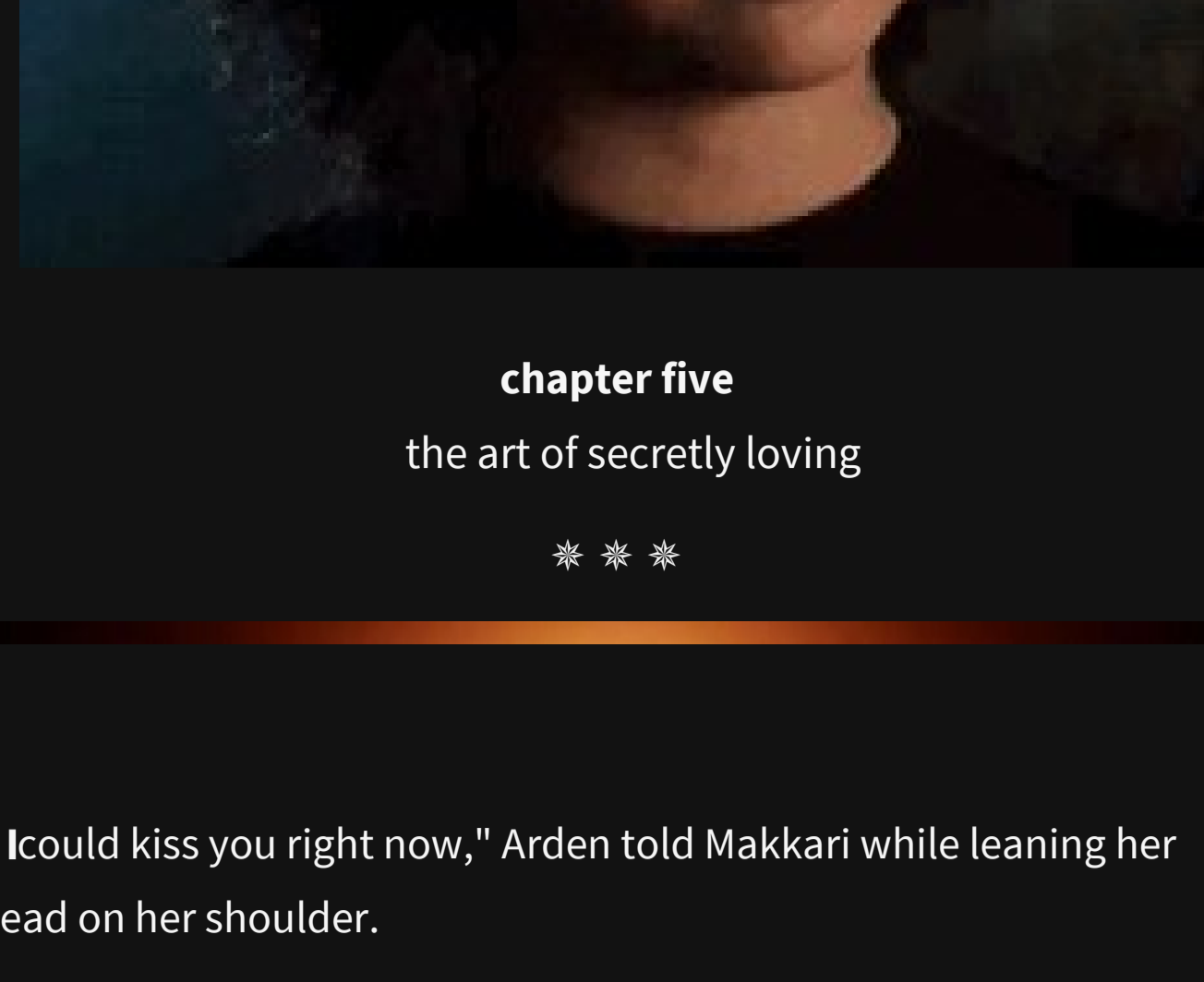


## 005 the art of secretly loving



### chapter five the art of secretly loving

\* \* \*

"I could kiss you right now," Arden told Makkari while leaning her head on her shoulder.

"What," Druig spoke defensively from his position on the ground in front of the two girls.

"What?" Arden asked, looking up from the ladybug in her hand to look at Druig.

"Nothing," he muttered, looking back down and continuing to draw random lines in the dirt.

Arden watched him, so ly smiling at his concentrated face as he seemed to be drawing some animal. She couldn't tell.

"That's a little weird," Makkari told Arden while nudging her shoulder, as if she caught something Arden obviously did not.

"What's a little weird?"

"Nothing is weird," Druig butt in making Makkari send him a teasing smile.

"He doesn't want you to kiss me," Makkari signed.

"Now I didn't say that."

"Well what else am I supposed to do?" Arden smiled in a teasing manor. "She gave me a lady bug."

"But I-"

"We're just joking around," Makkari told him once she sensed he was getting a little toouspet.

He said nothing and just continued drawing in the dirt. Arden watched, putting her head on her hand while still feeling the lady bug crawl on her other hand.

"I'm a little confused on what just happened," Arden whispered so ly making Druig look up at her.

They met eyes before hers moved down to the lady bug once again. She watched it crawl to the tip of her fingers before flying away. She frowned, staring at the spot it once was before setting her hand down to drape over her knee.

"How unfortunate," she spoke, her shoulders raising before dropping slowly to indicate a sigh.

Makkari looked over to Arden and frowned when she saw the lack of the lady bugs presence.

"Sorry about your ladybug," she apologized.

"Its okay," Arden shrugged.

\* \* \*

"Where is she?" Arden heard a voice grumble.

Her eyes were closed, head resting in Thena's lap as the woman played with her hair. The feeling made her tired, it crept up to her like a predator to its prey. It was as if it meant to happen.

She imagined herself fighting o the sleepy feeling as if it was a deviant, but the scenario only made her even more tired. Yet, she allowed herself to listen in on the conversation.

"Where's who?" Gilgamesh asked, standing up from his position at the end of Ardens feet.

"You know who," the voice muttered again. They did not seem happy.

That's when the voice finally registered in her mind. She scolded herself for not recognizing it sooner. They were around each other at all times, there was no way it should've taken her that long.

A moment of silence was heard, the only sound being a small shu le of movements.

"She's sleeping," Gilgamesh spoke so ly.

"So wake her up," Druig groaned.

Arden felt Thena move slightly and could practically feel the burn of the glare she was giving. She kept her face still, not wanting to laugh and give away that she was in fact nobsleeping.

"Is it important?" Thena asked.

"Very," Druig answered, his voice so ening from the aggressive tone it was previously in. "She's gonna love it."

"It?" Gilgamesh asked. "You're actually going to take her?"

Arden guessed Druig nodded or shook his head, she didn't know. But no words were spoken and the only thing she heard were two figures coming closer.

"Arden," Thena spoke, shaking her shoulders slightly. "Wake up."

Arden shu led, squeezing her eyes shut before slowly opening them. She winced at the bright light that she didn't know was on. Before her eyes closed the room was lit by candles instead.

She found the three staring down at her making her eyes widen.

"That's creepy," she muttered making them all smile in unison. "That's even more creepy don't do that."

She li ed her head o of Thena's lap and sat up next to her. She crossed her legs before putting her hands in her lap and smiling at them.

"What's up?" she asked, looking at Druig.

"I'm taking you somewhere," he said, holding out his hand.

Her heart beat faster as she reached out and took it, allowing him to pull her up to stand. Her legs wobbled making her almost fall but Druig put a hand on her waist to stabilize her. She shot him a smile in thanks making him nod.

"If there's any trouble," Gilgamesh told them. "Scream or something, I don't want either of you dead. Don't try to fight them on your own."

"Aye aye captain," Arden replied, putting two fingers to her temple.

Thena laughed making Gilgamesh look at her with a smile. The man turned to Druig and Arden before ru ling Ardens hair.

"Hey!" she protested, pushing his hand away. "I'm not a child."

He just hummed before leading them to the door.

"Be safe," Thena told them.

"Very safe," Gilgamesh added.

"Any thing for you," she winked before getting dragged out of the room by Druig.

\* \* \*

"What are you going to do when the deviants are gone?" Arden asked as they walked.

Her heart pounded against her rib cage as if begging to be let out of its trap. Though, it wasnt necessarily a trap than a cage enclosing her heart.

It wouldn't stop until their hands unlinked, yet she would rather have her heart pound than let him go.

"Probably stay with you for centuries," Druig admitted, his eyes going from their holding hands back to the trail in front of him. "I think im too attached to you to go anywhere else."

"I'd want to build a tree house, or get a apartment with beautiful scenery," Arden replied. "I'd want to collect tons of plants and rocks and nature stu."

"Nature stu," Druig repeated, letting out a small laugh.

"What?" Arden asked, stopping to pick up a stick making Druigs cheeks flush.

"It's cute," he said. "That you collect things."

"I had a bunch of leaves once but they crumbled," she frowned. "But anyway, where are we going?"

They were walking on a trail to a place Arden had yet to explore. Her eyes scanned the trees and saw a medium sized body of water up ahead. Well, more like heard it. It was quite a walk away, having walked until the stars came out.

"To the water," Druig answered her, his voice so and quiet.

"Are you going to drown me again?" she laughed making him smile.

He said nothing, just leading her to the shore and looking out to the bright moon that sat looming in the sky.

"I love the moon," he spoke, lowkey admitting why he brought her there. He wanted to share something he loved to someone he thought was special. "It's beautiful."

"It is beautiful," she agreed, watching his eyes stare at the moon in awe.

Her eyes scanned his face, looking at every part and feeling nothing but warmth lurking in her chest just by the sight of him.

She allowed her eyes to look around. She bent down and ran her hand through the cold water that threatened to touch the black boots on her feet. Her eyes went up to the tree that sat behind them, it's branches above their heads. She looked from the tree to Druig and back again before gently putting her hand in his.

He jumped at the sudden coldness due to her hands being in the cold water before tearing his eyes away from the bright moon. He followed as she dragged him to the trunk of the tree.

"What are you doing?" he asked, looking up before looking back at her.

"Can you climb?"

"Yeah... " he trailed o , confusion filling his features.

"Race you to the top," she smiled before grabbing onto a branch and hoisting herself up.

He hu ed before following her, taking his time and carefully watching incase she fell.

When she made it to the top she held out her hand, pulling Druig up to sit next to her on the branch. The two looked forward, getting a better vision of the sight around them.

"Its beautiful," she whispered, her eyes lighting up at the sight of a million stars that littered the night sky.

The moonlight reflected o the water making their faces seem lighter in the light. She stared at the moon, taking in all it's beautiful glory and she understood.

She understood why he loved it. At least, she believed she did. She thought it was beautiful how it stood out in the sky compared to all the stars littering it.

To Druig, that's exactly why he loved it. Because to him, Arden stood out from anyone he's ever met. Shining bright in the darkness of the sky, keeping him from losing his way through the night. She was his moon standing out against the tiny little stars.

"It always is," Druig whispered back, his eyes never leaving the short haired girl whose face was filled with nothing but pure awe and wonder.

\* \* \*

"And so that is why you guys should take me to the moon," Arden finalized as she looked at Ikaris, Kingo and Sersi who sat in front of her. Druig stood next to her, holding a piece of bark that she had carved. He pretended to look like he was forced there against his will but if anything, he begged Arden to let him be around her. A er all, she only wanted to go to the moon because he fancied it. "Any questions?"

"I have one," Thena spoke from her spot against the wall next to Gilgamesh.

Arden swallowed deeply, sending wide eyes to Druig before looking back at Thena.

"What is it?" Arden replied, fiddling with her fingers as she suddenly became nervous.

"Why do you need all of us?"

"Yeah, Ikaris can just fly you up there and you can do your thing," Kingo agreed making Arden frown.

"Wait so let me get this straight," Ikaris interrupted before the conversation could go on. "You want to go to the moon and sit in the craters to see which ones will fit you better. And then, you want to build a house there with Druig."

"That's exactly what she said," Druig spoke. "Do you not listen?"

Arden switched from fiddling with her hands to rubbing her arms. She knew her idea was silly but normally she didn't feel so embarrassed er goofing around. It was like something just randomly changed and she already hated it with all her heart.

"Sorry I don't listen to every single word she says and analyze it like she's some sort of god." Ikaris mocked making Sersi smack his shoulder. "Besides, I wouldn't have been able to say that if I didn't listen now would I?"

Arden and Kingo met eyes, both frowning in unison as if they both had the feeling they were going to argue even more. Ikaris' sudden annoyance seemed weird. Kingo opened his mouth as if to say 'yikes' making Arden let out a breathy, quiet laugh.

"Well you should," Druig said. "Listen to her like she's a god I mean."

"Now guys-" Gilgamesh and Sersi spoke in unison only to be cut o by Arden.

"If you didnt want to go to the moon with me you guys could've just said so," she muttered. "I'll go by myself."

"Arden no one said they wouldn't," Gilgamesh frowned.

"I know, I just want them to feel guilty," she mouthed to him, using her hand to block o her words from the others, making him let out a loud laugh.

"I'd go with you," Sersi grinned, gently grabbing Ardens hand.

"Whenever you want."

"It would be a vacation," she grinned. "Plus I really really really want to see the moon because Druig showed me the stars and it was all I could focus on."

"He showed you the stars?" Ikaris asked.

"I love the stars," Arden gushed, completely missing the look Ikaris shot at Druig.

authors note-----  
sorry for not posting recently / been writing a chapter two chapters ahead and totally didnt realize and the end is rushed because I really wanted to publish it

the urge to rewrite this book already cuz I feel like it's not written well

why do I always do this



Continue reading next part