chancellor stared at Wells, as if looking for a sign of remorse or glee—anything to help him understand why his son had tried to set fire to the only tree evacuated from their ravaged planet. "Some of the council members wanted to execute you on the

spot, juvenile or not, you know. I was only able to spare your life by getting them to agree to send you to Earth.”

Wells exhaled with relief. There were fewer than 150 kids in Confinement, so he had assumed they’d take all the older teens, but until this moment he hadn’t been sure he would be sent on the mission.

His father’s eyes widened with surprise and understanding as he stared at Wells. “That’s what you wanted, isn’t it?”

Wells nodded.

The Chancellor grimaced. “Had I known you were this desperate to see Earth, I could have easily arranged for you to join the second expedition. Once we determined it was safe.”

“I didn’t want to wait. I want to go with the first hundred.”

The Chancellor narrowed his eyes slightly as he assessed Wells’s impassive face. “Why? You of all people know the risks.”

“With all due respect, you’re the one who convinced the Council that nuclear winter was over. *You* said it was safe.”

“Yes. Safe enough for the hundred convicted criminals who were going to die anyway,” the Chancellor said, his voice a mix of condescension and disbelief. “I didn’t mean safe for my *son*.”

The anger Wells had been trying to smother flared up, reducing his guilt to ashes. He shook his hands so the cuffs

rattled against the chair. “I guess I’m one of them now.”

“Your mother wouldn’t want you to do this, Wells. Just because she enjoyed dreaming about Earth doesn’t mean she’d want you to put yourself in harm’s way.”

Wells leaned forward, ignoring the bite of the metal digging into his flesh. “She’s not who I’m doing this for,” he said, looking his father straight in the eye for the first time since he’d sat down. “Though I do think she’d be proud of me.” It was partially true. She’d had a romantic streak and would have commended her son’s desire to protect the girl he loved. But his stomach writhed at the thought of his mom knowing what he’d really done to save Clarke. The truth would make setting the Eden Tree on fire seem like a harmless prank.

His father stared at him. “Are you telling me this whole debacle is because of that girl?”

Wells nodded slowly. “It’s my fault she’s being sent down there like some lab rat. I’m going to make sure she has the best chance of making it out alive.”

The Chancellor was silent for a moment. But when he spoke again, his voice was calm. “That won’t be necessary.” The Chancellor removed something from his desk drawer and placed it in front of Wells. It was a metal ring affixed with a chip about the size of Wells’s thumb. “Every member of the expedition is currently being fitted with one of these bracelets,” his father explained. “They’ll send data back up to the

ship so we can track your location and monitor your vitals. As soon as we have proof that the environment is hospitable, we'll begin recolonization." He forced a grim smile. "If everything goes according to plan, it won't be long before the rest of us come down to join you, and all this"—he gestured toward Wells's bound hands—"will be forgotten."

The door opened and a guard stepped over the threshold. "It's time, sir."

The Chancellor nodded, and the guard strode across the room to pull Wells to his feet.

"Good luck, son," Wells's father said, assuming his trademark brusqueness. "If anyone can make this mission a success, it's you."

He extended his arm to shake Wells's hand, but then let it fall to his side when he realized his mistake. His only child's arms were still shackled behind him.

CHAPTER 3

Bellamy

Of course the smug bastard was late. Bellamy tapped his foot impatiently, not caring about the echo that rang throughout the storeroom. No one came down here anymore; anything valuable had been snatched up years ago. Every surface was covered with junk—spare parts for machines whose functions had been long forgotten, paper currency, endless tangles of cords and wires, cracked screens and monitors.

Bellamy felt a hand on his shoulder and spun around, raising his fists to block his face as he ducked to the side.

“Relax, man,” Colton’s voice called out as he switched on his flashbeam, shining it right in Bellamy’s eyes. He surveyed Bellamy with an amused expression on his long, narrow face.

“Why’d you want to meet down here?” He smirked. “Looking for caveman porn on broken computers? No judgments. If I were stuck with what passes for a girl down on Walden, I’d probably develop some sick habits myself.”

Bellamy ignored the jab. Despite his former friend’s new role as a guard, Colton didn’t stand a chance with a girl no matter what ship he was on. “Just tell me what’s going on, okay?” Bellamy said, doing his best to keep his tone light.

Colton leaned back against the wall and smiled. “Don’t let the uniform fool you, brother. I haven’t forgotten the first rule of business.” He held out his hand. “Give it to me.”

“You’re the one who’s confused, Colt. You know I always come through.” He patted the pocket that held the chip loaded with stolen ration points. “Now tell me where she is.”

The guard smirked, and Bellamy felt something in his chest tighten. He’d been bribing Colton for information about Octavia since her arrest, and the idiot always seemed to find twisted pleasure in delivering bad news.

“They’re sending them off today.” The words landed with a thud in Bellamy’s chest. “They got one of the old dropships on G deck working.” He held out his hand again. “Now come on. This mission’s top secret and I’m risking my ass for you. I’m done messing around.”

Bellamy’s stomach twisted as a series of images flashed before his eyes: his little sister strapped into an ancient metal

cage, hurtling through space at a thousand kilometers an hour. Her face turning purple as she struggled to breathe the toxic air. Her crumpled body lying just as still as—

Bellamy took a step forward. "I'm sorry, man."

Colton narrowed his eyes. "For what?"

"For this." Bellamy drew his arm back, then punched the guard right in the jaw. There was a loud crack, but he felt nothing but his racing heart as he watched Colton fall to the ground.

Thirty minutes later, Bellamy was trying to wrap his mind around the strange scene in front of him. His back was against the wall of a wide hallway that led onto a steep ramp. Convicts streamed by in gray jackets, led down the incline by a handful of guards. At the bottom was the dropship, a circular contraption outfitted with rows of harnessed seats that would take the poor, clueless kids to Earth.

The whole thing was completely sick, but he supposed it was better than the alternative. While you were supposed to get a retrial at your eighteenth birthday, in the last year or so, pretty much every juvenile defendant had been found guilty. Without this mission, they'd be counting down the days until their executions.

Bellamy's stomach clenched as his eyes settled on a second ramp, and for a moment, he worried that he'd missed

Octavia. But it didn't matter whether he saw her board. They'd be reunited soon enough.

Bellamy tugged on the sleeves of Colton's uniform. It barely fit, but so far none of the other guards seemed to notice. They were focused on the bottom of the ramp, where Chancellor Jaha was speaking to the passengers.

"You have been given an unprecedented opportunity to put the past behind you," the Chancellor was saying. "The mission on which you're about to embark is dangerous, but your bravery will be rewarded. If you succeed, your infractions will be forgiven, and you'll be able to start new lives on Earth."

Bellamy barely suppressed a snort. The Chancellor had some nerve to stand there, spewing whatever bullshit helped him sleep at night.

"We'll be monitoring your progress very closely, in order to keep you safe," the Chancellor continued as the next ten prisoners filed down the ramp, accompanied by a guard who gave the Chancellor a crisp salute before depositing his charges in the dropship and retreating back up to stand in the hallway. Bellamy searched the crowd for Luke, the only Waldenite he knew who hadn't turned into a total prick after becoming a guard. But there were fewer than a dozen guards on the launch deck; the Council had clearly decided that secrecy was more important than security.

He tried not to tap his feet with impatience as the line of prisoners proceeded down the ramp. If he was caught posing as a guard, the list of infractions would be endless: bribery, blackmail, identity theft, conspiracy, and whatever else the Council felt like adding to the mix. And since he was twenty, there'd be no Confinement for him; within twenty-four hours of his sentencing, he'd be dead.

Bellamy's chest tightened as a familiar red hair ribbon appeared at the end of the hallway, peeking out from a curtain of glossy black hair. Octavia.

For the past ten months, he'd been consumed with agonizing worries about what was happening to her in Confinement. Was she getting enough to eat? Was she finding ways to stay occupied? Stay sane? While Confinement would be brutal for anyone, Bellamy knew that it'd be infinitely worse for O.

Bellamy had pretty much raised his younger sister. Or at least he'd tried. After their mother's accident, he and Octavia had been placed under Council care. There was no precedent for what to do with siblings—with the strict population laws, a couple was never allowed to have more than one child, and sometimes, they weren't permitted to have any at all—and so no one in the Colony understood what it meant to have a brother or sister. Bellamy and Octavia lived in different group homes for a number of years, but Bellamy had always looked out for her, sneaking her extra rations whenever he

“wandered” into one of the restricted storage facilities, confronting the tough-talking older girls who thought it’d be fun to pick on the chubby-cheeked orphan with the big blue eyes. Bellamy worried about her constantly. The kid was special, and he’d do anything to give her a chance at a different life. Anything to make up for what she’d had to endure.

As Octavia’s guard led her onto the ramp, Bellamy suppressed a smile. While the other kids shuffled passively along as their escorts led them toward the dropship, it was clear Octavia was the one setting the pace. She moved deliberately, forcing her guard to shorten his stride as she sauntered down the ramp. She actually looked *better* than the last time he’d seen her. He supposed it made sense. She’d been sentenced to four years in Confinement, until a retrial on her eighteenth birthday that would very well lead to her execution. Now she was being given a second chance at a life. And Bellamy was going to make damn sure she got it.

He didn’t care what he had to do. He was going to Earth with her.

The Chancellor’s voice boomed over the clamor of footsteps and nervous whispers. He still held himself like a soldier, but his years on the Council had given him a politician’s gloss. “No one in the Colony knows what you are about to do, but if you succeed, we will all owe you our lives. I know that you’ll do your very best on behalf of yourselves, your

families, everyone aboard this ship: the entire human race.”

When Octavia’s gaze settled on Bellamy, her mouth fell open in surprise. He could see her mind race to make sense of the situation. They both knew he’d never be selected as a guard, which meant that he had to be there as an impostor. But just as she began to mouth a warning, the Chancellor turned to address the prisoners who were still coming down the ramp. Octavia reluctantly turned her head, but Bellamy could see the tension in her shoulders.

His heart sped up as the Chancellor finished his remarks and motioned for the guards to finish loading the passengers. He had to wait for just the right moment. If he acted too soon, there’d be time to haul him out. If he waited too long, Octavia would be barreling through space toward a toxic planet, while he remained to face the consequences of disrupting the launch.

Finally, it was Octavia’s turn. She turned over her shoulder and caught his eye, shaking her head slightly, a clear warning not to do anything stupid.

But Bellamy had been doing stupid things his whole life, and he had no intention of stopping now.

The Chancellor nodded at a woman in a black uniform. She turned to the control panel next to the dropship and started pressing a series of buttons. Large numbers began flashing on the screen.

THE 100

The countdown had begun.

He had three minutes to get past the door, down the ramp, and onto the dropship, or else lose his sister forever.

As the final passengers loaded, the mood in the room shifted. The guards next to Bellamy relaxed and began talking quietly among themselves. Across the deck on the other ramp, someone let out an obnoxious snort.

2:48 . . . 2:47 . . . 2:46 . . .

Bellamy felt a tide of anger rise within him, momentarily overpowering his nerves. How could these assholes *laugh* when his sister and ninety-nine other kids were being sent on what might be a suicide mission?

2:32 . . . 2:31 . . . 2:30 . . .

The woman by the control panel smiled and whispered something to the Chancellor, but he scowled and turned away.

The real guards had begun trudging back up and were filing into the hallway. Either they thought they had better things to do than witness humanity's first attempt to return to Earth, or they thought the ancient dropship was going to explode and were headed to safety.

2:14 . . . 2:13 . . . 2:12 . . .

Bellamy took a deep breath. It was time.

He shoved his way through the crowd and slipped behind a stocky guard whose holster was strapped carelessly to his

belt, leaving the handle of the gun exposed. Bellamy snatched the weapon and charged down the loading ramp.

Before anyone knew what was happening, Bellamy jabbed his elbow into the Chancellor's stomach and threw an arm around his neck, securing him in a headlock. The launch deck exploded with shouts and stamping feet, but before anyone had time to reach him, Bellamy placed the barrel of the gun against the Chancellor's temple. There was no way he'd actually shoot the bastard, but the guards needed to think he meant business.

1:12 . . . 1:11 . . . 1:10 . . .

"Everyone back up," Bellamy shouted, tightening his hold. The Chancellor groaned. There was a loud beep, and the flashing numbers changed from green to red. Less than a minute left. All he had to do was wait until the door to the dropship started to close, then push the Chancellor out of the way and duck inside. There wouldn't be any time to stop him.

"Let me onto the dropship, or I'll shoot."

The room fell silent, save for the sound of a dozen guns being cocked.

In thirty seconds, he'd either be heading to Earth with Octavia, or back to Walden in a body bag.

CHAPTER 4

Glass

Glass had just hooked her harness when a flurry of shouts rose up. The guards were closing in around two figures near the entrance to the dropship. It was difficult to see through the shifting mass of uniforms, but Glass caught a flash of suit sleeve, a glimpse of gray hair, and the glint of metal. Then half the guards knelt down and raised their guns to their shoulders, giving Glass an unobstructed view: The Chancellor was being held hostage.

“Everyone back up,” the captor yelled, his voice shaking. He wore a uniform, but he clearly wasn’t a guard. His hair was far longer than regulation length, his jacket fit badly, and his awkward grip on the gun showed that he’d never been trained to use one.

No one moved. “I said back *up*.”

The numbness that had set in during the long walk from her cell to the launch deck melted away like an icy comet passing the sun, leaving a faint trail of hope in its wake. She didn’t belong here. She couldn’t pretend they were about to head off on some historic adventure. The moment the dropship detached from the ship, Glass’s heart would start to break. *This is my chance*, she thought suddenly, excitement and terror shooting through her.

Glass unhooked her harness and sprang to her feet. A few other prisoners noticed, but most were caught up watching the drama unfolding atop the ramp. She dashed to the far side of the dropship, where another ramp led back up to the loading deck.

“I’m going with them,” the boy shouted as he took a step backward toward the door, dragging the Chancellor with him. “I’m going with my sister.”

A stunned silence fell over the launch deck. *Sister*. The word echoed in Glass’s head but before she had time to process its significance, a familiar voice pulled her from her thoughts.

“Let him go.”

Glass glanced at the back of the dropship and froze, momentarily stunned by the sight of her best friend’s face. Of course, she’d heard the ridiculous rumors that Wells had

been Confined, but hadn't given them a second thought. What was he doing here? As she stared at Wells's gray eyes, which were trained intently on his father, the answer came to her: He must have tried to follow Clarke. Wells would do anything to protect the people he cared about, most of all Clarke.

And then there was a deafening crack—a *gunshot*?—and something inside of her snapped. Without stopping to think, to breathe, she dashed through the door and began sprinting up the ramp. Fighting the urge to look back over her shoulder, Glass kept her head down and ran as fast as she'd ever run in her life.

She'd chosen just the right moment. For a few seconds, the guards stood still, as if the reverberation from the gunshot had locked their joints in place.

Then they caught sight of her.

"Prisoner on the run!" one of them shouted, and the others quickly turned in her direction. The flash of movement activated the instincts drilled into their brains during training. It didn't matter that she was a seventeen-year-old girl. They'd been programmed to look past the flowing blond hair and wide blue eyes that had always made people want to protect Glass. All they saw was an escaped convict.

Glass threw herself through the door, ignoring the angry shouts that rose up in her wake. She hurtled down the passageway that led back to Phoenix, her chest heaving, her breath coming in ragged gasps. "You! Stop right there!" a

guard shouted, his footsteps echoing behind her, but she didn't pause. If she ran fast enough, and if the luck that had been eluding her all her life made a final, last-minute appearance, maybe she could see Luke one last time. And maybe, just maybe, she could get him to forgive her.

Gasping, Glass staggered down a passageway bordered by unmarked doors. Her right knee buckled, and she grabbed on to the wall to catch herself. The corridor was beginning to grow blurry. She turned her head and could just make out the shape of an air vent. Glass hooked her fingers under one of the slats and pulled. Nothing happened. With a groan, she pulled again and felt the metal grate give. She yanked it open, revealing a dark, narrow tunnel full of ancient-looking pipes.

Glass pulled herself onto the small ledge, then scooted along on her stomach until there was room to bring her knees up to her chest. The metal felt cool against her burning skin. With her last milligram of strength, she crept deeper into the tunnel and closed the vent behind her. She strained her ears for signs of pursuit, but there was no more shouting, no more footsteps, only the desperate thud of her heart.

Glass blinked in the near darkness, taking stock of where she was. The cramped space extended straight in both directions, thick with dust. It had to be one of the original air shafts, from before the Colony built their new air circulation and filtration systems. Glass had no idea where it would lead,

but she was out of options. She started to crawl forward.

After what felt like hours, her knees numb and her hands burning, she reached a fork in the tunnel. If her sense of direction was right, then the tunnel on the left would lead to Phoenix, and the other would run parallel to the skybridge—onto Walden, and toward Luke.

Luke, the boy she loved, who she'd been forced to abandon all those months ago. Who she'd spent every night in Confinement thinking about, so desperate for his touch that she'd almost felt the pressure of his arms around her.

She took a deep breath and turned to the right, not knowing if she was headed toward freedom or certain death.

Ten minutes later, Glass slid quietly out of the vent and lowered herself to the floor. She took a step forward and coughed as a plume of dust swirled around her face, sticking to her sweaty skin. She was in some kind of storage space.

As her eyes adjusted to the darkness, shapes began to materialize on the wall—writing, Glass realized. She took another few steps forward, and her eyes widened. There were *messages* carved into the walls.

Rest in peace

In memoriam

From the stars to the heavens

She was on the quarantine deck, the oldest section of Walden. As nuclear and biological war threatened to destroy Earth, space had been the only option for those lucky enough to survive the first stages of the Cataclysm. But some infected survivors fought their way onto the transport pods—only to find themselves barred from Phoenix, left to die on Walden. Now, whenever there was the slightest threat of illness, anyone infected was quarantined, kept far from the rest of the Colony’s vulnerable population—the last of the human race.

Glass shivered as she moved quickly toward the door, praying that it hadn’t rusted shut. To her relief, she was able to wrench it open and began dashing down the corridor. She peeled off her sweat-soaked jacket; in her white T-shirt and prison-issue pants, she could pass for a worker, someone on sanitation duty, perhaps. She glanced down nervously at the bracelet on her wrist. She wasn’t sure whether it would work on the ship, or if it was only meant to transmit data from Earth. Either way, she needed to figure out a way to get it off as soon as possible. Even if she avoided the passages with retina scanners, every guard in the Colony would be on the lookout for her.

Her only hope was that they’d be expecting her to run back to Phoenix. They’d never guess that she would come here. She climbed up the main Walden stairwell until she reached the entrance to Luke’s residential unit. She turned

into his hallway and slowed down, wiping her sweaty hands on her pants, suddenly more nervous than she'd been on the dropship.

She couldn't imagine what he'd say, the look he'd give her when he saw her on his doorstep after her disappearance more than nine months earlier.

But maybe he wouldn't have to say anything. Perhaps, as soon as he saw her, as soon as the words began to pour out of her mouth, he would silence her with a kiss, relying on his lips to tell her that everything was okay. That she was forgiven.

Glass glanced over her shoulder and then slipped out the door. She didn't think anyone had seen her, but she had to be careful. It was incredibly rude to leave a Partnering Ceremony before the final blessing, but Glass didn't think she'd be able to spend another minute sitting next to Cassius, with his dirty mind and even fouler breath. His wandering hands reminded Glass of Carter, Luke's two-faced roommate whose creepiness only slithered out of the darkness when Luke was out on guard duty.

Glass climbed the stairs toward the observation deck, taking care to lift the hem of her gown with each step. It'd been foolish to waste so many ration points collecting the materials for the dress, a piece of tarp that she'd painstakingly sewn into a silver slip. It felt utterly worthless without Luke there to see her in it.

She hated spending the evening with other boys, but her

mother refused to let Glass be seen at a social event without a date, and as far as she knew, her daughter was single. She couldn't understand why Glass hadn't "snatched up" Wells. No matter how many times Glass explained that she didn't have those types of feelings for him, her mother sighed and muttered about not letting some badly dressed scientist girl steal him away. But Glass was happy that Wells had fallen for the beautiful if slightly over-serious Clarke Griffin. She only wished she could tell her mother the truth: that she was in love with a handsome, brilliant boy who could never escort her to a concert or a Partnering Ceremony.

"May I have this dance?"

Glass gasped and spun around. As her eyes locked with a familiar pair of brown ones, her face broke into a wide smile. "What are you doing here?" she whispered, looking around to make sure they were alone.

"I couldn't let those Phoenix boys have you all to themselves," Luke said, taking a step back to admire her dress. "Not when you look like this."

"Do you know how much trouble you'll get in if they catch you?"

"Let them try to keep up." He wrapped his arms around Glass's waist, and as the music from downstairs swelled, he spun her through the air.

"Put me down!" Glass half whispered, half laughed as she playfully hit his shoulder.

"Is that how young ladies are taught to address gentlemen admirers?" he asked, using a terrible, fake Phoenix accent.

"Come on," she said, giggling as she grabbed his hand. "You really shouldn't be here."

Luke stopped and pulled her to him. "Wherever you are is where I'm supposed to be."

"It's too risky," she said softly, bringing her face up to his.

He grinned. "Then we better make sure it's worth our while." He placed his hand behind her head and brought his lips to hers.

Glass raised her hand to knock a second time when the door opened. Her heart skipped a beat.

There he was, his sandy hair and deep-brown eyes exactly as she remembered them, exactly as they'd appeared in her dreams every night in Confinement. His eyes widened in surprise.

"Luke," she breathed, all the emotion of the past nine months threatening to break through. She was desperate to tell him what had happened, why she'd broken up with him and then disappeared. That she'd spent every minute of the nightmarish last six months thinking of him. That she never stopped loving him. "Luke," she said again, a tear sliding down her cheek. After the countless times she'd broken down in her cell, whispering his name in between sobs, it felt surreal to say it to him.

But before she had a chance to grab hold of any of the words flitting through her mind, another figure appeared in the door, a girl with wavy red hair.

“Glass?”

Glass tried to smile at Camille, Luke’s childhood friend, a girl who’d been as close to him as Glass was to Wells. And now she was here . . . in Luke’s flat. *Of course*, Glass thought with a strained kind of bitterness. She’d always wondered if there was more to their relationship than Luke had admitted.

“Would you like to come in?” Camille asked with exaggerated politeness. She wrapped her hand around Luke’s, but Glass felt as if Camille’s fingers had plunged into her heart instead. While Glass had spent months in Confinement pinning for Luke until his absence felt like a physical ache, he’d moved on to someone else.

“No . . . no, that’s okay,” Glass said, her voice hoarse. Even if she managed to find the words, it would be impossible to tell Luke the truth now. Seeing them together made it all the more ridiculous that she’d come so far—risked so much—to see a boy who had already moved on.

“I just came to say hello.”

“You came to say *hello*?” Luke repeated. “After almost a year of ignoring my messages, you thought you’d just *drop by*?” He wasn’t even trying to hide his anger, and Camille dropped his hand. Her smile hardened into a grimace.

“I know. I’m—I’m sorry. I’ll leave you two alone.”

“What’s really going on?” Luke asked, exchanging a look with Camille that made Glass feel both desperately foolish and terribly alone.

“Nothing,” Glass said quickly, trying and failing to keep her voice from trembling. “I’ll talk to you . . . I’ll see you . . .” She cut herself off with a weak smile and took a deep breath, ignoring her body’s furious plea to stay close to him.

But just as she turned, she saw a flash of a guard uniform out of the corner of her vision. She inhaled sharply and turned her face as the guard passed.

Luke pressed his lips together as he looked at something just beyond Glass’s head. He was reading a message on his cornea slip, Glass realized. And from the way his jaw was tightening, she got the sickening sense it was about her.

His eyes widened with understanding, and then horror. “Glass,” he said hoarsely. “You were Confined.” It wasn’t a question. Glass nodded.

He shifted his gaze back to Glass for a moment, then sighed and reached out to place his hand on her back. She could feel the pressure of his fingers through the fabric of her thin T-shirt, and despite her anxiety, her skin thrilled at his touch. “Come on,” he said, pulling her toward him. Camille stepped to the side, looking annoyed, as Glass stumbled into the flat. Luke quickly shut the door behind them.

The small living area was dark—Luke and Camille had been inside with the lights off. Glass tried to push the implications of that fact out of her head as she watched Camille sit down in the armchair that Luke’s great-grandmother had found at the Exchange. Glass shifted uncomfortably, unsure whether to take a seat. Being Luke’s ex-girlfriend somehow felt odder than being an escaped convict. She’d had six months in Confinement to come to terms with her criminal record, but Glass had never imagined what it would be like to stand in this flat feeling like a stranger.

“How did you escape?” he asked.

Glass paused. She had spent all her time in Confinement imagining what she would say to Luke if she ever got the chance to see him again. And now she had finally made her way back to him, and all the speeches she’d practiced felt flimsy and selfish. He was doing fine; she could see that now. Why should she tell him the truth, except to win him back and make herself feel less alone? And so, in a shaky voice, Glass quickly told him about the hundred and their secret mission, the hostage situation, and the chase.

“But I still don’t understand.” Luke shot a glance over his shoulder at Camille, who had given up pretending that she wasn’t paying attention. “Why were you Confined in the first place?”

Glass looked away, unable to meet his eyes as her brain

raced for an explanation. She couldn't tell him, not now, not when he'd moved on. Not when it was so obvious he didn't feel the same way for her.

"I can't talk about it," she said quietly. "You wouldn't underst—"

"It's fine." Luke cut her off sharply. "You've made it clear that there are lots of things I can't understand."

For the briefest of moments, Glass wished she'd stayed on the dropship with Clarke and Wells. Although she was standing next to the boy she loved, she couldn't imagine feeling any lonelier on the abandoned Earth than she did right now.

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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