Would You Catch Me If I Fall For You (’Cause I'm falling)

by Khrat9

Summary

Her therapist clears his throat and she looks up, tongue-tied, sweat and fear pouring out of her skin.

Technically, if all the rules of reason and science were followed and applied, Lena shouldn’t be able to see a blonde woman floating in the air, on her back, with no care whatsoever. No, no, no. Because that would be absolutely crazy and Lena is not crazy. She is a genius. She is a certified genius and that blonde woman is not making funny faces at her from behind her therapist back!

AU before Season 2 in which Lena fears she is loosing her mind but really is only trying to save the world and the woman she loves.
Hi!

English is not my first language and all mistakes are mine. The title is from Leela James "Fall for you" I'm going to link this story to one of my previous one Do not go gentle into that goodnight. It can be read as a stand alone but I'll definitely try to make echoes and paralleles with the previous story. I'm kind of nervous and excited for you to read this one, it feels a bit out of my comfort zone. :) All the science stuff is directly taken from Wikipedia and I will add tags and characters as the story progresses.

WARNING: Heavy drinking.

I hope you will like it. Enjoy!

It’s been a while since she felt the need to see her therapist.

She hasn’t seen him in years. Not since she left for boarding school when she was twelve. And it amazes her to see that nothing, absolutely nothing has changed in his office. Except him, of course.

Her therapist hasn’t escaped the effect of time. There’s now white hair across his temples, wrinkles she doesn’t remember seeing at the corner of his brown eyes and mouth. Lena frowns at the little, white scar on the back of his left hand.

“Gardening. A few years ago.”

Lena nods.

Everything feels exactly the same.

Right down to the calm atmosphere. To the comfort she used to find in those few hours where she didn’t need to pretend. Where she wasn’t a Luthor first and foremost anymore. Where silence wasn’t as oppressing as it was in their manor. In here, Lena can talk or not. She can cry if she wants to or scream… And he would let her because here is a place where she is just allowed to be.
Even the carpet is the same, Lena notes distractedly, as her therapist waits patiently for her to talk. It’s the same shade of red as in her memories and with the same bizarre drawing that confused her to no end when she was a child. Lena smirks as she tries, unsuccessfully, to understand the drawing on that awful, red carpet. Some would think that now that she is twenty-four, she might have gained some more wisdom, some more understanding of the world. Some would think that something she didn’t understand as a child would now be easy to understand or explain. But after all these years, Lena still doesn’t quite get these freaking black lines that keep interlacing and breaking apart on that burgundy carpet. There are no rhymes or reasons behind the pattern and Lena is usually really good at finding meanings behind patterns.

It began with chess.

She won’t brag about it but she did beat her brother at chess when she was four. The game had been surprisingly easy for her young mind to master. All she had to do was to know the rules and follow them. A set of rules laid out with only a few allotted moves each piece can do and player can make. From there, Lena finds it easy to deduce her opponent’s every moves and it’s even easier for her to checkmate them.

Everything obeyed to a rule and Lena thrives within them. Just like in science.

Water and oil never mix. Why? Because of relative density. Let’s take water as the reference. If a substance’s relative density is less than one then it is less dense than the reference; if greater than 1 then it is denser than the reference. If the relative density is exactly 1 then the densities are equal; that is, equal volumes of the two substances have the same mass. Then a substance like oil with a relative density less than 1 will float in water. Poured into a glass, or in a bottle or even in the ocean; oil will always float above the water.

Or Newton’s law of universal gravitation stating that a particle attracts every other particle in the universe using a force that is directly proportional to the product of their masses and inversely proportional to the square of the distance between them.

Her therapist clears his throat and she looks up, tongue-tied, sweat and fear pouring out of her skin.

Technically, if all the rules of reason and science were followed and applied, Lena shouldn’t be able to see a blonde woman floating in the air, on her back, with no care whatsoever. No, no, no. Because that would be absolutely crazy and Lena is not crazy. She is a genius. She is a certified genius and that blonde woman is not making funny faces at her from behind her therapist back!
“Are you alright, Lena?”

Lena nods quickly and drops her gaze back toward the awful, red carpet with a design so confusing and chaotic that she wants to take it apart. Pull every fiber one by one and find the meaning behind it. If there is one…

Of course there is one. There is always one. She just hasn’t found it yet.

The blonde woman floats next to her and Lena flinches away, pressing her back against the upholstered armchair.

“Lena, look at me.” He asks her softly and she can’t. She squeezes her eyes shut because she will see blonde hair and blue eyes, floating above the fucking ground.

“Take a deep breath.”

“Don’t panic, Lena. Everything is alright…” The voice whispers next to her, soothing and warm and Lena groans and shrinks away, putting her hands over her ears to muffle the sound.

“I am not crazy,” she whimpers over and over again, swaying back and forth. She knows that her behavior, right now, isn’t really helping her case but maybe if she repeats it enough or if she holds on to this truth hard enough, she might be able to convince herself of it.

Warm hands suddenly pries her hands away from her ears and Lena screams, startled, eyes wide and terrified as she stares at her therapist brown eyes, crouching before her.

“Breathe, Lena.” He whispers and she can’t because the woman is staring at her, blue eyes wide with concern and care, just behind her therapist’s back.

He frowns and looks over his shoulder. Lena waits with baited breath. He turns back toward her and she knows that he didn’t see her, the woman, the blonde woman floating in the air just behind his shoulder and Lena feels like crying.

“Focus on me,” he finally says. “Look at me in the eyes and focus on my voice. Nothing else.”
Lena tries to but the woman is moving again. She is pacing behind her therapist with a frown on her face, arms crossed over her chest. Lena grimaces slightly as he squeezes her hand softly and Lena focuses back on him. “I’m not crazy,” she whispers again, trembling all over.

“Maybe I should leave…” the woman says uncertain and sorry and Lena squeezes her eyes shut.

“Don’t! Stay with me!” He orders her, holding her hands tightly and Lena opens her eyes.

The woman is gone.

Lena sweeps with anxious eyes the office. She stands abruptly and checks every corner of the room, under her therapist’s desk, under the sofa, in between the books on his bookcase. Lena checks everywhere. Twice. Her therapist let her and she slowly calms down as the woman is nowhere to be seen. She will come back though. She always does.

“What is happening?”

Lena turns toward him, one hand still on an anthology of The Beatles, the book heavy and comforting in her hand. “I’m not crazy,” she repeats again, staring him directly in the eyes.

He looks at her from his seat and doesn’t say anything. Lena fidgets on her feet. “I’m not,” she insists desperately.

He nods calmly and looks at the armchair pointedly. Lena sighs and bites her lips as she walks back toward it and sits. She hates when he does that. It’s like he knows things about herself Lena isn’t privy to and with that look in his eyes and that overwhelming patience; it makes her want to pour everything out of her chest. It makes her want to lay everything out in the open even if most of the time, she doesn’t know how because everything feels like it’s locked away, deep inside herself. Lena knows that he is trying to find meaning in her behavior. He is looking at the pattern. Patterns she can’t see because there are inside herself and Lena is blind to it.

“Something is clearly happening but it doesn’t mean you are crazy,” he says softly, holding her gaze to get his message across. Lena nods and he smiles. “Let’s figure this out together. Tell me everything from the start.”
She takes a deep breath, closing her eyes briefly and then goes back to the day everything ran off the rails. “I… I…”

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Lena sees her for the first time on a Friday night. She just finished a meeting with the board of Luthor Corp and all she wants is to forget the awful, awful week she just had. A whole week spent arguing about numbers and corporate politics with white, old men trying to undermine her position and stab her in the back now that she is the new CEO.

After unspeakable crimes, her brother has finally been arrested by Superman. Clark Kent of the Daily Planet exposed his deeds to the world and now, Lena is left with nothing. The family company is going down on the stock market, her mom left the board as soon as it was announced that Lena would be the one to take back the company as stated in her father’s will and the media is waiting outside her apartment building, day and night, like shark circling their prey at the scent of blood.

Lena never shared Lex’s obsession for Kryptonians or aliens for that matter. She always was indifferent and while her brother had tried to sway her on his side multiples times; Lena never adhered to his views. All she saw was his magnanimity and his fear consuming him more and more. Lex descended into madness and Lena wasn’t able to save him.

Lena thanks Eli, her help, the son of one of her nannies when she was young who had asked for a job to pay for college. He sneaks her into the building as the swarm of photographers and reporters wait for her at the main entrance. Lena sighs and bids him goodnight as she enters her apartment and he retires back to the one just under hers.

So, really. It’s no wonder that she reaches for the bottle her friend, Jess, sent her from France. A beautiful bottle full of an unnaturally bright, green liquid and flops on her couch, heels off, hair in disarray with sweatpants and t-shirt instead of the tight dresses she has to wear every day.

After three shots of that French poison, Lena is not really surprised to see a woman suddenly appear in front of her eyes with ethereal blonde hair that falls graciously around an even lovelier face, blue eyes so deep and intense like siren’s songs bewitching her away from the coast and a crinkle on her brow, severe and mighty like… like Justice personified or Wisdom or Love…

Lena suddenly feels like Charles Baudelaire or Paul Verlaine, one of those poets, cooped up in those Parisian parlors drinking absinthe and waxing poetry on the woman’s figure. And what a beautiful figure this conjured woman has! Intense, blue eyes stares at her disapprovingly with her hands on her hips, tall and imposing like a Greek goddess who suddenly broke free of a long sleep from the stone
in which mere humans like her immortalizes the Gods out of love and adoration.

She stares breathless and in love as the woman, haloed in white from the lights above her, crouches in front of her. Lena frowns as she sees her muse dressed with an orange and navy stripped sweater and navy tailored pants. That weren’t the clothes Lena remembered muses wore in literature…

“Are you La fée verte?” Lena asks in wonder.

“What?”

She speaks! Lena rejoices, utterly captivated by the soft intonation of her voice, the crisp and virtuous mountain air coming down from sinuous valleys and ravines, snowy forests and sharp rocks to grace mortals with a lungful of life. “The green fairy… Are you the green fairy?”

“The what now?”

Lena chuckles at her muse’s language, modern and abrasive, so different from the language she pictured them using. Alexandrine or Sicilian octave, a speech governed by rhyme and reason, abiding to rules only to free themselves of them by the essence itself of creation. Lena reaches for the bottle on the coffee table but stops as her muse frowns at her, lips upturned, arms crossed over her chest.

“I don’t think it’s a good idea…”

“I think… that it’s the best idea I’ve ever had!” She winks or blinks really because the woman looks at her weirdly and Lena wiggles the bottle in front of her muse’s face, the liquid sloshing inside. “It conjured you, after all.”

“What do you mean by conjured? I’m real!”

“Yeah, right! In my head…” she scoffs and shakes her heads softly but stops and squeezes her eyes shuts because the world is swaying. Lena puts the bottle back on the table blindly and leans back on her couch, eyes still firmly closed.
“What? No, no! I swear I’m real!” she insists, high-pitched and excited.

Lena opens her eyes and hums, amused and oddly entertained by this strange creature in front of her. “So, my muse…”

“Muse? What the…”

“What is it that you came here to do?” Lena asks cheekily, leaning forward. “What inspirations will you breathe into me…” she whispers with her lips millimeters away from the woman’s pink and supple ones.

The muse recoils away and scrunches her nose in distaste. “Nothing. Because one: you reek of alcohol. There is no way I’m coming near you!”

Dismayed, Lena watches her put as much distance between them as possible.

“Don’t pout!” She hisses, pointing an accusing finger at her.

Lena scowls as her muse paces relentlessly in front of her.

“And two… There is something weird going on here. Right here!” She agitates her arms helplessly in the air and Lena follows them before she has to close her eyes again in fear of passing out on her couch.

She winces as the muse claps her hands loudly in front of her. “Hey! Don’t fall asleep! We are in a crisis!”

“Are we?” Lena grumbles, suddenly tired and annoyed. “Because I’m feeling fine… Super fine, even…” Lena chucks another shot of absinthe before the woman can stop her. The liquid burns her throat and warms her inside deliciously. Her head falls back on her couch and Lena stares at the lights dancing before her eyes.

“You are a mess.”
“Tell me something new…” Lena sighs and breathes deeply, closing her eyes. She will let herself have this one night. Just one night where she doesn’t feel like the universe is crushing her shoulders waiting to see her fall and crumble.

“Why are you drinking so much?” Her muse whispers next to her, sitting on the couch at a safe distance somewhere to her right.

“Why?” Lena mutters, sad and reflective. She feels the indentations on the cushions and opens her eyes to stare directly into blue eyes. Lena smirks. “For the pleasure of your company of course!”

The woman scoffs and crosses her arms over her chest, a deep crinkle on her brow. It’s a sight Lena is now becoming accustomed to and she smiles as her muse frowns. “If you are trying to be suave, it’s not working. You have drool on your face.”

Lena pats her cheeks and face. “What? No, I don’t!”

“How many fingers…” blue eyes demands expectantly, eyebrow raised, her hand held up to prove her point.

“Two is usually enough,” she smirks and whispers lewdly. The woman narrows her eyes, confused and Lena scotches closer. “But I’m not opposed to try more…”

Understanding dawns on her face and her muse groans in frustration, standing up, hands on her hips and glares at her.

Lena laughs. “Are you sure you are a muse?”

“I’m not a muse!”

Lena whines and rubs the bridge of her nose. “Of all the muses in the universe I had to get the rogue one… Why can’t anything be easy?” She goes for the bottle.
“Don’t you dare have another drink!” The muse hisses.

Lena raises an eyebrow in challenge, forgoing the glass on the table and begins to tip the bottle toward her lips with a smirk.

“Put that bottle back on the table!”

“Make me!”

Her muse lunges at her, hand outstretched and Lena inhales in surprise as a cold hand wraps around hers, more like merges with hers as they both hold on to the bottle.

Time stops.

No wonder poets loved that drink so much; Lena muses as the bottle is pried away from her hands. She falls backward on her couch and everything fades to black.

That French poison really, really was something else.

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The second time Lena sees her, she has just woken up from a hangover.

Her shirt is wet with alcohol… well she hopes it is alcohol and her tongue feels heavy and patsy in her mouth. Her mind is still fuzzy and there is an incessant pounding in her head. Lena trudges toward the bathroom, eyes half closed, fleeing the light as she fumbles on the floor on all four. She groans and whines feeling like she is crawling through an interminable desert in search of an oasis or in her case, her bathtub.

She stopped feeling sorry for herself a long time ago. Shit happens and it’s not the first time she finds herself in that exact situation. Lena is just glad she didn’t bring someone inside with her. Discretion is getting more and more expensive these days.
Lena sighs in relief when she finally reaches her cold bathroom door and pushes it wide open. It clanks against the wall. She winces at the loud sound and crawls toward the bathtub to run herself a bath. It’s a wonder she can still functions and perform her few basic needs while the water fills the tub and steams the bathroom. Lena will have to remember to talk to Jess about that bottle she gave her. She disrobes quickly and immerses herself into the scalding water up to her neck, closing her eyes. Lena sighs in relief.

“You should turn off the faucet…” A voice says from behind her and Lena nearly hurts her neck as she turns around and sees her muse pointing at said faucet. “It’s going to overflow…”

Water sloshes everywhere on the bathroom floor as Lena shrieks and backs away toward the other end, as far away as she can from the deranged creature. Her muse sighs exasperatedly.

Lena turns off the faucet, not leaving the woman out of her sight. “Happy?” The blonde nods with a self-satisfied smile and Lena cups some water in her hands and splashes her face a few times before looking back up. The woman is still here, watching her curiously. Lena blinks. “I’m still drunk, aren’t I?”

“I hope not. You slept for a while.”

“What do you mean?” Lena frowns. She had no recollection of something like that happening the other night. Frankly, she didn’t remember much, everything is still fuzzy but didn’t she wake up on her couch, fully clothed? “Did we sleep together?” She finally asks, confused.

“What?”

Lena suddenly stops the lecture before it can even begin with a wave of her hand. “Because if that’s the case, you are more than welcome to what is in my fridge but then I’ll have to ask you to leave. I’ll call for Eli and he will pay you handsomely for the time here and your discretion,” she stresses with a raise of an eyebrow.

The woman before her scrunches her nose. “I’m… I’m not some…” she sputters with indignation.

“Oh please,” Lena sighs, tired and exasperated. Her bath no longer able to keep the headache pounding behind her eyes. “There’s no shame in it. It was a win-win for the both of us and could you leave me to my bath? This,” Lena says pointing to the both of them in her bathroom. “This is getting weird…”
“No!” The blonde hisses angry and exasperated. Lena shies away but she is trapped and the woman kneels next to her, a cold finger poking at her bare shoulder. “What’s weird it is me being here with you! You don’t remember what happened last night?” She asks desperately.

Lena shrugs, glad that she stopped poking her. Her one night stand looks at her with wide, sad eyes and Lena feels sorry for the poor woman. “Sorry, maybe you weren’t that good of a…”

“Don’t you dare finish that sentence!”

Lena groans frustrated. Of all the women she could pick, she had to pick the neurotic one. “Listen, I’m sorry this is happening. What do you want? Money? Fame? I can call an agent and they’ll put you on the next cover of whatever magazines you want. You certainly have the figure…” she digresses but promptly shuts up at the look on the other woman’s face.

“You are so full of yourself! Nothing happened last night! And nothing ever will! I wouldn’t touch you even with a ten-foot pole!”

“Well, now that’s just mean…” Lena frowns, she won’t say that the blonde just poke her in the shoulder a few minutes ago. Looking at her face, Lena doesn’t want to bring her ire on her more than she already did. Lena wonders, not for the first time today, just what kind of crazy shit did Jess sent her because this was just next level.

“This is crazy…” The blonde mutters, pacing in her bathroom.

Lena huffs. “I’m glad we can agree on something. You are absolutely crazy!”

“This is your fault!” The woman hisses, pointing at her. “You did something to me!”

“Listen Miss, I don’t know you but I wouldn’t do anything that wasn’t consensual!” Lena hisses back fervently. It might not look like it but she has standard. She has honor.

“Will you just stop with the innuendos?” The woman snarls loudly.
“Will you stop screaming?” Lena snarls back and plunges her head into the water in frustration but mostly to escape the noise reverberating on the walls of her bathroom. Every sound is muffled and Lena relaxes, hoping that the woman will understand and leave her alone.

When Lena emerges, the woman is gone. No trace of her in her security cameras or in those of the lobby. No signs of a crazy woman with blonde hair and blue eyes anywhere.

Lena swears off absinthe for the rest of her life.

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The third time she sees her, Lena is absolutely sober.

It’s the middle of the week and Lena hasn’t indulged herself in sweet forgetfulness. She can’t. Too much lies on her shoulders and she has to be absolutely clear headed for this. Investors are cutting all ties with Luthor Corp every day and if Lena doesn’t find a solution rapidly, she might as well be the CEO of a bankrupt company.

No Luthor can escape the encompassing shadow of their last name and Lena is thrown in the dark, alone and forlorn, desperate for the light, any kind of light that would show her the way or at least tell her that everything she is doing isn’t in vain. That she is doing something good even when she has the feeling of being pulled backward into the dark. There are choices she needs to make. Lena has to choose which subsidiaries she has to close in order to stay afloat for a little bit longer… The board was very clear about which ones she should close and which ones she should focus on.

Lena sighs, closing her eyes for a bit. She is now a business woman and Luthor Corp has to make money, somehow… Even if, some have to lose their job in the process.

“You should eat, you know… You've been at it for hours.”

Lena screams and scrambles away from the voice whispering behind her ear. She puts the table in between them and stares at the woman she thought had been a figment of her imagination. “Who are you and what are you doing here?”

“Finally!” The woman whoops. “Hi! I’m…” She moves closer. Lena steps back. The woman shrugs, pausing slightly and frowns. “Wait… I don’t know…”
“What do you mean you don’t know?”

“Well, I was hoping we could figure it out together… Because I don’t really understand it either…”

“This is a dream, right?” Lena mutters, looking all around her, trying to regulate her breathing. “I’m dreaming. I’ve been working too much, maybe I took too many pills for that headache this morning… or I’m hallucinating because I’ve haven’t eaten since lunch…” Lena touches the table but the smooth mahogany really feels real to her.

“You should absolutely eat but this is not a hallucination. I’m really here… Listen…” she continues, coming closer.

“Don’t come any closer!” Lena shouts, hands held up protectively in front of her.

“Alright… I- I am sorry,” the blonde says quietly, looking sad.

Lena shakes her head. She can’t have Stockholm syndrome. Not now. “I will ask you to leave this apartment. I won’t call the police, I won’t file a claim… just please leave…”

“I can’t… I tried…” she whispers apologetically. “But every time I tried to leave I’d find myself back here… with you.”

“You are crazy,” Lena states absolutely certain now. “I’m calling security.” She runs toward the electronic pad near her door. “Eli, please there is someone in my apartment and she won’t leave…”

“I’m coming right away, Boss.”

“Please…” The blonde whispers but Lena watches her impassively as Eli comes in seconds later.

“Thank god! You are here,” Lena exclaims as soon as he steps into the apartment and hides behind his back, glaring at the woman who stands frozen near the table.
“Where is the intruder?” Eli asks quietly, sweeping the open living room quickly with his eyes, a gun in his hand.

“What do you mean?” Lena hisses quietly, looking furtively at the shocked woman and then she grabs Eli’s arm and squeezes it tightly, pointing toward the mahogany table where she has been working all night. “She is right here!”

“What?” The Intruder and Eli say at the same time.

He looks at where she is pointing with a frown while the blonde comes closer. Eli does not see her and Lena whimpers in fear.

“What is happening?” The woman says confused and stops just before her bodyguard. She waves a hand in front of his face and looks back at her. “He can’t see me?”

Can’t you… Don’t you see her? She is right here!” Lena whispers, tugging desperately on his arm.

Eli looks at her helpless. “I see nothing Lena… Are you… Are you alright?”

She is not crazy. The woman is here, still waving her hand in front of Eli’s eyes without him knowing it. It happened to her, a few times when she was stressed to hear voices. Her mind never stops and sometimes it is hard to know what is real and what isn’t. That’s why from a young age, she always found comfort in rules and hard facts. Something in which her thoughts could be canalized into something tangible and true and not into all of those thoughts and questions that don’t have answers, not into worlds she could get lost into and never come back. But this… This is something else completely.

“Uh… Do you… do you want me to call a doctor?” Eli asks softly. “Are you feeling faint? I can check the rooms if you want but I don’t see anything…”

“No, thank you. I’m sorry,” Lena whispers, eyes wide and unseeing. “That… That would be all. I haven’t eaten that must be why…”

“Are you sure?”
“Yes, Eli. Thank you.”

“Very well. Have a good night, Boss!” He says and closes the door behind him. Lena hears a faint thud and she knows that if she opens her door she will find him just outside, standing guard.

This is crazy, Lena thinks, suddenly exhausted. She bypasses the blonde without a thought and flops on her couch, head in her hands. She is haunted by a ghost.

“If what he said is true,” said ghost says, sitting next to her on the couch. “Then you are the only one who can help me!”

“You are not real,” Lena whispers, shaking her head desperately.

“What? Of course I’m real,” The blonde laughs and pokes her on the shoulder.

Lena flinches away, feeling the cold finger on her skin and presses her head against her knees. “This isn’t real. It’s only in my head. It’s only in my head.”

“Lena…” the voice whispers sad and confused, a cold hand rubbing her back gently.

“Don’t touch me!” Lena snarls with tears in her eyes. She ignores the broken look in the woman’s eyes as the blonde jerks her hand away, pressing it to her chest.

“I’m sorry… I won’t… I won’t do it again,” she swears quietly.

Lena clenches her jaw and flees toward the table and grabs her laptop, still powered up from earlier. She types a name on the browser and grabs her phone as soon as the number appears before her eyes.

“Hi… Dr. Luke Perec? It’s Lena Luthor. I… Yes, I’m… I’m sorry to be calling so late but I was hoping we could fix an appointment?” Lena says trying to sound assured and unafraid as the blue eyed woman observes her from her couch. “Tomorrow morning? Yes. That’s perfect… Thank you,” Lena whispers in relief and watches the ghost leave her couch and walk to the window, looking outside with a frown on her face.
Lena sits back on her couch and observes her quietly. They stay still and confused, the ghost throws her a few shy glances at her and Lena thinks that this night might just be the weirdest night she ever spent while being sober. She watches with fear and a bit of fascination as the ghost smile at her and decides to experiment in her living room the limits of her own body now that she knows she is a ghost.

She watches her walk through walls a few times and get stuck in her mahogany table when Lena suddenly laughs at the ridiculous view in front of her.

The ghost grins happily and Lena scowls, trying to hide her smile against her hand.

She isn’t sure the woman in her apartment is in fact a ghost because she can touch things, Lena watched her bring her a blanket from her bedroom to lay it on her trembling body. She watched her make a cup of tea and bring it to the coffee table, next to her, smiling hesitantly before rushing away.

Lena isn’t sure what to think anymore.

“Lena! Look what I can do!” The woman suddenly exclaims, laughing loudly while she floats in the air before her eyes and Lena calls it a night.

She wraps herself into her blanket and squeezes her eyes shut.

She will handle this in the morning.

This is just too crazy.

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“Is she here right now?” Dr Perec asks quietly.

Lena nods, watching the ghost from the corner of her eyes.
“Do you know what she wants?”

The ghost perks up. “Help. Please, I just need help. I’m not here to hurt you, Lena. I swear.”

“Is she talking right now?”

“Yes.”

“What is she saying?”

Lena inhales suddenly as the woman stands before her with pleading eyes. “She… She wants help.”

“What?”

“My memories…” The blonde exclaims. “They are gone.”

“Her memories are gone,” Lena whispers as the woman smiles widely at her, nodding her head excitingly.

“And what do you want Lena?” He asks catching her eyes and nods encouragingly as Lena clambers up. “Lena? Focus on me. What do you want?”

“I want her gone,” Lena whispers, trying hard to ignore the sharp inhale of breath from the woman next to her, the sadness in her eyes as she backs away slowly toward the wall.

Her therapist nods. “From how I see it. The only way would be to understand why she is here. Why she appeared to you at this moment in time. There is always an explanation, Lena.”

She nods gratefully, releasing a breath and he smiles while jostling a note on his desk.

“We will see each other next week and we will figure this out. In the meantime, here is your
prescription. They will quiet the voice when it gets too loud.”

“Thank you,” Lena says relieved as he walks her back to the door where Eli is waiting for her, on the other side.

He suddenly stops her before opening the door. “Don’t let the voice make you do things you wouldn’t do, alright?”

“What?” The voice exclaims indignant. “I wouldn’t do anything to harm her!”

Lena ignores it.

“We will work on it together. If something happens… Anything, give me a call. Understood?”

“Yes,” Lena whispers and shakes his hand with a smile.

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“Do you feel better?” The voice asks her full of concern, standing before her in her living room.

Lena watches her from the couch and doesn’t answer.

“He helped you, right?” The voice continues with hope. “Like we can figure this out together… like he said?”

Lena looks at the pill in her hand.

“She swallows it and closes her eyes. She waits and waits.
When she opens her eyes, Lena breathes again.

The ghost is gone.
Chapter Notes

Hi!
Sorry for the delay! I had my birthday yesterday, so I might update a bit slower for a few times... I feel like I misguided you because this will be angsty. I'm still working on the tags but while I know where I want my story to go, I never know what I'm gonna write until I write it. I hope you will stick with me and find out. :)
I took a bit from The Dark Knight Rises and very liberally play with the comic canon.
PS: I know nothing of finance or anything bussiness related, really but let's all use our suspension of disbelief ;) Everything is taken from Wikipedia.
I hope you will like this chapter! Enjoy! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The ghost came back, Lena notes as she wakes up. There are sounds coming from her kitchen and Lena gets up to investigate, phone in hand, annoyed and ready to fight but her initial irritation quickly abates when she steps into the living room and see the ghost busy making breakfast. Lena stares, at a loss as the blonde dances around her kitchen, flipping crêpes and bobbing her head to some imaginary music.

“What… What are you doing?”

The blonde turns around and Lena inhales sharply as vague memories of a muse haloed in white light crosses her mind. The woman smiles brightly at her, spatula in hand.

*Breakfast*, Lena reads on her lips. Her voice sounds like a faint whisper as if coming from far away and Lena moves closer if only to hear better.

“I can’t hear you,” she says with a frown.

*Breakfast!* The blonde repeats slowly, enunciating exaggeratedly the word again. She points at the stove, then mimes someone eating and Lena rolls her eyes.
“I didn’t say I couldn’t understand… I just can’t.” Lena suddenly remembers why she hates antipsychotics so much. Her brain is slower, her synapses fires in slow motion and everything feels like it is muted, slower, just slower somehow. “It’s… It’s the pill I think,” she whispers finally.

_Oh_, the blonde says.

They stare at each other for a while, stuck in time before Lena smells something burning and points wordlessly at the poor crêpe.

_Oh_, the blonde repeats and quickly flips it on its other side, sheepish and embarrassed.

Lena turns away and hides her smile. She reaches for a mug and pours herself some coffee, the warm and comforting aroma following her to the kitchen counter where she takes a seat on a high chair and observes quietly the woman in front of her. She bites her lips, looking at her phone and debates catching up on the news or not. She quickly disregards the idea and sighs. Ever since she took control of the company, Lena hasn’t been able to watch them, afraid and anxious at the idea of seeing again coverage of her brother’s destruction of Metropolis.

The guilt always sits heavily in her guts every time she hears the stories of people who lost a loved one, their home, their job because of what Lex did. Lena can’t just watch helplessly the consequences of his madness and not feel responsible somehow. She should have stopped him. She should have tried harder but everything she did hadn’t been enough. Lena hadn’t been enough to stop him and anger, fear and remorse fills her every time because she did not see the pattern that led her brother to this or maybe she did but ignored it out of love and that, Lena thinks, that is worse than being blind to it.

But when science and facts can’t bring her comfort, Lena finds solace in lies. Lies that her heart whispers deep into the night only to be able to sleep.

Lex couldn’t be saved.

The only thing she can do now is participate wholeheartedly in the reconstruction of Metropolis, speed up the process of compensation to the victims and make sure that Luthor Corp no longer follows her brother’s directives. Lena hopes to turn things around. Lena hopes, maybe naively, to build upon the shame, greed and madness a legacy she can be proud of.

Something that will be hers.
Lena startles as a plate and a fork slide in front of her. She looks up and the blonde smile at her encouragingly.

_Eat._

Lena picks at the food warily. It has been a while since she had crêpes. Eli usually comes around seven and brings her baked goods from the bakery a few streets away. The blonde looks at her expectantly and Lena grimaces slightly. While it is an extremely nice gesture, she is still skeptical about how good or even real food from a woman living in her mind can be.

Said woman crosses her arms over her chest, raising her eyebrow at her and Lena capitulates, albeit slowly, and bring a bit of crêpe to her lips. Lena can’t stresses hard enough how weird all of this is. A ghost just prepared her breakfast and is staring at her with barely concealed excitement, waiting for approval, in her kitchen. This is crazy and Lena closes her eyes as she chews on the surprisingly good crêpe.

“It’s-”

A slight knock interrupts her and Eli comes in, white paper bag in hand and then stops short at the threshold, with shock on his face as he looks straight toward the kitchen.

Lena inhales abruptly and turns toward her ghost who looks equally shocked that the man is suddenly staring straight at her. Lena promptly turns back toward Eli, ecstatic, ready to share all the crazy things that happened to her lately when he finally gets over his shock and finds his voice again.

“You made crêpes!”

“What?” Lena lets out, appalled as he closes the door and promptly moves to the kitchen.

“Boss, I’m not dreaming right? You made crêpes!”

Lena stares at him speechless as he bypasses the blonde completely and inspects the stack of crêpes, still warm and soft on a plate near the stove.
“Oh!” He suddenly exclaims sheepishly, throwing a brief look toward her bedroom and then at her. “Did you bring a lady over?” He whispers quietly, motioning with a slight movement of his head toward her slightly opened bedroom’s door. “Why didn’t you put the sign on the door? I wouldn’t have barged in…”

“No, I… There’s no one,” Lena says dismayed and shocked, looking at the blonde who only shrugs.

Eli rolls a crêpe and bites into it. “Hey, those are pretty good!” He says around a mouthful and Lena rolls her eyes as the blonde whoops joyously and looks at her smugly.

“Did you really make that? I’ve never seen you cook before…”

Me, the ghost points at herself trying to catch his attention but to no avail. Eli turns back toward her, mouth full and Lena tears her eyes away from the blonde.

“Ah, yes… I did that…”

The blonde scoffs.

“I can cook…” Lena lies with a smirk as the blonde puts her hands on her hips with a pointed look.

“Nah! That can’t be you,” he says around another mouthful. “Where did you hide the lady?”

Ah! The blonde exclaims victorious and Lena glowers petulantly.

“She already left and won’t ever come back!” Lena hisses angrily as her ghost dances around the kitchen.

“Is there a fly or something?”

“Sorry?” Lena mumbles, focusing back on him.
“You’ve been staring pretty intensely at… something…” he trails off, watching her curiously.

“Sorry, I didn’t have a lot of sleep. That’s all.”

He hums and points at the plate of crêpes in front of him.

Lena chuckles and rolls her eyes. “Yes, you can have the rest.”

“Great!” He takes a seat next to her and continues eating.

Lena smiles fondly at the sudden memory of him inhaling a plate twice this size in the Luthor’s Manor’s kitchen during the years his mother was a cook and her part-time nanny. She made them crêpes every time her parents were away. A four year old Eli would follow her around and eight year old Lena could finally play games her brother Lex was too old to play with her. She remembers games of hide and seek that would end way too quickly because Eli would hide way too close to her and then would cry when it would be his turn to count, afraid that he will never find her in that too big manor. They spent years playing around the too big manor until Lena was sent to boarding school and lost sight of them.

Lena sighs and ruffles his hair.

He groans and leans away. “Don’t mess with the hair! It took me some time…”

“They are a mess like every morning…” Lena sometimes forgets that he is twenty. She found him again a few years later, a lanky sixteen year old boy, trying desperately to pay the bills for his mother’s hospital care by working three jobs at a time, some shadier than others. Motivated by a deep, incomprehensible fear; she took him off the streets and offered him a job as her chauffeur or assistant, sometimes bodyguard, anything really as long as he stayed safe and protected him ever since.

The trembling of her fork ceases as a hand catches the other end.

Are you okay? The blonde asks with a frown, her hand close enough to hers for Lena to feel her presence next to her.
“I’m fine!” Lena hisses angrily and let go of the fork which clatters loudly on the kitchen counter. How could she explains the nightmares plaguing her mind of lifeless eyes staring back at her when Eli sat next to her, alive and well?

“Lena?”

“What?” She growls.

Eli flinches away.

Lena clenches her jaw. She hears her teeth grits in her mouth and closes her eyes abruptly. She takes a deep breath and feels her thoughts scatter and abate as suddenly as they came. “I’m sorry,” she whispers exhausted, rubbing the bridge of her nose. “I better get dressed.” She slides her barely touched plate of crêpes toward him as a peace offering. He nods with a concerned, forgiving smile and digs in promptly into his newly acquired food.

She mouths an apology to the blonde as well who looks at her with concern too and Lena gets a flash of blue eyes, intense and relentless as they pursue her and waits for her deep into the night, filled with rage. Lena blinks, inhaling sharply and leaves them both behind, hurrying to her bedroom, closing the door of her en suite bathroom and splashes water on her face. Those aren’t real, Lena whispers to the mirror, as drops of water trickles down her face. Those were just images that didn’t make sense; fantasies her mind conjured when she was young. Those were just dreams, hallucinations… They aren’t real. And yet, Lena still smells the sweat and the fear, the blood and the smoke permeating the air. She feels this overwhelming feeling of death as it looms and chases after her and it gets harder and harder to convince herself that it’s only a figment of her imagination.

Clearly, the pill wasn’t as effective anymore.

She was already stressed out and agitated from the takeover of the company and the sudden apparition of the ghost in her living room didn’t help her anxiety. That’s why her dreams are coming back. That’s all. She is not losing her mind. She is a genius, for God’s sake and she can’t let herself get lost in her mind again. As brilliant as she is, Lena learned quite young that her mind could be something lethal, to those around her but mainly to herself. It didn’t seem harmful at first as she checkmated her adoptive bother over and over again at chess. It earned her praises as she resolved equations after equations in class, it made her laugh as she took apart her toys only to build them back with better electronics… Her mind provided her with answers before she could even formulate questions. Her mind pushed her to seek knowledge and explore her own mind further and further until one night, five years old Lena, dreamed of a woman with intense, blue eyes who couldn’t be harmed, who couldn’t be killed and who kept chasing after her in the darkness of her mind…
Lena had sleepwalked to the sword displayed in her adoptive father’s study, grabbed it by the blade to protect herself and woke up, screaming as she cut her hand badly. The incident got covered up, her hand healed and Lionel Luthor called the best plastic surgeons to make sure that no scar would ever remain. Gone like it never happened, like it wasn’t real. Sometimes, Lena is persuaded the pain still flares in her hand when she clenches it. After the incident, Lena got to see a kind man named Doctor Luke who explained to her that the change of a new place, a new life could provoke those dreams. He explained that what she was seeing was only her mind telling her that she was afraid in that cold, big Manor and that they will learn not to be scared anymore. After that, her mother looked at her with even more colder eyes than before.

Lena breathes methodically, in and out, like Doctor Luke taught her so many years ago. She feels the cold, slippery ceramic sink, under her hands and holds on to it. Lena breathes again and tastes the remnant of coffee and the sweetness of the crepe still in her mouth, her lungs fills with the smell of Oceans and Seas, a perfume she got from a trip in Scotland that she sprays in her bathroom. She breathes again and her eyes widen slightly at hearing Eli’s voice talking quietly in the living room. She leaves the en suite bathroom and listens to the voice flowing from down the hall. Lena sighs, knowing he called reinforcement.

Lena goes back to the bathroom and disrobes quickly. She steps under the shower, the hot water relaxing her muscles one by one. She gets ready for the new day ahead of her mechanically. Outfits carefully chosen, make up methodically applied… Lena feels like she is becoming someone else. She leaves the safety of her bedroom only to startle at the odd sight in front of her. Eli, Jess and her ghost all stare at her like a deer caught in headlight.

Lena crosses her arms over her chest and stares at them with narrowed eyes. “Were you talking about me?”

“No!” Eli squeaks.

Lena shakes her head, amused and exasperated as he and her ghost shrinks away and looks everywhere but at her.

“Good morning, Ms. Luthor.” Jess says with slight incline of her head.

Lena rolls her eyes. “You don’t have to call me that.”

“Well, you did offer me a job.”
“As a front…” Lena reminds her for the hundredth time. “I need people I can trust, you know that.”

“Of course, this is only me keeping up appearances after all. Anyway, I heard someone made you crêpes? Would you believe that I could smell the delicious aroma from my apartment?”

Eli smiles sheepishly at Lena’s pointed glare.

“Unfortunately, she left and Eli ate all of them.”

“They were really good!” He defends himself quickly.

The blonde smiles brilliantly, pointing at him. *I like him!*

Lena huffs, feeling the start of a headache. “Let’s just go.”

Everyone nods and quickly depart from the apartment. They all squeeze in the elevator and Lena curses herself for her rebellious stage and desire to cut herself from the Luthor name even in her choice of apartment. That’s why her mother never came to visit her. Not in the right neighborhood. Not Luthor approved. Not as secured as a few reporters wait for her in the lobby.

“Fuck!” Eli exclaims, taking Lena by the arm and ushering quietly to the back door. “How did they get in? It’s the second time now…”

“I believed they paid the doorman…” she says with a sighs, becoming accustomed and resigned to what being a Luthor meant to the world.

“It’s my fault,” Jess whispers apologetically. “No one was inside when I got in a few minutes ago. They must have recognized me now that I work for you…”

“It doesn’t matter now…” Lena whispers, distracted by the ghost who runs through the back door ahead of them and comes back in, gesturing wildly at her.
Lena frowns as Eli walks straight through the blonde and opens the back door. They all curses as they see a swarm of reporters waiting for them there too. Lena gulps, feeling her hands tremble slightly. She clenches them and holds on to the phantom pain in her right hand as cameras’ light flash at her and journalists scream questions as soon as they see her. Everything blurs and Lena keeps her head high, stoic and composed but utterly blind.

“We can’t go back,” Jess murmurs, panicked as the ones from the lobby rush toward them, tipped by the sudden noise.

“We’ll have to push through, Boss!”

Lena nods and holds on to the back of his suit. Eli descends the steps, pushing his way through; making sure his body is in front of hers and bats away anyone coming too close to her. Jess is pressed against her back, grunting slightly as she pushes those trying to close in on them from the back.

“Ms. Luthor! What can you say about the Kryptonite found in your brother’s Laboratory!

“Look over here! Can we expect a press release from Luthor Corp soon?”

“Your brother is a killer!”

“Are you going to follow in your brother’s footsteps?”

“Do you hate aliens, too?”

Accusations veiled as questions are thrown at her and Lena ignores them, trying hard to breathe as her grip on Eli’s suit tightens sharply. They get stuck for a second in the middle of the swarming mass; shouts and flashes assaults her and Lena feels her mind shut down slowly. This can't happen now. This can't happen now, Lena thinks frantically, feeling her grip on Eli’s back slackens.

“Lillian Luthor, your mother, left the Board. Does she think you incapable of running the company?”
Eli disappears swallowed by the reporters and Jess bumps into her, pushing her forward. “Keep going, Lena!”

Lena tries but she can’t.

“Lena!” Eli screams somewhere before her.

She can’t. This can't happen now...

Colds hands suddenly cradle her jaw and Lena inhales sharply as deep, blue eyes stares at her.

Breathe.

Lena shudders, gripping at the orange and navy stripped sweater, twisting the phantom fabric tightly in her hand as the blonde encourages her to keep breathing.

“Lena!” Eli screams again coming back toward her as Jess pushes her forward once more.

I got you. Keep walking. Lena reads on rosy lips and nods. Cold arms, thrumming with fluid energy and strength, wrap around her in a welcome embrace and Lena sighs in relief, her head falls onto the blonde’s shoulder, pressing into the crook of a cold neck as Eli appears before them and Lena latches onto him with her other hand.

They finally reach the car. Lena is ushered inside, Jess following closely behind her, locking the doors. They pound on the car; shouts and flashes muffled and dulled by the tinted glass. Eli battles outside to get to the driver’s side before he gives up and climbs in from the front passenger’s seat, clambering his way over the console and into the driver’s seat.

The car starts up, he presses his foot on the accelerator and the car finally moves away, albeit slowly, from the crowd until it reaches the main street and Eli speeds away. Lena doesn’t let go of the phantom sweater, her side pressed against the blonde, breathing hard into her neck as cold, electric energy rubs her arm, soothingly.
“Are you okay, Boss?”

Lena tries to smile but doesn’t succeed as Jess looks at her with concerned eyes, a deep, confused frown on her face. Lena lets go of the ghost’s sweater, her hand falling back on her knees. The blonde let go of her and Lena straightens in her seat. “I’m fine. I just… I just need a few minutes.”

They both nod and leave her to compose herself. Jess checks her phone and Eli focuses back on the road. Lena takes the opportunity to thank the blonde quietly.

Anytime. She replies with a soft, kind smile before joining Eli at the front.

“How did they know?” Eli exclaims after a while.

“It was only a matter of time,” Lena whispers, meeting his eyes in the rearview mirror, “before they found out about the back door…”

“You’ll have to change apartment. It’s not safe anymore,” Jess retorts, making arrangement on her phone to have everything from her apartment and Eli’s boxed and ready to be moved.

“We’ll stay at Luthor Corp Tower…”

Jess looks back at her, shocked. “At Lex’s penthouse?”

Lena shrugs. “What other choices do I have? Luthor Corp Tower has the best security system I have ever seen, underground garages and panic rooms and several hidden passageways to leave the building without being detected… As much as I hate to admit it, my brother’s paranoia made this place the best fortress ever created.”

“If you are sure…” Jess trails off. Lena nods and Jess sighs, capitulating quietly. “Anyway, apparently journalists went crazy ever since Bruce Wayne announced yesterday night that he would hold a Gala tomorrow night…”

Lena frowns as they suddenly hear Jess’ phone vibrate several time, incessantly.
“And here is your invite, Lena.”

“A gala, really? Right now? I don’t have time for this…”

“On the contrary, it might be the best time. Everyone needs to see you. It could be seen as a weakness otherwise. And Miranda Tate has been asking for a meeting for a while now…” Jess reminds her.

“I know.”

“I have intelligence that they are planning something big,” Jess whispers.

“Aren’t they always?”

“There have been talks in Gotham City…”

Lena closes her eyes briefly and sighs. “What can you tell me?”

“Nothing concrete yet, but since the takeover everyone is watching and waiting for you to make a mistake. I heard that Wayne Enterprises and Kord Enterprises are trying to take advantage of the confusion…”

Lena rubs at her forehead, aggravated. Everyone was waiting for her to fail and she had more and more difficulties in believing that she won’t.

“Apparently, Miranda Tate had a few meetings with some of Luthor Corp’s shareholders…”

“For Wayne Enterprises, I presume? Is it safe to say that she is the one behind the panic behind my shareholders and investors as well?”

“Probably,” Jess speculates. “There are rumors that some shareholders are ready to sell their part to
“anyone who would put in the right price.”

“So all the meetings I had with them didn’t appeased them in the least? I have a meeting with their representatives this afternoon, have I not?”

“Yes and Luthor Corp lead financial advisor.”

“We need to find something that will stop them from selling their share or I’ll have to buy them myself… We can’t let Wayne Enterprises or any of our competitors own any part of this company. You have all the reports from the accountants?”

“Yes. I sent them to you as soon as I got them. We will have to pour over them to see why everyone is panicking.”

“I don’t understand. It’s not the first time Luthor Corp is facing a financial crisis, I don’t understand why they would try to leave now…”

“We’re here,” Eli whispers as he parks the car in the underground parking.

Lena sighs and stops them before anyone leaves the car. “I’ll pour over the numbers once again while you’ll get me everything on Mister Wayne’s Gala tomorrow night. I want to know everything but mostly, I want to know who will be in attendance. Tell Miranda Tate that if Bruce Wayne wants to own a part of this company, he will have to meet me himself.”

“Got it.”

“Eli, I need you to reinforce our security team for the meeting this afternoon. There can’t be any interruptions of any kind. If the representatives get spooked by any kind of incidents they’ll go straight to the competition.”

Eli nods gravely.

“Trust no one but our team,” Lena reminds them finally before they all step out of the car to the elevator and go their separate ways.
Her ghost stays by her side, following her silently with a supporting smile. Lena smiles back, her presence no longer annoying her. Surprisingly, Lena now finds it oddly comforting.

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It’s been a few hours now and Lena finds out that her ghost is quite good with numbers and other various subjects on technology. Even though, Lena still can’t hear her properly, the blonde gets around it with post-it notes and some serious miming. Lena tries hard to hide her amusement behind a confused frown as she asks the ghost to mime again and again till the woman stops and frowns at Lena’s smile. Lena doesn’t hide her laughter anymore and the blonde smiles wide.

It’s the first time Lena has as much fun at Luthor Corp.

Someone knocks on the door and Lena knows that this is it. Because this meeting might be Luthor Corp's breaking point if she doesn't find where all the anxiety is coming from. Lena shares a look with the blonde, sighing heavily, looking for something, some sort of strength, reassurance in her blue eyes. The numbers while low for a conglomerate like Luthor Corp wasn’t as alarming as she first thought and while it should be a relief, it doesn’t explain why her shareholders are panicking and ready to sell off their parts of the company. Something else was going on and the hours spent this morning on the various reports her own team of accountants compiled for her didn’t give them any answers so far. The blonde gives her a thumb up and Lena finds what she was looking for in her bright smile. She chuckles slightly, following her ghost out of the door with newfound determination in her steps. It's her confidence, Lena decides, her sure strides next to her as they follow the assistant leading them to the conference room that shakes Lena's fear away. Her ghost doesn't look worried at all. She looks like she is ready for battle, intent on crushing all the enemies and winning the war. Her ghost looks like she has absolute confidence in her and the thought is enough to make her believe that she might just be able to save her company.

“Gentlemen,” Lena exclaims confidently as she strides in the room.

“Ms. Luthor,” a chorus of deep, self-important voices greets her back and Lena sighs as she takes her brother’s former seat.

“Shall we begin?”

Luthor Corp’s lead financial advisor clears his throat and begins his presentation of the company’s state of finance.
Lena frowns as it doesn’t correspond to the reports her accountants gave her. It goes on and on and her ghost takes upon herself to do a perfect imitation of the lead financial advisor, a man in his fifties she remembers meeting a few times from Luthor Corp’s social events she was forced to attend throughout the years. Elegant man with white hair perfectly combed to the side, expensive perfume following him everywhere he goes, always calm and composed, looking at everyone with calculating eyes. Lena hides a smile behind her hand as the ghost tries to be as tall and intimidating, waving her hand over the graph like someone would present a weather report.

Luthor Corp is going down on the stock market, he says. Luthor Corp is in financial crisis, he vituperates. Luthor Corp will never rise back again, he asserts. Mister Hasser wants her to fling everything overboard as if Luthor Corp was the freaking Titanic. Lena sighs, imperturbable but really, she is boiling inside. It has been two hours now and Lena is pretty sure that if the sudden apparition of a blue eyed woman in her apartment a few nights ago wasn’t enough to prove that she is losing her mind then, these meetings certainly will.

The distraction is a welcome reprieve but it doesn’t stop Lena from noticing a few things. Everything follows a pattern; even people and Lena is really good when it comes down to detecting them. She watches the lead advisor present her the worst case scenario any company could ever face as inevitable, hammering several times how their finances are going down and their only solution would be to sell off the small businesses which haven’t even been affected by the fall out caused by Lex’s incarceration.

His presentation comes to an end and he looks at every representative in the eyes. “We need to sell those subsidiaries!” Twenty logos appear on the screen, among them LuthorMart, Ralli’s Family Restaurant and Koul-Brau Breweries.

“No,” Lena refuses categorically, observing Mister Hasser carefully. Besides, she is quite fond of their beer and it would be a shame to sell off a brand that exports worldwide and which still sends her a case every Christmas.

The lead advisor stays silent for a moment. “I assure you Miss Luthor,” he resumes with a condescending smile, “that these subsidiaries are bringing us down more than they earns us money over the years. If we want to repair the dent your brother caused to the finance of this company, we will have to make sacrifices, now!”

He looks calm, his voice strong and confident like usual and yet, his tie is a bit loose, his fingers twitches every few minutes.

“Can I have the annual budgets reports of the past five years?” Lena asks abruptly.
Mister Hasser scoffs as an assistant takes several folders from a case and hands them to her.

Lex did drain a big part of their funds in weapons and Advanced Research without any profit but to destroy Superman but they were still far from complete bankruptcy as showed the reports she got from her accountants. Something wasn’t quite right and Lena feels like she is finally making some headway.

“Can I have those of the past six months, please?”

The blonde returns to her side and inches toward her slowly, eyeing the reports from over her shoulder, Lena nods discreetly and spreads the papers before her. Mister Hasser’s eyes widen and Lena raises an eyebrow at the sudden perspiration on his temple. The lead advisor fidgets at the other end of the table and Lena follows the breadcrumbs.

The room grumbles and whispers as she examines the numbers.

The blonde stands by her side, silent and still, as they both compare the reports on her computer and those given by Luthor Corp’s lead advisor. The woman points out a few discrepancies here and there and Lena files the information into her brain. Names of ghost companies, missing assets and small misallocations of funds and resources… A cold shoulder brushes against hers and Lena smiles softly, finally having found the answers she was looking for.

“How long have you been in this company, Mister Hasser?” Lena asks suddenly.

The room falls silent and every chair turns suddenly toward her.

“Ten years, Miss Luthor.” He replies, puffing out his chest, his eyes wandering towards his colleagues furtively before fixing back on hers.

Lena narrows her eyes as he stares her down from the other side of the room.

“And what is it that you propose, really? Sell off subsidiaries to buffer the gap?”
“Yes… That is exactly…”

“I see right here that you report a deficit of 35 million just last year and while it is a small amount for a company like Luthor Corp, the deficit comes from subsidiaries that had no activities whatsoever with my brother’s criminal activities… Is that correct?” Lena asks, crossing her arms over her chest.

“I… Yes…”

“And yet, I have here another set of reports I ordered when I took the position of CEO…” Lena drawls out as Mister Hasser gapes, speechless along with several of his colleagues. She got him. The blonde huffs a laughs next to her and Lena smirks. “The differences are quite staggering. Tell me Mister Hasser, what were you hoping to do by overestimating our deficit? Use the confusion and chaos of Lex’s incarceration to hide evidence of years and years of embezzlement, perhaps?”

And just like that, the room erupts in chaos as the representatives shout all at the same time, closing in on the Luthor Corp accountant’s team. The door opens suddenly as security fills the room, Eli just behind the door, giving Lena two thumbs up.

Lena chuckles and sits back on her brother’s seat. She watches everything unfold passively as security takes away Mister Hasser and his associates. The whole accounting branch of Luthor Corp will have to undergo a profound investigation but Lena smiles as the blonde grins wide at her.

A small victory amidst the chaos.

She never really liked chaos but this one feels really, really good.

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Lena is finally having a break after the arrest of her lead financial advisor and his team. Her ghost… well, she really should stop calling her that but since the woman doesn’t even know her name Lena has no other choice, really. Her ghost is still hyped on victory, jumping up and down while recounting with exaggerated signs and facial expressions this afternoon meeting.

Lena laughs at her pretty accurate imitation of Mister Hasser’s face when Lena showed her own reports on the big screen for the representatives to see.
The ghost laughs. *That was awesome!*

Lena nods, feeling quite proud of herself.

The blonde raises her hand for a high-five.

Lena hesitates, looking at the hand offered so willingly. It's unassuming. Innocent. And Lena gives in because they've won. Lena gives in because she is tired of putting walls up. She gives in with the hope she might hold on to the comfort her ghost gives her so readily. Lena gets closer to the suddenly hesitant woman. Something has changed between them in those few seconds it took her to decide and now, her ghost is looking at her with big, blue eyes, somber, intense... It takes her breath away. Lena raises her hand toward the blonde's slowly, carefully; afraid this might mean more than an innocent clap of victory, that this might be the beginning of something Lena isn't sure she is ready for... Their eyes meet and Lena gulps as their hand comes into contact. It fills her with a cold current of energy, something electric. Something real and yet invisible for everyone else but her. Lena shudders and holds the ghost's hand tightly, briefly before letting go and backs away. The woman smiles wide, albeit shakily and Lena tries to smile back but her phone rings abruptly, disrupting the quiet moment.

Lena goes back toward her brother's desk and turns off the alarm. A reminder. Her pill. She takes the pills from her bag and looks apologetically at the blonde who smiles at her sadly.

*It's okay. Take them.*

Lena nods and pauses, biting her lips deep in thought. Beginning a treatment only to stop it a day after really isn't recommended but it feels like they get heavier and heavier in her hand as the woman who even though annoyed her to no end on certain occasions, also made her laugh and protected her. Her ghost, muse, woman in her mind turns away, giving her privacy to pop a pill and Lena laughs suddenly. Her ghost looks back at her confusedly before Lena throws the pills back in her bag.

“I don’t need them. I’m done being afraid. I’ll help you get your memories back,” Lena promises as the blonde beams brilliantly at her.

Someone knocks on the door.

“Come in,” Lena calls, tearing her eyes away from the beautiful smile.
“Ms. Luthor, I think congratulations are in orders,” Jess greets her with an amused smile and a plate of salmon with risotto.

“Thank you. It was quite the show…” Lena says accepting the plate gratefully, sitting back on her chair and shares a smile with the blonde.

“Do I forward the possible applications for new financial advisors?”

“Yes. We might have to weed them all out from the company,” Lena mutters while digging in ravenously into the plate. “Have our team investigate every branch of the company and all the employees. We can’t have something like this happening again.”

“I know… It will take us a while, though.”

“I think we scared everyone enough to quiet things around the office for a bit.”

Jess nods and gives her tonight’s latest edition. “I know you asked me to screen the news and make you a report but I think you should see this. This just got out. Lex wants to talk to you. Apparently, he has been vocal about it.”

Lena frowns, pushing her meal away. “Five refusals weren’t enough? He uses the press now?”

“He used guards to get his message to the press… I’m sorry.”

Lena waves Jess apology away. “It’s not your fault.”

“What do you want to do?”

“I can’t…” Lena whispers suddenly helpless. “No matter what I do, the press will twist it to fit their agenda…”
“I know…” her friend tells her but doesn’t bring her any comfort.

“I’m already in his office, in his seat, everything here reminds me of him, I can’t… Can’t he just…” Lena stammers frustrated. A cold hand rubs her shoulder soothingly and Lena leans into it. She stares absentmindedly to the portrait of her brother he kept in his office, face stern and intimidating, the furthest from the gentle eyes he had when she first met him. The painting hangs over the fireplace, right in front of the desk and Lena huffs. She is done being afraid. “Arrange a meeting for tomorrow morning,” Lena answers finally.

Jess nods quietly.

“Thank you, Jess.”

“Of course,” she smiles and leaves quietly.

Lena sighs, picking at the leftovers on her plate. “I wanted to thank you, for today,” she whispers unable to meet the blonde’s eyes. “I’ll do my best to help you get your memories back. But I’ll have to see my brother first I’m afraid and…”

The hand tightens on her shoulder and Lena frowns confused, turning her gaze away from her plate to look at the blonde. The woman isn’t even listening to her. She is looking intently at the latest issue of the Daily Planet.

“It’s me,” she whispers, shocked and wobbly and Lena hears it, loud and clear, her heart pounding.

The woman in her head points to the cover and Lena sees one of the headlines SUPERGIRL SAVES NATIONAL CITY ONCE AGAIN with the perfect image of a blonde, blue eyed woman, smiling widely, posing with National City’s firemen, just below.

“It’s me,” Supergirl whispers again.
Chapter End Notes

Mister Hasser is totally invented. Thank you for reading. Take care!
ARC 1: III

Chapter Notes

Hi!
Thank you so much for all the support! It motivates me every time and I hope that what
I planned for this story will please you. Everyscientific bits are taken from wikipedia
and I'm sorry for any inaccuracies and mistakes left.

Hope you will like this chapter! Enjoy! :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

It turns out that her ghost isn’t really a ghost. It turns out that the woman Lena thought lived in her
head for the past few days really isn’t a product of her mind at all as she stares and stares at the
smiling face on the cover of the Daily Planet. It turns out that the craziness with which she had so
many difficulties with before just got crazier somehow and it was expanding exponentially by the
second with the feel of the very real hand tightening on her shoulder, wrinkling the fabric of her very
expensive dress.

Lena feels like the rug just got pulled from under her feet. Her adoptive mother’s matryoshka dolls
set suddenly appears in her mind and Lena shudders, shying away from the hand on her shoulder.

“I don’t understand…” Lena whispers confused, angry and sad. She doesn’t know why she is sad
but… wait, no. She does. Lena knows why. She prides herself in uncovering truths and in finding
answers with complicated equations, physics and mathematical laws. Lena learned from a young age
that the only truth she could count on were those she could prove with logical, methodic reasoning.
Words are misleading. Feelings are even worse.

Feelings made her believe in things that weren’t there in the first place. Feelings let her believe her
new mom could love her someday if she tried hard enough. If she made more efforts to be the one
the woman wanted her to be. Feelings made her hold on to a brother even to the darkest of time,
naerly swallowing her whole into his madness. Feelings made her soft and vulnerable as she cried
and cried, holding on to the teddy bear her adoptive father bought her, when she learned that he died,
the day just after her fourteenth birthday, alone, in a too big room, with tons a books, hundreds of
miles away from Metropolis. Feelings didn’t make sense. They get hurt easily over the simplest of
things. Over a simple “no”, a cold gaze or an upturned chin. Feelings couldn’t be trusted because
they weren’t logical.
Why would she be sad over the fact that her ghost isn’t really her ghost anymore? That the person she thought belonged in her mind was never hers to begin with. She knows she promised the blonde that she would help her but now, staring at the smiling face printed on the cover before them made it all the more real. “I thought… I thought you were a ghost.”

“I’m not a ghost,” the blonde insists half-heartedly, sounding shell-shocked herself.

Lena inhales abruptly, lungs trembling as she stands from her seat and leaves the desk. “What are you, then?” She accuses with a snarl and puts as much distance as she can with the woman, frozen near the desk, still looking intently at the newspaper.

“I… I don’t know,” the woman cries helplessly, not understanding herself.

“What do you mean you don’t know?” Lena rages, brisk and stiff and crosses her arms over her chest, her back pressed against her brother’s library, far away from the woman who kept confusing her. She hates surprises; Lena hates everything she cannot predict or cannot demonstrate logically. Everything follows a pattern, a law and yet, the woman before her is breaking through every one of them and Lena doesn’t know what to think or expect anymore and she hates it.

Anger was safe, Lena learned as she grew up. Anger hurts others first before it hurt her. Lena learned to behave like those around her to survive but she never could quite master the glacial indifference Lillian showed to the world or Lex’s confidence in who he was and who he could be or even Lionel’s stern pragmatism; as much as she hates it, Lena still feels like the four year old little girl, waiting in that cold, big room where a woman gave her some paper to draw on, looking every few seconds toward the oak door, waiting and waiting for someone to come get her, when Lena really was only waiting for her mother to come back.

“Just that! I don’t know, Lena!” The blonde replies frustrated, arms flailing about before taking her eyes away from the picture and making a move toward her.

Lena raises a hand to stop her from coming closer and scoffs, incredulous and so very angry. “I can’t believe I didn’t see it sooner…” she trails off, now really looking at the woman in front of her. Blonde hair, blue eyes, a noble mind and an even kinder heart. The self-definition of a Super. National City’s new superhero. The only thing missing was the suit, the cape and the emblem on her chest. Lena had heard of her and of her exploits. The woman who stumbled her way into heroism. Lena remembers feeling a sort of kinship to the woman who made a name for herself away from Superman’s shadow, proving again and again the hero she was while Lena was engulfed into her own hardships during her brother’s trials, trying desperately not to fall with him before she was swept by the media whirlwind and completely forgot about the new superhero. Was this a plot to spy on her? How could she have not made the connection sooner? “Are you here to spy on me, Supergirl?”
“What are you talking about?”

“Don’t play innocent!” She sneers, voice high and angry. “Did Superman put you up to this? The government? How could I not see it?” Lena utters so very angry at herself. “You appeared just after the takeover… that’s why you can fly!”

“Lena! Wait!” Supergirl exclaims and Lena bristles, pressing her back even further against the hard wood of the bookcase behind her as the superhero in an orange and navy stripped sweater steps slowly closer to her. “I don’t… I don’t remember any of that. Besides, if I was her… how… how could I be here and there at the same time?” The woman pleads. “It says that she saved a building from burning this afternoon at the other end of the country… And I was with you this whole time, stuck in a meeting roasting Mister what-his-face!”

“Do not lie to me,” Lena snaps. “What tells me that this isn’t another one of your superpowers? Superman went after my brother so you had to come after me now that I’m the CEO, is that it?”

“Lena! Stop! I don’t even know who this Supergirl is! I…” Exasperated she takes the newspaper and holds it to her face. “I don’t know why I’m here and I don’t know why she looks like me. Or is it me that looks like her? But you see the resemblance, right?” She asks helpless, earnest and throws the newspaper away, coming closer toward her.

“Do not lie,” Lena stresses again with tears in her eyes. Do not come closer, she wants to add but it’s getting hard to breathe and if Lena could have backed away any further, further into the bookcase and far away from the approaching woman, she would have. In a heartbeat.

“I’m not lying, Lena. I don’t understand this any more than you do,” the blonde whispers calmly, defying all rules and expectations to stand before her, a gentle hand laid on her arm and sad, blue eyes looking at her. “I’m not going to hurt you. Stop being afraid!”

“I’m not afraid!” Lena lies, wrenching the hand away from her.

“Then why are you screaming?”

“I’m not-” Lena stops because the blonde has taken her into her arms and Lena is trapped in between a cold, electric like body and the hard bookcase.
“It’s okay. I’m scared too…”

“I’m not-” Lena tries to protest but the blonde shushes her and Lena’s body falls into the embrace and breathes, the fight leaving her slowly. Because if there is one thing Lena is good at beside finding answers, is lying to herself. If only to avoid getting hurt.

Her ghost holds her even tighter. “Don’t lie,” she admonishes her quietly and Lena chuckles, trembling slightly.

“I’m sorry… I don’t… I don’t like not understanding things.”

The blonde hums, a soothing hand caressing the back of her neck. “Are we okay?”

Lena nods, holding on tightly to the back of the woman’s sweater. “I’m sorry,” she repeats quietly into the strong shoulder and closes her eyes just for a few seconds before the blonde steps away from her.

“Good news is, we finally have a clue on where to look to find our answers now…” she smiles full of hope and Lena tries to imitate her and ignore the treacherous feeling of sadness inside her guts. The blonde goes back to where she threw the newspaper, lays it on the desk and reads it again with her hands on her hips. “I… I thought I was in a coma or something…”

“Yeah,” Lena whispers with a barely there smile and turns her back to the woman and inspects the bookcase now before her. She closes her eyes and inhales deeply before opening them with an even deeper exhale. “There’s must be an explanation for this,” Lena mutters, hands trembling as they browse through her brother’s library. Her hand stops on the cover of Erwin Schrödinger, *Expanding Universes* and then just next to it: *What Is Life? The Physical Aspect of the Living Cell*.

“…Or maybe I’m her twin? A long lost cousin… It could explain how I am here and there at the same time?”

Lena inhales sharply turning toward the voice, the apparition, the manifestation of the impossible just before her eyes as Erwin Schrödinger’s theories burn in her mind.
In quantum physics when talking of atoms and electrons; quantum superposition states that any two quantum states can be added together and the result will be another valid quantum state; and conversely, that every quantum state can be represented as a sum of two or more other distinct states. Mathematically, an atom can be at two different places at the same time its position determined only by calculating the probability of said position. But that was only theoretical. The quantum superposition principle had no physical interpretation unless… unless Lena was right now looking at the representation of Schrödinger’s cat. Dead and alive at the same time.

“Parallel universes…” Lena whispers suddenly, eyes wide.

The blonde looks back at her with a frown. “What?”

“A parallel universe! It- It makes sense!” Lena exclaims, walking back toward the desk, her brain firing with different theories and mathematical calculations only to come back to this one explanation. “You are her but from another world! There are hundreds, thousand of possibilities in which you might not even be the Supergirl we know in this world… It may be why you don’t know her, the persona!”

The blonde’s eyes widen. “Of course! I mean… It is crazy but not crazier than me walking through walls! Wait! How- How come no one else can see me? You are the only one.”

“Something went wrong when you crossed over? While true in theory, it’s not something that has been done before. Not that I know of at least, there’s hundreds of ways it could go wrong… this may be one of them?”

“We need to go to National City…” Supergirl says with determination before she winces and then crumbles behind the desk.

Lena rushes toward her and skids to an halt, staring in horror as the blonde flickers back and forth between existence and nothingness in a matter of a few seconds. “Supergirl!” Lena screams, paralysed, as the woman howls in pain, holding her head, glitching on the floor.

“Lena…” the distorted voice screams suddenly.

Lena kneels next to the blonde. She grasps her shoulders and holds on to her tightly. “Stay with me!” Lena whispers into her ear, holding on to a body that feels very much like water. Like a cold stream that rushes through her arms, making it harder and harder for her to grasp. Supergirl glitches in her
arms, disappearing and reappearing in sequences, screaming in pain and Lena watches helplessly until it stops and the blonde falls into her arms, breathing hard and heavy.

“What the hell was that?”

“I… I don’t know…” Supergirl replies, trembling still.

Lena caresses the cold cheek soothingly, immensely glad that the skin no longer feels like water, intangible and elusive. She brushes the few tears that had managed to escape from the woman’s eyes. “Are you… are you okay?”

Supergirl inhales, pressing her head into Lena’s neck and nods. “I think so…”

“Boss?” Eli calls from the door, sounding hesitant, suspicious.

“I… Yes?” Lena stammers, suddenly terrified as Supergirl, still weak, trembles in her arms. Lena listens to the approaching footsteps with no idea on how she might explain this.

“Are you okay? I heard a scream. Where… What are you doing on the floor?” Eli asked confused, looking at her curiously from the other side of the desk. She lets go of Supergirl who groans at the fall. Lena winces and Eli’s eyes widen. “Oh, fuck! Did you fall? Did you break something?” He rushes toward her, ready to help her but she stops him with a shake of her head.

“I’m fine. I didn’t fall. I was just…” She looks around her and then lunges for the pen under the desk that must have fallen earlier in the confusion. “My pen!” She exclaims, chuckling softly. “I was just looking for my pen… Found it!”

“Okay…” he trails off, looking even more confused.

“Anyway, what is it?”

“I uh… I was just here to tell you that everything has been moved to the penthouse. So if you want to go, I can escort you to it…” He gives her the key that bypasses the biometric pad to the penthouse back to her.
“No, I’m fine. I’ll go myself. Can you tell Jess to update me on everything by text? I don’t want to be disturbed tonight. I… I have to… to have a good night of sleep before I see my brother tomorrow morning and for the Gala. You can have the night off,” Lena says quickly, hoping that it will distract him from the odd predicament she found herself in.

“Really?” He says excited and then clears his throat. “I mean, are you sure Boss?”

Lena smiles. Too easy. “Yes, just make sure that my reservation for National City is still standing for the day after tomorrow.”

“I know we’ve already talked about this but are you sure you don’t want me to come with you?”

“Yes, I’m sure. It’s only a few days trip to supervise National City’s headquarter. Nothing will happen.”

“Alright. I'll be going then…”

“Yes. Thank you, Eli. Have fun!”

“Thanks, Boss. See you tomorrow!”

As soon as Eli leaves, Lena shakes the blonde’s shoulders. “Hey! Are you okay? I’m sorry I dropped you…”

Supergirl groans, an arm over her eyes. “What happened?”

“You don’t remember?” Lena frowns, even more worried and frustrated by the mystery laying before her. But above all, Lena feels helpless and doesn’t know how to help the woman who still trembles in pain on the floor.

“Maybe you weren’t that good of a-” Her ghost begins to reply with a self-satisfied smile on her face and Lena's worry dissipates as soon as it came.
“Hey!” Lena interrupts, indignant and hits the woman on the shoulder. “And here I was worried about you…”

The blonde laughs. “Sorry.”

Lena smiles and stands back on her feet awkwardly, hindered by her own dress. She sighs and holds out her hand which the blonde takes gratefully and stands but wobbles slightly. Lena frowns, putting one of Supergirl’s arms over her shoulder. “Are you sure you are okay?”

“I feel like I’ve been hit by a bus…”

“Alright. Come on,” she holds on to the woman’s waist and huffs in surprise as Supergirl sways suddenly to the side and Lena falls back slightly onto the desk. “You are heavier than I thought.”

“Don’t be mean,” Supergirl mutters into her neck. “I feel sleepy.”

Lena chuckles and then startles as the blonde suddenly nuzzles her neck.

“You smell really nice…” she whispers deliriously before falling over her.

Lena squeaks, suddenly having the weight laying on her, slipping from her grasp. “You’ve got to be kidding me,” she mutters under her breath, nudging the woman awake with a few pokes in the side.

The woman groans. “I’m awake,” she mumbles groggily.

“Come on… Work with me, here.” Lena groans as they slowly make their way out of Lex’s office.

“I feel like… I’ve been drained of all my energy.”

“Just try to walk with me to the elevator,” Lena whispers, opening the door of the office and looks carefully into the corridor to see if the coast is clear. It is. No one is working in the building at this
hour beside her but janitors might still be in the building and Lena doesn't need any new rumors about her acting weirdly in the press. "Quickly."

“Ashamed of me, are you?” Supergirl slurs, dragging her feet on the carpeted floor.

Lena huffs and tightens her grip, walking determinedly toward the elevator before them. “Let’s just say that it would be hard for me to explain…”

“That’s what everyone says…” she singsongs loudly and Lena wonders if the woman hasn’t had a drink while she was talking to Eli because this was just ridiculous.

Lena slams the button for the elevator, praying that no one will see her like this, arm looped around something no one could see. The door of the elevator opens and Lena breathes in relief as they step in and the door closes.

She puts her palm on the pad which glows blue at the contact. “Penthouse,” she enunciates clearly. The elevator whirs to life and ascend at the top of the tower.

“Fancy!” The blonde whistles, impressed. Lena chuckles, amused as the woman straightens up a bit, seeming to have found a bit of her energy back. Supergirl looks at her with an odd expression on her face. Vulnerable and unafraid. “Do you think I’m dying?”

Lena’s heart stops.

“Welcome Miss Luthor,” the female robotic voice says from the speaker as the door of the elevator opens. “How can I be of help?”

“That would be all for now, Mercy. Thank you,” Lena replies to the computer quickly before turning her focus back on her ghost. “You are not dying…” she hisses fiercely to the limping woman and guides her toward one of the guest bedrooms.

“We don’t know that…” Supergirl argues back, sounding small and unsure. "We don’t know anything. What if they are considering unplugging me from the machine keeping me alive? I feel like- I feel like I already saw something like that happen…”
“That’s the plot of a movie!” Lena counters, rolling her eyes. She might not understand what is happening right now but she will and she won't let her die. “I think I saw it too. Can’t remember the name, though.”

“But what if that is what is happening to me?”

“Then we’ll prevent it,” Lena replies confidently, opening the door to the spacious bedroom, the room she used to sleep in when she visited her brother. The blonde sinks into the bed, sighing heavily and Lena watches the blonde bury her body under the blanket with only a mop of hair coming out. “I’ll do some digging; see what is really going on… You get a rest.”

“Thank you,” Supergirl mumbles before falling asleep.

Lena smiles, watching the moonlight from the big window behind her illuminate the silhouette on the bed, made even more ethereal and unreal than she already was. She turns away from the sleeping woman to stare at the city below. Metropolis lies before her eyes, bustling with life, never sleeping. Lena sees the lights illuminating the streets, those of the police sirens and offices a few buildings away, the flickering lights of some TV and candlelight in another window. Lena watches everything from the top and wonders if her brother never felt lonely, standing above everyone else. She presses her forehead against the cool glass and watches her breath fog the window. The world blurs, distorted.

She used to love the view. Lex would always welcome her here for a few days, sometimes more after she finished an internship in some other part of the world. She wasn’t the heir and Lena had used the freedom to travel, applying for internships as an excuse to get away from everything the Luthor name stood for. It wasn’t as bad as it is now, but Lena always felt trapped in it, forced to conform to rules and etiquette that only hid the truth under false pretenses. And while she does understand the game, even excel at it, Lena doesn’t like it one bit. The rules imposed to the socialites were only meant to be transgressed because those that followed them blindly were eaten alive.

Standing at this very window, looking down onto the world; Lena had thought she could escape it all. She had thought that nothing could harm her here, protected at the very top by her brother. They would sometimes go out on the balcony, red wine in hand and talked. They never talked of the business or their parents. Those subjects were always better left alone. Those nights were only for them; soft voices lost among the singing city below and eyes filled with dazzling stars. She should have known then that it wouldn’t last. She used to admire the city’s lights with envy and longing while her brother dreamt of stars, hand outstretched to the sky with fascination and greed. They were both reaching for something out of their reach, stuck in this in-between where the risk of falling loomed over their head threateningly. Lex made the jump; hand outstretched toward the sky and fell.

Lena sighs and turns away from the window. She looks one last time to the sleeping figure on the
bed and leaves the room, closing the door quietly.

She will not fall.

“Mercy?” Lena whispers, discarding her heels against the wall near the entrance and opens boxes after boxes in the living room, in search of a change of clothes.

“Yes, Ms. Luthor?” The robotic voice answers.

“Collect all articles and videos of Supergirl. I want to know everything there is to know about her.”

“Of course, Ms. Luthor.”

Lena goes to the bathroom and changes from the tight dress and even tighter hairdo. It feels freeing somehow, to feel her dark hair fall onto her shoulders. She slips into a tee-shirt, soften with use and sweatpants. Lena splashes a bit of water on her face in order to stay awake. It wasn’t that late, not even past ten but the day had been harrowing and Lena sighs, trembling slightly as she brushes her teeth mechanically. It doesn’t feel real. Any of this. Lena spits out the foam into the sink and rinses her mouth, wondering absentmindedly when did everything go wrong?

“All files compiled,” Mercy’s voice resonates into the bathroom.

Lena stares at her reflection in the mirror. She stares at the dark circles under her eyes, the faint trace of red lipstick still on her lips and wipes it away furiously with her thumb. She bites her lips, discontent and closes her eyes against the harsh light of the bathroom only to forget the dull green eyes staring back at her.

The door of her brother’s personal office down the hall taunts her as she exits the bathroom. Tears spring to her eyes as she slides the panel open and presses her palm. It glows blue and the door opens. Unlike the office downstairs at Luthor Corp, this one feels homier. More like the Lex she knew. There are pictures of them adorning the walls, framed on the mantle of the fireplace and the shelves of his library. The office is dusty and Lena dries her tears quickly. She won’t stare at her graduation picture hanging proudly on his wall. She won’t linger toward the array of pictures of the both of them at various stages of their childhood.

Lena won’t. Lena lies.
Her brother’s computer power up at her approach and Lena enters the password automatically. Her birthday. Blurry images of a blonde woman, drenched in water, appears on the screen. She is standing on the wing of Flight 237 after she saved it from crashing, says the caption. Lena goes through the plethora of amateur videos and videos surveillance… Supergirl stopping a robbery. Supergirl saving snake. Supergirl wreaking havoc in the middle of National City and so on… Lena reads everything, every article, every mentions of Supergirl on blogs and other social media. It’s like pulling at threads, spinning them together in order to weave a tapestry in red, blue and gold. A name suddenly pops up a few times and Lena frowns, her curiosity picked. It’s nothing much. A few mentions here and there but there are enough occurrences for her mind to decide to investigate.

“Mercy… Collect everything there is to know on Kara Danvers.”

“Of course, Ms. Luthor.”

Random files appears. Lena is flooded with people with the name of Kara Danvers on the web. Various pages from social media, businesses, history books and so on… Odd, Lena thinks. While it is not uncommon to have people sharing the same name; it is weird to have literally three thousand pages. It feels too weird and extraordinary not to be done on purpose.

Lena muses, staring at the screen intently. “Mercy… File those pages by date of creation, recent activities and go as far back as fifteen years ago.”

“Of course, Ms. Luthor.”

Lena watches the files dance before her eyes as Mercy sorts them out one by one. To her surprise, most pages have been created relatively around the same year. A smokescreen, Lena realizes in astonishment. A protected twitter account suddenly appears: Kara Danvers. Cat Grant’s Personal Assistant. For Catco’s Magazine. And then a picture of a girl barely fifteen years old holding a trophy from the science fair next to her family pop up on the screen.

“Got you,” Lena whispers with a smile.

Alarms suddenly blares in the penthouse and lights flickers madly. Everything on her computer disappear one by one.

“System under attack. System under attack,” Mercy repeats.
Lena stretches and then cracks her neck. “Disable alarm.”

“Alarm disabled.”

“Connect me to the mainframe.”

“Connection to the mainframe.”

She smiles as she sees the numbers appears in front of her eyes. Those attacking her sure knew what they were doing, deleting everything from her system. Lena reroutes everything back to another server and then another, playing cat and mouse all over the globe. As long as they were chasing her, they were leaving a back door from where they were operating from and Lena slithers into it easily as they chases ghost IP’s all over the deep web.

Kara Danvers just became even more interesting than she first thought.

Lena downloads everything pertaining to Kara Danvers, disabling firewalls and trap doors, bypassing security systems and other measure of protection. “Restart systems in 30 seconds.”

“Systems restarting in 30 seconds.”

In the meantime, Lena erases every trace of her presence from their system and leaves them to chase after a ghost. While the system reset, she also disables any remnants of Lex’s old commands and makes sure that the system is solely under her control.

“System restarting in 3…2…1…”

Everything shuts down, and then restarts again.

“Welcome, Ms. Luthor. How can I be of help?”
Lena smirks as she opens a file named Kara Zor-El. “Let’s order some plumerias, Mercy. To liven up the place. And some breakfast in a few hours. Thank you.”

“Of course, Ms. Luthor.”

Lena looks for her phone and then curses as she remembers leaving it in Lex’s office downstairs. Too distracted by the slippery ghost to think of taking it with her.

“Connect me to Lena Luthor’s phone.”

“Password required.”

“Cavalier Blanc. Cf3,” Lena replies distractedly, reading on the files she just obtained.

“Access granted.”

“Read messages.”

“One message. Last night 9:46 pm. Lex Luthor. 6 am,” Mercy reads.

Lena clenches her jaw, biting the inside of her cheek and continues to read everything she got on Kara Danvers. It doesn't take her long to realize that she just discovered Supergirl secret’s identity and by extension Superman’s too. Lex was right. Clark Kent really was Superman… She also takes the opportunity to reads everything her brother compiled over the years, files about Kryptonians but also on several citizen of Metropolis. Lena frowns as she reads the files of Detective Maggie Sawyer of Metropolis PD… and gasps as she realizes that her brother has been blackmailing the detective.

“Hey! I’ve been looking for you,” her ghost says, peering into the office through the open door. “I heard the alarms. What happened?”

“I think I know who you are…” Lena blinks, her eyes moisten from staring too long at the screen. She rubs them in the hope of chasing away her exhaustion. She feels a presence next to her and Lena shows her a picture of Kara Danvers.
“It’s me, right? Does this mean that I’m both?”

Lena nods. "I think I’ve just discovered your secret identity. Kara Danvers is as normal as anyone can be besides the fact that she works as Cat Grant’s PA and is also Supergirl.”

“The glasses don’t really conceal anything…” she points out suddenly and Lena laughs.

“No, they don’t. Do you remember anything?”

The blonde shakes her head, reading through all the articles and files she found. “Nothing. I guess you can call me Kara now…” Lena hums and yawns, startling a little at Kara’s firm grip on her shoulder. “What time is it?”

“3 am,” Lena replies, cracking her neck again and turns back toward the screen.

Kara takes the keyboard away from her hand. “And you were up all night doing research?”

“I… Well, yes.” She stammers, confused and holds her hand out to have the keyboard back.

“You need to rest,” Kara admonishes her.

Lena chuckles. “I have to see Lex in three hours. It’s too late now to go to sleep.”

“No, come on. Take a nap,” Kara says taking her hand and leading her to the bedroom.

Lena is about to protest but then quickly changes her mind and decides to tease her muse instead. “If you wanted to bed me, all you had to do was asked.”

Kara rolls her eyes and pushes her playfully toward the bed. “Will you just stop with the innuendos?” Lena shakes her head, smiling still and Kara huffs exasperated. “Just get in and sleep!”
“I can’t,” Lena whines, sliding under the cover. Her muscles relax and her body sinks into the bed. It does feel good to lie down but she never liked sleeping. Nightmares always comes when she rest. “If I do, I’ll be awfully grumpy when I’ll have to wake up.” Lena wonders if Kara can be swayed in laying next to her. She should find it alarming how quickly and suddenly their dynamic has shifted. If Lena wasn’t so tired, she would have questioned her own motives as she pats the space next to her with a smile. If Lena would stop lying to herself she would have understand why this sudden need to feel Kara's presence next to her, as close to her as possible, makes her acts like a fool. Someone who barges into enemies’ lines without any weapons or armors. A fool attacking with bravado and smugness when it really is only the first signs of a surrender. She pats the space next to her again, looking at the frozen figure challengingly.

“Alright,” Kara groans, sliding into bed next to her and makes herself comfortable before she turns toward her and pins her down with a glance. “What do you want to talk about?”

“Anything,” Lena croaks. A fool, indeed. She puts her palm under her cheek and she stares at the woman laying next to her, refusing to back down. A fool till the end.

Kara blushes. “That’s not really helping.”

“I’m not very helpful in general.” Lena shrugs, gravitating closer, close enough that she only needs to whisper to be heard. Close enough that she is sure Kara can hear her heart beating. Close enough for Lena to fall and not be afraid.

“That’s a lie,” Kara whispers quietly.

So close in fact that Lena has to close her eyes. “Is it?”

“So, what is the plan for tomorrow?” Kara clears her throat, ending whatever this moment was or could have been between them and Lena nods, disappointed but understanding.

"I have to see my brother…” Lena replies, sighing heavily, turning back toward the ceiling. Only a fool would fall so easily and Lena can't be a fool. She is a Luthor and Luthors are no fools.

“How do you feel about that?”
Lena crosses her arms over her chest, eyes open but unseeing, glad to be back into less slippery grounds. Glad to be able to pretend that she didn't nearly caused her own downfall. “I don’t know… I didn’t think I would see him again.”

“What do you think he wants?”

“Brag?” Lena shrugs, not really feeling concerned anymore by the tantrums her brother threw. “Tell me I’m making a mistake… I stopped trying to understand him.” Kara nods and Lena waits, wondering if this is the end of the conversation. Wondering if they can go back to pretending...Pretending that she needs to be cold and removed from the world to survive. Pretending that the walls she raises and fortifies around her don't hurt.

“Are you scared?” Kara whispers finally, her voice sounding impossibly closer, as if she could see the walls raising up. As if she could prevent them from shutting her out.

Lena clenches her jaw and faces away, ignoring the question altogether. “And then I will have to swing back by the office, see what’s going on with the Finance department…”

“Lena…” Kara calls from outside the walls. Close. But not close enough.

“And then there’s Bruce Wayne’s Gala…”

A hand lands on her shoulder, turning her over and Lena squeezes her eyes shut, unable to face stubbornness personified. “Not tonight, please.” Lena pleads, shaking her head, eyes firmly closed. She knows that if she opens them, she might fall into blue eyes and Lena will not fall. Only fools fall.

“Alright,” Kara concedes.

She won't break tonight. “And then we will go to National City,” Lena reminds herself. They will find their answers and everything will be over. This partnership will cease and they will go back their separate ways. This situation was never meant to exist in the first place.

“Can you believe it?” Kara whispers suddenly, chasing the dark cloud that had appeared over them.
“What?”

“I am a hero…” she continues in awe and excited. “A superhero!”

Lena stares at the blue eyes looking back at her from across her pillow and smiles. “Yeah, you are…”

Kara laughs, surprised. “What no sarcastic quips? What happened to me being a muse?”

“Getting to know you made me change my mind,” Lena declares with a shrug. “There’s no way you could be a muse!”

“Hey!”

With the darkness as her ally, Lena smiles and stares unabashedly at Kara’s smile. “But I can actually see it. You being a hero…”

“You are one too.”

Lena laughs. “Says the one who reportedly saved a building from burning.”

“I don’t remember any of it,” Kara protests with a wave of her hand, “so that doesn’t count and I’m being serious.”

Lena hums and looks intently at the blonde who blushes harder under her gaze. “Please. Do tell,” she whispers incredibly entertained. “How am I a hero?”

“Now you are just fishing for compliments,” Kara frowns, looking away, a blush on her cheeks.

Lena sees it and pushes harder on the teasing. It's fun. It's safe. “Isn’t that what muses do, though? Compliments their protégé until they create something worthwhile?”
Kara rolls her eyes. “We both know I’m not a muse,” Kara pauses and narrows her eyes at her, realizing that she fell into her trap.

Lena smiles wider. “Glad we can agree on something…”

Kara groans frustrated and Lena shakes with laughter in the dark, quiet room with the moon as their only witness.

“It takes courage to face our fears… To try to be our own hero,” Kara says eventually.

“You don’t even remember,” Lena scoffs, staring back at the dark ceiling.

“I don’t,” Kara concedes, her voice filtering through hardened walls. “But that’s what I believe in.”

“I’m not afraid,” Lena lies, curling up slightly to hide her trembling body.

“It’s okay if you are.”

“I’m not,” she denies again.

“Okay,” Kara concedes and yet, Lena feels like Kara is winning.

“I’m not afraid of my brother,” Lena insists, vulnerable and scared, tears falling slowly from the corner of her eyes.

“Okay,” Kara whispers, taking her into her arms.

Her walls crumble and Lena latches on timidly to the phantom sweater. Kara's cold body reminds her perfidly that this isn’t real. This wouldn’t last. But Lena doesn't care because even the cold, intangible energy is enough to warm her. It's enough to remind her that she isn't alone. Alone in the dark. “Stay with me?” Lena asks, despair and loneliness bleeding through her voice. She has to remind herself not to be a fool as Kara slides an arm around her waist and presses her against her body, tracing soothing circle on her back, lulling her to sleep. This whole situation shouldn’t even
exist and yet, it is the realest thing she experienced since the takeover. The safest she ever felt while falling asleep.

“Always.” Lena hears vaguely, like the beginning of a dream and she holds on to it desperately wanting for it to be true.

Lena falls asleep and dreams of a world where blonde hair floats in the wind before her. A world where blue eyes looks back at her with love, hand outstretched for her to take. A world where Lena holds on without fear with a smile on her face. It’s only a dream, Lena reminds herself, she won't be a fool. She won't fall.

Lena won’t.

Lena lies.

Chapter End Notes

The computer's voice is Mercy Graves. Thank you for reading! Take care!
Chapter Notes

Thank you for the support! I think I dragged on long enough the mystery of Kara's state. All the answers can be found here and I hope they will make sense. All scientific stuffs are taken from wikipedia. I might have hurt my brain a bit in the process, so I deeply apologise if some parts feel confusing and the inaccuracies I'm sure are in this chapter. I wish I was a genius like Lena... Let's all use our suspension of disbelief and pretend I know what I'm talking about :)

WARNING: Angst!

Hope you will like it. Happy reading.

Lena should be used to it by now.

Her heart burns with life, with time and possibilities, and yet it feels hollow, too big and too empty to rejoice. Even the sunlight, warm and bright, coming from the windows does nothing to chase away the sudden darkness, the cloud of loneliness that had followed her for so long, clinging to her heels as she tries to walk, holding her back as she tries to move forward.

She won’t acknowledge the tears falling silently on her cheek, like she won’t acknowledge the shortened breath, the headache pounding in her skull or the trembling in her hands as they grip the awful red carpet on the floor, intent on shredding it. Lena screams, pounding her fists into the fabric but the dull thud does nothing to assuage the storm inside, the one she tries so hard to hide from the world and from herself.

Warm hands grip her pounding fists, stopping the motion. She jerks away, knees burning from staying too long curled up on the floor, and glares at the hands that had too much heat, the hands that weren’t those she longed for.

“I won’t let you hurt yourself,” Luke whispers, sitting before her in the middle of his thrashed office.

Lena exhales with difficulty and stares at her reddened, trembling hands in shock. Luthors are not
weak, Lillian had said. It is unbecoming to be so emotional, Lena. It is what the weak do. They scream and cry hoping someone will help them but no one will. Your tears won’t bring your mother back, darling. You are a Luthor now. I will expect you to act like one.

Her hands trembles even more now that awareness comes slowly back to her and with it the pain on her knuckles and the faint, opened skin on one of them. Evidence, a confession, a failure in itself. “I’m not weak,” she whispers, voice hoarse and small.

“This isn’t weakness, Lena. I already told you that,” he retorts calmly, taking her hands in his and slowly disinfecting the wound.

She doesn’t wince. She doesn’t react as it stings her skin. Lena feels numb and tries to retreat somewhere in her mind where it doesn’t hurt as much anymore. Somewhere she won’t feel so raw and vulnerable. Somewhere the world won’t feel so intense and chaotic. It is survival at it basest form. It happens when the mind recognizes danger and shuts emotions off in order to cope, to give a chance to the body to act and protect itself despite the fear, until the danger has passed. Lena closes her eyes, waiting patiently for the cold comfort of logic, rationality, and the certainties that comes with numbers and physical laws. A heartbeat echoes inside her head and the comfort doesn’t come. A second one pounds against her ribcage and Lena waits, gulping slightly. At the third one, Lena shakes in fear.

“Breathe, Lena. Stay with me… Tell me what happened.”

“She left…” Lena utters suddenly like the world had collapsed on her. Because it did. Something broke inside her and she can’t explain why. She doesn’t understand it and Lena hates not understanding things.

“What do you mean?”

Lena sighs, so very tired. It’s like there is no fight left inside of her anymore. Her muscles, tensed before, become sluggish, weak. She stares at his uncomprehending but patient eyes and she knows that of all of those close to her, the one most likely to believe her is the man sitting in front of her, waiting silently for her to talk, kind and diligent from the very beginning. She nods, this time she will tell him everything.

***
It is rare that Lena wakes up feeling serene and rested even though she knows she hasn’t slept much. The motion on her back is rhythmic and calming, soft and unhurried and Lena sighs contentedly as awareness comes slowly back to her…

She never liked falling asleep. There’s vulnerability in surrendering to the darkness. A kind of fear in surrendering to that loss of control where her body is limp but her mind wanders free and unrestrained into dreams and fantasies, thoughts and reminiscences.

To say that Lena had nightmares would feel like an understatement. It was an all encompassing fear gripping at her guts, conjuring images and feelings she was sure couldn’t be her own but in the dead of the night they very much felt like they were. Pillars of smoke and rivers of blood. Lifeless eyes staring at her, begging to be saved, begging to be spared.

It doesn’t make sense. Dreams rarely do but they terrify her nonetheless. Fear has been her companion for so long Lena learned to ignore it with lies. She would whisper to herself not to be afraid of the dark when her new mother wouldn’t let her keep her light on, forced to sleep in a pitch black room that wasn’t her own, in a bed that felt too big, too perfect for her to rumple the sheets with the slightest of movements. Eyes wide open, heart pounding, she would stare silently into nothingness and wait. Wait for the sun to come back… since her mother wouldn’t.

If it weren’t dreams plaguing her mind at nights then it was her thoughts, what-ifs and conjectures her restless mind couldn’t stop but think about. Humanity sees time linearly, with a beginning, an end and some progression in between. It is something that makes sense, something that can be measured with clocks and calendars, something made precious by the simple fact that it goes on and waits for no one. Something inevitable and uncontrollable.

It goes on regardless of the pain it causes or the regrets it births.

Late into the night, Lena often wonders what she would have done if only she had more time. If time didn’t end so abruptly for her mother. Would she have said goodbye or just taken her mother into her arms, not letting go, aware that the end would come, knowing that time would run out for her and yet be utterly helpless, powerless to give her some more?

Would the course of time be so cruel to throw her into a path only to change it before it could even begin? Lena still remembers vividly the day her whole life changed.

She still remembers the confusion. Around her but most of all, inside her. It thrummed and breathed inside her chest as Lena watched adults whisper to each other and give her sad looks as she passed by them with two police officers on each side. Lena had been afraid then but still blessedly unaware
of the real fear that would follow her like a shadow at her feet. She had cried silently in the car because police officers put people in jail and Lena didn’t want to go to jail. Jail was where bad people go. Jail was punishment her mother told her. And Lena had been good. The whole day. She had been on her best behavior like her mom told her to be before she left this morning.

An accident, they finally told her. Unpredictable, inevitable, there was nothing they could have done. The confusion and the uncertainty resulting from not having all information, of being given half truth awakened something in her that Lena tries to keep hidden most of the time. A fear, deep and gnarly took root inside of her. A feeling of impending doom that Lena still can’t shake away. She had asked why and her question never found answers. They lied and told her that everything was going to be alright and four years old Lena remembered her mother saying that sometimes people lie so that others wouldn’t feel sad.

And that’s what Lena learned to do. The small mercy her top notch brain would allow her. Lying to herself was easy. But still, lying to herself doesn’t prevent her from wondering about quantum theory, nonlocality and entanglement. It doesn’t prevent her from wondering what she could do, what she could invent to maybe, give her mother more time, give her a chance to fight for a new beginning, one that wouldn’t end with one leaving Lena an orphan.

The non-linear time theory is a possibility that would change everything. Not only would it change how humanity perceives time; it would make time travel a reality. The theory states that in the universe, time has no referential points, as if everything in time is either connected or happening simultaneously. It has no beginning or end unlike how humans perceive it and cut it arbitrarily into seconds, minutes, hours, days and years. The conception of time wouldn’t exist, no future or past because everything is happening now. Time, represented as linear, is only a concept limited by the consciousness of the observer and if Lena could put the non-linear time theory into something real, create a machine or a device, something powerful enough to collapse matter back into vibration and make it travel faster than the speed of light then she could send it back into the fluctuating field of vibration that makes the universe, free to travel at any point in time.

The theory exists. It’s out there waiting for someone to prove that the concept of time isn’t a linear passage of events like humanity would like to believe. They do only to reassure themselves of their own mortality, of their own limited capacity of actions imparted to them… The real question is would she go back in time only to see her mother smile again? Prevent an accident that felt inevitable to everyone else but her?

Because somehow, Lena’s life ended the day her mother died. It felt like the world collapsed in on itself. Destroying everything she held true in a matter of seconds…

But she also knows how dangerous it can be. Such endeavors are never accomplished without a price. Genius is only a step away from madness after all and Lena promised herself that she wouldn’t lean too much over the edge. Lex fell wanting to reach the stars; Lena won’t fall in her search of
connection.

But none of that plagues her mind this morning as Lena wakes to Kara tracing circles on her lower back, endless loops where she has a hard time distinguishing their ends or their beginnings. It’s mindless. It’s peaceful. It’s comforting that a simple movement, as innocent as this, could somehow feel infinite.

“Are you awake?”

“Five more minutes,” Lena grumbles burrowing her face into a cold neck as it trembles softly, shaking with laughter.

“You already said that… five minutes ago.”

“Did I?” She feels the nod above her head and sighs, “how long was I asleep?”

“An hour, more or less…” Kara whispers against her temple, nudging it with her nose gently.

It’s comforting and terrifying, Lena thinks, how Kara is so willing, so generous in her touch, in giving her something she felt so deprived of but was too afraid to voice her need for. It makes Lena pause, gulping slightly. It is disconcerting that Kara has so much ease with something Lena struggled with her whole life. It looks easy, even effortless for her ghost to provide warmth and serenity with something as simple and mundane as a touch. Kara quiets her mind with the whispers of her fingers on her back, playing a song, a lullaby, soft but confident, innocent and yet so intimate against her skin. It’s terrifying that Lena falls into it so readily, so willingly when she never let anyone, even past lovers get away with it before. It made her uncomfortable. It made her feel trapped and anxious and Lena doesn’t understand why it wouldn’t now. She doesn’t understand how Kara could bypass a fear so instinctive and ingrained in her body without getting any backlash. “You are awfully tactile for a ghost,” Lena remarks, cocky and assured but falters when the circles stop on her back.

Kara shrugs, taking her hand away from under her shirt, distancing herself from her. “I feel like… I’ve always been like this…”

Lena nods, cursing her walls and her fear but goes on with the same assuredness as earlier. It was familiar. It was all she ever had. “Should I expect the same from your counterpart?” She laughs as her ghost blushes, opening her mouth only to close it again, stammering for a response but finding none. Kara untangles herself from her and leaves the bed, flustered. Lena won but the victory feels
like an overwhelming defeat as her body yearns for Kara to come back.

“What… What do you think will happen once we’re in National City?” Kara deflects, embarrassed.

“I don’t know,” she sighs, angry at herself but resigned. “Find some answers, hopefully.”

Kara paces in front of the window and Lena follows the movement distractedly, still in bed, fascinated by the moonlight reflecting on the semi-corporeal body, captivated by the bruised lip pinned under Kara's teeth in worry.

“Do you think they will believe us?” She says, staring at her suddenly.

Lena clears her throat and looks away, focusing on the ceiling. “I hope so. Otherwise they’ll just think me crazy.”

“You are not crazy.”

“Says the woman who only I can see,” she mumbles and then chuckles, heart suddenly heavy. She leaves the bed and walks toward the bathroom but stops, staring at the oblivious ghost at her heels, about to retort something before Lena interrupts her. “Must you follow me?”

“What? Oh…” Kara trails off, backing away, nose scrunching slightly at the poorly concealed irritation directed at her. “Sorry! I’ll just- I’ll just go,” she whispers, turning away, disappearing down the hall.

Lena closes her eyes and inhales deeply, biting the inside of her cheeks. There was the backlash she thought Kara wouldn’t get. Old habits die hard. Especially those born out of fear. And Lena curses herself again before stepping into the bathroom and tries to drown her confusion and distress under the hot spray of water.

***

“You fell in love with her,” he states calmly, so calm and assured in fact that Lena clenches her jaw in anger.
“I didn’t!”

He stares at her, unimpressed, and Lena hates it because just like that, she knows that he knows she is lying desperately through her teeth. She looks away, unwilling to acknowledge the truth in his eyes and observes the state she put his office in. Books were strewn everywhere, agonizing silently, pitifully on the floor with their mouths open, words bleeding from their formerly pristine pages. Chairs were upturned, swept away from their defensive position, overrun by the rage and turmoil flowing into her veins. Even his desk wasn’t left untouched. She stares as the surface was left bare after the destruction; the lamp fighting for its life on the floor, laying on its side, its light flickering with pain and distress as the light dims further and further, pens and their broken bodies, papers shredded and dispersed into the wind… it was utter chaos. A chaos she caused.

“I’m sorry for,” she whispers, waving at the room in its entirety, “I’ll pay for everything.”

Luke sighs at her deflection. “It’s not the first time this happened. Do you remember what we did the first time you decided to wreak havoc in my office?” He smiles and stands up, his knees groaning under the efforts and holds a hand out to her, Lena takes it gratefully.

“We put everything back together.”

“We did and that’s what we are going to do. Let’s put the books back in place and you’ll tell me what happened next.”

Lena nods, picking up a book from the floor. “We went to see my brother…”

***

She can only blame herself for the oppressing silence and the awkwardness in the car. Eli has been discreetly checking up on her, glancing away every time she caught his eyes in the rear-view mirror and Lena has yet to call him out on it. Ever since he came by this morning to bring her breakfast and the plumerias she ordered, he has been more attentive, more observant and while he does have merits of his own, always eager to protect her, Lena also knows when he is following orders. She hides her amusement by looking out of the window, watching the city disappear from view only to be replaced by endless fields. There was only one person Eli would listen to as much as he listened to her and she wouldn’t be surprise in the least if Jess put him up to it.
She met Jess on one of her first big internships across the world. It was a wild adventure on an Australian icebreaker where Lena, barely eighteen years old, got in as an engineer officer under a fake ID, using the name Smith, to board. A four months expedition through the ice where Lena felt like she could finally escape her family name and be herself, work among a crew without the expectations and prejudices that came with being a Luthor. She met Jess at the mess hall, on the second day, too intimidated and apprehensive to go eat with anyone. The woman had put her tray on her table and presented herself as one of the Junior Researchers in the biological lab, about to end her three years at sea and her thesis on “Attachment of potentially human pathogenic Vibrio to synthetic polymers in the marine environment”. A subject the woman would happily elaborate on while taking Lena under her wing on the huge boat, showing her what life at sea was really about. It had been the first time Lena had felt like she was free.

Of course, Lena hadn’t duped the woman for long, while not in the face of the media as much as Lex was, her face was still recognizable by the scientific communities who had any interest on energy and environmental engineering; a field Lena had dabbed into for a semester, writing several essays and improving designs of generators and motors to reduce the energy loads and increase the efficiency of their system. In fact, the icebreaker they were on had been equipped with her new designs of generators a few months ago and Lena had been eager to see them in action. Jess never called her out on it, though. Introducing her to her colleagues and friends as Engineer Officer Smith for the duration of her stay.

In that band of misfits, Jess was the oldest and took it as her mission to check up on her and Eli, sending them souvenirs and other treasures from over the world. Lena kind of feel bad to have landlocked the woman, so well-traveled, so scared of settling down, here in Metropolis in a job so far below to what she could really do. It had been a decision taken in panic, half-drunk as it was announced everywhere that she was to be the next CEO of Luthor Corp after Lex’s arrest. She had needed someone she could trust and Jess was the first person that immediately came to mind.

But having her here also meant having Eli reporting on her whenever Jess felt like Lena was distancing herself. It was annoying. Not really…

“Please, tell Jess that I’m fine!”

Eli blushes slightly. “I’ve got your phone by the way…” he waves the device in the air for her to see. “You forgot it in the office and she has been blowing up my phone since you wouldn’t answer.”

Lena hums.

“Are you okay, Boss?” Eli asks her finally, meeting her eyes in the rear-view mirror.
“I’m fine.”

“Is it because of the visit to your brother?”

Lena catches Kara’s eyes briefly and lies. “Yes.”

The blonde has been silent, distant, watching the landscape pass by the window. She had respected dutifully Lena’s protective call for personal space, giving them a wide berth when Eli came up to get her, so silent in fact that she could have sworn Kara had disappeared if it weren’t for the fact Lena would furtively follow her every movements from the corner of her eyes. Every time she would catch Kara’s eyes, the blonde would only smile and then turn away, and Lena would huff, uncaring of the way Eli kept looking at her with confusion.

She sighs, biting her lips, wanting to act but not knowing how.

“I’m not allowed to accompany you to the prison but if I could I would,” he tells her fiercely.

“I know. Thank you,” Lena smiles, glad to have him in her corner, never wavering in his faith in her. “And keep the phone, I can’t take it where I’m going anyway.”

“Would you like me to drive back to Metropolis? We still can…”

“No, Eli. Keep driving.”

It isn’t long before they are at the airfield where a helicopter waits for her to take her on the island where the prison is situated.

She hates flying. Even if statistics show that it is the safest way to travel, risks still exist and up in the air, Lena feels powerless. Eli opens the door for her and she nods gratefully, walking toward the chopper. She stops, feeling suddenly alone. She looks over her shoulder and watches Kara fidgets next to the car, looking at her hesitantly, not knowing if she should follow or not.

*Please,* Lena mouths, giving in.
Kara nods and Lena smiles as Kara takes her by the hand, making the rest of the way with her, to the helicopter and then through the corridors of the prison to the parlor where they wait for Lex.

Kara stands behind her, both hands on her shoulders; a tangible show of support. Lena can’t help but wonder if time still has meaning when one serves thirty-two consecutive life sentences. She sucks in a breath, Kara grips her shoulder tightly as Lex Luthor is brought before them by two guards; he is handcuffed, eyes dark and intense and a thick beard on his sunken cheeks. It is as far away from the pristine, clean-cut image he always showed to the world.

“Lena,” he sits and she notices that he may have changed physically but his voice hasn’t changed at all; it is the same, deep, charismatic voice she used to love when she was a kid as he would explain to her his latest experiments, his work on genomics and quantum physics as they poured over books and illustrations of particles and waves, spending nights dreaming and theorizing over the endless possibilities of what science could offer if some theories could be put into practice. His voice, calm and benevolent, eager for her to learn, lured her into an endless quest for answers, into an obsessed pursuit of knowledge and Lena, drunk on his praises and approval, nearly fell over the edge with him the first time he proposed her to join him in his quest against Superman, only in the hope to earn his approval again. “I’m glad you are here.”

Lena clenches her jaw as the guards chain him to the table and then leave the room. She promised herself that she wouldn’t fall into it, into his gravity where for a time, she felt safe and loved. But now, looking into his eyes, being in his presence; Lena finds it harder and harder to resist. Happier times, childhood memories come to mind and Lena has to remember that Lex cannot be saved. She has to remind herself of that before she does something stupid, like take him into her arms or break him out of maximum security. Kara squeezes her shoulders and Lena comes back to herself, shaking her head, breathing heavily. “What do you want?”

“You,” he declares. “To see you,” he clarifies with a smile that does nothing to assuage the sudden fear that sprung so suddenly in her guts. They stare at each other and Lena is reminded of afternoons spent playing chess but while Lena excelled in strategy and cold logic, Lex knew exactly how to pressure his adversaries, destabilize them by any ways possible until they made a mistake. “It’s funny...” he baits her, leaving his sentence unfinished for her to fall into his trap.

Lena does, hopping it would give her an insight on his motives. “What is?”

“You are,” he replies, eyes twinkling and yet dead calm as the eye of a storm, “you have all of this potential inside of you, this raw power begging to be used... begging to be let out...”

Lena narrows her eyes, she already heard him repeat this to her several times already. Lex was
playing a game Lena wasn’t sure she knew the rules of and it makes her anxious and uneasy. “Why

did you call me here?”

“… And yet, you do nothing with it. Quite a shame,” he continues, observing her intently and smiles
widely. “I only wonder how long it will take before your mind consumes you.”

This was a mistake, Lena thinks in horror, the game had been playing way before she thought she
was even playing it and this meeting was only the grand finale.

“Don’t you feel it whispering at you in the dead of the night, Lena? The madness? The geniality of
our minds?”

“He’s only trying to destabilize you,” Kara whispers into her ear. She gulps, because it’s true. Everything he is saying is true. Long before a ghost appeared in her living room, Lena already had so much trouble controlling her own mind. Imagining things that weren’t there, feeling emotions that weren’t hers… only a harsh and strict discipline kept her sane most of the time but Lena could feel her control slipping… a little bit every day, until one day she’ll snap. “He’s just trying to scare you,” Kara whispers again and Lena flinches away involuntarily.

“We both know how this feels like. I heard you went back to… Luke Perec? The therapist…”

“How…” she whispers, horrified.

“We should leave, Lena!” Kara whispers frantically, pulling at her arm to make her move but Lena is
frozen, pinned under her brother’s gaze.

He shrugs. “I have my ways… you are not crazy, little sister. You wouldn’t need him if you had
listened to me. He can’t help you. He doesn’t understand what it feels like to be a Luthor. What it
feels like to carry the burden of our name, the power we hold…”

“Lena!” Kara pulls again and Lena frees her arm from the hold, glaring at Lex but addressing them
both.

“I don’t want your help!”
Lex chuckles. “He was wrong, you know. The visions you had, the dreams, the sleepwalking it wasn’t due to stress, it wasn’t just the product of a scared, little girl’s mind like he wanted you to believe…” he pauses, scrutinizing her silently, hands folded carefully under his chin. “What if I told you that everything you saw was real. The smoke, the blood, the lifeless eyes? I see them too…” he whispers and Lena gulps, feeling the sweat rolling on her temple. Terrified and confused, heart pounding in her chest. “Yes, I remember everything you told me when you used to cling on to me at night, scared of the dark. I can still help you, Lena. I can help you understand. We can be a family again.”

“I’m not a Luthor!” She states absolute and confident, straightening up, staring at him defiantly.

He smiles indulgently.

“Reincarnation has never been proven,” she repeats. This conversation has been a point of disagreement they had debated on for years and years. A seductive theory in which Lex based all his principles of his own greatness, convinced to be a piece of a whole, justifying everyone’s existence to a past, a life they couldn’t remember, a fatalism no one could escape from. Lex had theorized that if one knew of those reincarnations one would understand the workings of time and space. They would understand the very fabric of the universe. Unlike her brother, Lena never put too much stock on that theory, there were too many suppositions involved to be considered ever being true. “It’s just a fantasy and religious beliefs. It doesn’t pertain to science!”

“Stop limiting yourself, Lena! Science cannot explain everything. The mind is a powerful thing; our body is only a vessel…” he whispers vehemently, quietly like the voice would whisper in her mind at night.

“Lena, we should go!” Kara insists again.

“Don’t!” she exclaims, feeling her mind become confused and lost with her brother whispering in her ear and her ghost whispering in the other.

“Everything repeats itself, Lena. It’s an endless circle,” he leans over the table and stares at her directly in the eyes. Lena tries to breathe, she tries not to get sucked in and even the cold of Kara’s sudden embrace does nothing against Lex’s maddening gravity. “Humanity is too blind to see it. Humanity is too weak to rise above it. But we can… You and I. I know you thought about it. Join me and we will rise above. Join me and we will be gods!”

“Lex… You’ve lost your mind!”
He shakes his head, calm and in control. The total opposite of how she feels and Lena realizes fully how bad of an idea this was. How she never should have caved in and respond to his demands in the first place. This was a trap from the very beginning and she fell into it. Kara settles on her laps and cradles her jaw forcing Lena to focus back on her. Lena holds on tightly to the phantom fabric on the woman’s hips and tries to breathe as Lex goes on fervently. “No. This is me, Lena. There’s a war coming and you don’t even know it,” he laughs and Lena whimpers, trying to breathe.

Kara shakes her head. “Don’t listen to him.”

“History repeats itself, dear sister. Again and again. No matter how hard we try to change it. Aliens will destroy our Earth! Humanity will disappear! It’s not too late to change, Lena. You can still choose the right side.”

“I've got you, Lena. Breathe. Everything is okay,” Kara whispers, pressing their foreheads together.

Lena closes her eyes and breathes.

“Lena…” Lex whispers, enticing her back to him.

“Breathe,” Kara encourages her.

Lena opens her eyes, “Guards!” she calls loudly, looking at the blonde gratefully.

Her brother settles back onto his seat, narrowing his eyes, observing her quietly. “What do you say, little sister?” he finally asks with a smile and Lena is thrown back to happier times when he would smile at her, surprised and proud as she beat him at chess and he would ask for another round. She shudders, repulsed as guards enter and take his chains off the table. Lex stares at her, waiting calmly for an answer with that same soft smile Lena now hates.

“No!"

Lex inclines his head in acknowledgement. “As you wish.”
The guards take him away and Lena falls into Kara’s arms.

“Don’t listen to him,” Kara whispers into her temple. “I’ve got you,” she repeats over and over again.

Lena breathes hard and fast, pressing her burning skin into Kara’s cold neck, nodding along as her mind scrambles to put itself back together.

“Ms. Luthor,” a guard calls out from the door.

Lena sighs and Kara detaches herself from her, smiling at her encouragingly, urging her softly to get up. She is quietly escorted outside and it is only thanks to Kara’s firm grip on her bicep that Lena knows where she is going. She feels dizzy, unbalanced, like everything just went out of her control and Lena hates how her brother knows which buttons to push to make her feel scared when he used to calm her fears.

She doesn’t let go of Kara’s hand as they leave the prison quickly.

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Luke coughs slightly as a cloud of dust rise from the shelf, Lena hands him a tissue paper and he thanks her wordlessly, wiping away at the dust. “That bookshelf really needed a swept down. Thank you for reminding me of that…”

Lena chuckles, taking the tissue back and putting it in the trash bin. “Are you sure, you don’t want me to do it? It’s my fault after all,” she reminds him, handing him another book.

“I’m not that old, Lena. I can still stand on a chair and wipe away the dust in my own office.”

She huffs, eyebrow raised. “I heard your knees creak five times since you climbed on that stool thirty minutes ago…”

“Observant as always…” he mumbles, scowling slightly. “Alright, here take my place, if you want it so much.”
Lena smiles as they trade place and she resumes putting his books back on the shelf by chronological order this time around.

“So, your brother threatened you.”

Lena nods. “And you,” she adds quickly. “I made sure you are to leave after this session. Everything is ready. You’ll only need to tell me where you want to go and a jet is waiting for you.” She places another book back on the shelf and holds out her hand for the next one. It never comes. Lena looks back at her therapist who stares at her disapprovingly, the white of his eyebrows twisted in a frown.

“You would uproot my whole life?”

Lena frowns too, slightly bemused at his indignation. “If it keeps you alive then yes, I will.”

He crosses his arms over his chest, refusing to give her the next book. Lena finds it quite childish but he has this look in his eyes that tells her he is not joking anymore and it embarrasses her to no end to realize that she does feel chastise. “What if I don’t want to leave, Miss Luthor?”

Lena gulps. He never called her that before. It feels weird and Lena suddenly feels hurt. “Why? Why wouldn’t you?”

He sighs and then shrugs. “Your brother has influence even locked down in prison. We both know nothing would protect me if he really wanted me dead.”

“’I can protect you. All the measures I took and the preparations I made will protect you!’” She swears fervently. He shakes his head, refusing her protection and Lena feels tears coming up to her eyes. “Why won’t you let me? You are innocent…”

“I dedicated my life to this and nothing else,” he gestures to his office and Lena now understands why she never saw family pictures. The first time she had stepped into his office, she had asked why he didn’t have pictures, if he, like her, lost his family and had been thrown into a new one who never took pictures for fun. There were only weird paintings with swirly black lines on his walls and other decorative pictures meant to create warmth but nothing personal stood out. He never answered her and she came to believe that it was for privacy… “The people I get to help are my family. It is a joy for me knowing I can help them understand the things they fear the most, the things they can’t control and give them back the power for them to get back on their feet. The mind is something
powerful but it isn’t something to be feared, neither are your emotions, Lena. And I will continue to help you as long as you need me to,” he reaches for her hand and squeezes it gently. “I’m grateful but I won’t live in fear.”

She nods, thinking back of the woman who told her the same thing a few hours ago, and breathes deeply and then coughs from the dust. “When was the last time you dusted the shelf?”

“When was the last time you thrashed my office?” he retorts with a smile.

“Years then,” Lena chuckles. “And I was in no way tall enough to reach that last shelf... I can pay for someone to clean your office...” she proposes and holds her hands out for the book in his hand.

“Where’s the fun in that?” He examines the pile of books at his feet, opening a few of them to check their date. “Where were we again?”

Lena sighs, rolling her eyes. “15th century.”

“You are in luck. I don’t have much on that century.” He hands her another book and Lena chuckles, reading the title.

“The Master of Game? I wouldn’t have peg you as someone interested in medieval hunting.”

“You should give it a read. You might like it.”

Lena hums, not really convinced. They spend the next ten minutes in silence, working silently in putting his books back on the shelves. Even though he refused her protection, she would make sure that he would still be protected. She can’t let Lex taint the lives of those she cared about more than he already taint hers.

“She told me not to live in fear,” she finally says, breaking the silence. “Before she left.”

He hums, handing her another book. “Wise words.”
“She… She told me not to give up,” Lena whispers, a lump in her throat, putting the book back on the shelf, biting her lips. “That she believed in me. Always.”

“Why did she leave?”

“It wasn’t her choice,” she replies quickly. Kara had no choice. She was in pain and Lena couldn’t let her stay here and watch her suffer, just to stay here with her. Lena chuckles slightly, ironically as Luke hands her René Descartes’ *Meditations on First Philosophy: In which the existence of God and the immortality of the soul are demonstrated*. She leafs through it distractingly, and then stops, reading quietly a tentative justification of Kara’s existence and yet, still not enough to explain everything that happened.

*I have convinced myself that there is nothing in the world — no sky, no earth, no minds, no bodies. Doesn’t it follow that I don’t exist? No, surely I must exist if it's me who is convinced of something. But there is a deceiver, supremely powerful and cunning whose aim is to see that I am always deceived. But surely I exist, if I am deceived. Let him deceive me all he can, he will never make it the case that I am nothing while I think that I am something. Thus having fully weighed every consideration, I must finally conclude that the statement "I am, I exist" must be true whenever I state it or mentally consider it.*

Lena sighs, tiredly; she never cared much about philosophy. Years ago, she had stumbled on a conference where they were debating on what “absolute truth” meant and the diverse answers it spawned, the labyrinth of reasoning in which they were happy getting lost into was enough to turn her away from the discipline. She thought the discipline was only an endless threads of questions to which the answers didn’t matter as much as the reasoning itself. Lena felt like philosophers could care less if answers were found… Science gave her answers. Science gave her comfort.

“What do you know of quantum entanglement?” Lena asks putting the philosophical book back on the shelf.

“Not a lot, I’m afraid.”

Lena nods, breathing deeply and recites laws she learned so long ago. “It is a physical phenomenon that occurs when pairs of particles are generated or interact in ways such that the quantum state of each particle cannot be described independently of the others, even when the particles are separated by a large distance,” Luke nods and hands her another book and Lena puts it back on the shelves mechanically. “We usually experiments with photons, electrons or molecules. Not full-grown bodies,” she chuckles, not quite believing herself the answer to the mystery of the woman who appeared in her living room, that night, the beautiful muse that changed her life. Scientific laws used to give her comfort in the past and yet, they bring her none today.
“The paradox is that a measurement made on either of the particles apparently collapses the state of the entire entangled system—instantaneously, before any information about the measurement result could have been communicated to the other particle. Special relativity states that information cannot travel faster than the speed of light. Kara is the first human application of this theory I got to see. As far as I know, it is the first ever in the world. That’s why she wasn’t fully…here. That’s why she didn’t have her memory. She existed simultaneously, like an image, a duplicate of an entity. And what is true for protons and electrons is also true for Kara. I mean, I should have known when she first started glitching in Lex’s office but I was just…” Lena pauses, remembering painfully how Kara had screamed then, crumbling on the floor, holding her head in her hands, screaming in agony and she hadn’t known what to do but hold her in her arms and wait. Hope that it would pass. She clenches her jaw and breathe deeply. She should have done more…She could have if only she had known and connected the signs to what she knew. But she hadn’t been thinking then, not rationally, anyway. “…too focused on myself and what her being real meant to me to try and understand what was happening. But once I did,” Lena says, thumping her head slightly against the edge of the shelf in frustration, “it was already too late…”

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The Gala was held in one of Mister Wayne’s Mansion just outside of Metropolis. As always no expense had been spared and Lena recognizes the unmistakable flair of Miranda Tate in the choice of flowers, music, food and everything else for that matter. It is elegant, Lena has to give her that, the imposing chandeliers complimented really well the high ceiling, illuminating its gilding, paintings and ornaments evenly and giving the room a warm, appeasing, golden glow, intimate even for a party where sharks and other predators were on the lookout for blood.

“I’m going to go mingle for a bit,” Jess whispers to her, “find Wayne and bring him to you.”

Lena nods, watching Jess disappear into the mass of people, swallowing her whole until Lena couldn’t see her anymore.

“So, what’s my mission?” Kara asks her, eager and excited, making a show of observing the people around them.

Lena rolls her eyes, a faint smile tugging at her lips. “You are not going anywhere.”

“What? Come on…” she protests. “I am invisible!”
“Yes. Thank God for that!”

Kara narrows her eyes and Lena laughs, waiting for what she will do. Kara steps back smiling widely. “Watch me! I’ll show you how sneaky I can be!”

Lena sighs, watching her disappear too. She has been hiding, after two hours of mindless discussions with various CEOs and socialites. The currency for tonight wasn’t green bills and multimillion contracts; tonight, gossips were the currency and Lena finds herself at the center of it all unwittingly. The news of the arrest of the trusted, long-standing financial advisor of Luthor Corp and of his team had reached the ears of everyone here but even without that event, her brother’s arrest was sure to have them whisper and gossip behind her back for years. A goldmine for that little bubble where everyone knew of each other. It was enough to give her a headache as she plays absentmindedly with her still full glass of champagne, hopping no one would find her-

“Well, if this isn’t Lena Luthor, hiding…”

Never mind, Lena resigns herself, turning toward the woman who manages to glare at her with a smile; the hostility bright and clear and yet, concealed and restraint somehow. “Captain Sawyer…” Lena acknowledges with a slight incline of her head, hoping desperately she didn’t just step into a public showdown.

“It’s Detective now,” the woman snarls, “I lost the commandment of the Metropolis Special Crime Units because of your brother. It’s less hours, I’ll give you that,” she continues smiling pleasantly this time as people passes by them. “The pay is shit, though… but I still get to enjoy these things,” she raises her glass of champagne mockingly to her.

“I’m sorry for what he did to you,” she apologizes sincerely. It won’t give the Detective her position back or anything she lost in her fight against her brother but it is the only thing Lena can give her.

The woman narrows her eyes, observing her quietly. Lena tries hard not to fidget under the scrutiny, holding as stoically as possible the Detective’s gaze. “So you know?”

Lena nods. “He kept a file on you.”

“And what are you going to do with that file?” Detective Sawyer steps suddenly into her personal space and Lena backs away instinctively.
“Lena!” Jess intervenes, glaring at the detective. “Wayne is waiting to see you.”

Lena nods gratefully as Jess steer her away.

“I’ll keep my eyes on you, Luthor!” Maggie Sawyer calls out suddenly, before they get too far.

It turns a few heads toward them, observing the exchange with curiosity. Lena sighs. “I’ll expect nothing less, Detective.” And then she leaves, knowing this confrontation was only the beginning.

“Who was that?” Jess whispers furiously, leading her through corridors and staircases.

“An enemy my brother made in his quest for power. She got to close to his plans and he blackmailed her for it.”

Jess stops her, a crease on her brow. “Do you want us to take care of her?”

“No need,” Lena chuckles. Maggie Sawyer wasn’t a threat to her, if anything she might just be the person she needs. “I intend to make her my ally.”

“How?” Jess asks her bewildered. “I’m not sure she likes you very much…”

“I know,” Lena agrees. “I’ll find a way. Just keep an eye on her for tonight.”

Jess nods and leads her to an oak door, the study in which Bruce Wayne was waiting for her.

“Mr. Wayne!” Lena greets, false smile on her face.

“Ms. Luthor, we officially meet.” He tells her pleasantly, kissing the back of her hand, always the gentleman.

Lena isn’t sure how to act with this man. She knew of his reputation of course, the philanthropist
playboy who hid a powerful, calculating mind with easy smile and flirtatious gaze. She saw him a few times, but always in passing, with different women on his arm. Lex never liked him. He found him vain and arrogant, a liar and a devil in disguise. Lena learned to be wary and in this circle of intrigue and money, one should learn to be cautious. Especially when dealings with vigilantes. But… Lex also taught her to be bold. Attack first. “I wish it was under better circumstances but you are trying to buy out my company so…”

Wayne chuckles. “We both know you never wanted it. I can manage it for you,” he suggest kindly, borderline patronizing and Lena bristles as he continues in the same tone. “You would still be the face of the company if you want… but think about it. You’ll get to live the life you want. Attend parties? Oh no, wait. You are not like that. You would prefer spending months on a boat and build hydraulic drive system…”

“You did your research,” Lena fumes.

He smiles kindly and yet, the kindness has an edge to it and Lena understands why her brother never liked him. They were on the same playing field. “You should enjoy your life, Ms. Luthor. Let me take this burden off your shoulders.”

Lena steps toward him, into his personal space and glares. “While power holds no interest to me, being someone else’s puppets interest me even less,” she asserts fiercely. He might have done his research on her but she also did hers. “I will ask you to stop meddling with my company, Mr. Wayne… or should I say Batman?”

Bruce Wayne doesn’t react overtly but Lena sees in the minute twitch on his left eyebrow, the unwavering gaze fixed on hers, the sudden encompassing silence surrounding them, that she managed to surprise him.

“I’m not your enemy,” she continues, pinning him under her gaze. “You are not the only one who believes in justice and we both know how hard it is to escape our past. But it doesn’t mean that it should define us. It doesn’t mean that we should follow the path everyone thinks we should take. I’m only trying to turn the mess that has been given to me into something good. Something I can be proud of.”

The silence is oppressing and Lena waits and waits as Wayne observes her, judging, gauging her silently and surely deciding right at this moment if he will take her family’s company away from her or not. Lena stands her ground, heart pounding as he finally steps away and Lena breathes.

“It's a dangerous game,” he finally says, serious and somber. It's staggering how quickly his
demeanor changes. It changes so profoundly that Lena feels slightly dizzy as a new person emerges, or maybe she is finally meeting the real person behind the persona. “If you continue down this path your brother will come after you.”

“I am aware,” she replies, defiant and proud. Remembering Kara’s whispering to her not to be afraid. “He already told me this morning.”

He sighs. It surprises her how weary and worn he suddenly seems. “What your brother did here in Metropolis stirred up some chains of reactions that cannot be stopped. Me buying your company was only one of the few ways I found to put a wrench into it.”

“What are you trying to prevent?” Lena whispers, dread suddenly twisting her guts as images of Lex chained to a table, declaring a war on aliens come to her mind.

“There is a war brewing,” Wayne confirms to her horror. Lex wasn’t divagating. He was warning her. Threatening her to chose a side and Wayne nods grimly. “Unrest. Against aliens all over the country. An escalation in violence might come quicker than we expect. It will force everyone to choose a side.”

“How… How come we haven’t heard of it?”

“It wouldn’t be significant for anyone but those looking for that connection. Superman and I have been monitoring the situation,” he pauses and gauges her again. “He doesn’t think you should be trusted.”

Lena scoffs. “I am not my brother. How do I know I can even trust you?” She asks vehemently, glaring at his impassive face and sighs. If they wanted to prevent a war, they would have to work together and Lena is willing to take the first step. “What would you have done… if you had control of my company?”

“I would stop the funding of the government’s armament program,” Wayne tells her, nodding slightly with a new light shining in his eyes. Some kind of respect, perhaps. “There is a rogue branch of the government emerging. Luthor Corp’s technology is not safe in their hands anymore.”

“I will,” Lena says, sealing their pact with a nod.
He smiles, taking her hand in his and kisses the back of it slightly, reverting back to the philanthropist playboy everyone knew him to be. “Then I will stop trying to take your company. It was lovely meeting you, Ms. Luthor. We will keep in touch,” he winks at her and leaves the study, closing the door behind him quietly.

Lena puts a hand over her chest and leans slightly against the desk, trying to calm her pounding heart with a few calming breath.

“That was intense!” Kara suddenly whispers next to her.

“What the fuck!” Lena shrieks, holding on to a book for dear life, waving it as a weapon.

Kara smiles sheepishly, takes the book away from her hand and puts it back onto the desk. “Told you I could be sneaky.”

“You have the worst timing ever,” Lena rages, poking her in the chest.

“Do I?” Kara laughs, battling her hand away and takes her into her arms. “You did it,” she whispers and Lena holds on to her, pleasantly surprised and grateful. “You saved Luthor Corp.”

“For how long, though? You heard him, right?”

Kara chuckles softly against her ear, squeezing her reassuringly. “Yes, I heard. Mister Doom and Gloom sure knows how to give people whiplash.”

Lena detaches herself from Kara. Feeling bold by their victory, she caresses Kara’s cheek with the pads of her fingers. “Ready for National City? We’ll have to board the Venture in a few hours…” she reminds her with a smile.

Kara frowns and holds her head suddenly.

“What?” Lena whispers holding the woman tightly as the blonde suddenly winces and falls on her knees.
Kara screams.

Lena kneels next to her and takes her into her arms. She presses the screaming woman against her body, muffling the painful groans and cries into her neck. Kara begins to glitch madly and Lena watches, powerless as Kara flickers back and forth into existence. Feeling suddenly very real into her arm, only to feel like a current of water the next second.

“The Venture… Oh god! I remember now!” Kara blurts abruptly, breathing heavily. She is so tangible and real that Lena holds on to her even harder now that she can feel the pressure of her fingers against burning skin. Kara looks at her with realization and an overwhelmingly panic in her eyes. “It's you! All of this was about you! Not me! I came here to save you!” Kara exclaims, gripping tightly onto her arms, eyes wide and so, so blue but red-rimmed as tears suddenly fills her eyes. “Don’t board the Venture! Don’t go to National City! You’ll die, Lena,” Kara shouts, frantic and agitated, holding on to her arms so hard, Lena will find the imprints of her hands later. “You were dead in my timeline. You boarded the Venture and there was a bomb under your seat... you died... I’m here to make sure it doesn’t happen again. Don’t go to National City! Promise me!”

Lena nods, shocked and breathless as Kara waits for her answers with tears in her eyes. “I- I promise!”

“What the hell is going on?” Detective Sawyer screams from behind her. Lena looks up at the blurry image of a woman pointing a gun at her, stopping at the threshold, shocked at the sight in front of her.

Jess burst through the door a few seconds later, interposing herself between Lena and the Detective, holding a gun of her own. “Drop the gun, Detective. Lena?” her friend looks back at her quickly to check up on her only, to gape at the woman Lena is holding in her arms. “She- she- Who is that?”

Kara groans again, pressing her head into Lena’s shoulder as her body flickers again. Both women scream behind her, asking questions Lena can’t discern because Kara's body doesn't burn anymore. Lena holds on harder and harder as Kara's body flickers and becomes cold again, colder even. “You are disappearing…”

Kara nods, looking at her with sad eyes. “They were right,” she whispers, “Lex and Bruce Wayne. Listen to me!” Kara suddenly yells at the two screaming women behind them. “I don’t… have much time. We lost the war. The last of the resistance was about to fall when I powered up Winn’s machine to send me back in time. The programming led me to you. It was only a… prototype we weren’t even sure it would work. Either they… invaded the DEO or I don’t have enough energy to power up the machine…” Kara winces and then grabs Lena’s face into her cold hands and gives her
last orders clearly, desperately, looking so scared it breaks her heart. “You have to destroy Isotope 454. Cadmus used it to spread a virus that will kill the alien population of National City. That’s how… the war started. You are my last chance to make it right…”

“I will!” Lena swears as Kara wipes the tears from her cheeks, gently. “I promise, Kara!”

Kara smiles, blinking slightly, fading away and Lena can’t let it happen. “Tell- Tell me something about you…” she asks desperately.

“What do you want to know?”

“Everything,” she whispers. Everything she never got the time to know. Anything to make her stay longer with her.

“I'm Kara Zor-El,” the woman says so faintly Lena has to press her forehead against hers to hear better. She bites her lips harshly to stop the sob from overlapping Kara’s voice. “I work as Cat Grant's assistant and I'm… Supergirl. Krypton… Alex Danvers, I- I… always wanted to be a- a reporter…”

“Why didn't you?” Lena asks, straining to hear the faint, phantom voice, grabbing onto every parts of Kara’s body that hasn’t yet fade away.

“The world… needed Supergirl more than… Kara Danvers...” Kara whispers and disappears momentarily, completely before reappearing again in her arms. "I'm glad I got to know you.”

“No, no, no!” Lena presses Kara's body against hers, holding on with all of her strength. "Stay with me!”

Kara smiles against her cheek. “Don’t be afraid. You being alive might just… be enough to change everything...” she nuzzles her nose against hers, breathing against her skin. “I believe in you,” Kara adds against her bruised lips in a faint, ghostly kiss. “Always.”

Lena holds on tightly to cold, trembling lips. She holds on again and again until suddenly, there is nothing to hold onto anymore.
Lena breathes hard into Luke’s warm shoulder, uncontrollable sobs shaking her body, gripping harshly the back of his sweater, looking desperately for something to hold onto. She can’t remember when she step off the stool and got into his arms. But she clings onto him as hard as she can as he soothes her gently, holding her tightly too in a bear like embrace.

“You were supposed to be on the Venture,” he whispers after a while, “one of its reactors exploded this morning.”

Lena nods.

“Superman and Supergirl saved it, though…”

Lena shudders, gulping slightly, breathing to the rhythm of his hand on her back. He used to do it to her, years ago, when she would panic, when her emotions suppressed for so long would suddenly burst to the surface and deprive her of oxygen. “Kara said the bomb had been placed under the seat I was supposed to be in.”

“Your brother?”

“Possibly…”

“Jess and Detective Sawyer saw her then…” he continues, voice calm and comforting as he coaxes her back out from her mind.

Lena nods. “She was here. For a few minutes… they saw her.” Her breath hitches suddenly. “I don’t know what happened to her! Time travel is… it has never been attempted before. Our science isn’t advanced enough to understand the implication of such travels. I don’t know… if she went back to her timeline, or if her timeline got erased once she changed it by saving me… I don’t know if it only created an alternative reality or- or if she is even alive… I don’t know!” Lena panics. Luke hums calmly, repeating the motions on her back without fail. “She saved me. What do I do?”

He detaches himself from her to look her in the eyes. “Well, we come back to the same question. What do you want to do?”
Lena frowns. “She told me not to go to National City…”

He leads her to the sofa, the only survivor from her earlier rage, and motions her to sit with him. “As I see it, you are writing your own future. She gave you a second chance. A new beginning if you will…” he tells her pointedly. “You don’t have to live in fear, Lena.”

“Are you saying I have to go to National City?”

He shrugs but then smiles widely, challenging her wordlessly. “I’m saying you can do whatever you like. As long as the choice is yours, it can only be the right one.”

Lena chuckles, taking him back into her arms. “Thank you.”

“Go!” he pats her back and points to the door. “The session is finished. I’ll expect a call at least once a week.”

“Of course,” Lena smiles gratefully before she leaves his office. She calls for someone to help the poor man clean the mess she left in his office, arranging a security details for him by the same occasion.

Eli waits for her near the elevator, handing her a tissue wordlessly as Lena checks her haggard look in the mirror of the elevator, fixing her make-up quickly. They walk in the underground garage to the car and freeze, surprised as Jess is being held at gunpoint by an angry Detective.

“I want answers,” the woman says in lieu of greetings.

Eli looks back at her and Lena shakes her head slightly. “What do you think of a transfer? To National City Scientific Police Department more precisely?”

“What are you talking about?” Detective Sawyer snarls.

Lena smiles, walking confidently toward them. “We leave for National City and I’m taking you with
Right about now, second chances don't look as exciting as Luke made it look to be. It's been a lot of phone calls, lots of arguments mixed with reassurance and flattery with her shareholders back in Metropolis. It's been having Eli and Jess breathing down her neck to make sure she ate, and slept and stop fiddling with the heat system of her penthouse. It's been explaining the conflict going on to an incredibly wary and hostile Detective as Lena arranged for her transfer to National City. All in all, second chances don't feel so great and Lena frowns, frustrated as she looks for her phone, somewhere deep inside her bag, hoping she didn't forget the bloody device again. Jess will surely reprimand her if she did… Lena sighs as the doors of the elevator opens to her floor and rolls her eyes as Clark Kent stands before her, confident and imposing asking her bluntly about the incident on the Venture.

Lena bypasses him, walking quickly toward her office. “There’s a perfectly reasonable explanation for why I wasn’t on board of the Venture yesterday.” How funny would it be to watch Superman’s reaction if she were to tell him the crazy week she just had. His cousin coming from the future to save her and thus, changing all of their future.

“Well, that’s why we’re here.”

“There was an emergency,” Lena explains and then lies, “regarding the planning of a ceremony I’m planning tomorrow. I’m renaming my family’s company and I had to cancel.” Renaming Luthor Corp had been a last-minute idea. Something to explain her permanent move to National City. Jess and her had been working hard and fast to put a plan in motion in between the time Lena decided to go to National City and the time it took them to arrive. It feels a bit rushed but now that she thinks about it; it feels kind of nice to start over again.

Clark Kent scoffs. “Ah, lucky.”

Lena chuckles as Wayne’s words about what Superman thought of her come back to mind. “Lucky is Superman saving the day,” Lena offers willingly, after all a bit of flattery never hurt anyone. She turns away from the coat hanger and falters slightly at seeing Kara stands before her.

“It’s not something one would expect a Luthor to say…” he replies but Lena ignores him, her gaze intent on the woman with a ponytail and clutching awkwardly her notepad against her chest like a shield.
“Supergirl was there too!” Kara adds, strong and familiar and yet different, less confident somehow.

Lena stares at her tongue-tied and paralyzed for a few infinite seconds, noticing the glasses, the slight awkwardness in her movements, the barely restrained tension in her hands. This is the woman who saved her. This is the woman Lena watched disappear from her arms only two days ago. She bypasses her quickly, flustered. “And who are you exactly?” Lena asks, unable to contain the smile, the sudden joy and relief she feels at seeing her.

“Um… Um… I’m Kara Danvers. I’m not with the Daily Planet. I’m with CatCo Magazines… sort of…”

Lena smiles, holding on to her glass of water.

Second chances might not be so bad after all.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading the long chapter. I hope you liked it. The story is not finished... I feel like it's only the beginning :) From there it's going to follow canon at least till 2x15 (I'm not going to rewrite every scenes, though. fear not.) So that's my little headcanon on why our CEO looks so smitten with Kara since the very beginning and how I wished season 2 would have gone.

Thank you again. Take care! :)

Hi! Thank you all so much for the support! I'm really glad you liked the reveal. I was wondering if I could pull it off and you liking it makes the hours agonizing on my desk worth it. It's always a pleasure to read what you think. Thank you! I'll go and rename the first four chapters cause I did think of this story in terms of arc. If I can pull it off, there will be three. All mistakes are mine.

Thank you again. I hope you will like this chapter! Enjoy! :D

Lena is trapped. To be honest, she felt like she has been trapped her whole life.

Circumstances made it that she got trapped from a young age in a tragedy she couldn’t forget. Left alone to wonder about what could have been if her mother hadn’t been involved in that car accident. If only she had left the grocery shop only a few minutes earlier or later than she did… Would she still be alive? Waiting to get her from school that afternoon instead of two police officers? Would they have made that apple pie together like she had promised her that morning before she had to go to school? Logically, Lena knows those questions are futile. They will only harm her more and force her to hash out over and over again something that couldn’t be helped, something out of her control, hazardous and unfortunate but still inevitable…

Circumstances trapped her in a name she never desired before she could even realize it. She got suddenly thrown into the spotlights, forced to accompany her new family in events where everyone looked at her and whispered, forcing her to smile, making her want to cry. She became unwittingly the newest attraction in Metropolis’ closed socialite’s circle and Lena felt confused but most of all; she felt lost. Lost in those endless receptions with the highest ceilings she ever saw where everything was pretty and shined brighter than the sun: the dresses, the necklaces, the lights and the smiles. Lena hated it. Forced to play a game of pretend for her new mom when all she wanted was to hide under a table.

She hated even more the expectations that came with her new name. An imperative to be perfect and self-disciplined when guests were there and even when they weren’t. She couldn’t run outside anymore or bake… she was only allowed to read; play with her toys or chess with Lex as her only companion. Eli, her nanny’s son, had been like a breath of fresh air in a suffocating home. He and his mom came in years later when her new parents stopped taking her to their parties because the
attraction around her had finally abated.

Being a Luthor meant having a life everyone wanted to dictate for her and there weren’t many things she could do but the little she could; she did it fully, wholeheartedly, desperately.

She learned everything they told her to learn. She found comfort in the praise and her abilities to understand concepts and equations her tutors couldn’t keep up with… She learned to rely on her mind more than her heart because emotions made people weak. Well, that was what Lillian always told her…

But sometimes when the nights got too dark and the sadness too encompassing; Lex would take her under his arm and show her the little wonders he was working on… You are a Luthor now, he would tell her, you are a Luthor and I will always protect you. Lena had believed him, clinging onto him tightly, feeling loved.

With time, she forgot what her previous last name was. With time, it got harder and harder to remember her mother’s smile.

Lena would have never thought she would ever feel trapped in her brother’s shadow. As a child, she was quite content to hide behind him and admire him as he protected her from the tumultuous waters of flattery and fake smiles till she learned to do it herself. She never thought his shadow would ever feel so ominous and sinister as it loomed over Metropolis, destroying everything and plunging the world in chaos and darkness.

Lex plunged into darkness and Lena, for a few minutes, shamefully thought of taking the plunge too… It is easier to hide behind someone else’s shadow than to try to shine on her own. Not joining Lex meant being alone again and she didn’t want to be alone, not anymore. And yet again, logic stopped her when Lex drowned in hatred. Lena knew nothing good would come out of alienating Superman. For once, she felt more Luthor than Lex ever was. Because his plans weren’t coherent nor were they sensible. They weren’t governed by reason and pragmatism, something Lionel was sure to teach them and Lex particularly. Lex’s actions were motivated by greed and she had to let him go. He descended into madness and Lena promised herself that she wouldn’t fall with him.

She doesn’t know if she can sustain her own light, feeble and unsure, flickering just to exist outside of his shadow. In fact, everyone never let her forget that his darkness is still here, saturating every aspect of her life… and sometimes, Lena no longer discerns his darkness from hers, she doesn’t know if her light would be enough to cast away his shadows.

This feeling of being trapped is never truer than when she is in the air. While having a chopper for
her use only is a privilege that comes with her name, Lena can’t stress enough how much she hates flying.

Especially when drones are hell bent in shooting her down…

“What the hell-” she gaps, powerless and afraid; knowing that there is nothing she can do except brace herself for the impact. Drones shoot at them and Lena waits, closing her eyes tightly... She hopes the fall will be quick. She hopes it will be painless. Gary screams beside her and Lena waits... and waits but the impacts never come and Lena opens her eyes only to see Supergirl and Superman shielding them from bullets.

“Thanks God,” Gary exclaims. “What should we do, Miss Luthor?”

“Stay here,” Lena orders breathlessly. Her heart is beating so hard inside her chest, it becomes painful but seeing Kara protecting her is enough to reassure her and Lena feels confident again. Confident that everything will work out. “They will protect us.”

It is quite ironic to have someone come back in time to save her from a plane crash only to die in another one. If the situation wasn't so dire, Lena would have taken the time to admire the piece of tech firing at her. It is quite an amazing work from what she can see. Sleek and with incredible stability as they fire at the Supers. Impressive but still a bastardized version of what Luthor Corp provided the government.

Superman flies off and Lena gulps slightly. She isn't worried. She has absolute faith in Kara but there is no way she can stress enough how much she hates flying. The chopper veers to the right and alarms blare suddenly in the cockpit.

“Gary!”

“I’m sorry,” he apologizes.

Lena wishes he wouldn't because it means that they're screwed. It means he doesn't have control of the chopper. It means they are trapped...

“I’m trying to stabilize it but there’s too much disturbances against the fuselage. We need to go!”
Lena’s vision zeroes in on Kara who flies so freely, so effortlessly before them. Supergirl destroys another drone and Lena is envious. Lena wishes she could be free.

“Ms. Luthor!” Gary urges her as the chopper tilts and sways.

“Okay!” She finally relents. “Go!”

Gary strains on the commands and Lena feels like her heart might just beat out of her chest. Alarms blare ominously inside the cockpit. The chopper gains some altitudes and her heart stops as her body is thrown violently to the side with the blast of an explosion ringing in her ears. The sky is filled with fire and smoke and Lena can’t really see anything but she grabs Gary’s biceps, asking him to wait and ignores his protests as she squints through the cloud of smoke.

The smoke clears. Supergirl is nowhere to be seen.

“It’s shooting at us!” Gary screams, shaking her hand away and pulls on the collective pitch control to gain altitudes. The chopper shakes and tilts forward. Lena shrieks, one hand holding on to the back of the pilot’s seat as several impacts thunder against the fuselage. Gary slumps on his seat, letting go of the command, unresponsive.

“Fuck,” Lena hisses. It’s her fault. She should have listened to him and leave while they still could. Fix this, Lena thinks frantically, watching the lights on the control panel blinking madly at her. Guilt overwhelms her and Lena remembers that Gary has two daughters. The eldest is eight and just had her first recital while the youngest is only four... The same age she was when she lost her mom. Lena breathes deeply and shakes out of her stupor and transfers the command of the chopper to her side. She can’t let him die. And while she never piloted a helicopter before she does know the theory behind it and she hopes it is enough to prevent them from crashing.

This is the time to put her knowledge into practice. She can’t do much but try to stabilize the engine. Lena remembers that to maintain an helicopter in hovering flight, she needs to exert constant control inputs and corrections against the gusty wind their rotors generate. With one hand, she grabs the cyclic in front of her which is used to eliminate drift in the horizontal plane. It will allow her to control the helicopter forward and back, right and left. With the other, she grabs the collective to her left which will help her maintain her altitude. And finally, she disregards her heels and puts her feet onto the anti-torque pedals to control the nose direction. In theory, it is the interaction of these three controls that will help her maintain the chopper in hover flight position... in theory.
“Come on! Come on!” Lena presses desperately on the pedals as alarms blares in her ears, smoke fills her nose and her body is thrown from left to right. The pedals don’t respond to her command and Lena understands with mounting horror that the anti-torque tail rotor has been hit. She braces herself for the crash, heart in her throat; eyes closed tightly and she waits for the fall, violent and quick. Hoping that it will be painless.

It never comes. Lena isn’t sure how but the helicopter is righted mid-air and lands safely, steadily on sure ground.

Kara appears suddenly by the opened pilot’s door. “You are safe now,” she states with confidence. It throws Lena back to the memory of her ghost holding her in her arms and protecting her from a swarm of reporters. *I've got you*, she had said and Lena had nodded, trusting her blindly, feeling safe.

“What the hell was that?” Lena exclaims in shock... in fear.

“Someone is trying to kill you,” Kara tells her and Lena freezes as it suddenly dawns on her how naive she's been to think that changing the course of time once would be enough to stop her brother from trying to kill her.

“Is he going to be okay?” Lena asks as Kara checks on Gary, taking away his seatbelt.

"I can hear his heartbeat," Kara nods and then scrunches her nose, staring at the pilot intently, "and there's no signs of fractures or head trauma. I think it's just shock.”

Lena nods, relieved. But the good news don't alleviate the guilt she feels tenfold now that the danger has passed. She should have known. She should have been prepared because now anything was up in the air. Kara, her ghost, saved her from the Venture explosion and her brother would never stop at a failure. Knowing him, Lena should have known that it would only give him more incentive to try and kill her. Lex won’t give up and Lena has failed to anticipate what his next move would be now that she survived and it nearly cost her life again.

Kara takes the pilot out of his seat and lays him gently on the ground to give him more room to breathe. Lena powers off the engine, fingers trembling slightly and tries to unclasp her seatbelt. Her fingers slip several times until she hears the door on her side open and sees warm fingers stop her trembling ones.

“Let me,” Kara offers, unclasping it easily.
“Thank you,” Lena smiles, and then gasps as their eyes meet. Her muse so close with eyes so blue…

It’s the shock, Lena lies, that makes her unable to break eye contact. She stares, tongue-tied, starved for the crinkle between Kara’s brow, her disapproving look when Lena kept drinking and making lewd jokes. She craves the kindness she read in Kara’s eyes, the protectiveness of her embrace, the reassurance in every one of her smiles. Lena is desperate to see the playful tilt of her lips, to hear her laugh and above all, to taste again the hope she had breathed into her with the whisper of a kiss… It’s invasive and vulnerable, and Lena holds her breath, stunned and flustered, leaning in so slowly, unconsciously with the irrepressible want to feel Kara’s skin against hers, to have the pads of her fingers touch Kara’s cheek once again… real, warm and just within reach.

“Oh…” the superhero blushes and backs away slightly. “Uh… Yes. Here,” she hands her the seat belt and Lena takes it, still stunned.

“Thank you,” she croaks, gripping it tightly.

“Of course Ms. Luthor,” Kara replies. It makes Lena frown, wincing slightly. Her ghost never called her that before. It sounds too formal… As if… As if her ghost has never seen her naked before, barging in her bath. As if they’ve never cuddled in bed… Her heart thunders painfully inside her chest and Lena’s breathe hitches suddenly. The woman who isn’t her ghost, observes her worriedly and puts a warm hand on her shoulder. “Are you okay, Miss Luthor?”

“Yes,” Lena exhales suddenly, desperate for air, desperate for something that was no longer there. She presses her fingers against her forehead, rubbing it slightly. “Yes. I’m sorry… I’m just… shaken, I guess.”

Kara nods, satisfied with her answers. “Let me help you step off the-”

“Lena!” a voice shouts. Lena raises her head and sees Eli running toward them, a gun held tightly in his hand followed by a security team and paramedics. Supergirl helps her step off the chopper as he stops next to them and grips her shoulder, checking for any signs of injuries. “Are you alright, Boss?”

“Yes,” Lena nods, out of breath. “Supergirl saved me.”

Eli turns toward the blonde, hesitant and mute, fidgeting. Kara waves embarrassed, smiling slightly.
Lena elbows him in the side, hoping that it will make him stop gawking at the superhero. It doesn’t and it’s awkward. The tense atmosphere is only broken by the paramedics transporting Gary away.

“I… uh, here, your shoes.” Kara hands them to Eli and motions toward the sky. “I should go… Be careful,” Kara adds and flies off quickly.

Lena exhales, pressing her hand against her chest, willing her heart to stop beating so fast. Her security team is quick to spread out on the roof, alert, securing the zone and waiting for her to go back into the building. Lena keeps her head held high, composed.

“It’s her, right?” Eli whispers to her excitedly. “That’s the lady who made us crêpes?”

Lena sighs tiredly. She takes her heels from his hands and uses his shoulder to keep her balance while she puts them back on. “Yes, it’s her.”

“That’s so cool…” He gushes. Lena glares at him. He shuts up and accompany her quickly back to the building.

“I want this zone monitored at all times,” she orders at one of the security agent. The agent nods, relaying the order in his earpiece and opens the door for them.

Now alone, Lena falls against Eli, legs trembling. “I hate flying…” she mutters feebly. He picks her up and carries her down the rest of the stairs. Lena presses her forehead against his shoulder, fingers trembling madly now that the danger has passed, now that she realizes how close she has been from dying.

“I know… I’m glad you are okay. A few cables got damaged by the impact. Jess has been overseeing the reparation… most of the power has been rerouted to the Labs underground and the IT department. A few people got stuck in the elevators. We’ve already dispatched a team to get them out. Everything should go back to normal in thirty minutes. The building is more fragile than we thought… I’m sorry we weren’t here to protect you.”

“There’s nothing either of you could have done,” Lena whispers, biting her lips in a vain effort to control the sudden panic invading her body. It’s just shock, Lena knows it but it doesn’t stop her body from shivering or her eyes from tearing up slightly. “You would have been killed.” He holds her tighter against him and Lena closes her eyes, reprimanding herself for getting too confident. She was now playing in a game with new set of rules. Rules that hasn’t been set up yet and she has to
adapt and anticipate quickly otherwise everything Kara did to save her will be for nothing…

“So… Do you think she would make us more crêpes one day?” Lena laughs, squeezing his shoulder gratefully. He chuckles, pausing in front of the door that would lead them into the first offices and drops her off gently. “Ready?”

Lena breathes deeply once again, gathering whatever composure she has left. She ruffles his hair before he has a chance to open the door.

“Stop it,” he hisses. “I’m not a kid.”

“You are twenty. You are still a kid to me,” Lena teases, unimpressed as he tries to comb his hair with his fingers, indulging her.

“You are twenty four…” he scoffs. “What does that make you?”

“Young boss?” She replies with an eyebrow raised smugly.

He chuckles softly. “Damn. You got me there…” He grabs the door handle, waiting for her assent to open it.

Lena nods and they suddenly step into a buzzing corridor with a few dozens of her employees running around, carrying back classified documents that should have been ordered to be displaced and kept in a secure location if the building was ever under attack and their security breached. Fire alarms still blares around them, phone rings from every offices, people shouts into their comms asking for updates, asking for which protocols to follow and Lena observes the chaos unfolding in front of her with a dissatisfied frown before everyone freezes at the clang of the door closing behind them.

“Cut the alarm,” Lena commands, chin raised, back straight, calling upon the stoic authority the Luthors taught her. The alarm stops after a few seconds. “Miller,” the marketing department manager walks toward her, wringing his hands.

“Ms. Luthor…”
“Get yourself back together,” she hisses at him. He nods, trembling slightly and Lena sighs, taking pity on him. “All sensitive documents have to be put on lock-down until noticed otherwise, have an IT team run a complete check of your systems. See if no one took advantage of the attack to hack into the system… I want a report on your department in two hours.”

“Yes, Ms. Luthor.”

“And Miller?” He stops, looking back at her. Lena smiles. “Everything is going to be fine. Don’t panic.” He smiles back apologetically and goes back to work, gathering his team and following his directives.

“Maybe you should invest in a few bazookas…” Eli slips in quietly into her ear as they watch the marketing floor work quietly and more efficiently.

“That’s an idea…” she mumbles as they take another flight of stairs and she gives another set of directives to the division manager of the legal department and then to the finance department and so on. Powers comes back on again on all floors and the general anxiety starts to ebb away.

They finally step onto her office floor and are greeted with the sight of her newly employed assistant answering calls and jolting down furiously on her notepad while her computer lags; the Luthor Corp logo, flickering on the screen.

“Ms. Luthor!” Alana exclaims, surprised and relieved. “Jess told me to man up the desk. I- I’ve got calls from….”

Lena raises her hand, stopping the blubbery woman from having a heart attack. “Everything is alright, Alana. Don’t worry. They will call back if it is that important. Transfers the calls back to my desk if they are from shareholders or VPs. I want a meeting with all heads of department at the end of the day to discuss of the security and protocols to follow in case of an incident like this happening again.”

“Yes, Ms. Luthor!”

Eli opens the door of her office, letting her in before closing the door behind him. “They are like bees when the hive got rattled.”
“This is only a small branch of Luthor Corp. They are not used to the level of stress we might have had at HQ. Go to the IT department. Work your magic and put the system back into place. I’ll stay here answering calls all day and do some damage control. Let Marcus handle the security for today.”

“Alright,” he smiles, delighted.

“Don’t try to hack into the NSA again,” Lena warns before he leaves.

“Of course not, Boss!”

Lena shakes her head as he closes the door. The rest of her afternoon is spent on the phone with several of her shareholders. The news spread all over national television, and Lena watches on repeat the blurry, shaky footage shot from buildings around Luthor Corp, showing Superman and Supergirl saving her. The missile throwing Supergirl back crashing onto the roof that must have caused the power outage in the building, and then Supergirl righting the chopper mid-air. It’s late into the night when the buzz of the attack abates, replaced by coverage on her brother and Luthor Corp and all the damages it already caused in Metropolis. Lena watches in dismay as the inhabitants of National City express the same concerns about her too. Lena tries to move past the judgments and criticism to focus back on the meeting with the heads of department. It doesn’t take long and Jess, who has been doing some damage control with the scientific department, technicians and construction worker while still managing the press, walks into her office and sits on her couch. They work silently, tensed, both focused on their laptop, not uttering a word. Lena sighs, and waits for the scolding she is sure she will get at any minute now.

“Gary is fine,” Eli announces as he enters her office. He flops down onto the couch next to Jess and sighs tiredly, cracking his neck and knuckles. Lena sees Jess grimace at the sound and elbow him in the side for him to stop. Eli shrugs and looks back toward her. “The hospital is keeping him another day to be sure but he is alright.”

“Good. Jess, make sure to add that risk bonus to his salary and some vacation.”

“Are we still going ahead with the renaming ceremony?” Jess grumbles with a scowl on her face. “I got an email. They are asking for what to print on the banners?”

“I can do that,” Eli interjects. “Just give me a slogan and I can do the design.”

Lena doesn’t have to think long before the slogan comes to her mind. It is fitting. In more ways than
Eli nods solemnly while Jess narrows her eyes at her. Lena sighs, resigned, meeting Jess' eyes dead on. Jess never hid her reluctance to move to National City but she followed her anyway. Lena had kept quiet. She had been too focused on the move away from Metropolis and too consumed by the confusion left by Kara’s revelation to pay any attention to it. But by the increasing hostility she can feel pouring silently out of her friend Lena knows the confrontation is about to begin.

“She told you not to come here…” Jess begins, reminding her of a night Lena would rather forget. That same night where she gained a purpose and yet, it also felt like she had lost everything.

Lena narrows her eyes and waits. An eyebrow raised in warning.

Jess shrugs off the subtle threat and thrusts her laptop to Eli who takes it, looking at them, slightly panicked. “I’m just saying that we shouldn’t ignore what the other Kara said. You are in danger here.”

“I would be in danger anywhere,” Lena scoffs, leaning back on her chair and crosses her arms over her chest. “It doesn’t matter to my brother if I’m here or Metropolis or Cancun… he would find a way…”

Jess shakes her head. “We should have stayed in Metropolis…”

“Jess…” Lena warns this time vocally. Hurt at hearing the doubt in her friend's voice and the clear disapproval on her face. They've been butting heads since they've known each other. Both too stubborn to back down. But Lena has always relied on her friend's tenacity to guide her or steer her away from a path she might regrets. She has always trusted Jess' counsel but now it feels different. Because Kara is different and Lena can't just go back to Metropolis and act like nothing happened. She can't take back the course of her life as if nothing changed when Lena feels like everything, right down to her core, has changed. She has to protect Kara like Kara protected her.

“No!” Jess exclaims, refusing to back down. “First the Venture and now this? It’s like you are tempting fate.”

“Kara saved me. Both times.”
“She might not the next time. She is not the one you knew,” Jess insists and Lena clenches her jaw, mute, because Jess is right. Jess is right and she is hammering these reminders into her heart, bruising it even further. Lena has to bite the inside of her cheek to distract herself from the pain inside her chest as Jess goes on, relentless. “She is not the one we saw in Metropolis. You should cancel the renaming ceremony. Until they find the assassin.”

“The company-”

“This isn’t about the company anymore, Lena! This is about your life!” Jess implores her, frustrated, walking toward her desk and towering over her. “And ours as well. We are stepping into something way more complicated and dangerous than just corporate deals and office gossips.”

Lena stands, fuming. “I know what I’m doing.”

“No, you don’t,” Jess jeers at her with incredulity. “None of us are. We are no vigilantes and you are putting all of us in danger!”

The tension is oppressing and Lena feels like she can't breathe, locked into a stare fight with her friend. Her nails bites harshly into the skin of her arms and Lena has to breathe. Something has to give way. “You know where the door is,” Lena breathes finally, calm and assured but heart heavy.

Jess clenches her jaw and huffs, walking out of the office.

“Jess!” Eli exclaims and runs after her.

Lena falls back on her chair, elbows on her desk and head in her hands. She pushes her palms into her eyes and refrain herself from letting out a scream of frustration. Jess is right about everything. Lena doesn’t know what she is doing. She is improvising as she goes. Kara prophesied a war she is trying to prevent with no other information but a name: Cadmus and the order to destroy Isotope 454. Wayne told her the war was already underway. Hidden but already simmering and Lena doesn’t know if destroying Isotope 454 will be enough to put a stop to it. This war feels bigger and far more complex than what Kara made it out to be. There are so many ways to start a war, and Lena fears that Isotope 454 is only one of them. Lena doesn't know what to do but how can anyone know how to proceed armed only with the knowledge of a future that hasn’t happened yet and hopefully won’t. A future being changed already just by being aware of one of its possibilities and by her simply being alive this time around. How can she save Kara from the fear that had shinned in her tears when she doesn’t know what will trigger it or if it will ever be triggered this time around? To be honest, Lena isn’t sure that her being alive will really be enough to change everything…”
Eli comes back and smiles sadly. “She just- She just needs some time to calm down…”

“This is your out too,” Lena replies instead, voice hard, unable to meet his eyes. “If you want it. I will always help you with whatever you need. You could study computer engineering anywhere you want…” she suggests gently. She should have given him the choice to stay in Metropolis before he even step into the plane for National City with her. He shouldn't be here, putting his life in danger for her when his mother asked her to take care of him... “It’s okay if you’d rather- That’s what your mother would have wanted-”

“I’m not leaving,” Eli objects. “There’s nothing college could teach me better than you already did.”

“Eli…?” Lena protests, raising her head to look at him.

He smiles and shakes his head. “Remember when we were playing hide and seek and I kept crying because I couldn’t find you?” Lena nods, not knowing where he is going with this. “I’ve never had to look for you for long because you always came back. So I’m not going to leave you now.”

“It’s going to be dangerous…” Lena tries again.

He shrugs. “Isn’t it always?”

Lena chuckles.

“Jess won’t leave either,” he adds. “She is just… worried.”

“I know,” she whispers. They were both stubborn and hot-headed at times but Jess would never let her down. She just needed time to process. Used to a life where she had no one to worry about but herself. “Should I send her flowers to decorate her new office?”

Eli scoffs. “Alcohol would be more like it!”

“Yeah, alcohol would be great,” Jess says from the door, apologetically.
Lena smiles and motions her friend to come in. Glad she got to live in a boat for four months. Jess taught her that there was nowhere to hide out of an argument when living in such proximity. The only way for it to disappear was to deal with it. Something Lena was still learning to do…

“I just…” her friend says taking a seat on the couch. “She came back in time so that you could live. I don’t understand why you are throwing yourself in the face of danger so willingly when we just learned that you were- that you were meant to die.”

“I won’t live in fear.”

“It’s not unreasonable to take a step back after everything you’ve been through. Lex’s trial, taking back the company… No one is asking you to save the world and… knowing how your future could have gone, shouldn’t you take the chance to live your life? Honor her sacrifice?”

Lena slams her fist on the desk. “Don’t you think I don’t know it?” Eli startles and Lena closes her eyes, willing herself to calm down. She apologizes wordlessly to him and stands up to face the window, lost and unable to meet their eyes. “I spent a week with her, more or less. I saw her and I pushed her away thinking I was going crazy. I’m aware of the chance she gave me…”

“Lena…” Jess apologizes.

Lena sees their reflections approach her from behind, and crosses her arms over her chest, no longer in anger but in the futile hope to protect herself from the pain. “She is so strong, so resilient and noble. She used to tell me not to be afraid,” Lena confesses with a smile because no matter how many times Kara would repeat it to her; Lena couldn't stop being afraid. Afraid of her own mind as she thought a ghost was haunting her. Afraid of the comfort Kara gave her so willingly. Afraid of falling for her even though the fall was already well underway. Afraid of losing her when she thought she could... maybe... National City blurs before her eyes. “When I was with my brother, with the reporters… She was always with me. It was annoying and confusing at first but then… it gave me comfort. It felt like I wasn’t alone anymore.”

“You are not alone. We’re not leaving,” Jess asserts and then sighs. “I just want to understand. She only told us to destroy Isotope 454. We already stopped the production… If everything goes according to plan, it will be destroyed in two months. Why can’t we stop at that?”

“She was scared,” Lena answers. She feels the weight of Jess’ stares on the back of her neck, waiting for her to elaborate but to her, this answer means everything. This answer is worth the danger that
comes with trying to put an end to a war before it even has the chance of beginning. Lena sighs and presses her forehead against the cool glass. “Kara was scared when she was fading away. She was scared that everything she did wouldn’t be enough to prevent what would happen…” Lena rubs at her eyes and faces them, pleading Jess to understand. “She gave me a second chance and I’m not going to waste it on a quiet life, especially if I have the slight advantage in preventing a war! Wayne was clear about it. It’s already happening and they are all going blind in this. We aren’t! Less than they are,” Lena amends. “And while Kara somehow thought saving me would save the future… I can’t put all of my trust in the fact that me being alive will be enough to change everything. We are changing the future as we speak and I won’t let what happened happen again. She believes in me,” Lena ends, breathing heavily.

“I don’t like it but okay,” Jess nods with understanding. “I’m sorry. I didn’t know. You love her…”

“I don’t,” Lena lies automatically, wondering if she was that transparent. Hoping that Kara, this Kara wouldn’t see it.

Eli scoffs. “Sure, Boss.”

They laugh and the tension slips away from the room. Eli scoops them all in a group hug and Lena rolls her eyes, indulging him while Jess groans but squeezes her as hard as Eli does.

“Thank you,” Lena nods into her shoulder gratefully. “What of Detective Sawyer?” Lena asks Jess, her mind back on track as Eli lets them go.

“She should be in National City tomorrow morning. We got her an apartment ready… She still has a few things to do paper wise but everything should be good for her to be on active duty soon.”

“So, are we still on for the renaming ceremony?” Eli asks, taking back Jess laptop, ready to work on the banners’ design.

She looks at Jess who sighs and nods. Lena smiles. “We are. It will be perfect for a trap.”

“That’s reckless!”

“I think that’s pretty badass!” Eli laughs.
Jess huffs. “You better have a plan,” she says turning back to her.

"Of course," Lena nods and eagerly shows them the prototype of a drone she has been working on. “Let’s draw this assassin out and see what he has planned for me.”

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On the day of the renaming ceremony, they had agreed to only keep a few people in the building and only the minimum of security personnel necessary. They couldn’t take the risk of what happened yesterday from happening again and having all of her employees suffer from a heart attack if the building was to be attacked again. This assassin for hire didn’t really care for collateral damage and Lena hopes the renaming ceremony will bring them out in the open where she knows police officers and her protective details will be patrolling the Plaza.

As for the trap, she got her inspiration by the assassin themselves. Jess is monitoring the Plaza by video surveillance, ready to pilot a drone of Lena’s device as small as a wasp but powerful enough to discharge enough electricity to incapacitate someone. She hasn’t slept much, busy tweaking the little devil and while it is not unusual for her, stress about an incoming attack does shake her a bit even if Eli and her protective details are already in the Plaza, waiting for her in civilian clothes; ready to intervene at any moments.

Lena steps out of the elevator and is pleasantly surprised by the person waiting for her in the lobby, standing up as soon as she sees her.

“Ms. Danvers…”

“Hi! I… um…”

Lena smiles and wonders if Supergirl is here to protect her. The thought warms her heart and Lena tries hard not to look at the woman fondly by opening the door of the building for her. “What brings you here?”

Kara pushes her glasses back up her nose and walks alongside her toward the Plaza. “I heard of what happened yesterday...”
Lena nods. “I think everyone did. It was all over the news.”

“Are you okay?” Kara asks with a frown on her face, observing her quietly with her hands in her coat’s pockets. A movement Lena would have perceived as nonchalant if it weren’t for the fact Lena knows it is Supergirl walking next to her. It is an odd mixed Kara forces upon herself. Something like awkwardness blending so seamlessly with hyper awareness. An unassuming and nonthreatening air reinforced by glasses and clumsiness when Lena can guess the tension in Kara’s shoulders just in the way she holds herself or the thrumming energy that surely courses through her veins in every measured steps that she makes. Lena would have been fooled if she hadn’t known Kara before; if she hadn’t known the person underneath all the layers of deception Kara Zor-El puts on herself.

“Are you asking as a reporter Ms. Danvers?” Lena teases.


While it is true that Kara can be a master at deception, they are some things that betray her if one looks closely. And maybe that was the secret on which Kara’s secret identity strives on. Because if one stops at the superficial comparison or at the things showed so blatantly on the surface… Who would think that the bubbly, stammering, clumsy woman could also be the confident, courageous hero depicted everywhere on TV? Who would think that a woman as normal as Kara Danvers could do something as extraordinary as save a plane from crashing? But looking at the Kara Danvers that Kara Zor-El hides behind; Lena can’t help but see the same concern shining in her eyes, this deep desire to protect motivating her actions even for someone she just met.

“I’m alright. Thank you for asking,” she refrains herself from squeezing her arm in thanks. Something she never really did before until Kara’s future-self broke her into it with impromptu hugs and innocent but constant physical contacts. Kara blushes again and Lena wonders what is she doing to warrant such a reaction from the superhero? But whatever it is, she finds the reaction to be utterly endearing. They arrive at the Plaza and Lena stops for a moment, taking the scene in, spotting Eli immediately.

Kara looks at her, kind of apologetic. “There are not a lot of people.”

Lena shrugs, walking determinedly forward. “My brother is serving thirty-two consecutive life sentences. I guess I shouldn’t be surprised there isn’t a bigger turnout.”

“You’re taking an awful risk going ahead with the renaming ceremony with your life in danger,”
Kara says warningly, serious and disapproving, using her Supergirl’s voice without even knowing it.

“I won’t have a life if I can’t make this company into something positive,” Lena tells her, remembering Kara’s terrified eyes as she vanished from her arms. This was her second chance. She was Kara’s last chance to make it right. “All it will be remembered is Lex’s madness.”

Lena leaves Kara behind and steps on the podium.

“Everything is ready, Lena.” Jess tells into her comms.

Lena takes a deep breath and scans the crowd. Eli nods at her. “I want to thank you all for coming. My brother hurt a lot of good, innocent people. My family owes a debt not just to Metropolis but to everyone,” she says distinctively as people passes by without really paying attention and while Lena knows this is just a front to stop the assassin sent by her brother, she doesn’t let their indifference deter her. “I intend to pay that by renaming my company L-Corp, we will usher in a new age of cooperation and community. Together, we will chart a brighter-”

Static crackles violently in her ear.

“-future.” Lena finishes confused before she spots Eli running toward her. Explosions ring out from behind her and Lena watches people fall onto the ground, screaming, running.

“Lena! Run!” Eli screams.

Lena runs as the explosion reaches the stage. There’s smoke everywhere and people running around. Lena scans the crowd. “Eli? Eli!” He doesn’t respond and someone bumps violently into her, her earpiece falls to the ground. “Fuck,” she whispers, running up the steps where she last saw Eli. An officer comes toward her and Lena breathes in relief. “Officer, thank god!”

He pulls out a gun on her and Lena freezes. As he is about to shoot a woman grabs his arm and deviates the shot.

“Lena!” Eli grabs her and puts his arm around her protectively. He takes her away from the fight and leads her toward her protection details. “There was an explosion in the building!”
“Is Jess okay?”

“We don’t know. We lost communications. We have to go!”

“No, wait!” Lena replies distracted, looking back at where the woman stopped the man her brother sent to kill her. “Give me your gun.”

“What?”

“Give me your gun, Eli!”

Eli gives it to her and Lena runs back to where she last saw them. The assassin has the woman in a choke hold and Lena hears him threatens Kara. He is about to shoot at her. Lena doesn’t hesitate and fires. Her arms shake slightly from the recoil but Lena is more preoccupied by the look Kara is giving her. She looks stunned. As if she was seeing her for the first time. Her protective detail is quick to surround her and Eli takes his gun back, leading her away.

“You shot him!” He whispers frantically as they rush back to the car waiting for them.

“He tried to shoot me first.” Lena defends herself. She takes a sit at the back and Eli takes a seat next to her. He knocks on the divider and the chauffeur starts the engine and drives around the city aimlessly till they give him the signal to go back to L-Corp. Lena inhales through her nose as adrenaline still courses through her veins. “How is the building? Were there anyone injured?”

“Too early to know but Supergirl and Superman fixed it. It’s not leaning too much to the side anymore,” Eli breathes, slumping in his seat, swiping at the sweat off his brow. “Damn, we didn’t plan that…”

Lena nods, taking a breath herself in order to calm the rapid beating of her heart. “Clearly, our future plans will need a little more planning next time.”

Eli laughs. “Yeah… Jess is going to kill us, though.”

“Tell me about it,” Lena sighs and pushes on the comms to speak to the driver. “You can drive back
“Yes, Ms. Luthor.”

“Yes, Ms. Luthor.”

“Are you sure?” Eli asks her.

Lena watches out of the window and shrugs. “Might as well do it now.”

The driver parks the car and there is a swarm of reporter jumping at her. The sound of their shouts mixed with the numerous clicking of their camera is deafening and Eli is quick to push a way through for them and get into L-Corp's lobby. Jess is waiting for them, white dust on her impeccable clothes.

“Are you okay?” They ask her quickly as technicians and a crew of engineers and construction workers run toward the damages.

“They took out the southwest retaining column. It was the only weakness in the building’s foundation.” Jess tells them, waving their concern away and leads them to said column, tilting her head slightly at Supergirl’s work.

“The perfect shot… Just like for the Death Star…” Lena chuckles softly. She tilts her head too, admiring Kara’s work.

“Do we leave it like that?” Jess asks with a frown. “It is a bit crude…”

Lena shrugs, examining the molten metal preventing her building from falling. “It holds… Let’s reinforce everything around. We can’t move them anyway, unless we want everything to fall down once again.”

“The chief engineer and the foreman is waiting in the conference room for a briefing. We will need to make repairs on the exterior. I got reports of several cracks running all over the building…”

Lena nods. “Have an overnight crew on this. I want the building to be operational for tomorrow morning,” Lena pauses as a thought comes through her mind. ”And let’s add a balcony to my office...
while we’re at it.”

They both raise an eyebrow at her.

She shrugs, blushing slightly. “Just in case…”

“Of course, Ms. Luthor.” Jess teases her.

They make their way back toward the lobby as the crew begins securing the foundation and head back toward the conference room.

“Shouldn’t we tell her?” Eli asks.

Lena shakes her head. She had thought long and hard about this and she has come to the conclusion that it was better to keep that between them. “No one expects us to save the world it will give us an advantage and working in the shadows will allow us more freedom…”

“You will have to tell her eventually. She looks like the type to snoop around,” Jess points out.

Lena frowns, reluctant. “We are not there yet.”

Jess’ phone suddenly rings, signaling an email. “We might be there sooner than you think,” Jess shows her the email she just received. “Clark Kent and Kara Danvers want a meeting with you tomorrow morning.”

Lena sighs, stepping into the conference room, faking a smile.

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Indeed, first thing in the morning, Clark Kent and Kara Danvers are showed in her office, a copy of the Daily Planet with them. Lena reads the article, quite pleased with the turnout.
“Thank you, Mr. Kent. This is exactly the kind of press my company needs after yesterday's attack,” she crosses her arms over her chest, intently focused on Superman, trying hard not to stray away too long to the kind, blue eyes standing next to him when she knows she has troubles distinguishing her ghost from this Kara. “And thank you for including that part about me shooting the guy. That'll teach Lex to mess with me,” Lena smirks, failing quite miserably as Kara smiles at her. “He'll be the laughingstock of Cell Block X.”

“Well, that's not exactly why I wrote it. I wrote it because it's the truth. I was wrong about you, Ms. Luthor. I'm sorry.”

“Well, if I can make a believer out of Clark Kent, there's hope yet.” Lena smiles, suddenly understanding what she can do and the full extent of the change she can initiate. She focuses back onto Kara, sharp and insistent. “What about you, Ms. Danvers? I didn't see your name on the byline.”

“Oh... Well, like I said, I'm not a reporter.”

“You could have fooled me,” she tells her, hinting at something her ghost told her before she disappeared. Hopefully pushing Kara toward being something more than just what the world wanted her to be. “I hope this isn't the last time we talk.”

“I hope not either,” Kara replies with a smile and Lena wonders if she succeeded.

Kara leaves her office and Lena wonders if this could be Kara’s second chance too.

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“So what do we do now?” Eli asks, laid out on her couch, throwing a rubber ball in the air, repeatedly.

“What we do best. Research.” Jess replies from her seat next to her on her desk.

“I'm hungry!” Eli whines.
Lena frowns. “We just ate twenty minutes ago…”

“I know but-”

“If I find out you are playing me Luthor,” Detective Sawyer suddenly threatens her, barging into her office in the middle of the night, stopping just before her desk. Eli promptly gets back on his feet and points a gun at her while Jess interposes herself between her and the angry Detective. “I swear there will be no where for you to hide…”

Lena can only admire a woman who dares to make a threat so directly to her while being outnumbered. “You sure took your time to come here.”

“I’m not your lackey,” she snarls, narrowing her eyes at Jess and Eli.

“I hope your apartment is to your liking,” Lena says calmly, nodding at Eli to put his gun down. She sits back on her chair, observing the woman warily and sighs, wondering if the woman will ever let go of the grudge she has against her because of her brother. “It won’t come to that. I assure you.”

Detective Sawyer smiles menacingly. “Let’s hope not. For your sake…”

Lena raises an eyebrow at the menace before her TV flickers on its own, putting an end to the confrontation.

*People of National City. The Earth has been stolen from us. And the enemy has come in the guise of heroes. They say they come in peace, to protect us from ourselves. But how long will it be before these gods decide to rule instead of serve? We are the antidote to their poison. We are the scientists who will show them what humans are capable of. Those who have sided with the invaders will not be spared. You cannot stop us. We are everywhere. We are Cadmus.*

Silence falls upon the room as they all stare at the screen.

“What the hell is this?” Detective Sawyer breathes.

“War,” Lena announces, resigned. “I hope you are ready Detective.”
WAR IS COMING! ;) Thank you for reading. Take care!
Hi! I'm so sorry for the wait. I needed to catch up on things in real life and couldn't devote time to writing. Thank you for the kudos, comments and general words of encouragements they help a lot in keeping me motivated and always make me smile. So thank you!

**WARNING: SEXUAL CONTENTS WITH DUBIOUS CONSENT!**

I hope you will like the chapter. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

The war begins quietly.

If she didn’t know any better, Lena would think that there isn’t one in the first place because nothing changes, really. She still gets calls from her shareholders, VPs, investors and business partners at all hours. She still has to attend meetings that sometimes run for the whole day and more. Jess is still making sure that she eats; pushing a plate on her desk every few hours in that quiet way of hers, and Eli is still hanging around working more on the new L-Corp’s network system than being her bodyguard, cooped up in her private Lab.

All in all, the beginning of the end isn’t as explosive as they depicted it in movies or as life-altering as she expected. It is more pernicious and crueler than that. It is quiet like the sudden muggy heat of a summer night, sticking to her skin, frizzling the little hairs at the back of her neck, breathing in the sweltering atmosphere, laying in wait… in wait of the storm and its violent thunders splitting the sky. It comes slowly. It permeates the air and Lena feels it scorching her skin, like an itch, wanting to act but not knowing what do to.

It feels inevitable, and Lena watches powerless as Cadmus’ broadcast, now more virulent and relevant since the announcement of the President’s Alien Amnesty Act, is played over and over again on National City TV News, being decorticated and analyzed with different experts and activists from various disciplines like science, politics, religions and so on, questioning the need for the Superheroes emerging from all over the country. Heroes who sometimes cause more damages in their attempt to save the world. Heroes who live in secrecy among ordinary people. Heroes who could turn their back on humanity. Footage of Supergirl ravaging National City appear on the screen as one of the experts states his case, using Supergirl as an example, to demonstrate his views, his clear distrust of all Super who believes themselves to be Gods… He is quickly shut down by another.
expert who takes Supergirl defense… and the debates goes on, heated and nervous, useless and already a sign of defeat.

Doubt is spreading.

Dread fills her as account of several attacks, inconspicuous, and yet telling are reported and have been for a few days. Earlier, all programs had been interrupted with the flashing news of the attack at the tarmac. Images of Supergirl saving the President’s life had been played over and over again and National City is now waiting with baited breath for the President’s next move, debating if she will still go through her Alien Amnesty Act as the attack definitely seemed coming from an alien…

Lena can’t forget the look in Kara’s eyes as she presented her the alien detection device yesterday morning. The device was nothing more but a fancy thermograph sensor working on the assumption that alien’s body temperature was different than humans. She would be lying if she said that watching Kara squirm, trying desperately to keep her secret intact didn’t make her smile but the sudden wariness, the worry and the doubt that shone in her eyes as she explained to her the purpose of the prototype, truly made her hesitate, wondering if Kara would be able to see past it, past the mask she had to wear, past the persona she had to adopt in order to protect the world they knew. Kara had been scared at the idea of putting her thumb on the device, reluctant and Lena had watched the relief overtaking her features when it lighted green. She had masked her pain behind a smile, big and confident, as Kara had looked back at her with steel in her eyes, distrust and anger before she quickly said her goodbyes and left her office. She knows the article the newly appointed reporter would do on her won’t be a good one. She would surely be burned down at the stake and Lena, with a heavy heart, counts on Kara’s passion, bravery and righteousness to stop the war. Even if she has to be the bad guy in Kara’s eyes…

There’s a war coming and you don’t even know it, her brother had said, laughing at her, handcuffed at the other end of the table in a maximum security prison, sure of his victory.

Lena inhales and feels the tremor shake her bones as it stretches the fiber of her lungs. Tears gather at the corner of her eyes as she watches tiredly other reports of incident unfold before her eyes, act of vandalism, protests against alien… Incidents happening randomly all over the country. It doesn’t feel like much now. It is disjointed and inconsistent with no apparent thread, naively depicted as the bit of unrest that always comes with change. But Lena knows. She knows it is more than what journalists are saying it is… She knows what is coming but with no certitudes on how to stop it.

It feels like a curse. To know how everything ends… trying desperately to prevent it, and yet to see the events leading to it unfolds before her eyes, powerless.

I believe in you.
She closes her eyes as she feels the imprint of her ghost’s hand on her shoulder, strong and supportive, cold and so very real. She breathes slowly, holding on to this feeling, holding on to her Kara… wishing she was there with her.

“You should stop watching that,” Eli suddenly says from the door, startling her. Lena exhales abruptly as the hand on her shoulder fades away… He comes in quietly, closing the door of her office behind him to take the remote from her hand and switches the TV off, looking at her worriedly. “I still think we should tell her.”

“We can’t,” Lena sighs tiredly as he frowns at her. She rubs at her eyes, suddenly exhausted. “She is not ready. We might do more damages than good and you know what Jess thinks of this…” She holds out her hand to have the remote back and raises an eyebrow at him as he shakes his head and crosses his arms over his chest, the remote out of her reach.

“Jess doesn’t trust anyone right now but it doesn’t mean she is right,” he reminds her quietly. “She doesn’t trust Jackson the mailman, he is so scared of her that he called me to get your mail from their office yesterday. She frowns every time she sees Elise, the sweet lady in accounting who always brings cupcakes for the whole floor on Friday and she even has suspicions about Alana the new assistant. Jess has her working non-stop ever since she got in,” he finishes with a slight pout.

Lena smile smugly. “Are you crushing on the assistant, Eli?”

“What? No! No!” he protests vehemently with a blush. “I’m not- We just talked and-”

Lena raises an eyebrow at him, stopping his rambling.

He clears his throat, sheepish and embarrassed. “Just don’t tell Jess. Please?”

Lena laughs as he scratches the back of his neck, avoiding her eyes. “I won’t,” she reassures him. “But I’ll be worse than Jess until she has my approval…”

“What approval? I’m not going to date her! We just talked-”

“Of course…” she interrupts him and then winks, smiling playfully.
Eli blushes harder. “Can we just stop talking about this?”

“I’ll help you pick the flowers…” Lena suggests, containing her laugh as he groans and rolls his eyes. She catches the remote tossed at her and laughs harder.

“How did it go, anyway?” he asks, changing the subject and sits on one of the chairs opposite her. “With Kara and the alien detection device? Does she know? Does she suspect anything?”

Lena shakes her head. She pushes the device that had been on her desk ever since Kara left, untouched, toward him. “I don’t think so. She definitely did something to it but I don’t think she guessed the true purpose of this.”

He examines the device thoughtfully, opening it and poking at the electrical system. “Amazing!” he gushes, “she grilled the red’s response electrical pathway without burning everything or making it explodes. It’s a work of art. It's so precise… It looks like the device only has a little malfunction…” Lena sighs as he puts the device back together and looks back at her, with a slight frown. “It makes us look like the bad guys.”

“We are,” she reminds him quietly.

“I don’t like being the bad guy. I mean, we are trying to save the world. Shouldn’t that make us heroes?”

Lena shrugs. “That’s what Lex thought he was too. He thought he was saving humanity by fighting against Superman and in the end; the only thing he accomplished was destroying half of Metropolis and hurting the people he swore he was defending.”

“But you are purposely setting us up to be the bad guy…”

“People already have an opinion of me because of my family. If I can use that bad reputation to further change their mind on the alien’s right then I will do it.”

“Even if she might hate you?”
“We all have our roles to play,” Lena whispers. “The company will take a hit but only to bounce back in the end. With Kara now a reporter, she will write a scathing article about me and this device. It will, hopefully, influence people toward the alien cause and we will have no choice but to back down on the production. I will make a statement and it will be a victory for the pro-aliens. The world will see that L-Corp, the most notorious alien hater company can change its way… So really, it’s a win-win.”

“It will also weaken your position as a CEO…” Jess chimes in from the door with a frown on her face. She closes the door behind her and Lena eyes the magazine her friend holds in her hand but makes no move to give it to her. “You’ve tried so hard to establish and secure your position as a new leader and you are ready to weaken it by staging this elaborate scam and let Ms. Danvers have a victory…”

Lena raises an eyebrow as Jess crosses her arms over her chest, the magazine still hostage in her grip like Eli did a few minutes ago with the remote. Lena sighs, feeling the beginning of a headache pulse behind her eyes. She hates when they gang up on her. They were both defending different positions but it didn’t stop them from attacking hers constantly. Eli clears his throat, suddenly uncomfortable as Lena rounds her desk and lean against it, fixing them with a glare of her own.

“My position as CEO will mean nothing if this war isn’t contained and ends like the future Kara warned us about. We can’t let other people know without causing panic or have them turn against us. My position is fragile enough to have them send me in jail if they have so much as a hint of proof against me. We can’t really do anything on the field to prevent it either. It would be too obvious. We don’t know who works for Cadmus, the government can’t be trusted and my only source of reliable information come from a vigilante in Gotham City,” Lena says in a breath reminding them how dire the situation really is. How alone they truly are in this. “Cadmus is waging an ideological war and is using the media to get their message across. We have to do the same. Kara Danvers is our platform and she will influence people’s opinion like Supergirl had saved National City countless of times.”

“I still think we should just tell her…” Eli grumbles from his seat.

Lena sighs, rubbing at the bridge of her nose. He never hid his admiration for Kara ever since she told them about her coming from the future to save her from the Venture. He’s been her fiercest supporter while Jess has been more wary about the situation. Lena was swaying between Eli’s naive optimism and Jess’ cynical realism, and while experience made her wary, Lena longs for the trust of a woman who looks at her with no recollection in her eyes. Jess finally hands her the magazine, always keeping her on her toes, always making sure that her decisions had been thought through. Lena reaches for it with trembling fingers. She prepares herself for the worst: harsh words, the judgments, the condemnation… wishing she could be a hero instead, wishing to be the one to save the day. But she isn’t. And the only thing she can do is try to make sure that the real heroes get to have the ending they worked so hard for…
She opens the magazine straight to the article dedicated to her, ignoring Eli’s eager face and Jess’ narrowed eyes as they read from behind her shoulders, and let Kara’s words slowly echo into her mind, the dread she had felt ever since the woman left her office abates slowly the more she reads. She has never been fond of surprises, but Kara has been the best one yet. She has been surprising Lena since day one, breaking through every expectations and barriers she’s ever had. Her article is nuanced. It’s less virulent than what she thought it would be while still clearly presenting both opinions and the implications of this device and its possible consequences on their society. It wasn’t the descent in flames she was expecting and her heart breathes easier, a weight disappearing from her shoulders.

“Told you,” Eli whispers on her right, “she’s got our back…”

“It doesn’t mean she would believe us about everything else…” Jess points out from her left, surely glaring at Eli from behind her back.

She lets them, too stunned by the words before her. “She's full of surprises…” Lena agrees quietly and then chuckles, relieved, looking at Jess. “Contact her. I want to see her as soon as possible.”

Jess nods reluctantly, caution shining in her eyes, Lena raises an eyebrow at her silence and her friend sighs, looking back at her phone. “Veronica Sinclair sent another invite this morning. She really wants to see you…”

“I don’t have time for that,” Lena dismisses quickly, “has Detective Sawyer checked in yet?” Lena asks instead, flipping through the magazine distractedly for anything Kara Danvers related.

“No. But I don’t know if it’s because she is too stubborn or because she is still mad at you…”

Lena huffs, getting a bit impatient with the Detective’s attitude. While she does understand Maggie Sawyer’s view of her brother and the prejudice he caused her, Lena can’t help but feel resentment at the clear distrust in the woman’s eyes, still judging her solely for something her family had done. “What of the information Wayne sent us?”

Eli sighs, falling back onto his seat heavily. “I hacked into the NCPD. They don’t have a clue about any alien fight club. Nothing turned up or they just aren’t investigating into it.”

“Text her again,” Lena orders with a displeased frown as Jess nods quickly, the detective’s
prejudices against her were slowing her down and Lena hopes the detective’s opinion will turn around soon, otherwise Lena will have no choice but to get rid of her. “Tell her it’s urgent.”

“I wonder how some people might consider this as entertainment…” Jess muses, typing on her phone.

“You’d be surprised…” Lena sighs, remembering fuzzy nights in a different city, with different worries, made braver and insolent with youth and the feeling of having the world between her hand. She remembers sneaking out of school, encouraged by a young Veronica Sinclair, hiding behind walls to light a cigarette. She remembers their pseudo rivalry in everything school related, this hatred people projected on the both of them because of it. She remembers quiet nights where they would suddenly both find themselves alone at school for Christmas, entertaining themselves with scientific experimentation or UFC battles on TV, sharing chocolates and muting their pain and loneliness with smuggled alcohol, shouting at the TV. “Wait, maybe call back Sinclair.”

“Do you think she might know something about it?”

“Just a hunch,” Lena muses, wondering what the woman was up to since the last time she saw her. “Arrange a meeting. Take the device back to the Lab, Eli. I need to make a phone call.”

“Sure thing, Boss.”

They both leave the office and Lena finds herself alone once again. She sighs, taking her seat back behind her desk and stares at the ceiling silently, head thrown back, watching the different lights in her office cut up her ceiling in bright circles. She leafs through the magazine again, reading Kara’s article, mouthing the words, tracing them with her fingers, holding on to them tightly before they too fade away...

She dials his number without a second thought, playing with the necklace falling down her stomach, rubbing the chain in between her fingers. It’s been more than a week and everything that happened so far had made her brain work overtime, incapable of finding an outlet in which to pour all of her feelings into. Jess and Eli are incredible. Her friends were always looking out for her, always making sure that she was alright, but no one can shed light on the maze that is her mind like he can. No one can interpret her silences like he does. And Lena waits for him to pick up, smiling slightly as he does with an exhale of breath, a smile of his own. Lena listens to his breathing, his slight hums as he wait for her to be ready to take the plunge, for her to lower her barriers and let out all the emotions, no matter how painful they were, come back to the surface.

“Hi,” she whispers quietly, like a confession, a relief.
“Lena,” he replies with a smile in his voice. “I was waiting for your call.”

“I… A lot of things happened…”

“I know. I saw the news,” he offers quietly, a hint of worry in his voice that Lena holds onto.

“I- I feel…” Lena tries, clearing her throat a few times, tears welling up in her eyes without her consent. She takes a deep breath and pushes her seat away from her desk, walking toward the window to look at the City. The view blurs slightly as she watches with envy the windows below her light up one by one. “I feel lost.” He hums, pushing her silently to continue, to elaborate. She puts her hand on the window, feeling the cool glass under her hand and tells him everything that had happened so far. “I don’t know if what I’m doing is enough. I don’t know if I can save her. She’s different. She’s more guarded, distrusting,” Lena voices the disappointment she didn’t let herself feel, her forehead hitting the window softly. She felt it in Kara’s handshake, warm and loose, so unlike the way her ghost had clutch on to her for the short time they had spent together. Cold skin but tight grip, hard even. As if Kara never wanted to let go. As if Lena was the only thing that tethered her to this world. As if she was the only thing that made sense to her. Lena doesn’t know what it means that this Kara, warm grip but loose is not holding on to her as tight anymore. Not like her Kara did. “Jess doesn’t like her very much. She thinks I will get hurt.”

“Are you surprised?” Luke replies, chuckling softly. “She is not the one you knew.”

“I know! I know… I just-”, she stops, not knowing how to express this longing she feels, this hope and the pain at seeing Kara and knowing that the woman in front of her isn’t the one she had clutched into her arms.

“Second chances are here to make sure we don’t repeat the mistakes of the past. You can still save her,” he tells her softly, assuaging her fears.

“You told me to come here and-,” she mumbles, watching the buildings light up more and more as the afternoon ends and darkness falls over National City.

“I told you to do whatever you liked,” he corrects her. “You decided to go to National City.”

“That wasn’t a mistake,” Lena whispers harshly, trying to persuade herself.
He chuckles at her vehemence. “No, I didn’t say it was,” he pauses and Lena hates that few seconds of silence because she knows that he will tell her something she wasn’t ready to hear, “but you putting on the expectations of the Kara you knew on her might be…”

Lena slams her eyes shut, hitting her head on the window. “I’m not- that’s not what I’m doing…”

“Pushing her to be a reporter?”

“I only hinted at it,” she retorts defensively. “She made the decision herself.”

“Because the other Kara told you she had wanted to be a reporter. Second chances are here to make you create new memories. Not relive the old ones.”

Lena frowns, frustration crinkling her eyes. “But it’s her, right? Essentially they are the same person. Why can’t I influence the future the way she would have liked it?”

“Because that’s not your decision to make,” he reminds her, always so calm and level-headed despite all the wild things she told him over the years. She pictures him behind his desk, with the new light she bought for his desk to replace the one she broke and maybe a glass of scotch now that office hours officially ended. “It’s hers. Without her knowing all the facts how can she make the best decision for herself?”

Lena huffs, not believing he was siding with Eli, after all. “So what should I do then? Should I tell her everything? You know that it’s not possible. She is a wild card. I cannot predict how this news will affect her.”

“And you might never found out if you don’t give her the chance.”

“Tell me,” Lena orders, waiting for him to tell her the truth she refuses to see.

“It’s not a matter of her being able to handle the truth or not,” he says, “I believe you are the one who is not ready to tell her… and face all of the things your relationship with the other Kara implied.”
Lena clenches her jaw, her fist bumping against the glass in frustration.

“I understand her being unpredictable might cause some concern for your plans but you will have to tell her eventually, she is intrinsically a part of it, you can’t go on much longer without it affecting your plans one day,” he continues as Lena nods, seeing the truth in it but not willing to act on it. Not yet. “We can’t live in fear nor can we live in our lies either. Both have a way to torment us when we least expect it.”

“What do I do, then?” Lena croaks.

“Be you and let her be her. Be honest, one step a time and let things pan out. That’s the surprise.”

“You know how I feel about surprises.”

“I know but didn’t you say she was the best one yet?”

Lena chuckles and feels lighter for the first time since she came to National City. Her phone beeps into her ear and Lena checks the new message, her eyes widen at what Eli wrote. “I have to go,” she says into the phone, breathless, eyeing her office. “Kara has decided to pay me a visit.”


“I know, right? Thank you, Doctor.”

“Just call me Luke,” he tells her and Lena smiles. “I’ll be waiting for your call.”

“Thank you,” Lena repeats again, hanging up shortly after. Panic fills her at Kara’s sudden visit. She knew the reporter was due to come in sometime after her article but Lena feels out of depth every time something unexpected happens. She grabs the magazine and quickly sits on her couch, leafing through the magazine waiting for Kara to be let in.

“Hi, I'm sorry to drop in unannounced,” Kara says from the door as Celia, her assistant for the day opens the door for the reporter and closes them behind her, “I just got the message you wanted to see me.” Kara halts before the plumerias she put on her coffee table. “Those flowers are beautiful.”
“They’re called plumerias,” Lena provides, smiling slightly, remembering another Kara who played with the petals of said flowers in the kitchen of Lex’s penthouse in Metropolis as she waited for Lena to finish her breakfast in silence, awkward and tense after Lena had snapped at her. “They’re pretty rare.” And Lena understands Luke’s warning about putting expectations of the other Kara on this Kara, the real one.

“They remind me of my mother,” Kara continues with a small smile.

“Was your mother a writer, too?” Lena asks, starved for any details this Kara will offer her.

“No, she was, um, I guess, sort of a lawyer.”

“Well, you’ve have a natural gift with words. Your article is amazing,” Lena begins, putting the article back onto the coffee table, watching a smile and a slight blush overtake Kara’s feature at the compliment. “Yeah, I knew you’d make a great reporter, but after I heard your bleeding heart, pro-alien views, I was afraid you’d do a hatchet job on me.”

“Oh, I tried,” Kara claims, sitting on the couch next to her, not meeting her eyes. “I tried. I wrote a scathing article about your device,” she finally admits with a smile, looking at her, hesitant and yet seeming confident…

“And?” Lena asks, curious as to why Kara changed her mind.

“And... My boss tossed it. He made me re-do it.”

“Well, that explains it,” she replies, smiling, slightly disappointed that it didn’t come from Kara. Lena fiddles with her hand incapable of keeping eye contact with the woman who isn’t the one she knew.

“The funny thing is, I’m glad he did,” Kara offers, poking at Lena’s curiosity once again. “I mean, not at first, but some things happened that made me re-think my position.”

“Do tell,” she inquires, turning fully toward the reporter who blushes and looks away and hesitates over a response before making the plunge.
“I still think Alien Amnesty is a good thing, but, there are bad aliens out there...”

Lena laughs, surprised once again at the turns of events. She had launched this masquerade of Alien Detection Device, persuaded that Kara would see the wrongness of it, and call her out on it publicly to make L-Corp change its mind. That had been the goal. She never thought she would be the one to influence Kara’s view, or make her question her belief of the world she lived in. “Well, I'm glad you can see from my point of view,” Kara smiles tight-lipped, looking away, somehow not finding the change positive. And Lena understands that finding that your world can’t be as simple as to be divided between the good and the bad can be a bit jarring at first. “You know, when I was first adopted by the Luthors, I adored Lex. When he showed his true colors, I was crushed. I tried everything to reach him, bring him back to the side of good. But it was no use. I'd lost him,” she whispers, remembering the mad light in his eyes as he taunted her at the other of the table with another Kara sitting on her lap, trying desperately to bring her back to her, catching her as she fell. “Finally, I realized that some people are just bad. And there is nothing you can do to change that. But, you can learn to protect yourself.”

“Yeah.”

Lena smiles, suddenly tired, hoping Kara will understand why she is doing this, why lying was the only way she found to protect herself from heartbreak. Why she can’t bear the thought of falling again with no guarantees that Kara will catch her this time. They stare at each other in silence, not knowing how to go forward in this newfound relationship, not yet a friendship nor is it an alliance. Something in between where Kara was still carefully learning the rules of how much she could push, and where Lena has to refrain herself from giving too much, too soon. They both startle from their thoughts by the ring of Lena’s phone, left back onto the desk. Lena quickly picks it up and presses it against her chest, looking apologetically at Kara. “I'm sorry. I have to take this.”

“Ah, yes! Of course. I'm going to…” Kara stands up quickly and points to the door. “Thank you!” She calls out with a smile before she hurries out of the door as quickly as she came in.

“But, you can learn to protect yourself.”

“Bye,” Lena whispers as the door closes behind the reporter. She finally brings the phone to her ear, scowling at the laughing person on the other end. “You are awfully hard to get a hold on to.”

“Well, that's how I do it. Was that Kara Danvers I just heard leaving your office?” Lena doesn’t answer and Detective Sawyer sighs. “So, what’s so important that you made your lackey text me 15 times in the last hour?”

“Well, that's how I do it. Was that Kara Danvers I just heard leaving your office?” Lena doesn’t answer and Detective Sawyer sighs. “So, what’s so important that you made your lackey text me 15 times in the last hour?”

“Wayne’s gave me information about an illegal alien fight club. He shut one in Gotham City a few days ago. He has suspicions that there might be one too here in National City. I have hunch on who
might be behind this but I’ll need to investigate. I need for us to regroup and discuss this through.”

She chuckles humorlessly. “Well, you certainly keep me busy I can’t complain about that. I’ll be at the President’s announcement in a few hours. I’ll try to find whatever I can about this alien fight club.”

“Thank you, Detective. And please, do not make me run after you again.”

“I can’t promise that. How the mighty have fallen…” Lena rolls her eyes picturing the Detective smiling smugly, and then frowns as the woman hangs up on her.

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Veronica Sinclair was two years older when Lena met her at boarding school. She was confident and unabashed about what she wanted; ruling over the school like it belonged to her. She had been intimidated at first by this raging storm that was Veronica Sinclair, this young girl who used her potential for destruction, exuding this aura of danger and control Lena couldn’t help but be envious of every time they would cross path. Of course the arrival of a Luthor had stirred up quite a mess in that fragile ecosystem. And Veronica Sinclair, already calling herself Roulette, did everything to bring her down. She did everything to make her feel small and little until one day, Lena understood that the destruction the girl was hell-bent on causing around her was only a distraction to hide the lonely girl that never went home for holidays. They had bonded secretly over the silence. Over the pain of loneliness and expectations. Stuck together in the eye of the storm. Not friends but occasional allies. Someone to chase away the loneliness. Veronica had asked her to meet at a bar outside of National City and Eli has been throwing glances at her every few minutes, his anxiety rubbing off on her.

“We can turn back around, Boss. I’m sure she doesn’t know anything about this alien fight club thing.”

“I beg to differ,” Lena mumbles, watching distractedly the lights passes her by.

“But… She- She hurt you.”

“Don’t worry,” Lena exhaled with a smile, meeting his eyes in the rear-view mirror. “I was naive back then. First love never last.”
Eli nods, not convinced in the slightest, and Lena huffs looking back out of the window.

They only became lovers after they had both left boarding school and had run into one another in one of those fancy parties, with high-ceilings and champagne… Lena still remembers the surprise as Veronica took her hand and led her away from the party, a bottle of champagne in her other hand, running toward the gardens, laughing under the stars. Lena remembers the taste of champagne still lingering on Veronica’s lips, the perfume in the hollow of her neck, her warm fingers dancing in the inside of her thighs as Lena was pressed back against a wall, exhaling harshly into the cold night. It had been easy back then. No questions asked. It had been easy until somehow, Lena had longed for more. For something Veronica didn’t know how to give.

“You don’t have to this Lena,” he tells her seriously, he always uses her name when he isn’t joking around, and Lena finds it comforting and sad that he feels like he has to protect her from an old lover. “I can go in and put the tracker on her and-”

“Eli,” she interrupts him with a glare. He gulps, parking the car in front of the bar, its lights illuminating his face unevenly. “I’ll be alright. See you in a few hours.” She opens the door and leaves without a second glance, a chill running up her body as she knocks on the heavy door.

A burly man checks her over before she is escorted inside. Lena recognizes Veronica’s taste everywhere from the layout of the bar, to the music playing loudly and the people frequenting the establishment. No one looks at her as she passes by them. Everyone keeps their heads down busy themselves in trying to hide their identity in someone else’s chest, the bottom of a glass or hunched over the green scent of money. She is escorted to a parlor, small and intimate, where Veronica Sinclair waits for her with appraising eyes, poised, seated at the bar while several of her bodyguards watches her warily.

This was a game, Lena reminds herself. Veronica Sinclair was a game she knew how to win… every single time.

“Well, if this isn’t Lena Luthor. At last,” the woman says with a feral grin, raising her glass to her, drinking in the sight of her in a forest green dress, one that Lena knew would make Veronica lingers on her chest.

Lena smiles, strutting confidently toward the woman and stops right into her personal space. She puts a hand on the woman's smooth thigh while the other grabs the glass from her hand. Lena gulps the bronze liquid inside and meets the eyes of the woman who made her experience as much pleasure as there was pain. “You did beg me for a meeting.”
“That wasn’t begging…” Veronica drawls quietly, pupils wide, biting her lips, “If I remember correctly, you were more the one to beg.”

Lena shrugs, tracing idly the tattoos on the woman’s thigh. “You did your fair share of begging.”

“True,” Veronica concedes, waving away at the security from around the parlor and bartender. Lena breathes easier as she sees them exit one by one, leaving them alone. Veronica suddenly stands, forcing her to take a step back as the woman smiles, her eyes lingering on her mouth. She leaves to stand behind the counter, a coy smile on her face. “Well, what’s your poison?”

“Scotch,” Lena answers automatically, her heart beating slightly and takes a seat, fiddling with the tracker on her hand as her once lover pours her a drink. “Why did you call me?”

“Alcohol, girls dancing and loud music…” Veronica shrugs, pouring herself a drink and taking back her seat next to her. “It feels like old time. If I remember correctly, you liked those kinds of things.” She raises her glass and Lena raises hers too with a faint smile.

“Not anymore, I’m afraid I don’t have the time.”

“Oh, yes. You are now CEO… Congratulations, by the way. Who knew the sweet, nerdy girl who dreamed of freedom would be locked down into the dry environment of an office.”

“Who knew that the girl raised to take back her father’s place in the Army would be here, entertaining the elites with dubious activities instead.”

“Life has a way to surprise us.”

“I hate surprises.”

“Oh, I know…” Veronica winks. “Remember when I surprised you in Hong Kong? You had that internship for two months and you were wasting your nights away in that hotel room when a whole city was waiting for you. You liked my surprise back then.”

Lena nods, remembering those few nights spent between dark, silky sheets, entangled legs and
mingling breaths. Running around the city in quest of adventures and thrills. “Why did you call me?” Lena asks again, closing her eyes as Veronica puts her hand on her thigh, caressing it softly.

“I have this little thing on the side. I was hoping you could show up and have fun with me,” she whispers in the shell of her ear, standing up and trapping her against the bar.

“What kind of entertainment?” Lena asks, breathless, palming the woman’s back, clutching at the back of her neck and sticking the transparent tracker just behind her ear as she bites playfully into the other one.

“Violent, exciting, bloody. You’ll like it,” Veronica hisses, chuckling quietly, pressing harder against her.

“Tempting,” Lena hums, biting on that patch of skin on Veronica’s shoulder that never failed to make her moan. She does and Lena smiles. “Give me the address of your next fight and I might show up… For old time sake.”

“For old time sake…” Veronica repeats quietly, solemnly.

Veronica puts both hands on her thigh and forces her legs open. Lena feels like she just sealed a pact with the devil. Dark, seductive and soul consuming. She takes a deep breath, and pushes Veronica away from her, pins her down against the wall and slides a knee in between her leg, pressing into her as the woman laughs and bites harshly into her bottom lip. It's going to hurt, Lena is sure of that. Victory never comes without a bit of sacrifice and Veronica Sinclair is a game Lena knows how to play.

And she will win, always, even if she loses a bit of herself in the process.

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The drive back to the penthouse is quiet, awkward. Lena knows it is futile to hide the evidence from Eli’s eyes as he drives quietly through the silent street of National City. She did what she had to do and now she knows for sure who is behind the alien fight club. The knowledge only brings her a small comfort as she still feels the sting of Veronica's bite on her bottom lip and her perfume lingering on her skin.
Eli parks the car, eyes shiny, hands trembling in rage. Lena tries to put on a brave face for his sake. A young man hardened by life, and yet still so innocent. He holds out his hand for her to take but Lena refuses silently, stepping out of the car on her own. He puts his jacket over her shoulders and Lena smiles gratefully. “Jess is waiting for my call…” he murmurs as they step into the lobby and straight into the elevator. “Do you want me to call her?”

Lena shakes her head, refusing to let her eyes stray to the mirrors all around her.

He nods hands deep inside his pockets.

The elevator opens its door and reveals Detective Sawyer, standing next to her penthouse door, arms crossed. They all freeze, surprised, the scowl on the Detective’s face slowly morphs into a look of concern as she looks at them.

“What- What happened?”

“You need to leave! Now!” Eli roars, stepping out of the elevator and putting himself in between her and the Detective.

“Not before you tell me what happened!”

“I’ll put a fucking bullet through your head if you don’t fucking leave!” Eli points his gun at the woman who only laughs and points her gun back at him.

“You have guts, kid! Wanna see who’s faster?”

“Stop!” Lena exclaims. She lowers Eli’s arm forcefully and pushes him behind her. “It’s okay. Let’s just get in, we have to talk anyway.”

Eli opens the door reluctantly. Lena doesn’t miss the Detective’s lingering glances as she passes her by, surely noticing the red lipstick on her neck, the bites marks on her shoulders and her slightly disheveled look.

“Wait here,” Lena croaks, throwing a warning look at Eli before she makes a beeline for the
bathroom. She steps into the scalding water and let it wash away the lingering perfume of a woman she once loved, a woman who only knew how to take, laying waste on her body when she did the same with her heart a few years ago. Lena rubs furiously at her skin until it becomes red, closing her eyes, biting her lips harshly. It had been necessary. She had no other choices. She steps out of the shower, rubbing at the fog on her mirror, not recognizing her reflection. Scents of blood, smoke and sweat fills her nostrils and Lena holds on tightly to the cold edges of the sink to ground her back to the present, far away from the images her mind conjures up. She breathes in deeply and puts on some clothes to join those still in the living room, hoping they didn’t kill one another.

Detective Sawyer is the only one in the room, examining the lack of decorations, the white walls and the sense of a home unlived, dull, with only a couch, two armchairs around a coffee table and a TV Lena has yet to use.

“Where is Eli?”

“He left to get you food.”

Lena nods and smiles slightly, taking a seat on the couch. “I’m sorry for earlier. He was only trying to protect me.”

“No harm done. They are loyal to you. I can understand that,” the Detective replies with a shrugs. She stops her examination of Lena’s apartment only to turn toward her and fix her with wide, surprised eyes. "Who would have thought… Lena Luthor. Nerd.”

Lena chuckles, eyeing her outfits, a star wars t-shirt with a NASA sweatpants, fiddling with her glasses, embarrassed. “We all have our secrets.”

The woman laughs quietly, taking a seat next to her. “What happened?”

Lena sighs, holding her knees against her chest. “I told you I was investigating a lead about the alien fight club. I know who is behind it. Veronica Sinclair, we went to boarding school together, had a relationship for a few years on and off. I went to see her tonight. She will give me the address of the next fight.” Lena scoffs, at the look Sawyer is giving her, full of understanding and pity. Lena hates it. “I did what needed to be done!”

“I get it,” Sawyer replies holding her trembling hands into her own. "What can I do?”
Lena breathes shakily and shows her everything Wayne sent to her so far. “NCPD is not looking into it, though. There’s no way to investigate something that doesn’t exist.”

“Alien fight club…. It will be hard to detect. Until someone talk or shows up dead.”

“Veronica is very good at what she does. You can bet that she will have a back-up plan. You need to build a case on her. Point the NCPD in her direction. Find evidence. You said you had contacts in an alien bar?”

“Yeah, but they are tight lipped. I only got a few who tolerate me. It’s going to be harder to make them talk to me about that. I’ll do some digging, get words on the streets, and see if there are not dead bodies hiding somewhere…”

“Thank you,” Lena whispers, standing up to pour herself a drink and pours another one for the Detective.

The woman accepts it wordlessly, raising her glass before gulping it down. It feels like a truce. “I got an in to the DEO. I’ve been working with Alex Danvers, recently.”

“Kara’s sister.”

Detective Sawyer nods. “We should tell them. They can help us.”

“Would you?” Lena asks, contemplating the bottom of her glass, wondering if she ought to pour herself another one.

“What?”

“Would you have helped me,” Lena continues, raising an eyebrow at the Detective, “if you hadn’t seen what happened at Wayne’s party? Would you have believed me?”

Maggie doesn’t answer, proving her point.
Lena smiles self-deprecatingly. “I know what they think of me. I know what they see when they look at me. I’m a Luthor and there’s nothing to change that. The only thing I can do is protect myself.”

“I won’t lie for you.”

“You already did,” Lena reminds her quietly and then sighs not wanting to alienate the woman scowling at her. “I’m just your informant. Do what you would do to protect an informant. No one will question it, Detective.”

The Detective sighs, standing up and brings the scotch to the coffee table, pouring her a glass. “Call me Sawyer. I’m off the clock.”

Lena smiles and sips at her drink.

“I didn’t think that would be a lie,” she finally confesses with a sigh, the liquid sloshing in her glass, “when I told Danvers I had a hot date for the night.” Detective Sawyer looks her up and down, a slight teasing smile on her face, eyeing critically the sweatpants, the t-shirt and the glasses. “Looks like you are ready to go to sleep.”

Lena rolls her eyes.

“You owe me an alibi.”

“Are you asking me to set you up for a date?”

Sawyer shrugs. “Only for my alibi.”

“Of course,” Lena replies with a smile.

Eli suddenly comes in carrying large boxes of pizza in one hand and a case of beer in the other, the smell invading the living-room quickly. Jess closes the door behind her, watching Sawyer warily, surely made aware of the slight confrontation earlier. Lena shakes her head at her, pleading silently for her friend to let it go.
Jess sighs and nods. “Dinner has arrived. I hope you are hungry, Detective.”

“Crack me one of those beer and I’ll eat one of those boxes in no times.”

“Wait,” Eli frowns, putting the boxes on the coffee table. “There’s a Hawaiian pizza with my name on it. No one gets to have that one.”

“Wanna fight over it, kid?”

Lena smiles as they all gather around the coffee table. Eli protests, opening a bottle of beer and hands it to Sawyer, who unabashedly steals a slice of his pizza. A blanket is thrown over her shoulders and Lena smiles gratefully at Jess who sits next to her on the couch with a slice of her own. Lena scotches closer, glued to Jess’ side as she watches Sawyer and Eli, fight over another slice of pizza. She feels Jess’ arm over her shoulders and closes her eyes, lulled to sleep by the arguing around, the whispered conversations and the newfound truce as her friends welcome the new addition to their ragtag group.

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Lena is impressed as she gets messages from Sawyer every few hours, now, updating her on the investigation regularly. From what she understands, it isn’t going well. Despite her anonymous tip to the NCPD, they have no serious ground for an arrest since the aliens fighting in her rings weren’t registered citizen.

“We could plant something on her…” Jess suggests.

“I don’t think Sawyer would be up for it. We can’t undermine her credibility has a Detective.”

“She seems to be getting pretty close with the DEO Agent…”

“What are you saying…”?
“She is as much of a wild card as Kara is. What makes you think she will stick to our side?”

“I don’t. And if that’s happens then it will. I cannot change things more than I already am,” Lena sighs, rubbing her forehead.

“Are you okay?” Jess asks her suddenly, “You should go home. These paperwork can wait.”

Lena shakes her head, trying hard to distinguish what is written in front of her. “Just make sure no one comes in. I want to finish these things as soon as possible.”

“Of course,” Jess replies, standing up and closing the door behind her.

Lena sighs, signing documents after documents when suddenly Jess’ voice resounds in the hallway.

“Excuse me, you can't go in there. Stop...”

Lena stands up, wary, ready to greet this new interruption. The door of her office opens widely, Jess running behind a stubborn Kara Danvers who strides confidently into her office.

“I swear I just blinked and she got right past me,” her friend explains, ready to haul the reporter away with the slightest indication on her part.

“Lena, I'm sorry. This is my fault,” Kara begins urgently.

“She's so fast,” Jess interrupts, making her smile.

“I just need to talk to you,” Kara demands.

Lena hides her smile, surprised as always, by the unpredictable nature of the woman before her. “Jess, will you make a note downstairs that Kara Danvers is to be shown in right away whenever possible?”
“Yes, Ms. Luthor.” Her friend replies, looking at Kara and then turns away with a slight roll of her eyes.

“Really? Thank you.”

“Now...” Lena asks, taking back her seat. “How can I help?”

“I... I think a friend of mine has gotten involved in something shady.”

“A friend?” Lena scoffs, wondering if Kara wasn’t talking about herself.

“No, an actual friend. And now he’s missing. Do you know of a woman named Veronica Sinclair?” Kara asks, coming closer toward her, asking for help when Lena has already been providing it without her knowing. “She caters to people in your, um, your circles.”

“Tight dresses, tattoos like Lisbeth Salander? Yeah, I know Roulette,” Lena admits, clutching at her pen, just to have something to do with her hand. “We went to boarding school together. I never liked her,” she lies easily.

“I need to find her,” Kara insists.

“Well, that's the trick, isn't it? Her little fights clubs stay mobile,” Lena counters and observes Kara silently; drinking in the sight of her after everything she did to get her this information. Wishing not for the first time that Kara would know the length she went to, to protect her…

“But do you know where she's holding the next fight? I wouldn't ask if I had any other option.”

Lena sighs, jotting down the last address her tracker indicated where Veronica was. “I'm a Luthor. Of course I'm invited to her little pop-up. Not that I'm interested in her type of entertainment,” she answers with a slight roll of her eyes. It might have been once upon a time but not anymore. She tore the piece of paper and stands up, walking around her desk, handing Kara the information she was looking for, knowing that Sawyer would be made aware of it immediately now that she was working so closely with the DEO.
Kara exhales, seeming relieved at how easy it was. “Thank you. I owe you, big time,” she insists.

“Not at all,” Lena utters quietly with a tight smile, eyes shining, feeling suddenly vulnerable and raw, in the silence of her office, with the woman who had already saved her life several time without even knowing it… “I know you’ll be there for me when the time comes.”

Kara doesn’t answer. She pursues her lips, considers her warily and hurries out of the door.

Lena can’t bring herself to watch her leave. She has to look away, staring off into space, lost in a not so far away past where Kara would have answered. Where she would have squeezed her arm and Lena would have nodded, feeling safe. Lena would have fallen into her arms, breathed into her neck and Kara would have whispered softly, fiercely into her ear, holding her tight, the word no one had told her before and meant it.

Her Kara would have whispered always.

***

Veronica Sinclair got out. Thanks for the date.

Lena sighs at the last of Sawyer’s text who had kept her updated throughout the night. She should have guessed that putting Veronica Sinclair behind bars would be more difficult than that. If there was one thing she was better at than gambling, it was survival. And Lena is sure; she hasn’t seen the last of her. She has been in her bed, laptop out, incapable of finding sleep, waiting anxiously for news but now that everything had come to an end, Lena hopes she will find a bit of sleep before she’ll have to wake up in a few hours. She powers off her laptop, puts it on her nightstand and closes her eyes, sighing deeply.

Her phone rings, its screen lighting into the dark room. Lena picks it up automatically and gulps, hearing the voice on the other end.

“I found your tracker,” Veronica drawls quietly, intimate even and Lena has to turn on the light to make sure that the woman isn’t here with her. “I don’t know what game you are playing at, Lena. Imagine my surprise when the Girl of Steel kept disrupting my plans lately when I made sure no one but trusted elites knew of the locations of my next fights...”
“I guess someone got you out. Would it be too much to ask who it was?”

Veronica scoffs tutting quietly. “The perks of having friends in high places… I’m kind of disappointed; I thought you enjoyed our little reunion.”

“A means to an end,” she dismisses quietly.

Lena hears her hums, exhaling deeply. “You are more Luthor than I thought. Well, for old time sake, I will tell you this. Cadmus is closer to you than you think. Be careful, Lena. You are playing in the big leagues this time.”

“What do you mean?”

Veronica laughs humorlessly before she hangs up, leaving her in the silence. Lena stares at her phone, squeezing it in anger. She breathes deeply and powers her laptop back on, opening folders after folders of equations and graphics which quickly overtake her screen as she lays out the first step of her new project… Lena types furiously on the keyboard entering theories, numbers and calculations… Waves and particles take over her mind as the quantum entanglement theory blurs with the blue of Kara’s eyes…

A plan B.

Just in case…

Chapter End Notes

That’s my super long explanation on why Jess reacted the way she did in Ep.4 haha! I hope you liked it. Take care!
Hi! Thank you for the kudos and comments. Your support always means a lot. A huge thank you to Earthling3 who edited this chapter and made it more english than I ever could ;)
Hope you will like this chapter. Enjoy!

You were warned. The alien invaders are dangerous- their intentions, malicious. They possess power we cannot hope to match. And their technology, brought from other worlds, is falling into the wrong hands. We should not be opening our arms to them; we should be locking them up and taking their weapons away. You did not heed us, but you will heed the chaos that amnesty has brought. You will pay the price in fear and blood. And you will beg us to save you. We are Cadmus.

The broadcast flickers off as suddenly as it came and silence falls upon the meeting room. Miller’s weekly report appears back on the screen. Her marketing department manager looks back at her, looking unsure and hesitant as everyone turns toward her waiting silently for direction.

Several phones go off, vibrating loudly against the table, hers included. Lena sighs, closing her laptop, inviting the others to do the same. “We will reconvene this meeting tomorrow morning.”

Everyone files out of the room and she clenches her jaw at hearing their murmurs and speculations on what prompted this new broadcast. Lena follows them out of the meeting room and finds Jess waiting for her, tablet in hand, face grim.

Lena stops in front of her, fearing the worst. “Fill me in.”

Jess shows her the headlines on National City TV News. “There has been an attack at the West National City Bank,” she whispers, her voice strained and tired. There are bags under her eyes, a nervous tic in her cheek that appears whenever her friend is annoyed or bothered by something.

Admittedly, it’s been a rough couple of weeks, filled with nights stuck in front of the computer down
in the Lab, preparing and watching for any kind of threat, and days busy trying to keep the company scandal free. Lena squeezes Jess’ shoulder in support, hoping that the contact would show the gratitude she can’t express in words. Jess only answers with a hesitant, halfhearted smile before handing her the tablet where she had pulled the various headlines from this morning.

Lena frowns at the cold shoulder and follows her friend to the elevator where Jackson waits too, a pile of mail under his arm.

An awkward silence settles in. Jackson stays unmoving, glancing furtively at both of them, and Lena watches the scene unfold with mild interest. The elevator opens its door for them and Jess steps into it immediately, pinning Jackson in his place daring him to follow them…

“I’ll… huh; I’ll take the next one.”

“Good initiative, Jackson.” Jess gives a satisfied nod. The man stammers a response they never get to hear as the door closes on his surprised expression.

Silence settles back into the elevator before Lena puffs out a laugh at Jackson’s contrite face. “He is terrified of you.”

Jess chuckles and shrugs. “I might have been a bit enthusiastic in my critique of his filing system the first day we got here…” She swipes her key card onto the control panel and the elevator whirs to life and begins its descent. “And I might possibly have reorganized his whole service…”

Lena laughs at her friend’s antics, glad of the dissipating tension. “Just don’t scare them all off,” she whispers teasingly, nudging Jess slightly with her elbow and eliciting a laugh from the woman.

“I’ll try not to…”

Lena turns her attention back onto the tablet, browsing through the pictures of the attack and the damage caused. “Have there been any casualties during the attack?”

“No, but there has been damage to the Children’s Hospital next to the bank building.”
Lena zooms in on one of the pictures taken of the hospital, frowning slightly. “The structure is completely bent. The impact has an odd shape… What type of bombs could have done this?”

“It wasn’t a bomb,” Jess informs her. She takes the tablet out of her hands and shows her surveillance footage of a man holding a strange gun, more like a canon, firing at Supergirl. “Supergirl crashed into it…”

Lena nods, watching an amateur video showing the ray hitting Supergirl and propelling her in the air and into the hospital.

“…they shot at her with some sort of alien weapons.”

Lena hears the strain in her friend’s voice and now that they both stand under the harsh light of the elevator, she finally notices how wound up Jess really is, betrayed by the tension in her shoulders and the nervous twitch at the corner of her eyes. Lena tries to meet her gaze but Jess quickly looks away and shows her another picture of Supergirl being brought down from the air by the ray weapon.

Lena takes away the tablet from her friend’s hand and powers it off. “Are you okay?”

The elevator stops and opens into the Lab, one of the many hidden facilities Lex had built all over the country, deep underground, just right under the authorities’ noses. Lena grabs Jess’ arm before she goes too far, watching her, perplexed.

Jess shakes her head, still not meeting her eyes. “Just tired. Nothing to worry about…”

Lena frowns, not at all convinced. Jess walks deeper into the Lab, joining Eli at the other end, surrounded by computers and several screens, all showing the attack on the West National City Bank. Lena decides to let it go… for now. Eli greets her, wordlessly pulling close ups of the weapon on one screen and slowed-down footage of the attack on another.

“I compiled everything I could find on the net about the attack. It was quick, choppy and not well planned at all. See here…”

Eli pulls up a security surveillance video showing a black SUV screeching to a halt just before a woman she would recognize anywhere.
“Kara…”

“Yeah, crazy coincidence. They didn’t bother to hide their identity for long. And they only won because of these things.” He pulls up more surveillance footage, but from another angle this time. It shows the exact moment the attacker takes away the hood obscuring his face and shoots at Supergirl. Eli zooms in on the weapon.

Lena grabs a seat and examines the footage several times. “Do we know who this man is?”

Eli shrugs. “You told me not to hack into government agencies.”

Lena scoffs, cocking an eyebrow at him, not fooled for a minute.

He breaks into a sheepish grin and pulls up everything he found about the man. “His name’s Milner. But he’s just a local thug. Arrested several times for robbery, armed robbery and aggression…”

“How could he have gotten those weapons?” Jess asks, quickly typing her own search parameters on her computer.

“They possess power we cannot hope to match. And their technology, brought from other worlds, is falling into the wrong hands…” Lena quotes suddenly as the entirety of the broadcast comes back to the forefront of her mind. “Cadmus gave them these weapons. They want to create fear…”

“Well, it’s working.” Jess pulls up the coverage of the attack with citizen expressing their concerns and fears in front of the damaged Children’s Hospital. “The media is eating it up… The percentage of people in favor of repealing the Alien Amnesty Act has suddenly increased.”

“That’s not good,” Eli mumbles. “What- what can we do?” he turns toward her, looking for directives and Lena feels lightheaded at the responsibility. Her heart beats painfully at the pressure that had been placed upon her and at the increasing risk of failure as the days go by with things only seeming to get worse. She looks away, willing her heart to calm down before the memory of a voice echoes inside her mind.

*I believe in you.*
Lena breathes deeply, holding on to it tightly. “We give them hope,” she answers finally.

“How?” Jess asks her, stopping her typing and looking up from her keyboard.

The silence feels oppressing and Lena stares at the several screens before her, racking her brain for an idea. She lights up as the Children’s Hospital logo suddenly appears in one of the coverage videos. “A fundraiser! A fundraiser for the hospital…”

Jess smiles, shaking her head with a twinkle in her eyes and Lena grins to herself, wondering if she managed to impress her. Jess rolls her eyes with an exasperated smile. “I’m on it,” she turns back to her computer and types furiously in it, beginning the setup of arrangements for the event.

Eli gives her thumbs up, a proud and relieved smile on his face, the same one he always gave her every time she would find him in his hiding place in their game of hide and seek. Brown eyes looking at her for answers, looking at her with so much trust and admiration that Lena’s smile falters and her eyes moisten suddenly, dreading the day he’ll look at her with lifeless eyes.

“You okay, Boss?”

Lena nods, chuckling humorlessly, and wills her nightmare to disappear. “Yes, don’t worry. Show me a close up of the weapon. I want to see how it’s powered…” She feels his worried glance linger on her for a few seconds before the footage of the first shot appears in front of them.

They spend the next thirty minutes decorticating and dissecting every frame of the videos adding more and more material as other amateur’s videos become available on the net. Jess works quietly next to them, making phone call after phone call for the gala being planned for the weekend, while Lena compiles and analyzes every apparent characteristic of the weapon, scribbling theories and drawing sketches, dozens of sketches of the possible workings of the weapon. She continues adding more material and new theories as new footage comes up from different angles. And yet, despite analyzing these videos frame by frame Lena feels like she is missing something. Missing something that could be critical to understanding the way this weapon works. Lena groans, frustrated as an hour goes by and the functioning of the weapon remains a mystery…

“Wait! Rewind!” Lena blurts out as something in the video sparks something in her brain, a thought, an idea still elusive but that she feels has the potential to unlock everything.
Eli nods and rewinds. The gun powers up and shoots a ray of blue light toward Supergirl who counters it with her heat vision.

“Look at this!” Lena points on the screen excitedly, showing the slight distortion in the air from the impact of Kara’s heat vision and the unknown ray. Jess abandons her seat to peer at the screen from behind her shoulder. “It’s like it creates a sort of magnetic field every time Supergirl counters it with her heat vision. Positive and negative charged energy…” Lena muses; her eyes focused on that slight disturbance, that slight fluttering of energy and then she laughs suddenly, relieved and victorious. “This is basic quantum electrodynamics… I need… I need to…” Lena looks down on the desk looking for blank sheet of paper but finds none, all of them already used, filled with scribbles and scratches.

“Wait…” Jess runs toward the board and wheels it next to them while Eli runs back from the office wheeling another one from the other end of the Lab. Jess hands her a chalk and Lena smiles gratefully drawing the weapon again with a new understanding followed by wavelengths and equations next to it. “This is far more advanced than what we’ve developed so far on Earth. It is powered by muons which are charged negatively. The effect is nullified when met with the positively charged energy of Supergirl’s heat vision…”

“How do we counter it?” Eli asks her, lost, trying hard to read her writings and follow her train of thought.

Lena takes a moment to think, tapping the chalk slightly against the blackboard, listening to the dull sound, pacing her thoughts, giving it a musicality, a rhythm to follow. She walks toward the second blackboard and writes down numbers as an idea takes form in her mind. “A black body generator can emit electromagnetic radiation… in equilibrium with these alien weapons it could neutralize their electromagnetic field.” Lena frowns as a problem suddenly arises, her chalk squeaks painfully on the board. She takes a step back and examines what she has written and drawn so far… There was something missing. “I don’t… I can’t calibrate the generator if I don’t have the frequency and wavelength these weapons operate on… Fuck!” Lena curses quietly, suddenly stuck. She looks at Eli who looks back at her, wide eyed, ready to execute any order she might give him and turns toward Jess instead. “I’ll need some residue to calibrate the generator…”

“I’ll text Detective Sawyer,” Jess nods, grabbing the phone she had left near her computer and types quickly, brows furrowed.

“I think we will need Supergirl on this,” Eli voices with determination as Lena turns toward him, knowing perfectly well what he is trying to do. What he has been trying to do for the past month, ever since he learned of the existence of her ghost, ever since he saw Kara in the flesh. He straightens up and looks at her dead on. “We can’t do this on our own…”
“Do you want me to message her?” Jess inquires, looking at her expectantly, phone at the ready.

Lena shakes her head and Eli frowns, ready to protest. She stops him quickly with a glare and stands up with a slight huff. “No, I’ll go to her.”

Eli gapes, stunned before he beams at her, putting on his jacket while Jess snickers quietly. Lena rolls her eyes and leaves for the elevator ignoring their laughter ringing behind her.

***

Eli drives her to CatCo, a shit-eating grin on his face. Lena should find it exasperating and tiring that he is pushing her so much to be with Kara, rooting so hard for them to be together. He never misses an opportunity to bring her up. He would gush about her latest heroics as Supergirl or her new article as Kara Danvers. She really should tell him to stop because she doesn’t need his constant reminders to be aware of everything Kara does. She is already drawn to her, stifling with increasing difficulty her avid desire to be in her presence.

It is a mistake, Lena thinks, to see them as the same person. They aren’t, and this train of thought causes more harm than it gives her comfort. Because Kara isn’t there yet, this Kara never saw her at her most vulnerable or scared and angry, stripped of the image she shows to the world. This Kara never took her in her arms or whispered soft, soothing words in her ear when she had trembled in fear, oppressed by reporters or in front of her brother. This Kara isn’t the one she- -- Lena clenches her jaw as she finally admits the truth she had refused to acknowledge since her ghost disappeared- -- she fell in love with. She has been searching for any trace of her ghost in Kara’s eyes.

Eli stops the car in front of the building and opens the door for her. Lena sighs, closing her eyes. Reminding herself not to put past expectations on this Kara. “I’ll be back shortly,” Lena whispers tiredly.

She walks to the building and makes a beeline for the elevator, grateful to step into an empty one. Lena checks her appearance in the mirror and makes sure that nothing is out of place, not even a stray lock of hair. Her appearance has to be perfect, calm and confident for she is about to step into a hive full of annoying bees whose honey is made of everything going wrong in her life. The elevator stops and its doors open to the sound of phones ringing and interns, assistants and reporters running around, many stopping their activities to stare at her. Lena keeps her head held high and walks to the reception desk where the secretary gapes at her.

“I’m looking for Kara Danvers.”
The woman nods, bemused, and points to her right.

“Thank you,” Lena winks, pleased by the reddening of the woman’s cheeks. Lena spots Kara easily. She isn’t nervous. She is perfectly calm and her heart isn’t racing the closer she gets to Kara Danvers.

“Kara.”

Kara turns around, a surprised smile on her face. “Lena!”

She is painfully hit by a sensation of déjà-vu. Kara smiles at her, wearing the same outfit her ghost had worn, and Lena’s hands tremble. She hides her surprise by crossing her arms over her chest and plasters a smile, wide and shaky, on her face.

“Surprise visit to Catco?” Kara wonders in confusion.

“No,” Lena looks away, her eyes falling inevitably on Kara’s sweater, that same sweater she had grabbed onto so desperately, the feel of the fabric still imprinted in her mind, cold, coarse and yet so comforting. “I’m here to see you, actually.”

“You are?” She asks with surprise in her voice for some reason, as if Lena would have any other reason to step into this buzzing hive and willingly put herself under scrutiny if it weren’t for Kara working there.

Lena nods and forces herself to breathe, willing her mind to focus back on the task at hand. “L-Corp is hosting a party this weekend. It’s a gala fundraiser for the Children’s Hospital after that horrific attack on their new building.” Lena inhales forcefully, gathering a bit of courage to ask Kara out. Well, not like that but still… “I was hoping you’d come.”

“Gala? Is that like a party?”

A voice interrupts them, making her frown. A man steps into view looking like a male version of Kara, glasses, cardigan and all… but only with a lost expression on his face.
“No. No, it’s not.” Kara objects, turning away from him to look back at her with some sort of wide-eyed expression.

Lena ignores him too and resumes where she left off. “You are literally my only friend in National City,” she pleads, hoping that it will sway the reporter in case she might refuse. “Most people wouldn’t touch a Luthor with a 10-foot pole,” Lena pauses and bites her lip. She shouldn’t use words her ghost used before… “It would mean a lot to me if you were there.”

“Of course I’ll come,” Kara nods and smiles. “I’m honored.”

Lena breathes in relief, smiling too.

“I love parties,” the man cuts in again with a chuckle. “Can I come, too?”

“No,” Kara retorts immediately.

Lena pauses and tries to read Kara’s expression in order to understand the sudden animosity but Kara looks down seemingly aggravated… She doesn’t know what is going between these two but Lena knows she won’t find out if he doesn’t come to the gala. “Oh... Well, of course your friend can come.” It’s dangerous. She might regret it later, but Lena hates not knowing... She turns toward him, politely, trying hard to hide her ulterior motive to have him there and maybe understand what connection he has with Kara. “What's your name?”

“Mike. Of the interns.”

“Well, Mike of the interns…” Lena isn’t sure if he is mocking her or not, but she takes it with a smile and veils her challenge with an invite. “Find yourself a nice suit, and I'll see you there.”

“Bye,” Kara whispers with a contrite smile.

Lena turns away and walks confidently back toward the elevator, keeping her head held high as people stare at her again. She curses her bad luck as Snapper Carr follows her in the elevator.
“Ms. Luthor,” the reporter greets her his gruff voice, a voice she remembers has grilled her on several occasions during press conferences since her move to National City. Lena couldn’t be happier when she noticed that Kara seemed to have taken his place as of late. The view was much more pleasant and the conversation much less stressful.

“Mr. Carr...” Lena nods back, already on the defensive as the elevator begins its descent.

“Kara Danvers, huh?” By the knowing look in his eyes, Lena understands that sending Kara to do more interviews at L-Corp has been a strategy of his to make her spill her secrets. And right now, his hunch has been confirmed and Lena hates it. The sneaky bastard. “Good call on that gala fundraiser by the way. L-Corp is back in the good graces of the public. Any quote on that?”

Lena rolls her eyes exasperatedly. She has the distinct impression that the universe is against her today. The sand of time trickles down and the ride down is agonizingly slower than the ride up. “You can ask your questions at the press conference, Mr. Carr.” The elevator finally stops on the ground floor and he observes her from above the lenses of his glasses. “Enjoy the rest of your day” she adds with tight-lipped smile and walks away, confident and calm, albeit quicker than when she came in, eager to leave this place.

Eli straightens up at her approach and opens the door for her. Lena sighs and sags in her seat.

“How did it go?” Eli asks her from the driver seat.

“I hate reporters…”

He turns toward her, brows furrowed in confusion. “Did Kara-”

“It’s not her,” Lena cuts him off and closes her eyes, focused on her breathing. She is tired. She feels the exhaustion hanging heavily on her bones and a headache pulses just behind her eyes. She hasn’t been able to fall asleep lately. Too focused, too afraid to do anything else but work. “Just drive. Please.”

The car moves, gliding through the street of National City and Lena feels content, enjoying the little peace the drive back to L-Corp offers her. It’s not a lot, but it feels like it’s the only moment in her day where she can close her eyes and get the rest her mind so desperately craves but can’t seem to find.
The car stops and Lena opens her eyes. They are back at L-Corp, parked in her usual spot in the underground garage. As if they had never left in the first place. Back to the beginning…

Time has no beginning or end, Lena reminds herself, only human perception gives it these landmarks and cuts it arbitrarily in order to make sense, in order to see some sort of progression in the endless cycle of life and death governing all life forms. Time doesn’t slow down or quicken its pace; it just is. And Lena feels suspended in time in the safety of her car. She doesn’t want to leave and face whatever waits for her out there. Forced to obey the arbitrary rule of everyone else’s conception of time, the clock they all decided to follow blindly… Lena would like to hide today, be free to just be, just for a little while… but she can’t. She can’t.

Her hand reaches for the handle, confused that Eli hasn’t opened the door for her yet, it isn’t required but he usually does it. Lena glances at him and her protégé looks at her with understanding in his eyes from the rearview mirror.

“Hey, um… Do you think we could talk for a bit?” Eli asks, indulging her.

“Sure,” she nods, letting go of the handle and smiles in relief. Eli fidgets on his seat and Lena stops his fidgeting with a hand on his shoulder, a silent thank you. “What is it?”

He smiles sheepishly, scratching the back of his head, always careful not to mess up his hair. “Do you think Alana would say yes if I… say… invite her to the gala?”

Lena grins, leaning toward the front seat. “On a date?”

“No, I mean, yes?”

Lena tries not to smile. She also tries not to poke him in the cheek, absolutely amused by the blush on his cheek. He wouldn’t have brought it up to her - Lena knows it - if it weren’t for the fact that she needed a distraction. Something to take her mind away from the planning and constant vigilance that had consumed the past few weeks. “You know there might be some trouble…” Lena warns, knowing the gala was sure to be interrupted, and it didn’t bode well for a first date.

“Please,” he snorts, eyes shining with brashness. “Champagne and danger? It feels like the perfect setting to woo someone.”
“You have a lot to learn,” Lena laughs, ruffling his hair.

“Hey!” Eli protests and bats her hand away. “Don’t do that! I’m trying to be professional.”

Lena rolls her eyes, messing up his hair again for good measure. “I’m sure she’ll say yes.”

A tap on Eli’s window startles them both and Detective Sawyer raises an eyebrow at them, stepping away from the door to let Eli out and opens the back door for Lena.

“Having fun?” Sawyer greets them, dimples showing. “Luthor” she nods at her and then turns toward Eli. “Kid…”

Lena chuckles at Eli’s scandalized expression.

“What is it today? Annoy Eli Day?” He huffs and stomps toward the elevator.

Sawyer winks at Lena with a teasing smile on her face. “Every day, kid!”

Lena isn’t sure what their dynamic is. It seems to have shifted since the time Detective Sawyer ambushed them at the door of her penthouse, after she came back from Veronica’s club. Looking at them now, as the Detective nudges him with her elbow, teases him while Eli shakes his head exasperatedly, Lena is pretty sure Sawyer has made a mission of finding new ways to tease him every chance she gets. Lena follows them, happily confused until they step into the elevator and Eli takes out his keycard from under his shirt and presses it to the control panel.

“Lighten up, kid. You’ll get there someday… Don’t worry.”

Lena observes them quietly, not sure of what the Detective is alluding to but still highly amused by the blush on Eli’s cheek.

“You fight dirty,” he hisses, crossing his arms over his chest in a failed attempt at appearing intimidating. Eli might be taller than them but his glare fails to have its desired effects when his ears turn bright red. “You can’t tickle someone while arm wrestling.”
Lena bursts out laughing, watching him incredulously as he gapes at her, offended. “Wait, she beat you? When did this happen?”

“She didn’t beat me,” Eli scoffs, “she cheated and Jess helped her. We fought over the last slice of pizza,” he mumbles, embarrassed. “You were asleep and-”

Lena’s laugh abates, trying hard to stop the memories of the scent of Veronica’s skin from overtaking her nose, the sound of her moans from echoing inside her mind and the pain of her bites from flaring on her shoulder.

“Anyway,” Detective Sawyer cuts in loudly, snapping her from her trance. “I got your lackey’s text and,” she takes out a Ziploc bag from the inside of her leather jacket and tosses it to Lena, “here is what you asked me for. Kind of hard to steal it under the DEO’s nose, but I managed. I think they are slowly warming up to me.”

“Thank-” Lena is interrupted by the opening door of the elevator, stopping at the Lab. She hears the Detective’s breath hitch, her eyes widening as she takes in the space before her.

“What is this place?”

“My brother built labs under most of Luthor Corp’s buildings. Obviously I got this one shut down and repurposed,” Lena knows she is taking a risk by revealing this to the Detective. And while their partnership has been rocky so far, Lena has no choice but to trust that Detective Sawyer is more invested in preventing the war than taking revenge on her because of her brother. Lena can only hope she won’t be betrayed if Sawyer ever decides to side with the DEO in the end. “Come on, I’ll show you what I’ve been working on.” She leads the wide-eyed Detective through the Lab, past tables filled with microscopes, beakers, thermometers, tongs on one side and the other filled with what Jess would call Lena’s junkyard; computers, scraps of metal, screwdrivers, electrical wires, wrenches, strain gauges, acceleration and torque measuring devices… both spaces encased in protective glass and separated by the passageway where they are walking. The corridor leads to the back of the Lab, where Eli’s surveillance system is set up, and Lena’s second office where she slept sometimes, too tired to make it back to the penthouse. Dominating the office were the two blackboards Jess and Eli had wheeled there for her earlier.

“What is this?” Detective Sawyer whispers, staring at the boards filled with Len’s notes, sketches and calculations.
“A trap,” Lena answers with pride. “I’m working on a countermeasure against the weapons those thugs are using. And now, thanks to you, I can analyze the thermal residue and look for any electromagnetic component. I’ll be able to create an effective countermeasure by copying the wavelength and frequency of-”

Detective Sawyer grabs her arm and Lena stares at her questioningly.

“I’m stopping you right there, nerd. I didn’t understand a thing of what you said. Are you sure you don’t want to talk to Alex Danvers? I’m sure you’ll get along.”

Lena rolls her eyes. “It’s just quantum electrodynamics. The interaction between a negatively charged energy-”

The Detective holds up her hand, interrupting her again. “That sounded even worse. Do your thing, Luthor. I trust you on this.”

Lena pauses, speechless, and looks at Eli who only shrugs and takes his seat back behind his computer, turning his back on them.

Detective Sawyer walks over Lena’s side of the Lab, squinting at the various machines behind the glass. Lena joins her and invites the curious Detective inside, closing the door behind them. The Detective nods, seemingly impressed. She sits on a stool and looks back at her expectantly. “So, you were talking about a trap?”

Lena nods, logs on to a laptop, and shows her the event Jess has been organizing. “I need your help. L-Corp is organizing a gala fundraiser for the Children’s Hospital. I’m pretty sure it’s going to be a target for them.”

“Wait, you want to lure them to your party and…”

“And neutralize their weapons,” Lena finishes confidently.

“You realize that half of National City’s wealthiest are going to be there. You would put them all in danger just to trap those guys?”
Lena shrugs. “Yeah.”

Detective Sawyer laughs disbelievingly. “You have guts, Luthor. There’s no denying that. But this is reckless. It’s a disaster waiting to happen.”

“No more than letting them roam free,” Lena retorts. “I know I can stop them.”

The Detective looks at her skeptically, playing with a wrench. “Are you sure your gismo-thingy is going to work? You’ll be putting a lot of lives in danger…”

“I know! But we can’t let them wreak havoc in the city anymore,” Lena argues. Detective Sawyer frowns, still undecided. Lena sighs, rubbing her forehead, thinking of a compromise. “Would it ease your mind if I let you post undercover cops in the crowd? They can’t be allowed to intervene until those weapons are neutralized, though.”

Detective Sawyer smiles. “Deal. I’ll have to talk to the Captain about it…”

“Thank you. I asked Kara to come too, just in case.”

Sawyer nods, thoughtfully. “Will she come as Kara or as Supergirl?”

Lena frowns, not having thought of that. “I mean… She’ll surely have a change of clothes handy in case there’s trouble, right? Do you even know where she keeps her cape and boots?” Lena wonders half-jokingly because now that she thinks about it; she can’t help but wonder where Kara stores her suit or how fast she can get access to it during an emergency.

“No idea,” Sawyer laughs, “-but maybe you should stress a bit more the dangerous potential of this gala to her,” she suggests. “To make sure Supergirl is prepared for trouble?”

“Good idea,” Lena chuckles, not bothered at all by the prospect of having to see Kara again. As either Supergirl or Kara Danvers…

“So…” Detective Sawyer exclaims suddenly. “A funny thing happened today...”
Lena cocks an eyebrow at her, waiting for her to continue.

“I mean… it’s not funny, per se… It’s just…” Detective Sawyer frowns, scratching at a spot on the metal table, looking confused. Lena hasn’t known the Detective for long, but the woman is usually self-assured, determined, and not easily shaken, and yet, right now she seems flustered and unsure, and Lena’s curiosity is piqued. Detective Sawyer takes a deep breath, steeling herself before she looks at her dead in the eyes, already looking for answers Lena isn’t sure she has. “I think Alex Danvers asked me out…”

Lena isn’t sure how to react. She never met Kara’s adoptive sister but the Detective seems to be confused about it and she doesn’t know if it is a good thing or not. “Well, what did you say?”

“I mean… she was oddly insistent and I thought she was… I asked her if she was gay which she answered no. And then she sort of panicked, and ran off,” Detective Sawyer explains, helpless and frustrated, seemingly lost for words. “Did… the other Kara, the ghost, tell you anything about her sister? What she was like in the future?”

Lena shakes her head apologetically, having no recollection of Kara talking about her sister besides saying her name once at the very end. “She only regained her memory when she was… fading away… and you were there for it.”

“Only time will tell then,” Detective Sawyer laughs, a frown marring her features. “You know that I had to lie to her about a breakup for you? Even with the alibi you gave me Danvers couldn’t let it go…”

“It seems like she is very interested to me…”

“We’ll see.” Her phone suddenly beeps in her pocket. “You even have reception down here. Pretty impressive. I have to go,” she jumps off the stool and turns back toward her before opening the door. “Don’t make me lie too much for you.”

Lena hears the warning loud and clear, encompassing more than just the silly story about the woman Lena hired to act as the Detective’s date as an alibi. “I can’t promise that. Only you can decide if the lies are worth it are not.”

“They never are, Luthor. You should know, you read my file.”
Lena sighs and nods. “I’ll try not to make you lie too much,” Lena concedes. Detective Sawyer nods in appreciation and leaves Lena’s side of the Lab. Eli walks her to the elevator, looking like he is being teased again. “Wait!” Lena calls out, running after them. Sawyer frowns and Eli makes himself scarce with a look from her.

Lena knows she shouldn’t. It’s probably nothing, maybe just a rivalry between colleagues, but she has this weird feeling and she needs to know. “Do you know someone who calls himself Mike… of the interns…?”

Maggie looks at her confused.

“Six feet tall, brown hair, looks at Kara like he’s lost?”

“Oh! You mean Mon-El? From what I understand, he’s an alien. Kara has been showing him the rope on how to be human. How to blend in…”

Lena is afraid to ask it and maybe for her own sake she shouldn’t, but seeing them together just a few moments earlier birthed something in her mind that she just can’t shake away. “Are they close?” Maggie pauses, understanding dawning on her face and Lena has to look away, unable to stand the pity in her eyes. “Sorry, forget it.”

“I don’t know how close they are…” Maggie finally answers. Not a yes but it isn’t a definite no either. It’s something in between and Lena hates not having answers. “He’s… some sort of protégé. They are often at odds…” Maggie adds and Lena finds it terrifying that the woman gained so much insight into Kara’s life in so little time. It makes her wonder how much the Detective knows about her, and how much she can guess?

Lena startles at the feel of the Detective’s hand squeezing her shoulder in support. Lena smiles but doesn’t find comfort in it. Somehow, it feels like a defeat.

“Text me the details later. I’ve really got to run.”

Lena nods as Eli comes back and escorts the Detective back to her car, leaving her alone in the Lab. Lena sighs, the Ziploc bag still in her hand, and decides to get back to work. She’s already spent enough time feeling sorry for herself.
Lena puts on a white blouse and throws herself wholeheartedly into the design and construction of the black body field generator. She finally feels in her element, where she has always found the most joy. Working systematically toward a goal, wearing gloves and protective glasses, with a plan to build something concrete and tangible. Protocols she has to follow, electrical circuits she has to build and test… This is only possible because Jess ghost-manages L-Corp in her absence. And Lena loses herself in her work only aware of the passing of time thanks to Eli who comes and goes, bringing food and coffee from time to time.

She is called away for a press conference after a while and has to leave the Lab with Eli in tow. It’s part of the game, Lena knows, but after a while, it gets tiring to be in the limelight, always scrutinized and observed. Reporters asking for quotes, only to misrepresent them in their articles. She spots Snapper Carr in the audience, and sighs before taking her place at the desk in the conference room. It’s a game she learned to play early on. Lying comes easily, and smiling too. After two hours of being grilled, Lena has had enough and signals to Alana to end the press conference. Her assistant rushes to take her place at the microphone and ushers everyone outside. Lena asks Eli to make sure no one is lingering in the corridors before she slips away by the back door. She wonders where Jess has gone off to. Her friend would have usually helped her moderate the conference… Lena steps into the elevator and presses her keycard to the control panel. The black body generator isn’t ready yet. She is nearly done, but Lena fears it won’t be ready in time for the gala if she gets interrupted in her work every few minutes. She enters the Lab, ready to get back to work, only to stop when she notices the door of her office half open. She finds Jess there, hunched over the blueprints she had put in the secret safe hidden there. Jess looks up and stares at her impassively.

Lena narrows her eyes, walking furiously toward her friend, closing the door behind her. “How did you find this?”

Jess sighs tiredly and straightens up, meeting her glare unafraid. “A few nights ago I got an alert on my phone. Someone got into the restricted files you had us block access to. I got curious, especially when they were researching for the characteristics of Kryptonite.”

“You were spying on me?”

Jess ignores her accusation and pulls out a receipt from Jackson’s service. “And then we got a notice of a shipment from Lab 487, where I know for a fact your brother used to experiment on kryptonite when L-Corp was still Luthor Corp. The package came in two days ago. I got to it first before it was delivered to you…” Jess looks at her, pleadingly. “What are you doing, Lena? Please… Don’t tell me…” Jess points at the blueprints, eyeing the numbers, the drawings, looking at her incredulously. “Are you… Are you trying to build a time machine?”

It’s useless to hide it now. It was only a matter of time before Jess found out. Lena hasn’t been
particularly covert when doing her research. She has been single-minded and too focused to be aware of anything else. She has been working on it for nights on end, barely sleeping, and it paid off because the blueprints of the very first time machine lay on the desk between them. “It is my plan B,” Lena admits, standing her ground confronted by Jess’ thinly veiled reproach.

The shock in Jess’ eyes is to be expected, Lena reasons, it is quite an invention after all. It will propel humanity into a new future. It is necessary. It was her second chance. The shock Lena reads in Jess’ eyes quickly morphs into anger and disappointment and it feels like a slap to the face.

“These are just theories,” she defends herself, gathering the blueprints back into a pile and keeping them securely in her grip. “It’s not… It’s nothing concrete…” Lena lies.

“Don’t lie to me,” Jess growls, her voice full of reproach. “I read everything. Twice. And it looks like you are this close to successfully building a time machine. You ordered synthetic Kryptonite because you needed something powerful enough to power it up! This looks like more than just theory to me.” Her friend accuses her.

“If they’ve done it then it is possible!” Lena roars, angry and hopeless. Feeling like she is pressed into a corner. She has been trying her best her whole life. And she has never been good enough. Not worthy of Lillian’s love or of her brother’s protection. Not Luthor enough to be feared but certainly enough to be hated and made into a villain by the press. Falling in love… but not worthy enough to be loved back… Ever since Lex had been arrested, Lena had felt the control of her life slipping through her fingers. Everything she thought to be true, everything she found comfort in was now in shambles, tangled into an inexorable mess inside her mind. All she knows is that there is a war coming and she has to prevent it. She has to make sure that Kara won’t have to go back to the past to try to change the future again. Lena knows Jess doesn’t understand why she is doing this. Jess doesn’t understand how tiring it is to lose… to lose everything. “This is our last chance! Have you seen how close Cadmus is to causing widespread civil unrest? I feel like no matter what I do it isn’t enough. I feel like I’m already losing!” Lena screams, her voice hoarse, light headed and exhausted. She’s tired of losing. She’s tired of picking up the broken pieces of her life again and again.

“We don’t know that,” Jess argues, standing her ground and Lena wishes her friend would just back down. Just this once. But Jess doesn’t. Jess grabs her arms, and forces her to meet her eyes, trying forcefully to shake some sense into her. “There is no way to know what is going to happen for sure!”

Lena pushes Jess away. Hard. And the back of her friend’s legs bump into the desk behind her. But Lena is cold and determined, holding on desperately to the last thread of sanity she has left. The only thing that still makes sense to her. Save Kara. Save the world. “Then all the more reasons for us to be prepared…”

Jess flinches, looking at her like she is seeing her for the first time. A look Lena remembers seeing
people give to her brother during his trial. Jess straightens up, dust off her skirts and glares at her. “Do you know how reckless that is? Once something like this is out there… You can’t take it back. We don’t know the ramifications of an invention like this. Who knows what could happen! We could erase our timeline by using this. We don’t even know what happened to the other Kara or if she is even alive!”

Logically, there is a high probability that her ghost died when she disappeared. Lena knows that. She had thought about it again and again during sleepless nights. She has generated countless simulations with the algorithm she created to see if her Kara could be alive somewhere in another timeline or another universe or another plane of existence… The results were the same. Kara, her Kara, sacrificed herself to save her, and Lena knows that building a time machine won’t bring her back. No matter how hard she tries…

Jess freezes at her silence. Horror suddenly overtaking her features and Lena feels like she might have lost her trust for good this time. “Are you doing this for her? You want to go back to her?”

“Don’t be silly…” Lena retorts weakly. It’s not like she could. She knows that… The ground feels unsteady and Lena has nothing to hold on to anymore. Her vision gets blurry, black spots appear and the world tilts sideways.

“I’ve got you,” Jess groans, her voice impossibly close to her ear, arms holding her upright, guiding her body gently to the ground. Lena lets herself fall, staring dizzyingly at the dancing lights on the ceiling. “Lena, listen to me, you have to breathe with me,” Jess whispers and Lena only now notices the pain in her chest, this insurmountable pressure crushing her lungs little by little… It feels like dying. “Breathe with me,” Jess whispers again from behind her and Lena finally feels her chest expand and contract like waves crashing on the sand. The pain in her chest abates, sagging against her friend, utterly exhausted. Jess breathes against her slowly, her arms wound up tight around her. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t have pushed you.”

Lena shakes her head. “I’m sorry too,” she whispers, throat parched.

“We’ve all been on edge lately…” Jess murmurs, swaying her gently from side to side, like when she would get anxious on the icebreaker where they first met. The rhythmic movement calls back the fresh, saline air of the ocean and Lena closes her eyes, hearing the cries of seagulls and waves crashing against the hull. “Where is Eli?”

“Upstairs with Alana,” Lena answers as the memories fade away, replaced by the harsh light above them, hurting her eyes, by the cold, hard ground under her and the soft whirr of all the machines and computers in the Lab. “They were managing the press conference.”
“It’s pretty late. Have you eaten, yet?”

“I don’t remember,” Lena mutters as a wave of nausea suddenly hits her. Jess rubs her back and helps her stand to lie back down on the couch against the wall.

“I’m going to call him. Ask him to bring us some food. Try to rest,” her friend whispers, covering her with a blanket and switching off the light.

“Jess!” Lena calls her before she closes the door. Jess turns back toward her and Lena wishes the light shining from the Lab wouldn’t obscure her face because Lena needs to know. She needs to know if she is leaning too much over the edge. “Do you think I’m making a mistake?”

Jess doesn’t answer for awhile and Lena knows then that the answer won’t be the one she has been hoping for. “The last shipment of Isotope 454 is due to arrive in National City in two days for destruction. It’s over, Lena. You should let her go,” Jess replies gently but firmly and closes the door, plunging her in the dark.

Lena feels a tear slide down her temple because she can’t. Lena knows she can’t let go and she hopes, looking at the darkness enveloping her, that it won’t swallow her whole like it did with Lex.

“I’m not like him,” she whispers quietly, trying to convince herself that she won’t share the same fate as her brother.

***

They had been working all night on the black body field generator. An odd silence had overtaken the Lab, the three of them working quietly in that weird atmosphere that comes after a storm. The air charged with leftover energy, the tension dissipating slowly and yet not fast enough for the birds to sing back again…

Lena has just left Kara’s apartment after asking the reporter to set up a meeting with Supergirl. It had been surprisingly easy, even with the wary glance Alex Danvers had thrown at her. Lena had tried to go on like nothing happened, but the agent’s cool gaze had been more intimidating than Lena expected and she had to cut her visit short, suddenly remembering a meeting that didn’t exist.

Eli is now driving her back to L-Corp, humming softly to himself.
“Do you trust me?” Lena asks suddenly, interrupting his humming. Ever since Jess closed the door of the office and let her rest, Lena couldn’t help but wonder if she was going too far, leaning too much over the edge and it has been bothering her…

“Till the end,” he swears quietly.

“Even if I have the blueprints of a time machine?”

Eli shrugs. “They're just blueprints. It's not like you began to build it.” He looks at her waiting for a confirmation she can’t give. Lena sees him gulp, focusing back on the road. “It’s just plan B anyway. We won’t have to use it, right?”

“Right,” Lena echoes.

Eli parked the car and they walked back to her main office where Jess waits for them.

“How did it go?” Jess asks, looking up from a booklet of several new research projects Lena has to green light.

Eli closes the door behind him while Lena put her purse and coat on a hanger. Jess gives her the booklet and Lena opens it, sitting behind her desk, sighing heavily.

“Remind me to be careful around Alex Danvers…”

“Why?”

“She is too perceptive. She could be trouble if I’m not careful.” And if Maggie was right, Alex Danvers looked like she had a few surprises of her own up her sleeve. Lena hopes it will distract her enough to stop from looking too closely at her.

“Isn’t that a good thing, though?” Eli asks, taking a seat on the couch, remote in hand and browsing through channels. “I mean… She could help us?”
Lena shakes her head. “She works for the DEO. They are still a government agency. Wayne told me not to trust anyone from the government. I can’t take the risk that a mole might be hiding in the DEO. Detective Sawyer seems to be getting along with them. It should be enough for now...”

“I sent you the list of guests,” Jess reminds her. “I’ll go supervise the set-up for the gala. Call me if you need anything.”

Lena watches Jess make a quick exit, surprised.

“I guess it is best if we don’t tell her you’ve begun building your time machine?”

“I guess not,” Lena whispers as Eli switches the TV off.

“I’ll be in the Lab. Call me if you need anything.”

Lena nods, watching him leave. The door closes quietly behind him and Lena has the distinct impression that it will be harder to mend the crack this time.

Lena works until late into the night. She has been catching up on everything she’s been neglecting ever since she heard Cadmus’ broadcast. Jess had left an hour ago and Eli is still cooped up in the Lab... Lena sighs as numbers blur before her eyes and her hand cramps from holding her pen too long, too tight. She had opened the door to her balcony, hoping that the cool air would keep her awake long enough to at least finish up reading those reports, but to no avail, her mind keeps wandering off, unable to focus. Lena hears the fluttering of a cape behind her and the soft scratch of boots on the floor of her balcony. She frowns and turns around only to smile at seeing Kara there.

“Supergirl.”

“You wanted to see me?” Supergirl frowns, hands on her hips, voice hard, walking confidently into Lena’s office.

“Yes, thank you for coming.” Lena marvels at the effort Kara takes to change her attitude every time she switches personas. It isn’t perfect, Kara slips sometimes, but Lena only notices because she knows who Supergirl is. Otherwise, it would work perfectly. “I wanted to invite you to my party.”
Kara walks deeper into her office, facing away from her and Lena doesn’t know what to make of it. Surprised at how unreachable Kara suddenly seems in her Supergirl suit. “Kara Danvers told me you were going on with the fundraiser. You can’t. It’s definitely going to be a target for this gang.”

Kara faces her finally, disapproving and Lena didn’t think she would have to defend herself again after Kara already said yes to her. Lena frowns slightly, not expecting to have to convince Supergirl as well. “Well, that's why I need you there to protect it. With Supergirl in attendance, I know my guests and I will be safe.”

“You like to take risks, don't you?” Supergirl accuses her, frowning deeply. “First, when Corben was after you, and now this. Why?” she asks, not knowing the reason is her.

Lena has been doing all of this because Kara had asked her to. A Kara that came from the future yes, but Kara nonetheless. “Well, you can't live in fear. You, more than anyone, must understand that,” Lena replies, remembering Kara telling her several times not to be afraid, taking her in her arms and whispering that she believed in her. “Time and again, you risk everything to see justice done. Is it so hard to believe that I feel the same way?” Lena challenges the Girl of Steel. She isn’t the Kara she knew and Lena has to remember that even though she keeps slipping every time. This Kara hasn’t gotten to know her yet. She primarily sees her as a Luthor and Lena has to accept it, even though it hurts. “Or are you one of those people that think there's no such thing as a good Luthor?”

“I believe everyone should be judged on their own merits.”

“Then judge me on mine. This party must happen, and I’m asking you for your help,” Lena pleads. She doesn’t know what else she can do to secure Kara’s help in this. It used to be easy; her ghost would willingly come to help her every time she asked, and even when she didn’t. Lena feels a bit like a fish out of water, unable to guess Kara’s next course of action. She has failed to understand that this Kara was as much Supergirl as she was Kara Danvers. And if she wants to get to know her, she has to understand them both…

“I guess I have no choice,” Supergirl finally concedes.

“Thank you,” Lena breathes. It feels like a victory and Lena doesn’t hide her smile anymore nor does she quell the desire to mess up with Kara. A little playful revenge for scaring her in her bath in Metropolis. “So Kara and I will see you tomorrow night?”

“Right,” Supergirl pauses, a slight panic shining in her eyes for a few seconds. “Yes, Kara and I will
both be at your party,” she assures her, walking out to the balcony and flying off into the night.

Lena chuckles. She can’t wait to see how Kara will get out of this one.

***

The day finally comes at last. The trap has been set, and everything is ready. Detective Sawyer sent a few undercover cops to mingle in the crowd, and Eli, while technically on a date, has been standing by the exit ready to usher everyone out in case it gets out of hand. Lena has only seen Jess in passing, not really knowing where she stood with her friend at the moment. The party is a success for L-Corp so far. And Lena waits with jittery hands, trying hard not to make it obvious that she is waiting for the worst to happen.

“Lena!” Kara calls out from behind her, interrupting her talk with a benefactor.

“Kara, it's really great to see you. I'm glad you could come,” Lena says sincerely but she is curious to see how Kara will manage to appear as Supergirl at the same time. “Um, have you seen Supergirl?”

“I'm sure she's on her way,” Kara looks around.

Someone bumps abruptly into her. “Oh, I am so... Did I spill this on you? Does anybody have some seltzer?”

Lena looks down at her dress for a few seconds, only to see Supergirl land next to her. “Supergirl, I'm glad you could make it,” Lena comments utterly impressed.

“I still think this might be a bad idea.”

“Well, why don't we wait and see how the evening pans out,” Lena suggests, repressing a smile and letting Kara have this victory.

“I'll check the perimeter for any activity, and I'll be back at the first sign of danger,” Supergirl tells her and flies off. Lena watches her fly away until she can’t see her anymore.
She hears someone run up behind and heaved out a sigh. Lena turns toward them and smiles, surprised. “Kara!” Yes, she is definitely impressed. “You just missed Supergirl.”


Lena frowns at the odd saying and focuses solely back on her now that the magic trick ended. “I hope you’ll enjoy the party… There’s food if…”

“Food? Yes!” Kara exclaims, leaving her to make her way to a waiter.

Lena watches her leave with a bemused smile before National City’s Mayor takes her aside and engages her in another conversation about the financing of a new water plant outside city limits. Lena listens halfheartedly, spotting Eli in the crowd laughing with Alana. Lena smiles to herself, nodding distractedly to what the Mayor is saying and observes her protégé flirting with her assistant.

An impromptu dance floor opens up and a few couples dance to the sound of violins. It is peaceful, nearly perfect if it weren’t for the trap Lena laid out under the stage. A couple stands out, a light blue dress twirls in the crowd, and Lena feels like she got punched in the chest. It’s just a dance. A silly dance the two dancers don’t seem to take seriously. It’s just a dance, and yet Lena can’t help but feel pinpricks of jealousy stab her heart as Kara laughs in his arms, moving beautifully on the improvised dance floor. If Lena had been braver, she would have asked her herself. If she had been braver, Lena would have made the jump, with no fear of falling…

Her train of thought screeches to a halt at the sound of explosions. Lena flinches as another booms closer to her and shakes the ground. People scream and Lena is pushed against a table, its blunt edge biting painfully into her back.

“My, my... Look how many pretty things there are,” Milner bellows, holding the alien weapon confidently.

Lena steps in and stares him down, unable to hide the contempt from her voice. “Oh, you picked the wrong party to crash.”

“I don’t think so, princess.” He snaps her necklace off of her neck and the sting burns her skin. He turns away from her and Lena uses the distraction to quietly slip away listening to him threaten the rest of her guests. “All right, I'm going to keep this real simple, people. Hand over every ring, pearl,
diamond, watch, wallet and no one gets disintegrated.”

“Did you really think I wouldn't be here?”

Lena hears Supergirl exclaim before chaos erupts, and Lena slides unobserved under the stage. She crawls toward the black body field generator and powers it on. Nothing happens… “Come on,” Lena powers it off and on again. Nothing happens. Lena hears screaming, glass shattering and her fingers tremble as she stares at the device before her, confused as to why it isn’t working. It should work. It has to work. “Come on!” She hisses again, pushing on the button. Nothing happens. Lena’s heart stops… she knows she has failed.

_I believe in you._

Lena exhales forcefully and pulls her flashlight and pliers out; infinitely glad for the hidden pocket in her dress. She takes the lid off and shines the lights on the electrical circuit. She takes out a few wires, hoping that it might just be an electrical problem. A man slides abruptly under the stage, startling her. “Do you mind?”

“Oh. Is... Is that a Black Body Field Generator?”

“It will be if I can get it working,” Lena answers and resumes her work. She tightens the copper threads of the wire she took out before and plugs it back.

“This whole party... You set a trap for these guys,” he whispers sounding scandalized. She feels him look at her for confirmation but Lena doesn’t have the time to do anything but fix her device.

“Yeah,” she admits reluctantly. “A trap that will fail unless I can get this operational.” Panic rises inside of her and Lena wishes the man would just leave her alone so that she can fix this.

“Oh, so if the Black Body is at equilibrium with the alien weapons, then it will absorb the electromagnetic radiation and shut them down. This is genius,” the man exclaims creeping closer to her to examine the device.

If the situation wasn’t so dire, she would have smiled. Clearly, he knew what he was talking about and Lena disregards her annoyance for now. “I know, but the frequency and the wavelength, they’re a match. So...” Lena pauses, running back through every step of the device construction. She had
made sure to calibrate everything and yet, it lacked something… A spark…

“The induction coil,” the man whispers at the same time the answers finally comes to her, and reaches for the core vibrator. He hisses in pain as sparks fly.

“Wait,” Lena pushes his hands away from her device. “Let me do it. It’s the interrupter. The iron armature is not slotted properly,” Lena tweaks at it, a few sparks escape from the primary coil. The burning scent of copper fills her nose and the sparks suddenly stop.

“Punch it.”

Lena pushes on the interrupter, hoping that it will finally disconnect the primary current and force it to release the magnetic field. The man crawls out from under the stage as another explosion rings out.

“I think it worked!” he whispers back to her, a wide grin on his face.

Lena sighs in relief and crawls out from under the stage. It was close. Too close for her comfort. She dusts herself off only to face the curious stare of the crowd.

“Oh, we weren’t under there, so… We stopped it!”

The undercover cops come out of the crowd and surround the men responsible of the attack. Lena looks for Supergirl in the crowd but she is nowhere to be seen.

Kara suddenly appears out of nowhere, glasses askew. “Lena! Are you okay?”

Lena nods, still a bit dazed that it worked. “Yeah, I…”

“Kara!” Mike, or rather Mon-El, cuts in, pointing at a hole in his suit. “Those ray guns were…”

Kara elbows him hard in the side and looks at her apologetically. “I have to go. He’s had too much to drink.”
Lena blinks and watches them leave as suddenly as they had appeared. “Yeah,” Lena whispers to no one. She observes the chaos abates around her. Midnight strikes and time goes on. It goes on without her.

“You did it…” Eli nudges her with his shoulder.

“Where’s Alana?” Lena asks absentmindedly, feeling the adrenaline leave her body.

“She is doing damage control with Jess… Come on. Let’s get out of here,” Eli whispers, a hand gripping at her arm firmly, leading her away.

Lena nods and lets him guide her away, utterly exhausted.

***

She slept for most of her Sunday and when she woke up she had to deal with the press and phone calls from her shareholders and National City’s Mayor. She gets reprimanded and praised; the press doesn’t know whether to hail her as a hero or a wannabe vigilante. Her phone rings again and Lena picks it up, straightening slightly at hearing Detective Sawyer heave out a sigh on the other end.

“I got bad news. They are all dead. We’ve never seen anything like it. I’ll bring you the results from the coroner but it looks like they each had a microchip in their brain and it just exploded…”

Lena curses quietly, rubbing at her forehead, aggravated. “They are not leaving any loose ends.”

“This is bad, Lena.”

“Indeed,” Lena nods only to stop, eyes wide, a smug smile on her lips. “Wait! Are we now on first name basis?”

Detective Sawyer chuckles on the other end. “It pains me to say this, but you did make my job easier for the past few weeks.”
“What a privilege…” Lena laughs, falling back onto her chair.

“It is.”

“Admit it. You like us, Maggie…” Lena replies, testing the name between her lips. Smiling at hearing the Detective laugh on the other end.

“You guys are alright! Don’t make me revoke it,” Maggie warns her mockingly and pauses over the phone. Lena waits and steps out of the balcony, watching the sunset. “You did good, Lena. Kara would have been proud.”

“Thank you,” Lena breathes and hangs up, trembling slightly. She closes her eyes and soaks up on the last rays on sunlight. She doesn’t know what the future holds for her. Lena feels adrift longing for warmth and words whispered in the night while laying in bed, longing for someone who would make her crêpes in the morning. Someone to call home.

Lena hears the fluttering of a cape next to her and when she opens her eyes, she is surprised to realize that it is dark outside, the night well on its way. Supergirl smiles at her and Lena wishes falling in love wouldn’t be so easy.

“Patrolling the city?”

Kara nods.

“Thank you for saving the day at my party…”

“I was only the distraction,” Kara acknowledges, putting her hands on her hips, something Supergirl seemed to be doing a lot. Kara looks at her, appraising her quietly. “It looked like you had everything under control… You took a great risk, Ms. Luthor. Why didn't you tell me what you were up to?”

Lena sighs, walking back into her office. “I doubt you would've believed that a Luthor just wanted to see justice done.”
“Well, I couldn’t have stopped them without you. Thank you,” Kara tells her and Lena notices something new shining in her eyes. She doesn’t know what is it yet but it makes her heart flutter.

“Who would’ve believed it? A Luthor and a Super working together…” Supergirl smiles and for a second, Lena was sure it was her ghost smiling back at her. It makes her hope that maybe Kara, this Kara, might someday return her feelings. Maybe she still has a chance… “I hope we can work together more in the future.”

“Me too,” Kara agrees, smiling at her but dread fills her as she sees her mother step into her office.

“Oh! I didn't realize you had company,” her mother apologizes but Lena notices the duplicity in the coldness of her smile, in the smug light shining in her eyes. Her mother must have been waiting by the door, listening to everything, like always.

“Would you excuse me, Supergirl? I have to take this.”

“Of course,” Kara excuses herself, walking out of her office to her balcony.

“Sorry I missed your party.”

Lena would have usually watched Kara fly away but she learned quite young to never let her mother out of her sight when talking to her. “What else is new? What can I do for you, Mom?”

Lillian watches her coldly, with that calculating gaze of hers. Everything was a transaction for her. People hold a certain value in her eyes, and Lena’s seems to fluctuate depending of what her mother needed from her. “Can’t a mother check on her daughter after those criminals dared to attack her?”

Lena crosses her arms over her chest not buying it for a second. “You never cared before. What changed? We both know that’s not why you are here.”

Her mother looks around her office and Lena reads the contempt, the judgment as her eyes fall on every piece of furniture she owns. She walks toward her window, the door leading to the balcony still open and peers outside, looking bored. “I heard about your alien detection device…”
Lena chuckles humorlessly, rolling her eyes. Of course her mother would come to talk about her anti-alien views. It’s been all she’s been talking about ever since Lex waged a war against Superman. “What about it?”

“It’s a shame really, that you wouldn’t go through with it…” Her mother runs her fingers over her desk, her face scrunching in distaste at an imaginary speck of dust on her finger. “I thought it was brilliant. I thought you finally showed initiative and boldness like your brother did when he was at the head of Luthor Corp.”

“I’m not Lex,” Lena hisses.

“Clearly…” her mother agrees with a cold, indulging smile.

Lena scoffs. “Is that all you came here for? Criticize how I run L-Corp?”

Her mother laughs. The sound rings false to her ears and chills her skin. “I don’t care about L-Corp,” she declares with disdain. Lena wishes she would just leave. “Always as sensitive, I see.” Lena clenches her jaw, cursing her eyes for betraying her. Her mother shakes her head in disappointment. “It seems that you still haven’t learned. Your brother-”

“Leave,” Lena hisses angrily, praying desperately for the tears to wait for her mother to leave until they have to fall.

Her mother smiles and looks around her office once again. “Well, I’m glad you are well, Lena. Obviously I’ve overstayed my welcome…”

Her mother finally leaves and Lena waits and waits making sure that she truly does leave her office. She hears the sound of the elevator open and close and Lena staggers back, using her desk for support. Lena should be used to it by now. She should be used to her mother’s jibes, her constant criticism. She has been like this ever since she knew her. If there was any comfort to find in this, is that Lillian Luthor would never change no matter how hard Lena wishes she would.

Lena calls Eli back from the Lab and asks him to drive her back to the penthouse. It has been a while since she has been there and Lena wants to forget; infuriated by how easy it was for her mother to break her.
The penthouse is quiet, dark, dusty and cold. Eli takes his leave and Lena has to remember to call someone to sweep up the place at least make it clean even if it isn’t lived in. Back in Metropolis, she would have been glad to have some down time and crash on her couch, indulge in donuts and watch some trashy reality TV, only because it stops her from thinking too much, only because the stories depicted in it are more outrageous and ridiculous than her own life. Lena takes her heels off and throws them to the side, sighing in relief at finally feeling the flat surface of the floor on the soles of her feet. She takes her bun out and runs her fingers through her hair, massaging her scalp. She takes off her tight skirt and the flimsy top, leaving them on the floor behind her. She sheds away the perfect image of Lena Luthor and slips into comfortable clothes, warm and soft against her skin. It feels meaningless. Lena doesn’t know who she is anymore outside of the image she portrays to the world.

She shouldn’t but Lena grabs the bottle of absinthe Jess gave her from the drawer and steps out on her balcony. It’s cold. That’s the first thing she notices, the bottle of absinthe securely in her grip. The night gives her goosebumps and Lena inhales deeply, wanting to scream as she towers above the city; high enough to see the entirety of National City spread below her, and yet high enough to feel alone in that ocean of light. She uncaps the bottle, inhaling the strong scent, the memory of it already burning her throat, making her head spin. She promised herself she would never drink one drop of that alcohol again. Not after she had watched Kara, another Kara, suddenly appear in her living room, pleading with her to help… This has been a dark time in her life, where everything just felt too heavy, too much to handle. Where relief can only be gained through forgetfulness, numbness and euphoria.

Lena still feels Veronica’s lips on her skin. She can still smell her perfume all around her like an imprint she just can’t wash away. There is this unease, this anxiety twisting her guts, pounding inside her heart and this overwhelming feeling of being trapped. Trapped in her own body, betrayed by her own thoughts in a prison made of her own flesh and blood.

She exhales loudly, trying to get all of these feelings out, trying to breathe again and not drown. How ironic is it that for her whole life she had wished to change the course of time, be able to change one event, save one life and now that she can do it, now that she is so close to being able to change everything; she wishes she could just let time take its course and remain blissfully ignorant of the micro changes she causes, of the perpetual worry of not knowing whether the outcome will be positive or negative.

Lena wonders if she is making it worse.

The weight she feels on her shoulders only gets heavier as time goes by and Lena slides to the floor, against the cold, metallic railing of her balcony. People are unpredictable. They don’t obey any law besides their own. And maybe it had been foolish to fall in love with a ghost. She can’t hold on to the past forever… It’s silly and yet so damn logical.
She knows better than to bring the bottle of absinthe to her lips, the scent strong and sweet. Lena takes a sip. It burns her lips, her tongue and then her throat. Her eyes moisten and Lena inhales deeply as the liquid carves a way through her chest, deep into her belly, warming her from the inside. Her ghost wouldn’t have approved. She would have frowned, berating her with that crinkle between her eyebrows, hands on her hips. Just like she did with Mon-El. How stupid was it that she should be jealous of a dance? A silly dance… it is silly, it is just a bit of jealousy but Lena can’t help but notice it, and the thought of it makes her bring back the absinthe to her lips. It blurs everything.

Sweet forgetfulness.

Lena sputters, surprised when a hand suddenly pries the bottle away from her hers and wrenches it away from her lips.

“I don’t think this is a good idea,” a voice admonishes her.

Lena looks up at the shadow, vision slightly blurry, and then laughs uncontrollably as the woman frowns at her. Her bottle gets confiscated, put against the wall and far away from her reach. This bottle really does have magical powers, Lena thinks in awe, taking in the woman in all her glory, framed by the moonlight, cape swaying in the wind.

“I really don’t think it is a good idea to drink on a balcony, Ms. Luthor.”

“I think…” Lena laughs again at the irony of this meeting, drying a few tears with the back of her hand. “I think that it is the best idea I’ve ever had. It conjured you after all,” she grins to herself, mumbling the last part, reaching for the bottle only to be stopped by the firm grip on her shoulder. Strong and warm. Impossibly warm.

“I don’t understand,” Supergirl frowns, not getting the joke, not knowing that they’ve already had this conversation before. “Were you- Were you trying to contact me?”

Lena breathes deeply, trying to sober up but immediately regrets it as she catches Kara’s perfume in the air as the hero kneels down before her.

“Because they are more effective ways to contact me than drinking in the middle of the night…” she adds and holds her chin to check her pupils.
Lena falls into blue eyes, pulled by some sort of magnetism that shouldn’t exist. A magnetism that should be made illegal. Because all Lena wants to do is to fall into her arms and never let go. Lena would never let her go again.

Supergirl let go of her chin, stepping back, a slight blush overtaking her cheeks. “Are you sure everything is okay, Ms. Luthor? What are you doing out here? Did something happen since I left your office?”

“I…” Lena considers telling her the truth. But Kara is blurry and she might reveal too much. Lena is so used to lying to protect herself that she fears the one time she chooses to tell the truth, all of her secrets will spill out. Uncontrollably. You don’t pierce a hole in the middle of a dam and not expect it to crumble one day, no matter how small the hole is. And so Lena keeps quiet. Kara watches her with patience and kindness in her eyes but Lena only talks when she is able to lie again. “Would you believe me if I told you I was celebrating?”

Supergirl tilts her head, the frown still firmly in place. “What are you celebrating?”

“Well, I did save you!” Lena exclaims, the absinthe making her bold and cocky.

Supergirl chuckles, sitting next to her, her impossibly warm shoulder pressed against hers. Lena feels her heart pound painfully against her chest as Kara look out toward the stars with a slight smile on her face. “That you did. I did thank you, though.”

It feels surreal. Lena feels like she is back in her brother’s penthouse, whispering secrets in the night, soothed by Kara’s presence. The absinthe makes everything blurry and Lena wishes she hadn’t drink that poison again. She should have known better. It feels like being hurled in the air. It is terrifying and exhilarating, waiting for the fall. The inevitable fall.

“Does it get tiring?” Lena asks finally, making sure to keep her hands to herself, focusing back onto the conversation as hard as she can.

Kara scotches closer to her and Lena shivers slightly. Kara gets even closer to her, noticing the chill shaking her body and Lena suppress the agonized groan about to escape from her lips. Kara’s warmth spreads from her shoulder to her thigh. “What does get tiring?”

“So saving the world,” Lena whispers. Kara doesn’t answer and Lena turns her gaze toward the sky, watching the stars, looking for answers because she has been trying to save the world for the last few
weeks and she is already so, so tired.

“It can be lonely,” Kara confesses finally. “Like you have everything to prove. To the world but mostly to yourself… And it still doesn’t feel like it is enough,” she whispers, somber and Lena nods, feeling tears sting her eyes. Kara exhales next to her, like she is freeing herself from a weight and looks back at her, smiling again, bright and hopeful. “But when it happens, when I feel down, I just remember the people I am protecting… and then, it doesn’t feel as lonely anymore…”

And Lena falls.

Kara’s lips are warm. Impossibly warm. They burn. Their mingled breaths scorch her lips and Lena kisses Kara harder. Hopelessly greedy. Lena kisses her and doesn’t let go. Kara gasps and Lena falls deeper against her, burying her hands into soft hair, about to straddle the warm body under her only to be pushed back, gently.

“Ms. Luthor… I… I- I don’t… I’m not…” Kara stammers, wide-eyed and staggers away. Kara blinks rapidly, confused and Lena understands the mistake she made because Lena has been falling for a while now but there is no one to catch her. Kara clears her throat and stands up abruptly. Lena can’t bring herself to look at her. Lena can’t watch the rejection shine in Kara’s eyes. Kara becomes Supergirl once again. Lena feels it in the aura of confidence, powerful and distant, like the sun that Kara projects when she becomes the superhero. “It’s getting late. You should get inside before you get cold.”

Lena nods, already cold. Frozen by this moment of weakness. “Can we- Can we pretend this never happened?”

Supergirl doesn’t answer.

“Please…” Lena pleads and looks up. Another mistake.

“I… Of course, Ms. Luthor.” Supergirl nods, closed off and unreachable.

“Please, stop calling me that,” Lena sighs tiredly. “Lena’s fine. Just Lena…”

“I-” Supergirl tilts her head to the side, eyebrow creased in concentration. “I’m sorry there’s-”
Lena nods in understanding. “Go save the world, Supergirl.”

Supergirl nods and flies off into the night. Lena follows the billowing cape until she can’t see it anymore. She exhales abruptly, holding back the sobs that threatens to spill out of her throat and grips the metal bar of her balcony, trying hard to steady her breathing; shaken by the memory of a kiss not returned still lingering on her lips.

It makes her wonder if Jess wasn’t right after all.

She ought to let her go.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading. Take care!
The war began quietly. It lulled everyone into a false sense of security. No one could have predicted the chain of events that led to the full blown war raging in National City.

It slithered perniciously into everyone’s life. So quiet and invasive that no one really noticed the repeated warning signs thundering in the air. An atmosphere of unrest, tension and instability lurked in the streets and peaceful protests turned bloody; vibrant districts were silenced by fear, and locals became wary of strangers… aliens. Incidents involving aliens became more and more frequent in spite of the DEO’s efforts to contain the situation. Destruction became a daily occurrence around National City in spite of Supergirl’s heroics. Cadmus’ broadcasts became even more frequent until they became an expected part of the city’s mediascape.

The beginning of the war had been like the first signs of a storm. Signs that lasted for months on end. They lingered above the city’s skyline for so long that everyone got used to the dark and to the breathlessness that comes with such a heavy atmosphere. National City waited… waited for the sky to break and when it did… When it did? It happened like a surgical strike. The thunder boomed and struck right into L-Corp. No amount of preparation could have prepared Lena for the chaos that would rain upon her. It struck her so suddenly that she was literally blindsided by the blood rain falling down upon National City.

It felt inevitable, and she should have…

She should have…
Lena skids to a halt, pushes the door open and it clangs against the wall. Her heart stops for a few seconds and she waits and waits, gun at the ready, staring up the stairs as blood drips into her right eye.

The main corridor of the 19th floor is silent. It’s too silent for her liking, but Lena retreats into it after no one shows up on the stairs. The flickering lights above do nothing to help her headache or clear her vision. She already has one eye impaired by the blood gushing out of her forehead, and the ringing in her ear doesn’t help her focus on her surroundings either. It’s bad, Lena knows this, because it’s not the blood she feels on her face that worries her most right now; it’s the sudden dizziness that overtook her a few minutes ago as she was running down the stairs between the 20th and the 19th floor. It’s the sudden nausea and instability that made her kneel down and press a hand to her chest as she tried to breathe that rang the warning bells.

The bump at the back of her head must be more serious than she first thought and it’s only through sheer willpower that she manages to drag herself to the lab and punch the code in. The sealed door opens and Lena dives right in, closing the door immediately behind her. The silence in the chemical testing lab is even more oppressing than it is in the rest of the building where several hitmen are chasing her. Blood drips down her face and Lena slides against the door, exhausted and bruised. She sits on the ground, feeling the cold floor under her left hand as the other finally loosens its grip on Eli’s gun.

“Please, Kara!” Lena hisses in the silence, hoping that somehow the superhero will hear her from wherever she might be. Kara Danvers has been nothing but forthcoming and kind in her friendship in spite of the kiss she stole from her that night on her balcony. It had put a wedge between them big enough that Kara has felt hesitant to see her when she wore the suit. But she never failed to respond to her call… She has just saved her from an imminent death thirty minutes ago. She’ll come back…

Lena stares at the dark stain on her dress growing larger as more blood drips down her face. Lena stares, unfocused, with the nagging feeling that Kara might not be able to save her this time…

Maybe if she hadn’t-

Maybe if she-

Maybe…

***
The past week has been nothing but a blur. Routine has settled in and Lena has been working non-stop to quiet down the noise in her head.

She hasn’t heard anything from Kara or Supergirl ever since she kissed her on her balcony. She does see the superhero on the news from time to time. Breaking news was Supergirl’s niche and reports of her fighting criminals, stopping bank robberies, or fighting a new vigilante called Guardian broke out randomly during the day. So, it’s not like Kara had disappeared. Lena knows Kara is avoiding her. To be honest, she deserves it. She made a mistake. A small miscalculation in a perfectly laid out plan. She should have known better than to let herself be ruled by emotions. Emotions are unreliable. Isn’t that what Lillian always told her? Feelings make you weak. No amount of water, breathing exercises, or talks with her therapist has managed to appease her mind, nor did it let her forget the look on Kara’s face just after the kiss. She had let her resolve weaken, and her impulsiveness mixed with feelings and alcohol might have cost her everything.

There have been talks in the company. Her employees have been wondering why she stayed so late every day, why she was always the first in the office and the last one to leave. The truth is that Lena doesn’t even leave the building. Jess and Eli have been begging her to go home. They were subtle at first. Jess would give her a few insistent glances and Eli would jingle his car keys, sighing heavily while waiting at the door of her office. After a few days, they had no qualms about ordering her to go home or changing the password of L-Corp’s network after 9pm. Cracking Eli’s firewalls had been entertaining at first but it quickly bored her and Lena has been spending her time down in the Lab instead.

She is used to sleeping on the couch now. Sleepless nights are spent in working on her time machine, especially now that Jess has stopped breathing down her neck and her plan B is nearly finished. She hasn’t tested it yet, but theoretically it should work.

Lena stares at the glowing green kryptonite that will power up her machine. How ironic is it that the only thing capable of weakening Supergirl might also be the only thing capable of saving her? Of course, Lena understands Jess’ disapproval and anger. Her arguments were all valid but Lena can’t back down. She can’t have this trump card in her sleeve and not be ready to use it if there is ever a critical situation.

In all honesty, without testing, Lena isn’t sure what her time machine does. Will she go back in time for a few minutes or a few years? Is there a correlation between the amount of power and the amount of time she will go back? Is that why Kara disappeared? Because she didn’t have enough energy to power the time machine created in her timeline? At least, that’s what Lena understood when Kara tried to tell her everything she knew when she got her memories back... Lena sighs, puts back the synthetic Kryptonite in its lead case and stores it in the cabinet under her TV. She won’t know until she tries.

Her office is now bathed in warm red light as another day ends. Lena walks out to her balcony and
watches the sunset with longing and impatience. She can’t wait for the sun to disappear. She can’t wait to test out her theory under cover of darkness while National City sleeps peacefully. In the back of her mind, Lena hears several warnings go off, but she ignores them. She can’t let Cadmus win.

The sound of keys jingling behind her brings her back from her musings. She doesn’t have to turn around to know that Eli is looking at her with concern. Lena doesn’t have to see him to feel his hesitation and unease toward her. It makes her wonder when it became like this. When did Eli start being afraid to talk to her?

“Someone is here for you,” he tells her quietly, somberly even, and it makes Lena’s heart ache as the distance between them suddenly increases. She hasn’t been on her A game lately. She’s been distracted and moody, dismissive and withdrawn. Eli and Jess have taken the brunt of it and Lena doesn’t know how to apologize to them. “I’m going to let her in.”

“Eli! Wait!” Lena calls out but he doesn’t listen and Lena watches helplessly as he walks away.

He opens the door and Kara walks in. To say that Lena is surprised would be an understatement. Lena is frozen to the spot, tongue-tied as Kara thanks Eli with a smile and then looks her straight in the eyes. No amount of self-talk or berating could have prepared her for this. Apprehension and unease flash briefly in Kara’s eyes before being quashed down by the famous Danvers smile. A deceptive smile that seems to hide the hesitation, panic and confusion Lena saw briefly in those blue eyes. Supergirl is gone and Kara Danvers illuminates her office with an infuriating smile. Kara Zor-El juggles her different personas to hide herself and Lena wishes she wouldn’t. Lena wishes Kara wouldn’t be so afraid to talk to her.

“You asked for a meeting?” Kara asks, beaming at her. It throws her off for a second at how easily Kara Danvers manages to remove the tension from the atmosphere, making her relax in mere moments after the terrible weeks she’s had stressing over their kiss. An unreciprocated kiss, Lena reminds herself. This is Kara Danvers, not Supergirl, and Lena has to remember that if she doesn’t want Kara to be suspicious of her. Kara makes a point of differentiating the two, changing everything from her posture to her mannerisms. Kara walks timidly toward her couch, still hesitant and only sits down at Lena’s nod. Kara sighs and looks at her expectantly. “Is it for business or just for a chat? Because I can totally do both. It’s been awhile since I’ve seen you.”

Lena frowns, glancing at Eli who nods vigorously behind the reporter, gives her a thumb up and then disappears out the door, leaving them alone in the office. Lena curses him quietly but smiles inwardly at his not-so-subtle nudge.

“It has. Thank you for coming here,” Lena sits down next to Kara, making sure to be at a safe distance from the reporter.
“No problem. So what do you need me for?”

She had missed this, Lena realizes, as Kara smiles at her. She had missed this effortless camaraderie. New friends were hard to come by, and Lena had missed Kara’s presence. If only she could apologize for the kiss, right here, right now. “I need my friend.”

“Su- Sure.” Kara looks at her taken aback. Her eyes narrow imperceptibly but she hides it by fumbling with her glasses. “Fr- Friends. I mean, of course we are friends. You helped me so, so much with the alien fight club and then there was the Gala-” Kara suddenly cuts herself off with a sheepish smile. “I’m here…”

She takes pity on the reporter who blushes brightly as soon as their eyes meet. Lena wonders if Kara is thinking of the kiss right now. Lena wonders if it has been plaguing Kara’s mind as much as it plagued hers. “Just tell me about your day. Take my mind off of work.”

“Well,” Kara smiles, relieved. “There has been a lot going on lately. I mean with the Thorul Arctic Research Station and now Guardian showing up in National City… There has been a lot to cover.”

“I can imagine. Didn’t Guardian help Supergirl, though? I saw the TV coverage…”

“He did,” Kara nods, frowning slightly. “He did but I don’t know. It’s weird to conceal their identity if they are here to protect…” Kara trails off and looks her straight in the eye. Lena knows that whatever Kara is steeling herself to ask might just change everything. “So, seeing anyone?”

Lena laughs at Kara’s bluntness, hiding her true inquiry immediately behind an innocent smile and a shrug of her shoulder.

“You wanted to talk,” Kara defends herself and then laughs. “We can talk about anything. That’s what friends are for.”

Indeed, that’s what friends are for, but she has never been friends with Kara to begin with. It isn’t friendship she is looking for and it’s unfair. It is unfair to Kara to have all of these expectations put on her when Lena isn’t even willing to tell her the truth. That’s what her therapist has been telling her again and again, and yet Lena stays paralyzed in fear at the thought of ever telling Kara the truth. The whole truth. How she fell in love with her before she even really knew her. Lena hides her turmoil by getting up and pouring herself a glass of water. She can see how badly Kara wants to ask
her about the kiss. Lena sees it in the way Kara’s gaze stays on her, alert and attentive to her every movement. It lingers sometimes on her lips before the reporter looks away with a blush coloring her cheeks.

Lena realizes in that silence that the lie goes both ways. Kara isn’t willing to take the first step either. She’d rather circle around the truth in hope of finding the answer she is looking for. Maybe friendship is enough... And so, Lena deflects. She’s pretty good at that. “If I didn’t know better I’d swear Snapper put you in charge of the gossip column...”

“Oh, no, no, no! It’s not-” Kara stops and rolls her eyes at her, puffing out a laugh. “Don’t look at me like that!”

“Like what?” Lena frowns good-naturedly, knowing full well the effect she can have on people with a slight smile and the raising of an eyebrow.

“Like that! Like you know something that I don’t!”

Lena laughs at the irony of that statement. “I’m not seeing anyone. Are you?”

Kara’s smile stills. The silence lingers as she has yet to reply. It hangs in between them expectant and heavy. Both unwilling to divulge secrets that might change everything. Friends might be a good fit for them. Just friends. Lena might not be ready for more. It’s selfish but she doesn’t want to let go of the memory of her ghost. Lena doesn’t want to share it with this Kara either. Afraid she might lose the last piece of herself that had loved her.

***

Lena jostles awake as a loud noise reverberates into the corridor. The dizziness doesn’t go away... It is worse and Lena feels the remnants of her dinner come back up her throat violently. She vomits, turning her body to the side and grimaces at the acrid smell filling up her nose. She shouldn’t have stopped. She should have kept going because now her body is sluggish and weak and surely her hiding place won’t hide her for long. She has to do something. She can’t just stay here, hidden when Eli is somewhere in the building risking his life to give her enough time to escape. She has to-

She has to-
“Fuck you, Alana!” Lena groans painfully. She pushes herself up; the floor tilts sideways and Lena crashes against the wall, gulping for air. She should have known. She should have listened to Jess when she told her there was something fishy about the new assistant. She shouldn’t have dismissed it as overprotection. She should have listened to her. She should have listened and maybe her friend wouldn’t be missing.

In hindsight, Jess’ strings of excuses for not showing up for work had been incredibly out of character. Her voicemails and shorts conversations on the phone should have raised a red flag at least. Especially when she kept asking for days off in spite of her well-known dedication to her work. Claiming a sudden sickness didn’t make sense either when the last time Lena saw her friend she had been full of energy and fired up to make the last of Isotope 454 inert. They had fooled her mother and Lena remembers celebrating it with her with a few glasses of champagne… She had been so relieved to have finally stopped the Medusa virus that she hadn’t looked much further when she got the first string of texts a few days after. After the stormy conversations they’d had Lena had gladly given Jess a few days off, giving her friend some space in case she might decide to just leave and never come back. In hindsight, nothing really added up. Lena had let her fear rule over her and Alana kidnapped Jess right under her nose. Lena had been distracted and Jess paid the price. Luke did too…

Lena notices the phone on the counter on the other end of the room and staggers toward it, fixing it with a glare as if daring it to disappear in front of her eyes. She needs to call Kara or Maggie or even J’o-

The floor shakes under her feet and Lena holds on to the counter to keep her balance. She closes her eyes, hoping it will prevent her from throwing up again. Dull sounds resonate above her and she looks at the ceiling as a bit of plaster falls on her.

They are closing in on her.

Eli had placed their last two Molotov’s on the 24th floor. They would have been activated as soon as the hitmen pushed the door open.

“Fuck you, Alana!” Lena curses again, gritting her teeth as black spots appear in her vision. Her assistant had made sure to disable the fire alarms and most of the phones in the building were out. Their only chance was to get to one of the phones in the labs, as their landlines weren’t connected to the main electrical line. Lena zeroes in on the phone and grabs it.

She should have known better than to believe it was over. She should have known that neutralizing Isotope 454 would only be the beginning.
Lena watches impassively her mother get arrested by the NCPD.

It had been surprisingly easy to fool her. It had been surprisingly easy to let everyone think that she had turned evil. Supergirl had seemed to believe it. Today was the first time that Kara had been comfortable enough to show up as Supergirl after the kiss on the balcony. Lena was used to seeing Kara Danvers for an impromptu lunch or for a chat after office hours, but Supergirl had been absent. It is clear that Kara feels safer talking to her as Kara Danvers, her friend, than as Supergirl, a potential love interest. And if it hadn’t been for Kara’s not-so-subtle way of gleaning information, Lena wouldn’t have known what was going on. Yesterday’s interview about “Women of Power and the Mothers Who Molded Them” had been telling and Lena had known immediately that something wasn’t right. But she would have never imagined that it would lead to her mother’s arrest for attempted genocide on the alien population of National City.

“Lena?”

Lena hums absentmindedly as Maggie appears in her line of sight.

“Ready to go?”

Lena nods but her gaze strays toward a red cape. Lena watches Supergirl hug her friend in relief.

Maggie sighs beside her and squeezes her shoulder. “Come on,” she whispers, taking her gently by the arm and guides her toward her car.

Lena follows with a heavy heart.

“Wait!”

Lena freezes as she hears Kara jog after them. The anger and wariness Lena saw in Kara’s eyes in her office still haunts her. Lena doesn’t think she will ever forget the look Kara gave her as she thought she was about to betray her… Don’t do it, Lena. Lena prepares herself for the worst and turns around.
“I can fly you home,” Supergirl offers with a smile. Lena stares, too stunned to answer. “I mean… if you want to that is,” she finishes hesitantly.

“I hate flying.”

Supergirl’s smile falters and Lena hisses in pain as an elbow hits her between her ribs.

“Damn, sorry!” Maggie exclaims suddenly while checking her phone. “I just- I just got a message that I’m needed at the precinct. Would you mind taking Ms. Luthor home Supergirl?” Maggie doesn’t wait for an answer. She waves them goodbye, gets in her car and drives away.

Lena stares at the fading light incredulously.

“I can always call you a cab…” Kara suggests, scratching the back of her head.

Lena shakes her head, still bemused by Maggie’s quick departure. It makes her wonder if Eli and the Detective aren’t teaming up against her by literally pushing her into Kara’s arms when she least expects it but she can’t deny that she feels grateful for those stolen moments. Moments she would have never have the courage to act on. She steps toward Supergirl and swallows back her fear of flying, pushed forward by an irrepressible desire to feel close to her after finally accomplishing what the other Kara had asked her to do before fading away. “I- I’ll take you up on that offer. Thank you.”

Kara picks her up, holds her tight against her chest and Lena falls willingly into the embrace as memories of another Kara pressing her against her body fill up her mind. Lena holds on tight and catches the eyes of Kara’s friend who looks at her with an odd expression on his face just before Kara elevates them a few meters above the ground. Lena hides her whimper by gripping at Kara’s shoulders and presses her face against her neck, closing her eyes tightly.

“Don’t be afraid. I’m not going to let you fall,” Kara chuckles against her ear and Lena shivers.

“You better not.”

Kara laughs. “Hold on tight.”
Lena shrieks as Kara soars up in the sky. And just like that, Lena is flying. Just like that, Lena feels free. Weightless. As if the world had no hold on her. As if Kara’s embrace made Lena untouchable, strong and secure with the world at her feet.

“Open your eyes,” Kara whispers.

Lena does and it is breathtaking. National City lights up below them while the stars shine just above, bright and infinite. It is intoxicating. Supergirl stops mid-air, staring up above and Lena witnesses unwittingly the fine line Kara is walking on. There’s longing and wistfulness in her eyes as she stares at a world alive only in memories. Supergirl floats in the air, high above the city but never close enough to reach the stars and they stand in this in-between where suddenly it feels okay not to fit in. It feels okay not to know where they belong.

“I love flying.”

“I can see why.”

Silence falls upon them but Lena doesn’t feel uncomfortable. This silence is filled with understanding and words they don’t need to vocalize to acknowledge. A language shared that spoke of loneliness, yearning and enchantment. It’s like building a bridge between worlds.

“Thank you for what you did tonight,” Supergirl whispers, looking back at her, “and I wanted to apologize too...”

Lena blushes and looks away only now realizing she had been staring at Kara this whole time. “Why?”

“I didn’t trust you when you could have used my help. You went after your mother alone and I know how difficult it is to stand up against your own family.”

Lena nods, twiddling with Kara’s cape, not knowing how to respond. The fabric feels foreign to her fingertips. Otherworldly. Lena huffs at her silly observation.

“And... And I know you told me to forget about the kiss but I can’t. I feel like we should talk about it.”
“Is that why we’ve been floating in the air? To prevent me from running away if we talked about it?”

“Maybe?” Supergirl shrugs with a sheepish smile. “You tend to run away when you want to protect yourself, which is odd because at the same time you always seem to run straight into trouble.”

Lena laughs at Kara’s observation. It pains her to admit it but she can’t really object to any of that.

“A lot has been happening lately. All so suddenly and…” Supergirl steels herself, taking a deep breath only to pin her down with a searching look, quiet and invasive and blue eyes roaming all over her face. “I’ve never been more confused than I am now. But of all the things I’m confused about, I don’t want to be confused about you. I need an answer… do- do you have feelings for me?”

“Yes,” Lena answers immediately. It comes out of her chest without much control. She had dreaded this moment for so long, hyped it up in her head, stressed and cried so much about it during sleepless nights and moments of doubt that it surprises her at how easily the confession comes out. How little effort it took to let it out. Maybe it was just time. Maybe it was finally time to allow herself to breathe. Yes, Lena wants to shout. There’s so much she wants to say but feels she has to hold back for Kara’s sake.

Lena doesn’t say that every time Kara Danvers calls her a friend she wants her to mean something else, something more. Lena doesn’t say that she waits for Kara to look at her like she used to… like her ghost used to. Days pass and the wait stretches on longer and longer… and Lena berates herself for even hoping in the first place. Lena doesn’t say how vulnerable she feels to have Kara, and yet not have her at all. It makes her wonder if she changed things around too much… If Kara with her memories intact could ever love her, knowing what Lena represents. Maybe her ghost was just an oddity in the whole weird scenario of time travelling. Maybe it just wasn’t meant to be…

By the look on Kara’s face, Lena knows that this answer isn’t the one she had been expecting. Maybe Kara had hoped for an easy answer, for Lena to run away again and bury her head in the sand. Not give her the truth. Lena knows Kara isn’t the ghost she fell in love with, but how could she not fall again for the woman who fights so fiercely for what she believes in and the people she loves and swore to protect? By the look on Kara’s face, the surprise and the silence, Lena knows she can’t say any of it in fear of scaring her even more than she already has. And if the truth is what Kara needs to move on then Lena will give it to her.

“Yes. I have feelings for you.”
Panic fills Kara’s eyes and the grip around her body shake imperceptibly. Lena feels bad for being the cause of it. Jess was right. She ought to let her go.

“I’m not asking you to return my feelings or anything. You don’t even have to say a thing but you wanted an answer…” Lena adds her voice quiet and vulnerable. Kara remains silent and Lena looks to the stars for strength. “Just take me back to L-Corp, please.”

They fly away. The bridge crumbles and Lena never felt so removed from the world than she is right now. She watches it blur before her. They land softly on the balcony and it’s like the world has come crashing back on them. Sharp and cruel as Kara faces her with tears in her eyes and an apology on her lips.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be,” Lena smiles and steps away from Kara’s embrace.

Supergirl shoots up in the sky and Lena only watches her go, letting her smile fall. It hurts too much to pretend. The door of the balcony opens and Lena sighs as an arm covers her shoulders. She keeps her gaze turned toward the sky, hoping naively that Kara might come back. That she might come back if Lena just waits a little bit longer…

“How did it go?”

Lena shrugs as the wait doesn’t stop. “I was a fool. You were right.”

“Believe me,” Jess sighs and squeezes her shoulder. “I really didn’t want to be right…”

“I know…”

“Come on. Eli’s starving.”

Lena scoffs. “When is he not?”
Jess walks her back to the office where Eli waits for them with champagne and pizza on the coffee table. He hands her a flute of champagne and Lena takes it with a grateful nod. Not long after, Maggie joins them with beers and they all settle around the coffee table, opening the boxes of pizza. Maggie fills them in on the aftermath of Lillian’s arrest and Lena can’t contain her laughter at the recount of Lillian’s outraged face when being kept in a cell with drunkards before her transfer. The others join in and Lena finds it easier to smile as the night goes on. They’ve done it after all, what they came here to do in the first place, and Lena raises her glass to their victory as everyone cheers.

They call for more pizzas and in a rare moment of vulnerability, Maggie confides in why she has been in such a bad mood lately. They all listen as the Detective recounts what happened with Alex Danvers.

“I mean she confessed to me and I- I got scared… So I rejected her and now…” She looks at them, unsure and small. “What should I do?”

“Go for it.” Lena shrugs as everyone looks at her in astonishment. “It’s not too late.”

“I thought about it and I don’t know if I-”

“Go for it,” Lena repeats, thinking of second chances and missed opportunities. Even if it didn’t work out for her, she knows Maggie can’t let herself be ruled by fear like she had been. “Life’s too short anyway…”

Maggie nods, clutching suddenly at her shoulder. “I’ve got to go!”

“Yes!” Eli cheers and hands her a case of beer while Jess gives her a box of pizza freshly delivered.

Maggie rushes out the door but then stops suddenly and glances back at her. “It’s not too late for you either.”

Lena only raises her glasses in acknowledgement, knowing deep down that her time has passed.

The celebration continues and Lena really shouldn’t be surprised that her office has turned into a meeting point what with Supergirl using her balcony as an entrance. But to everyone astonishment it isn’t Supergirl who lands on her balcony that night: Green Martian does. He knocks on the window, asking to be let in and they all stare petrified until Jess curses and goes to open the door while Eli
stands protectively before her. Green Martian walks into her office and transforms back into the man Kara hugged just a few hours ago. He crosses his arms over his chest and Lena gulps as he stares her down.

“My name is J’onn J’onnzz and I believe we need to talk.”

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Lena blinks in an effort to chase away the black spots in her vision but it doesn’t work. If anything, it worsens and she has to hold on to the counter to keep herself from falling to the ground. Kara’s number is the first that comes to mind and Lena types it mechanically, distracted by the blood she leaves on the phone’s keypad.

It goes straight to voicemail.

“No! No! Please, Kara!”

Lena calls again.

*Hi! It’s me, Kara Danvers! I’m not available at the moment. I’m either eating potstickers or doing reporter stuff. But leave me a message and I’ll call you as soon as possible. Bye.*

Lena breathes deeply through her nose in an effort to keep her panic at bay. Kara must still be busy looking for the missing aliens. She just gave her the address of her mother’s hideout after all. Lena types in Maggie’s number and waits nervously as it rings and rings… with no response. Lena bites her lips in frustration but mostly to keep it from trembling too much as she tries to remember the number J’onn gave her to call in case of emergency. Her vision blurs with tears as her memory fails her. Did it end by 548-784 or 548-764? Lena can’t remember, her mind is hazy and it infuriates her. She doesn’t understand how she can be stuck on one number when she memorized the number π to the 84.529 decimal, beating the previous unofficial world record owner, Akira Haraguchi, of 1098 decimals. She still can… She can recite them right now if she wants to.

“3.141 592 653 589 793 238 462 643 383 279 502 884 197 169 399 375 105… Stop!” Lena groans in frustration, pressing a hand against her forehead, as her mind strays. “Focus, Lena. Focus!”

J’onn will help her like he did when she got arrested for supposedly helping Metallo escape. Lena
types in the final numbers and hopes she typed in the right one.

It rings and rings and rings…

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“You are in deep shit, Luthor.” Maggie hisses into her ear as she is taken away from L-Corp.

“Were the handcuffs really necessary?” Lena whispers back as flashes of lights blinds her and reporters surround her on all part and shout at her.

“I had to play my part convincingly…”

An officer opens the car door and Maggie guides her gently inside and then slides down next to her.

“Don’t talk until I tell you it is safe.”

Lena nods as two officers climb at the front and drives them to the precinct. The drive is quiet and Lena tries desperately to understand what is happening right now and how she fits into all of this. Something went wrong when she went to see her mother at the jail last night. Someone must have tampered with L-Corp’s surveillance system while they were away and she can’t ask Jess what happened since her friend has been sick and has stayed in her apartment for two weeks now.

They walk her to a cell and Lena slumps on the hard bench, musing over the last twenty-four hours… Alana had stayed in the building, organizing today’s schedule went they left for the jail yesterday. She would have given the alert if something had happened…

Time passes but Lena has no notion of it. Officers taunt her from behind the bars and other detainees sneer and holler at her from other cells. She is glad she got one just for herself and feels bad for laughing at her mother when Lillian got thrown into the NCPD’s cell after the Medusa virus. She must have felt so, so alone…

“You’re up Luthor,” the officer that has been taunting her calls out. “You know the drill. Turn around and hold out both of your hands.”
Lena does so wordlessly and winces slightly as he handcuffs her.

“Step back.” He opens the door and grabs her arm. “Must be used to it by now, eh? It runs in the family after all.”

Lena clenches her jaw, stopping herself from biting his head off, knowing it will be held against her as soon as she loses her cool.

“We’ll take it from here,” Maggie calls out from the other end of the corridor and Lena has never been happier to hear her voice. “My team and I have been asked to escort Ms. Luthor to jail.”

“Good riddance,” the officers sneers and releases her into Maggie’s team custody.

Lena breathes in relief as Maggie grips her arm and guides her out of the precinct by the back entrance where a van waits for them. She and another officer climb in after her, attaching her handcuffs to a chain on the floor. The other two officers then close the door and Lena hears them walk to the front of the van. The vehicle shakes as they settle in and then the engine roars to life.

It is only Maggie’s hand over her mouth that prevents her from screaming out as the officer that had climbed in with them morphs into J’onn J’onzz for a few seconds only to morph back into the officer. Maggie looks at her insistently, pressing her index finger to her lips in a shushing gesture and Lena nods her understanding. She takes her hand away from over her mouth and Lena stares at them incredulously.

“We don’t have much time Lena.” J’onn whispers quickly. “I know you are innocent.”

“How?”

He taps his temple with his finger and smiles. “I’m psychic. Remember?”

Lena snorts without meaning to. It does feel like a joke hearing it like that but how can she ever forget the fright he gave her the night he came to her office demanding answers. He had confessed to already having suspicions about them from what he could read out of Maggie’s mind and had preferred to wait and see how things would play out. But the knowledge he got from reading her
mind during the brief seconds their eyes met had been so overwhelming that he had to act. Lena had no choice but to tell him everything. He would have known if she had lied anyway.

“The synthetic kryptonite came from your lab and I know what you intend to do with it. Can I trust you only to use it in absolute necessity?”

“You have my word.” Her time machine was just a last resort. If they prevent the war, Lena would have no use for it.

J’onn nods, seemingly satisfied with her answers and Maggie frowns, confused and crosses her arms over chest.

“Anyway, we think this is Cadmus’ doing. They are planning something.”

“But we don’t know what,” J’onn finishes looking at her intently. Lena scoffs and rolls her eyes, motioning him to continue. “I can stage an escape now or you can go to jail and see how things play out. The choice is yours.”

“What will happen if I escape now?”

“You will be under my protection but you’ll have to live as a fugitive.”

“And if I don’t?”

“I’ll give you this,” he shows her a tracker not unlike the one she used against Roulette. “It’s not a tracker. They would be able to trace it back to us. This will record everything around you and send it every five minutes to different servers we are monitoring. We will be able to listen in but I’m not sure I can guarantee your immediate safety.”

Lena smiles. She is in too deep already. She has been utterly committed to stop Cadmus ever since Kara showed up in her apartment asking for her help. If stopping the Medusa virus wasn’t enough to deter them then Lena won’t stop trying.

“Are you sure?” J’onn asks her.
Lena nods.

“Wait! What happened? Can you not have telepathic conversations without me?”

“I’ll do it,” Lena tells Maggie. “I’ll discover what my mother is up to.”

Maggie sighs. “The kid has been messaging me non-stop. He’s worried about you…”

“Tell him I’ll be back soon and that I need him to manage the company while I’m gone.”

J’onn places the device behind her ear. Lena gulps slightly as the van stops. Her hands tremble and her heart pounds inside her chest. She’ll be on her own. As soon as they open the door, she’ll be on her own.

J’onn squeezes her shoulder in support as they hear the front doors of the van open. “From what I could hear in Alex’s mind, Kara is hell-bent on trying to prove your innocence. I’ll have to delay any official action that will exonerate you till we know for sure what Cadmus is up to,” J’onn holds her gaze and Lena sees understanding, kindness and pride shine in his eyes. “You are not alone Lena.”

Lena smiles and exhales heavily, trying to keep her act together. She can’t break now but it’s hard to prevent a few treacherous tears from falling when Maggie takes a hold of her wrist and squeezes it in support. “I’ll keep my eye on the kid. I’ll make sure he doesn’t do anything stupid.”

Lena hears the jingling of keys outside of the van and grabs Maggie’s hand quickly, knowing she doesn’t have much time before they take her away. “Can you check on Jess too? She’s been sick but she hasn’t been answering my calls lately.”

The doors open and Lena heaves a sigh as a new contingency of guards wait for her outside. One of the previous officers detaches her from the chain linking her to the vehicle and takes her arm to help her exit out of the van. Lena glances over her shoulder and is reassured to see J’onn and Maggie still there. Their silent support is enough to give her courage as the penitentiary’s reinforced door closes behind her.

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Cheers erupt from the other end of the phone and Lena has to remove it from ear in fear it might make her head explode.

“J’onn?”

“Wrong. This is the amazing, extraordinary, wonder-working Agent Schott at your service…” the man shouts and cheers behind him erupt again, making Lena wince and groan. He guffaws loudly. “What can I do for you Alex? I swear you just got saved from being jettisoned into space and you’re already ready to give me orders…”

Lena holds her breath as a sudden wave of nausea hits her. She closes her eyes and tries to inhale slowly through her nose, tight-lipped, waiting for the nausea to go away.

“Alex?”

“I- I need J’onn. I need… I- I need J’onn to help me.”

“What?” Silence follows and Lena tries to focus on the conversation as the Agent squeaks loudly over the phone. “Who are you? How did you get this number?”

Lena tries to swallow the excess of saliva rushing into her mouth and groans as she tries to put all of her focus on articulating. She needs him to understand how dire the situation is. She needs him to send help or Eli might die before she can even get out of here.

“I- I need help. J’onn… J’onn will help me.”

“Tell me who you are! I’m trying to locate you but your line is protected by a lot of-”

Lena let go of the phone in fright as someone bangs on the door. She turns around only to exhale in relief as Eli bangs on it again, motioning her to come to him. Lena walks toward him, focusing on his face to prevent her body from swaying too much to the side. She opens the door and steps back to let him in.
But instead of coming in, Eli grabs the gun she had left on the ground, picks her up in his arms and runs to the other part of the floor, away from the stairs.

“I lost my shoes and my dress is all torn up…” Lena slurs, closing her eyes tightly as the shakes makes her want to vomit again. Her body is jerked to the side as he rounds a corner and sprints toward the elevator. “What are you doing? Alana cut off the power,” she reminds him harshly. “It won’t work.”

“It will if we override its electrical command with one of our key. It’s not perfect but I programmed it so that in case of a blackout the elevator will use the independent generator from the Lab and get you there immediately without stopping. The outer doors were supposed to respond to the commands,” Eli stops, drops her off gently, takes his keycard out from under his shirt and presses it to the pad just above the call button. The outer doors open but only for an inch. Eli pries them open, grimacing under the effort.

“Where’s mine? Why didn’t you tell me sooner?”

“It’s still in the Lab, remember? You asked me to get it but I got attacked on the way. The cab is stuck in between the 18th and 17th floor and it won’t budge. That’s why I asked you to wait for me on the 18th.” He holds out his hand to her. “Come on, Boss. Only one floor left. We don’t have much time.”

Lena grabs it, feeling as if the world just turned on its axis and Eli was her only point of gravity. “My mind is fuzzy,” Lena tells him. It’s not much of an excuse but it is the only one she has for not being at her best, especially now that they are in danger. He crouches in front of her and Lena slumps on his back. “How did you know I was here?”

“I followed your blood,” he hisses as he stands up.

“Are you hurt?”

“No, but maybe you should stick to the kale.”

“Fuck off,” Lena whispers affectionately. She squeezes him weakly in her arms, getting this weird, unpleasant feeling of déjà-vu. “We are going to be okay, right?”
Eli laughs and Lena feels it traveling through her body. She can’t even be mad at him for being such an oaf and shaking her like a leaf. “Of course, Boss. Like always.” He scales down the elevator down to the cab below, drops her off again and then pulls on the lever to open the hatch. It creaks open and Lena smiles, relieved.

They are going to be alright.

He holds out his hand again and Lena takes it gratefully as he lowers her down inside the cab only illuminated by blue emergency lights. She steps away from under the hatch, looks up, fighting her nausea, and waits for Eli to join her.

He doesn’t.

“What are you doing?” Lena asks, confused as he stays above the hatch, unmoving. “Get down! Quick!”

He shakes his head and drags the lids back on.

“Eli!” Lena screams and jumps in a futile attempt to climb back out, grab his arm and pull him inside.

“The security on elevators really is a pain in the ass. The outer doors need to be closed for the cab to work. Don’t worry. I’ll take care of this. You’ll be okay,” he reassures her but it does the exact opposite. His trembling tone and teary eyes talk of a sacrifice Lena isn’t willing to make.

“Don’t you dare do this to me!”

His chin trembles and he looks away for a few seconds while Lena can’t even blink in fear that he might disappear. She let out a sob as he looks back at her. “Alana must have known… She must have blocked the one on the 17th floor. I’ll close this one and there will be only one door left,” he tells her feverishly, looking back up. “I have to go!”

“Eli!” Lena stops him. There’s still so much she wants to say, so much he needs to know… but the words get stuck inside her throat and Eli only smiles, knowingly.
“Remember when we used to play hide and seek? I was the best, remember?”

He was terrible. He always cried when she took too much time to find him. But she never told him anything. She always let him win. “You were. You still are.”

Eli laughs, nodding in self-satisfaction. “See! No need to worry. They won’t find me, Lena.”

He closes the hatch and Lena stands alone in the elevator. She feels the cab shake as he walks above it and climbs back out. She hears the tell-tale sound of doors swishing close and then absolute silence. Lena falls on her knees, absolutely still as she waits and waits… She tries to pry the door of the elevator open but it’s no use. She only leaves trails of blood on the metallic door. It doesn’t stop her from trying though. It doesn’t stop her from trying to get back to Eli.

The tell-tall sound of doors swishing closed reverberates underneath her and the elevator suddenly whirs to life.

Lena flinches as several gunshots break the silence.

Lena screams Eli’s name as something slams against the door, rattles the cab violently, and then slides wetly to the ground of the 17th floor.

Lena screams but the elevator continues its descent.

Unstoppable.

***

Lena fumes, still reeling from her mother’s deceit. Of course Lillian didn’t break her from jail to be joyfully reunited with her, to be the mother she promised her she wanted to be. This wasn’t a second chance and Lena knew it. She knew it, and yet she still fell for it. Lena wonders why she is so surprised after all. Her mother never hid how little she loved her. But Lena surprised herself by believing it this time. And she knows that’s what hurt the most.

“Well, this should make you feel safe,” her mother muses, walking into her brother’s vault. “Lex’s
Lena grabs what looks like a grenade from a metal case, weighing it in her hand as her mother continues to gloat.

“Everything we need to rid this planet of Kryptonians, and every other alien invader, once and for all.”

“You're worse than Lex,” Lena scoffs, putting the device back in his place. Lex’s vault is full of weapons and Lena knows that if she’s subtle enough, she can destroy everything with one well aimed explosion. She just needs the right opportunity and Cadmus will cease to exist.

“I promise you, I will be on the right side of history. Maybe then you'll believe that I was looking out for your best interests, after all. Whether you like it or not I'll always be your mother.” Lena rolls her eyes as her mother’s touching speech comes to an end; her attention already focused on something else. “Oh, my beautiful boy. I had no idea... You finished it.”

A distraction… Lena needs them to look away but seconds pass and Lena feels helpless as Cyborg Superman is keeping a close eye on her. She is running out of time.

Something crashes behind them and Lena can’t believe her luck at seeing Kara landing in the facility. “Supergirl, I can't believe you're here.” Lena walks toward her instinctively as if pulled by some sort of magnetism.

“Kara Danvers believes in you,” Supergirl says, and Lena tries not to roll her eyes at her. Supergirl has been hiding behind the persona of Kara Danvers ever since the night she confessed her feelings to her. She stopped showing up unexpectedly at her balcony and always came as the reporter when she needed information.

Her mother throws a device at Kara, who catches it only to fall on her knees and scream in pain. Everything happened so quickly, and Lena understands too late what is going on.

“Well, that was easy,” her mother says sounding disappointed. “You want to try more of these toys?”

“Don't hurt her!” Lena steps up only to be stopped by Cyborg Superman. She hopes that the device behind her ear will relay her warning. She hopes J’onn has enough information to intervene.
“Sorry, she's got to pay for what her cousin did to your brother,” her mother tells her before Lena is thrown to the ground. Blood rushes to her head and Lena only hears snippets of conversation before everything goes quiet.

She’ll never get used to the feeling of weightlessness, and as she opens her eyes Lena screams when she realizes she’s flying.


Lena nods, pressing her forehead against Supergirl’s neck, still reeling from the shock. After a while, the panic abates and Lena finally notices J’onn flying behind Supergirl. He nods at her and she smiles gratefully before he flies away. Lena sighs, enjoying the feeling of flying again. “I couldn’t stop her. I’m sorry you got hurt.”

“Don’t worry. I don’t bruise easily,” Supergirl chuckles at her joke and tightens her grip around her. The silence lingers uncomfortably and it is painfully obvious that Kara doesn’t know how to act around her when she is wearing the suit. “Kara Danvers will be glad to see you safe and sound.”

“I’m sure,” Lena whispers wistfully. “Thank you for saving me.”

“It’s Kara… She, uh- She’s been trying to prove your innocence ever since you got arrested,” Supergirl insists.

Lena would have smiled she wasn’t so tired. “She’s a good friend.” She breathes in relief when L-Corp finally looms in the horizon.

“I know things are…” Supergirl pauses and tightens her grip around her. A gesture Lena doesn’t want to read too much into it in case she might get her hopes up. “… Awkward right now and I’m sorry. But I want you to know that I’ll always come to your aid when you need me. Always.”

The day after, Lena sends Kara Danvers hundreds of flowers as a thank you and Kara reiterates her promise of friendship. That day, Lena learns that Jess is missing. All of her texts, voicemails, and phones calls were linked to a computer program that could mimic her speech. She also reinforces security at Luke Perec’s office, asking Batman to keep an eye on her therapist from time to time.
That day, J’onn asks her to help him find Jeremiah Danvers.

***

Lena doesn’t know how she got here. She doesn’t remember how she got out of the elevator, walked through the Lab, went straight to her office and took away the cloth covering the time machine. Lena doesn’t even remember taking out the synthetic kryptonite from the safe or setting the command to power up the machine.

But she did and the machine is whirring up to life. Lena only has to put the kryptonite into the socket, like an offering to the Gods, to be able to tear through the veil of space and time. It would be her first attempt ever. She knows how reckless that sounds. She knows she shouldn’t even attempt it without having first done some test trials. There is a good eighty percent chance that she will blow herself up, or scatter herself across time.

She only built it as a last resort. She never intended to use it. She had built it out of fear. She had built it out of regret. She had built it to feel closer to her ghost. A wishful project meant to focus her mind when she felt it stray into dangerous territories, forcing it to follow a single thread instead of the thousands that crowded her mind.

She really is a Luthor after all.

Lena doesn’t let herself linger on the thought for too long, fearing she might see too many parallels with her infamous family. Knowing that she was adopted had been her only comfort at night when the media had raged about her family for months on end. She doesn’t even have that security blanket anymore and it scares her to realize how similar she is to her brother, her father or even Lillian. She has an obsessive mind like them. She had convinced herself that her brother couldn’t be saved, turned mad by illusions of grandeur and a too-brilliant mind. *I only wonder how long it will take before your mind consumes you,* he told her at the jail. Maybe it was finally happening. Maybe Lena really is losing her mind and there’s no way to save her now.

She wonders if her brother knew that they were related. She can’t help but think of the indulging smile he gave her when she had screamed to him that she wasn’t a Luthor. Had he known? Had he planned this all along? Was this why he always seemed to be several steps ahead of her? Had he only been waiting for her to crash and burn?

The kryptonite feels heavy in her hand, and Lena watches it glow unnaturally.
Ever since her mother’s death, Lena had always wanted to go back in time. And now, she can. She can go back in time and prevent her mother’s car accident…

She can go back in time and stop her brother before he destroys half of Metropolis…

She can go back in time before the Venture explosion and start again…

She can go back in time and withhold information on where Jeremiah Danvers is so that the DEO never finds him and this mess they are currently in never happens…

She can go back in time and save Jess, Luke, Eli…

She can go back in time and…

***

**Lena heart stops.** That’s what it feels like to fall. That’s what it feels like to be pulled by gravity. It feels inevitable. It feels agonizingly slow and Lena closes her eyes, hoping she won’t feel the impact too much. But she does and the realization leaves her breathless.

The impact is soft, gentle. It’s strong arms embracing her tightly. It’s being enveloped in a familiar scent that makes Lena feels safe and warm. It’s being cradled against a soft and yet firm body. It’s a strange dichotomy belonging to only one person she knows…

“I’ve got you. You’re okay…” Kara whispers against her temple; her body warm, solid and very real.

Lena holds on to her desperately, in shock, reeling from the fall and unable to shake away the irrepressible fear that took place in her heart. She feels like her heart might beat out of her chest. She can’t breathe. She can’t even think and her heart only slows down because of the lazy circles Kara traces on her back quietly, soothingly as if she knew, as if she knew that would calm her down. Lena presses her face against Supergirl’s neck, feeling her strong pulse beat against her lips. It hurts to feel alive…
“It’s okay. Hold on to me. Take all the time you need. I’ve got you,” Kara repeats over and over again.

“I’m okay…” Lena realizes after a while. Surprised and grateful to be alive.

“Yes. You are,” Kara smiles, holding her tight, and it’s enough for her to believe that she has nothing more to fear. Kara will protect her… Always. “Ready to give ‘em hell?”

Lena nods and Supergirl shoots up in the sky back to the balcony.

“Dropped something?” Supergirl says to the stunned men, looking at them in anger. She quickly takes care of them and sets Lena gently onto the balcony.

“How did you know?” Lena asks, not missing an occasion to catch Kara in her deception, now that her heart has calmed down.

“I, uh… I was having coffee with Kara Danvers when you called,” Kara stutters, surprised, and Lena tries hard not to laugh at the ridiculous lie.

“That's lucky. Well, I'm glad you're here. I have something you'll both want to know. Cadmus and the missing aliens. I know where they are.” Lena runs back into her office and grabs the paper where the address of the facility was written. “Go save the world Supergirl.”

Kara grabs the piece of paper, reading it quickly before she pauses and watches her oddly, as if struck by a sudden realization. Lena isn’t sure what is happening, but it passes all too quickly. Supergirl thanks her and Lena watches her fly away.

“Lena!” Alana screams from behind her and then hugs her tightly. “I don’t know how they got in… I- I just…”

“It’s okay,” Lena reassures her. Her assistant looks like she is close to tears and Lena pats her arm comfortingly. “Have you seen Eli? I asked him to get something for me. Did he come back?”
Alana shakes her head and Lena sighs, going back into the office. “Call the police so that they can take away those men. This is going to be a lot of paperwork…”

“Of course. And here, I got something for you.” Lena frowns as Alana shows her the front page of the Daily Planet on her phone. Lena stops breathing.

**HAS BATMAN GONE MAD?**
*Gruesome murder of Arkham Asylum’s consulting psychiatrist Luke Perec in Metropolis.*

“Shame. I heard he was your therapist…”

Lena staggers back, horrified. It feels like getting punched in the chest and her heart stutters painfully as Alana laughs at her. It couldn’t be true. Luke couldn’t be dead… She just talked to him this morning.

“You don’t believe me? I got pictures…” Alana continues with a smile, looking at her expectantly.

Lena bumps into her desk and tries blindly to find the panic button that would immediately notify Eli and all of her security team. She presses it several times, watching the door of her office waiting for them to walk in any seconds now… They don’t and Alana laughs even more.

“Who are you?”

“That’s not important…” her assistant shrugs nonchalantly and it contrasts so strongly with the sweet, clumsy and easily flustered woman Lena got to know. She can’t believe that the woman standing before her is the same one Eli has been gushing on about for weeks. It didn’t make sense and yet… Jess had warned her about her at the beginning… Alana got appointed as a junior assistant at L-Corp just after her move to National City and Jess had found it suspicious… But Jess had been suspicious of a lot of people and Lena hadn’t taken it seriously, especially after Eli went on a date with her assistant at the gala for the children’s hospital… Alana had them all fooled from the very beginning…

_Cadmus is closer to you than you think,_ Veronica had told her over the phone after Lena got her arrested. Had she known then? Had she known Lena had a mole in her company? Lena can’t believe how blind she’s been. She can’t believe she’s been fooled and put her team and everything she has been working for in jeopardy. Her mother must be laughing at her so hard right now… “Do you work for my mother?” Alana only smiles back at her and it makes Lena’s blood boil. “You were the
You let Cyborg Superman steal the synthetic kryptonite from my office! You framed me!"

“Bingo!” Alana exclaims, eyes cold and calculating. “But while I do take some orders from your mother I don’t work for her. My boss sends his love. He hopes you liked his gift.”

Dread, fear and absolute horror fills her as her mind whispers the answer to her. “Lex?”

“Check!” Alana nods. The chess reference sits heavy in her mind as Alana suddenly points a gun at her, her arm unflinching. “He told me you were naïve and idealistic… That it would be easy to fool you if I pulled on just the right strings… He was right. You are pathetic!”

Lena always won against him at chess. Always. Games could last for hours and as they grew up it could last for days. They were harrowing and soul consuming. Lena had to put all of her focus on it as her brother became better and better but mostly because she was always confused with his strategy. Lex liked to take his time and he would seemingly move his pieces randomly across the chessboard just to throw her off. Lena always tried to calculate his next move. She always tried to find a pattern and when she thought she found one he would change the game unexpectedly, sacrificing pieces if he had to. He never won but only because Lena kept her defenses strong and ready. With time, Lena came to understand that the game Lex was playing wasn’t on the board at all. He was deliberately trying to throw her off and make her lose her cool. Lena knew then that if she did, she would be checkmated. Like today… The game of chess didn’t end with her shooting Corben at the renaming ceremony like she thought. It continued on, and Lena had failed to see it. Lex had played the long game and she had been utterly blindsided.

“What happened to Jess? What did you do to her?” Lena asks, stalling the outcome. She has to think. She needs to think but her mind goes blank when Alana walks up to her and presses the gun to her head.

“Don’t worry about her. She’ll be dead soon. I have to give it to her. She was incredib-”

Something crashes suddenly through the door of her office and Lena takes advantage of the second of surprise on Alana’s face to grab her arm and push her against the wall. Lena puts all of her body into the movement and the momentum throws them backward against the furniture. Glass shatters. Alana roars in rage and the shot goes off.

Lena falls to the ground, stunned and the back head bangs against the side of her desk. Lena watches the ceiling move before her as her head burns and bleeds… There is a ringing sound in her ears and Lena sits up unsteadily only to see Eli punch Alana, repeatedly.
“Eli!”

Eli stops and Alana stays unmoving on the floor. He crawls back toward her and grabs her arms, looking at her head worriedly.

“Is it bad?”

“I think the bullet grazed your forehead. It’s bleeding really heavily.” He gives her his jacket for her to press it against the wound. “Come on. We have to go.”

“What’s going on?” Lena asks as they flee her office. Eli stands before her, arm outstretched to keep her behind him. She has never seen him so serious and quiet. They bypass the elevator only to stop at the corner leading to the stairs and Eli leans in carefully to see all the way down to the corridor. There’s blood down his nose and all over his chin. She looks at him more closely and she sees that his nose is broken with the color of his skin turning a dark shade of purple. “Eli?”

“I was about to get your keycard from the Lab when the security system went crazy. I went to check it and got attacked. I managed to escape and ran straight to you but they cut off the power and took out the security team. Phones don’t work and I don’t know how many men are left in the building.” He presses his gun into her hand and keeps Alana’s ready to shoot. “We’ll have to use the stairs.”

“We will be meeting them head on…”

Eli nods, breathing harshly as Lena reads the panic in his eyes.

“Then we need more than just guns. If you can find fire extinguishers or any inflammatory liquids for me; I can rig them up. It should be enough to slow them down.”

“That's badass! Let’s go to the 28th floor first, then. There’ll be plenty of that stuff, and I’m sure the biochemists stashed a few interesting things in their fridge.” Eli smiles at her, albeit shakily, and the sight gives her warmth nonetheless.

“We’ll be alright, Eli. I promise,” Lena swears, squeezing his arm.
He nods and walks carefully toward the door leading to the stairs, his hand ready to push it open. “If we get separated meet me on the 18th floor.”

Lena nods and Eli pushes the door open.

***

“Don’t do it, Lena!”

Lena frowns at the feeling of déjà-vu. She raises her head and to her astonishment Kara looks back at her, hands outstretched, grimacing in pain. Lena looks at the kryptonite still in her hand and frowns as Kara tries to get closer.

“Stop!” Don’t come closer, Lena tries to warn her, but her brain is fuzzy and there’s two Kara standing a few feet from her. The world blurs and tilts and Lena doesn’t know where she fits in all of this. If she even fit at all. “I have to- I need to go back! I need to… save them…”

“You did!” Kara pleads, walking toward her in spite of her warning. She falls to her knees but still comes closer. “Lena! You don’t have to do this. The synthetic kryptonite isn’t stable… It killed Metallo. It will kill you too.”

Lena winces as the ringing sound intensifies in her head. She can’t think… Her head pounds in pain and all she has to do is slot the kryptonite into the machine. It’s all she has to do and everything will be okay again.

“Please, you won’t be able to go back!” Kara screams at her and Lena’s eyes snaps back at her. Green meets blue and the bridge slowly forms again as the storm raging inside Lena’s head abates a bit, dulled by the blue of Kara’s eyes and the unwavering faith still shining in them.

“How?” Lena croaks. How did she know?

“Jess told me everything,” Kara answers simply, unaware of the pain it causes her. Unaware of the truth. Unaware of the fact that Alana had killed her.
“Don’t lie. Jess is dead.”

Kara shakes her head vigorously and Lena feels faint just by watching her. Kara crawls toward her nearly at her feet but makes no move to stop her. “I’m not lying. She was among the registered aliens ready to be deported. I came here as soon as I knew… Winn got your call and J’onn and Alex took care of those who did this to you. Maggie is with Eli right now, she is taking him to the hospital. He is still alive!”

It can’t be true, Lena thinks. It can’t be real. She was there. She heard the gunshots. She heard his body slides down on the ground. She heard everything. She was there… She was there… “Don’t lie to me!” Lena screams. Tears sting her eyes and Lena tries to blink them away only for the black spots to intensify and the ringing in her head blares louder than it ever did before but Lena focuses on Kara’s blue eyes as an anchor before she inevitably drifts away.

“I’m not lying! Look, Jess gave me her key so that I could come to you…” Kara shows her Jess’ key card, attached to the red and pink chain she got her when she gave it to her and the realization that Kara is not lying brings her down to her knees. Lena lets go of the kryptonite and falls… she falls and Kara catches her in her arms. Kara holds her tight against her and Lena feels like their positions have been reversed, because she’s the one fading away now. Fading away…

“I’m so, so tired.”

“I know. You’ve been so brave. So brave,” Kara whispers and caresses her face softly with tears falling down her cheeks. “You’re going to be okay, Lena. I’m going to get you out… You’re going to be okay…”

Lena nods, brushing Kara’s tears away. It mixes with the blood on her hand and Lena feels weightless. She feels like she is flying. “You are real, right? You’re not just in my head?”

“No. I’m here. I’m right here,” Kara tells her, “I’m not going anywhere.”

“Promise?”

“I promise.”
The fall isn’t so scary anymore and Lena closes her eyes, comforted by Kara’s promise.

Kara is here.

She’ll be okay.

Chapter End Notes

Akira Haragushi recited 83 431 digits of Pi on July 1, 2005. He beat his own record by now but for this story that's the reference I used.

Are you ready for the final arc (4 or 5 chapters maybe)? It's the arc where Kara falls in love :)
I hope you like the chapter. Thank you for reading. Take care!
Hi! I'm glad you liked the previous chapter. I hope you'll enjoy this one too. ARC 2 finished at episode 2x15 and the story won't follow canon anymore. I had to make a few adjustments to the plot now that Season two is finished but it won't change much from how I originally planned it. I did give Mon-El a new storyline. So no Daxam invasion in this story. Huge thanks to Earthling3 who edited this chapter. Any lingering mistakes are mine. I hope you'll like this chapter. Enjoy!

WARNING: Fluff (what?) but there's angst too ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lena never liked to sleep. The dreams began the first night she slept at the Luthor’s Manor and she woke up screaming herself hoarse, dreaming of lifeless eyes for the first time. Lionel had rushed to her room and took her in his arms to calm her down while Lillian and Lex had watched her cry and scream from the doorway. The dreams came back the following night, and the next. Lena would wake up screaming and thrashing in the dark, until Lillian put a stop to it by taking her aside, one night when Lionel was away on a business trip, explaining to her with that cold, insincere smile of hers that she would be sent back to the orphanage if she wasn’t a good girl. Lena made sure not to scream again at night.

It didn’t make the dreams go away. They only got worse.

Every night, Lena would dream of lifeless eyes. Every night, they’d crawl to her. Every night, they’d get so close that Lena would see the whites of the empty eyes, and a gaping mouth beneath. She’d hear their growls and wails creeping closer and closer until she’d wake up in tears, gasping for breath and soaked in sweat, but silent, always silent.

Every day, Lena would watch the sun disappear with dread in her heart.

She’d seek comfort by Lionel’s side, playing quietly in his office while he worked. But Lionel was rarely home, sometimes away for weeks at a time, and so Lena would seek comfort by Lex’s side. She would hide in his room before Eli’s mother came to get her and put her to bed. Lex would let her roam around or stare at his electronics projects and other experiments on his desk. Most often than not, Lex would take the time to explain to her the ideas behind every one of his projects. Lena would always listen, entranced, as he sometimes delayed her bedtime by a good ten to twenty minutes while
he finished with his explanations. Her nanny was always hesitant to knock at Lex’s door and Lena always took full advantage of it.

Delaying her bedtime didn’t stop the dreams from plaguing her mind at night.

Lena theorized that if she slept less then she wouldn’t have the time to dream. Her dreams wouldn’t have the time to make her feel trapped, terrified or powerless. If she slept less, the lifeless eyes wouldn’t get to her by the time her nanny came to wake her up. Lena had watched Lex formulate enough theories to understand that hers was a good one. Not infallible but solid nonetheless. Proud of herself, she tested that theory immediately after she came up with it. She delayed her bedtime by hiding in Lex’s room. She’d lay awake, staring at the dark ceiling of her room, clutching at her teddy bear. She’d fight off sleep and exhort herself to keep her eyes open until she would eventually lose the fight and darkness would claim her. The dreams only got more intense. And the following morning had been the first time Lena woke up having wet her bed. The shame and the fear had paralyzed her and Lena had apologized and begged her nanny with teary eyes and trembling lips not to tell Lillian because she didn’t want to be sent back. She wanted to stay. Her nanny only held her tight and let her cry in her arms. Lena had clutched to her desperately hiding herself inside her nanny’s warm embrace, comforted by her warm floral scent. Because of the dreams, Lena became accustomed to waking up to the potent and overwhelming scent of smoke, blood and rain lingering in the air. It pushed her to inhale the scent of her nanny’s crêpes in the morning afterward, eager and desperate to forget.

Her nanny didn’t tell Lillian, or at least Lena doesn’t think she did, because her mother’s attitude toward her didn’t change. It was the same cold indifference Lena had experienced ever since they had taken her in a few months ago. But Lionel would look at her with concern and Lex would sometimes let her nap against his side, a protective arm wrapped around her shoulders. Sometimes when it rained, Lena would see the grass wet with blood and pillars of smoke rising to the sky. Sometimes, she’d wake up in the middle of the night, and find herself standing in the library or in the kitchen. Every time it happened, she’d find Lex not too far behind, watching over her sleepily before he’d carry her back to her room quietly. Sometimes, her mind would get so hazy that she would pause in her activities and seek out Lex to ask him if she was dreaming or not. Lex would always tell her what was real and what wasn’t. Sometimes, he’d ask her about her dreams and let her cry on his shoulder even though she’d always leave spots of snot on his sweater. Lex would read books on genomics and quantum physics to her when she was too afraid to go back to sleep. Sometimes he’d even challenge her to solve equations and other math problems. Every time she’d succeed, Lex would smile and look at her with pride. Lena cherishes those memories where the sun would rise and shine into his room and chase the darkness away. It made her feel loved and protected.

Lifeless eyes kept chasing after her, but Lena got used to it. Used to the nightmares and the terror. Used to feeling afraid and hiding it.

Everything changed when Lena dreamt of a woman, standing among the lifeless eyes and their gaping mouth. Lena dreamt of a woman with intense blue eyes, looking at her with steel in her eyes, exuding determination and strength. The sight wouldn’t have been threatening if it hadn’t been for
the blood of innocents dripping down her face. Lena had a feeling that this woman was looking for her and the thought had terrified her. So much so that Lena had run and awakened to the scent of blood. She woke up with a firm grip on one of Lionel’s swords, holding it by the blade while Lex stared at her with wide, stunned eyes. Lena had screamed that night, even though she’d promised herself not to do it again.

The incident prompted Lionel Luthor to engage a therapist, Dr. Luke Perec, or Dr. Luke as she’d call him as a child. The incident also prompted Lex Luthor to begin researching anything that would help him understand what was happening to her.

It took years. Hours upon hours, tears, fits of rage and hurling books across the room for Luke to heal her wounded psyche, at least enough for her sleep again and take back control of her life. But while Lena was rejoicing in that newfound freedom, Lex became obsessed with theories of people capable of traveling through time and space. With trust and time, Luke helped her come out of her shell while her brother sank deeper and deeper into theories of reincarnation and theories of an ultimate being. With patience and work, Luke helped Lena move forward by helping her let go of the guilt she felt over her mother’s passing, and it worked. Lena realized after a while that her dreams weren’t so potent anymore, and that they would only appear when she felt particularly anxious and stressed. But while her only desire was to forget about them, Lex would push her to hold on to the dreams and explore them further and further even at the risk of losing her mind.

She stopped talking about her dreams with Lex. She would only discuss them with Luke. It didn’t mean she loved him less, but she knew he hated the fact that she’d rather talk to Luke than him. He hated her desire to be normal when he’d never ceased to tell her how extraordinary her dreams were. He hated the pills she had to take in order to have a full night’s sleep. He hated when she’d ask him to let it go, to forget it. He hated her lack of ambition when it came to exploring her mind. Lex never understood the fear, the powerlessness and anxiety that came with the dreams. He’d always ask her to push through it until she’d get so mad she’d stop talking to him. It never lasted long, but after a while Lex stopped asking her and Lena felt a rift in their relationship. A tenuous bridge they both refused to cross until finally it became too late to even think of crossing it.

And now?

Now, the darkness threatens to take over her mind once again. Luke’s lifeless eyes stare back at her, blaming her for his death. His kind, brown eyes that used to make her feel understood and protected have become glassy and merciless in their blame. His deep, comforting voice has turned into pitiful groans as he tries to reach her and grab her like all the lifeless eyes surrounding her.

Luke Perec is dead. She killed him. Her brother had warned her but she hadn’t listened. She had kept moving forward in spite of the danger and without regard for the life she put at risk. Everything repeats itself, Lena. It’s an endless circle, he would say, laughing at her. She should have listened. She should have known that in her brother’s obsessive mind, everything is bound to go back to the
beginning. There won’t be any loose ends, and if he wanted her dead he would destroy everything and everyone she holds dear first.

She has failed. The darkness is here. It looms over her and it will swallow her whole. There will be nothing left of her but flesh and bones.

*Join me and we will be gods,* the darkness whispers. The same darkness her brother fell into, and pushed her to explore. An old friend. An enemy who opens its arms to her. *History repeats itself, dear sister. Again and again. No matter how hard we try to change it,* it whispers latching onto her. It fills her mind and Lena has never felt more afraid and weary as she is right now. It sinks its claws into her body and its poison rushes through her veins.

It feels like letting go.

It feels like giving up.

 Darkness seeps into her veins and Lena is powerless to stop it. She can only hope it won’t consume her entirely. Hope there will be something left of her after the poison has run its course... if there is anything left of her at all. Darkness takes her by the hand and turns her away from the lifeless eyes, guiding her somewhere Lena has never been before. Somewhere she isn’t sure she might be able to come back from...

Something stops her. Or rather, someone does.

Standing among the lifeless eyes, intense blue eyes stare at her, arm outstretched, begging her silently to take her hand. *I’m not going to hurt you. You don’t have to be afraid,* the woman says.

The pull the darkness has on her stops.

Lena watches the woman bring Luke’s memory back to life and give his brown eyes the warmth and kindness he has lost. *As I see it, you are writing your own future,* his voice resonates suddenly all around them. *She gave you a second chance. A new beginning if you will... You don’t have to live in fear, Lena.*

It hurts and Lena is tired. So tired. But the woman’s unwavering hand beckons her closer and closer until Lena lets go of the darkness and grasps the warm hand before her.
I’m here. I’m right here, she says, holding Lena into her arms.

I’m not going anywhere.

The darkness disappears and Lena gulps for air. Her body thrashes instinctively against the last pulls of darkness and it hurts. Awareness hurts and Lena tries to breathe but she can’t. There’s something in her throat choking her. Lena tries to grab it, but her arms are weak and sluggish. They barely respond to her commands and only flop back against her stomach, unable to reach her mouth. Lena feels powerless. Voices rise all around her. Alarms blare and Lena is choking. She can’t breathe. She can’t…

“Eliza! Eliza! She’s waking up! She’s waking up!”

“Quick, Kara! Help me hold her down!”

Hands grab her shoulders firmly and immobilize her against the bed. Voices shout all around her but Lena doesn’t understand what is going on and she opens her eyes in fright, blinking several times. The light hurts and everything is hazy, blurry. Panic overtakes her mind as she suddenly remembers the fear, the blood. She remembers running through L-Corp’s corridors and getting stuck on the 19th floor. They’ve caught her, Lena realizes. They’ve caught her!

Another set of hands grabs her face and Lena tries to scream until she is forced to focus on the woman’s face. On her eyes and her voice.

“It’s okay. You’re okay. I’ve got you!” Intense blue eyes tell her.

“Everything’s fine, sweetie. Relax,” another one says. “You need to calm down. Everything’s fine.”

Lena isn’t so sure about that. Her head feels like it’s been cracked open and her throat burns. It burns. A flurry of white coats blur around her and Lena tries to breathe but she can’t… she can’t…

“Put her under,” someone commands to Lena’s horror. “She is going to hurt herself.”
Lena doesn’t want to. She doesn’t want to go back to the darkness. She doesn’t want to be alone in
the dark. She doesn’t want to-

“It’s okay. You’re okay, Lena. I’m here,” intense, blue eyes tell her. “I’m not going anywhere.”

Lena believes her and darkness doesn’t seem as scary as it was before.

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Lena wakes up with a dry mouth and a burning throat. The room is bright, illuminated by several
lights but she still needs to blink a few times to adjust to the light and finally see where she is. It looks
like a hospital. A fancy one, because she recognizes the latest tech from Wayne Medical and even
some of her own in the room. A room made of three grey, concrete walls and one glass wall where
Lena can see several agents and a few doctors walking about on the other side, noses buried in their
charts and files.

The sound of someone suddenly muttering under their breath startles her and Lena only then realizes
that she isn’t alone in the room. A woman in a white lab coat stands a few feet away, hunched over a
laptop, typing furiously on the keyboard. The sound is comforting. It is familiar and Lena relaxes into
it until she tries to scratch her forehead and realizes she can’t. Her hands and feet are tied to the bed
and her heart races suddenly in fear. A few beeps resound in the quiet room. Her heart is beating too
fast and the heart monitor alerts the doctor who immediately turns toward her.

“Hi, sweetie.”

Lena frowns. The woman looks familiar but she can’t remember where she has seen her before. She
walks toward her, a stethoscope around her neck and a relieved smile on her face. It doesn’t stop
Lena from observing her warily and following her movements closely. She relaxes slightly when the
doctor unclasps the straps binding her feet.

“You were thrashing in your sleep,” she explains, reading the silent question in her eyes. “You could
have hurt yourself,” she continues, unbinding her hands.

Lena doesn’t know if she should make a run for it or not, until she realizes that if she does, she
wouldn’t get very far what with all the agents outside.
“You had us quite worried,” the woman tells her, bringing her a cup of water and a straw before she takes a seat on the bed. It whirs softly and Lena feels it move, elevating her back. The doctor hands her the cup and Lena takes it gratefully.

“Sip it slowly,” she warns.

Lena does but the coolness of the water makes her cough nonetheless. A hand rubs her back soothingly and Lena’s eyes widens at the touch. At the familiarity.

“It’s okay. Take your time,” the woman says handing her a few tissues.

Lena nods. The burning in her throat abates slowly. She sips at her water again, her eyes never leaving the doctor, trying to think, trying to remember where she has seen her before.

“I’m Dr. Eliza Danvers. I need to ask you a few questions.” Lena eyes widens as she finally remembers. The doctor was one of the subjects in the files she had stolen from the DEO back in Metropolis. Kara’s foster mother. “I see you know who I am,” Dr. Danvers chuckles. “These are just standard questions. Can you tell me your name?”

“Lena. Lena Luthor,” Lena whispers hoarsely, coughing a bit.

“Take your time. Breathe deeply.”

Lena does.

“Good. Can you tell me what your last memory is?”

Blood. Lena remembers blood. She remembers her panic as she ran flights of stairs. The silence of a barely lighted elevator. Gunshots. Screams. Tears. “There was an attack on L-Corp,” Lena whispers, choking slightly.

Smoke… Blood… Rain… Lifeless eyes and gaping mouths.
Lena slams her eyes shut, gasping for breath. Those aren’t real. Those are just dreams. They’re just dreams!

“Oh Lena! Lena, focus back on me!” Dr. Danvers urges her, but it’s hard to focus back on her when Lena can smell the smoke, see the blood drip behind her eyelids and hear every drop of rain hit the ground. “Lena, open your eyes! Whatever you are seeing is not real!” Lifeless eyes stare at her and grab her ankles, reaching for her face. Lena wants to scream but she can’t. She can’t or Lillian will throw her out… “You are at the DEO! I’m Eliza Danvers! Those are my hands on your face! Lena!”

Lena inhales abruptly, opening her eyes, staring back at Dr. Danvers’ wide, blue eyes. The woman grimaces slightly and Lena immediately lets go of the hands she had crushed in her grip, feeling guilty as she sees the red marks she left on Kara’s foster mother’s hands.

“I’m sorry,” Lena says, horrified. She is losing control. She needs Dr. Luke. She needs to call him. She needs- Lena clenches the blanket tightly in her hands, trembling in fury and silent agony as she remembers that Luke is dead. Lex killed him.

“It’s okay. I shouldn’t have touched you,” Dr. Danvers says, moving back slightly. She holds up her hand in a stopping motion and Lena follows the movement back to the glass wall where she can see Kara, looking back at her. Her hands pressed to the glass, eyes trained on hers. Unwavering. Alex Danvers stands next to her, a hand gripping her shoulder and J’onn appears quickly at their side, talking rapidly. Lena gulps, focusing on the woman following behind him and sags in relief when she recognizes Jess, one arm in a cast, her hair down, out of breath and a trembling smile on her face.

“I won’t let them come in until I know you can handle it. Rest is essential for you to get better. You can’t push yourself too hard…”

Lena nods, tearing her eyes away from the glass wall. “What happened to me, Dr Danvers?”

“Just call me Eliza, sweetie.” She grabs the charts at the end of her bed and leafs through it, shaking her head. “I must say that you presented one of the most mysterious cases I’ve ever seen. And I specialize in alien biology…”

Lena smiles at the joke, not sure if she ought to take it as a compliment.

“You had swelling in your brain due to trauma at the back of your head. They had to surgically relieve the pressure. The operation went perfectly. Your body kept functioning but your brain’s
activity was very low and you had to be put on life support in case your general state deteriorated.”

Lena touches the back of her head tentatively, remembering how she had fallen when Alana shot at her and the bullet grazed her forehead. Lena touches her forehead next and traces with her fingers the still tender skin. The trajectory of the bullet is etched onto her skin and a scar extends sideways above her right eye from her eyebrow up to her hairline.

“It is healing nicely,” Eliza remarks. “The bullet tore through several layers of skin and burned a bit of the surrounding area. You were transferred at the DEO after a few days for security reasons. That’s when I began to treat you. Do you remember waking up?”

Lena shakes her head.

“You woke up eleven days after the operation. You had a sudden surge in your brain activity and the electroencephalogram registered a constant and nearly virulent brain activity. We took you off of life support as you were able to breathe on your own. We treated your trachea. You bruised it while waking up. That’s why your throat might feel like it is burning,” Eliza continues, listing all the medication used on her while reading her chart and looking at her now and then with a smile.

Lena nods absentmindedly, looking at her pale, bony hands, wondering just what went wrong with her. She startles slightly when Eliza puts a hand on her leg, calling for her attention and meets her eyes with an inquisitive and serious look on her face.

“There’s a lot of things we still don’t know about the human brain, but yours, Lena, is nothing short of extraordinary. Your brain is…” Eliza pauses as if searching for words. “Your brain is wired differently. You have a complete extra set of neurological pathways and connections interacting with the different lobes,” Eliza elaborates, sounding slightly in awe, with questions in her eyes, asking for answers Lena isn’t sure she has.

“I- I get lost in my mind sometimes,” Lena replies instead. Lena doesn’t say how maze-like her mind feels sometimes. How her dreams might just drag her somewhere she isn’t sure she can come back from. How terrified she is every time she falls asleep.

Eliza nods, squeezing her hand in reassurance. “Even though you could breathe on your own and were technically conscious, you still wouldn’t wake up. You would have nightmares and fits of panic in your sleep. Kara nearly had a heart attack the first time you sleepwalked. You went straight out of the doors of the building. She carried you back here and Jess told us it could be a common occurrence. Hence the need of those,” Eliza motions to the straps on either side of the bed.
Lena nods, rendered mute by old fears. She glances back at the glass wall. J’onn and Alex aren’t there anymore. There’s only Kara, pacing outside, arms crossed over her chest and Jess sitting on a chair, waiting patiently. Jess waves at her and Lena tries to wave back but frowns when her arm only lifts halfway.

“It’s normal to feel weakness in your limbs. It’s from the lack of activity. You were strapped to that bed for a while.”

“How long was I out?” Lena asks, dreading the answer.

Eliza sighs and looks at her with sympathy. “A month and twelve days.”

Lena gasps, trying to wrap her mind around it. What the hell happened while she was out? What happened to Eli? And L-Corp or her brother? Lena has to find out. She needs to know…

“I want to see Jess.”

Eliza pinches her lips, assessing her quietly.

“Please.”

Eliza sighs and glances out the door before focusing back on her. “I’m going to call a nurse. She is going to help me unhook you from all these monitors…” She presses a button and a nurse immediately comes in, drawing the curtain and hiding her from the people outside. They work quickly around her. Lena endures Eliza’s check-ups, without uttering a word. She only grimaces a few times at the discomfort and sighs in relief when the nurse finally leaves and Eliza opens the curtains. “I’m going to let Jess in. I want to be informed immediately if you feel any pain, dizziness or headache. Remember not to push yourself too hard.”

“I will.”

Eliza looks at her insistently, as if not quite believing her. Lena only shrugs in response. She might have been too quick in her answer to sound sincere but Eliza pats her hand and smiles at her warmly. “I wanted to thank you. J’onn told me you helped the DEO in their search for my husband. Thank
Lena clenches her jaw, not knowing how to respond to that. She did help find Jeremiah Danvers but the man she found wasn’t the man Eliza knew and lost, and the cost of finding him has been high for her and her team. Too high maybe for her to handle right now.

“I’ll let Jess in.”

Lena watches Eliza walk out of the door. Jess perks up immediately and Kara stops her pacing, rushing toward Eliza before the door even has the time to close properly. She can’t hear what is being said outside but Kara’s shoulders slouches slightly before she turns away and sits on Jess’ now vacated seat. Jess is nodding quickly at whatever Eliza is saying and Lena smiles, meeting her friend’s eyes. She can’t believe how lucky they are. She can’t believe she gets to have a chance to see her friend alive and well when Alana had made her think Jess was dead. Her confrontation with Alana had been brief but everything went downhill so fast that Alana had dealt her blow after blow with only a few well-aimed words that had hurt her more than the graze of the bullet on her forehead. Lena opens her arms wide as soon as Jess steps into the room. Her friend laughs suddenly, beautifully and throws herself into her arms, embracing her in a one-armed hug, shaking with relieved laughter. Lena smiles widely, uncontrollably, and holds on tight.

“I’m sorry! I’m so sorry! I should have known. I should have known…” Lena whispers, trying to convey in those few words her regrets, shame but above all her gratitude. “You were right about Alana. You were right about everything. You were in danger and I- I’m so, so sorry!”

“Don’t,” Jess shushes her. “We’re okay. That’s all that matters! It’s alright.”

“It’s not. I should have protected you better and I didn’t. I’m sorry,” Lena insists, making sure to meet Jess’ eyes while uttering her apology. The remnant of laughter fades from her friend’s eyes, and Lena stares at the pain, fear and sorrow etched so clearly on her face.

“I know,” Jess smiles with tears filling her eyes. “Thank you.”

It doesn’t make Lena feel better. The guilt lingers even with Jess’ reassurance and all Lena can do from now on is protect them better so that she won’t ever have to see her friends’ eyes fill with tears again. “Where is Eli?”

Jess inhales abruptly, shakily, looking away. “He is still at the hospital.”
Lena waits, breathless, fearing the worst.

Jess looks back at her and Lena’s heart break as tears rolls down Jess’ cheeks. “He- He had multiple injuries. Two broken ribs, a broken nose and two bullet wounds. One in his shoulder and one in his back…” Her voice breaks and Lena watches powerless as her friend falls against her chest and sobs uncontrollably into her shoulder.

Lena embraces her immediately. Surprised and heartbroken to see her friend break down for the first time in all the years she’s known her. Jess was the one holding the three of them together. She always took care of them. Jess was the one to force Eli to take his medicine whenever he had a cold or help her hold her hair over the toilet bowl after a night of drinking because Eli would be too queasy to help her. Jess, with her non-nonsense attitude and overbearing tendencies, always seemed to be indestructible, a juggernaut they could always count on. Always so strong and resilient and yet, falling apart at the seam.

“The bullet damaged his lumbar spine,” Jess powers through. “They did everything they could but… Lena, he- he can’t walk! He can’t walk!” Lena holds back her tears as Jess shakes in her arms. She needs to be strong, be the protective force Jess had been for them for so long without breaking herself.

“Is it permanent?”

“We don’t know. We don’t know,” Jess repeats tiredly, rubbing at her eyes. “He’s lost feeling in both of his legs. He has to do physical therapy but there’s no guarantee he’ll ever be able to walk again on his own and he doesn’t want to do it. He- He’s so angry, Lena. Silent. He hasn’t talked for weeks. Maggie is with him right now. We’ve been keeping an eye on him but he won’t talk to us.”

Lena nods, handing her friend some of the tissues Eliza gave her. “Would I make it worse if I were to go see him?”

“I don’t know. I- To tell you the truth, I don’t know what to do anymore.”

“I’ll go see him. I’ll fix this,” Lena promises.

Jess nods, sagging in relief. “I’ll make arrangements. The security is tight around you if you haven’t noticed.” Jess points to the agents behind the glass wall and Lena’s eyes widen at seeing Marcus, her
head of security team back at L-Corp, among the agents she had thought were just employees passing by. “There has been unrest. Communication is limited, and a few days after the attack on L-Corp, rumors about Lex escaping prison began circulating. We removed you immediately from the hospital and hid you here.” Jess sighs, looking at her worriedly. “He’s out. There’s been a sighting of him in Metropolis a month ago, but then nothing. Superman, the DEO, Metropolis PD… everyone is looking for him, but he just disappeared.”

“Who is running L-Corp?”

“I am. Well, the official version is that you’ve been managing the company from home after the attack while the building is under repair.”

“The shareholders bought it?”

Jess nods, chuckling slightly. “We were pretty convincing. J’onn J’onzz really got your mannerism perfectly. He attended a few functions in your stead.”

Lena laughs, imagining him walking in ten inch heels and tight dresses. “If I’ve been working from home… Wouldn’t Lex or Cadmus try to look for me there?”

“That’s what we thought too. We have several agents waiting there if they show up. But, I don’t know. Something tells me they aren’t buying it, and yet nothing has been leaked to the Board.”

Lex would know it wasn’t her. He’d know that the first thing she’d do is track him down and make him pay for what he did. “And Alana?”

Jess’ features becoming dark and angry and her hand lift instinctively at the cast encasing her left arm. “Dead. She had a cyanide pill on her and took it before the DEO could interrogate her. I was there… It- It’s a whole other level of dedication.”

“Lex has that effect on people.” She feels exhausted, weary. As if her flesh and bones have become too heavy for her move. But Lena can’t rest knowing that her brother is out there; free and surely by Lillian’s side. Lena needs to push through the exhaustion, the lassitude. She needs to keep fighting. She needs to make him pay for what he did. “He killed Dr. Luke.” Every word feels like a stab in the chest, and the wound doesn’t heal with time. It only gapes wide open. Lena needs him. She needs the comfort, the safety and the affection he never ceased to give her. She needs his endless support and his faith in her. She needs him to ground her before she loses control of her mind. “Lex killed
him and then framed Batman for it. Have you heard anything from him?”

Jess shakes her head. “He hasn’t been seen since the murder. Metropolis PD is still looking for him.”

“Even as Bruce Wayne?”

“You know he doesn’t make a lot of public appearances. Everything goes through Miranda Tate first.”

Lena frowns. She needs to talk to him and understand what went wrong with Luke’s protection details. She had promised she would protect him. She had promised… “I need you to go back to the Lab and get the batarang he gave me. It’s in the vault. We need to send him a message.”

“Do you want me to do it?”

“You can’t. That batarang is quite the tech. He modified it into a communication device that would only activate with my DNA and a retinal scan.”

“That’s a bit extreme.”

“I know. He’s not the most trusting of individuals.” Lena should have been too… She should have been more careful. She should have taken better care of her team. Lena sighs, scratching at the scar on her forehead.


“Sorry.”

“We can have it surgically removed if you want. It’ll take a few hours…”

“No,” Lena says, flexing her right hand, scar-free and yet Lena can still feel the pain pulsing there.
“You don’t have to punish yourself for-”

“It’s not a punishment,” Lena cuts-in. “It’s a reminder.”

Jess frowns but Lena stops her before she can protest with a shake of her head. She doesn’t know how to explain that it isn’t the hurt she wants to remember, or the pain, the fear, or the blood. It’s what comes after that. It’s having this scar and still being alive. It’s being afraid but still fighting back...

“I- I survived. I want to remember that.”

“Alright,” Jess capitulates, hugging her goodbye. “I’m going to make the arrangement with the security team and get back that batarang.”

“Thank you,” Lena whispers, holding on to Jess for a few seconds longer.

“Are you going to be okay? As soon as I open this door…”

As soon as Jess opens the door Kara will come in and ask for answers. Lena knows Kara will come in and ask her to expose all of her secrets. Kara will ask her to be honest and vulnerable, and Lena isn’t sure she is ready for that yet.

“I can tell her you need more rest…” Jess trails off, unafraid to butt heads with the Girl of Steel if need be.

“No. It’s okay. I’ve made her wait long enough…”

Jess smiles, squeezes her shoulder in support and walks out of the room. Kara gets up from her chair as soon as the door opens but Jess stops her from walking any further. Lena can only guess what is being said, but from the frown marring Kara’s brow and the grave expression on her face, Lena is pretty sure Jess just might just be threatening the Girl of Steel. It doesn’t last long and Kara finally comes in, closing the door behind her. Silence settles and Lena feels awkward. She tries to talk a few times but nothing comes out and Lena stares, clueless about how to begin this long overdue conversation. Kara stands by the door, unmoving and hesitant. Unreachable. She doesn’t seem to know how to start either and they look at each other utterly lost, unable to figure out how to navigate these new, uncharted waters their friendship has fallen into.
“Hi,” Kara whispers after a while, breaking the silence.


It’s the first conversation they’ll have without one having to pretend, or actively keeping a secret from the other. Lena doesn’t have anything else to hide. Everything is out in the open now. Exposed and vulnerable. Lena wonders if all that newfound knowledge will maybe give them a chance at the affection her ghost had hinted at or if it might just break them apart. Lena doesn’t know what to do. It feels like time has stopped. Kara knows everything. Every secret she hid, every lie she uttered to protect herself. Protect herself from the uncertainty of Kara’s reaction if she ever found out the truth. The truth about the depth of her feelings for her. The truth about who they really are. Who they could be to each other.

The silence isn’t helping. It’s killing her and to be honest, Lena doesn’t really know what Kara knows. Her memory is hazy, and she realizes she should have asked Jess about the extent of Kara’s knowledge. It must be enough though. Kara looks at her differently now. It’s a look she has given her once or twice, generally when Lena would act impulsively or recklessly enough to thoroughly surprise her. Like when she had kissed her. Kara observes her with eyes full of concern and wariness. Exuding power and vulnerability at the same time. A mix of Supergirl and Kara Danvers. The personas merge together, interlacing seamlessly. Kara doesn’t hide anymore and Kara Zor-El stands before her, assessing her quietly.

A nurse breaks the silent standoff, bringing her food, telling her to be careful because her stomach hasn’t processed solid food for more than a month, completely oblivious of the tension in the room. Lena nods and listens intently, quite glad to have an excuse to look at something other than Kara’s eyes. The nurse leaves, closing the door behind her, and letting the silence settle back in. Lena drags her spoon through the brown broth, not sure if she can even get it past her lips.

“You should eat.”

“I- I’m not really hungry.”

The spoon is suddenly pried away from her hand, and Kara takes a seat on the bed, scoops a bit of the broth and lifts it to her closed, unwilling lips.

“What- What are you doing?” Lena asks as Kara looks at her expectantly.
“What does it look like? Open your mouth.”

Well, this certainly wasn’t a scenario she had been expecting. But she shouldn’t be surprised because from the very beginning, Kara has surprised her again and again.

“Come on. It’s good for you.”

Lena scrunches her nose at the liquid, ready to protest.

“Too bad there’s no kale in it…” Kara sasses with a teasing smile on her lips.

“Still mad at me for the kale cookies?” Lena asks, breathing more easily. She opens her mouth and lets Kara feed her a spoonful.

“Always. They were awful.”

Lena grimaces and swallows the broth. It’s tepid and tastes like bad aromatized water. “They weren’t so bad.”

Kara lifts the spoon to her lips again and Lena wonders if this isn’t some sort of revenge. Kara raises an eyebrow at her and Lena opens her mouth, unwillingly. “Yes. Awful,” Kara repeats, smiling as Lena grimaces at the taste again. She lifts another spoonful to her lips but Lena shakes her head, feeling like she might vomit if she has to swallow it again. Kara hands her a cup of water and Lena takes it gratefully, sipping at it slowly.

“You don’t mind if I eat the jelly then?”

“No. You can have it.”

Kara tears the wrapper off. Lena watches her eat the jelly meticulously, not meeting her eyes, seemingly happy to concentrate on it and let the conversation die down until only silence remains. But the silence is killing her and Lena can’t let that happen.
“Ask me,” Lena whispers, steeling herself. Inhaling deeply.

“No. It’s okay.” She finishes the jelly and turns away from her to put it back on the tray. “I’m just glad you are okay. We can wait until-“

“I’m not going to break,” Lena snaps. She doesn’t mean to but she can’t take the silence anymore. Or the distance she feels increasing between them as seconds pass. “If- If you want to yell at me… Do it! I can take it. I won’t break…”

“I’m not going to yell at you,” Kara huffs with a roll of her eyes, avoiding her gaze, rearranging what’s on the tray neatly, unnecessarily. She stands, turning her back on her, ready to leave, and Lena sees the small window of opportunity closing quickly. She has to act now if she wants to salvage their friendship. She has to do something before the bridge becomes too frail to cross.

“Then ask me.” Lena croaks, gripping at Kara’s arm to prevent her from leaving. “Just ask me what you want to know, Kara.”

Kara freezes, watching Lena’s hand wrapped around her arm impassively, lost somewhere Lena can’t reach her. It used to be so easy for them to talk. Back when she was just Kara Danvers, young reporter trying to make her voice heard. Lena had been a friend then and Kara would have no qualms in sharing the most trivial yet precious thing about herself. Like her obsession with N'Sync. Lena only had a few vague memories of the 90’ pop boy-band but Kara had blabbered non-stop about them one time over lunch, and now Lena knows everything there is to know about them. Or those late afternoons when Kara would pop up randomly just to catch up with her. Lena knows the kiss had always been standing like a wall in between them but when Kara would visit her as Kara Danvers, the wall wouldn’t seem so thick, so opaque and impenetrable anymore. But now the wall between them seems insurmountable. Kara seems so unreachable, and Lena just wants her friend back. If it’s all she can have… Lena wants Kara Danvers back.

“Please.”

Kara slams her eyes shut, her jaw clenches and her features become hard and unreadable. Lena waits, breathless, ready for anything. She can handle Kara’s anger. She hopes she can… she can handle anything but her indifference. It might break her if Kara looks at her and decides their friendship might not be worth the fight… Kara finally opens her eyes and Lena stares, tongue-tied, as stormy blue eyes stare at her angrily, painfully. A tear falls down Kara’s cheek, quickly followed by another one and it- it’s not what Lena expected… A few more follow and Lena stares in shock as Kara wipes them away hastily, gritting her teeth as if reprimanding herself for crying.
“I’m just…” Kara utters after taking a breath. It is slow and deliberate. A silent plea for control even though Lena hears the underlying emotion underneath. “I’m… I’m confused and lost with all of these questions and- I’m just trying to understand why you didn’t tell me, Lena.” Lena watches, helpless as Kara begins to pace, hands on her hips, voice measured and controlled until the tension breaks little by little and Kara’s voice rises in anger. “I- I could have helped you!” Kara’s eyes flash with anger, sadness and so much guilt that Lena can see it shake her body with rage and fury. “I could have done more! I could have protected you better if only I knew! If only you’d told me, Lena! What- What were you thinking?”

“I-”

“And then… And then I just couldn’t stop but think. I kept replaying the last few months in my head and-” Kara pauses, raging and pacing in front of her, burning a hole in the ground, “…and how secretive and reckless you were! How willing you were to put yourself in danger! At the renaming ceremony, at the gala fundraiser, and the whole thing with you stopping the Medusa virus!” Kara lists off, hands on her hips, looking at her accusingly. “I couldn’t understand how- why… but I believed you when you told me you believed in justice! When you said you wanted to make a name for yourself outside of your family! But that’s not why you came to National City, is it? You came because of me!”

Lena nods, paralyzed by the intensity of Kara’s anger. She would be lying if she said anything else. She came to National City filled with curiosity, and the hope, the desperate hope of seeing Kara again, and Lena would be lying if she said anything other than that. But her confirmation only seems to anger Kara further and her features twist in a painful grimace. Kara presses her fist against her closed lips, breathing heavily, trying in vain to quell the storm inside and Lena can only watch as Kara’s anger falls on her.

“Then why didn’t you tell me? Why didn’t you tell me what you were really here to do? Didn’t I have a right to know that some version of me came from the future? I thought- I thought you were my friend, Lena. Everyone kept telling me that you were lying that- that I shouldn’t trust you! But I did! I stood up for you when everyone thought you were guilty! I thought- I thought…” Kara’s voice breaks. It breaks and the damage is more damning than the anger itself. The resulting silence hurts more than Lena thought it would. “You lied to me, Lena. Was everything you told me just a lie?”

It hurts.

It hurts and Lena feels her hands tremble suddenly, shaken by Kara’s accusations. Was that Kara’s side of the story? Was that how Kara perceived her actions? Lies? It hurts and Lena feels anger bubbling inside of her. She knows she’d always had a hard time being honest. She would rather
deflect and lie because lying doesn’t leave her as vulnerable as being honest does. It doesn’t leave her as exposed and defenseless. Sometimes it feels like anger and lies are all she has to protect her from Lillian’s scorn and indifference, Lex’s betrayal or her father’s lies. Everyone has lied to her and Kara is no different…

“Why didn’t you tell me you were Supergirl?” Lena fights back, cold and calm, trying to harness her own anger to palliate the hurt she feels. “Is it because I’m a Luthor? Does it still overshadow our… friendship?” Lena asks, stressing on the last word with derision and hostility, dangling the very thing she has been trying to save over the precipice. “You asked me for my help and I did. Over and over again even when you were unaware of it! How many more times do I need to prove myself?”

“That’s not the point!” Kara growls in frustration, turning her back on her, shoulders so tense it seemed like her shirt would split open.

“I think it is,” Lena insists, words flying out of her mouth without much control. Feelings are unreliable and right now hers are spilling everywhere. Lena doesn’t how to stop it and she might be breaking the very thing she wanted to save. “Admit it. You didn’t trust me.”

“Well, clearly I was right not to!” Kara roars, facing her again, furious. “You’ve been lying to me from the start!”

“You’ve lied to me too!” Lena shouts defensively. It is weak. It is not the best counter-argument she could have come up with but it’s all she has right now. Her hands just won’t stop shaking and her throat burns so bad she might be spitting out flame soon. “Flew on a bus? Really? Do I have to remind you of all the lies you’ve told me?”

Kara crosses her arms over her chest, stoic. An unstoppable force amidst the chaos. “Clearly, I’m not as good of a liar as you are. You’ll have to teach me a thing or two!”

“Great! Do we make it a regular thing? You have a lot to learn.”

Kara laughs derisively, opening her arms wide. “Well, welcome to the Superfriends then! It’s a special club where my friends would rather lie to me than tell me the truth. We have game night on Friday.”

“Count me in!” Lena hisses, wild and vindictive, rising up to Kara’s challenge.
“Awesome! You’ll fit right in!” Kara declares, turning her back on her, breathing deeply and Lena tries to breathe too. To use this reprieve to calm herself down and remind herself that this isn’t the goal she had in mind. She had wanted to preserve their friendship but all she seems to do is break it apart.

Lena breathes heavily, winded and dizzy, reaching for her cup of water. Her hands shake and the cup falls to the ground spilling the rest of the water everywhere. Lena leans over the edge to grab her cup back but hands grip her shoulders and push her backwards. Lena bats them away.

“What are you doing? Let me do it,” Kara says, more gentle and soft than Lena deserves and Lena slams her eyes shut as tears threaten to fall. She hears water running and feels Kara’s presence back next to her but Lena keeps her eyes shut. Tightly. Kara places the cup in her hand and the coolness of the water inside soothes her burning skin. “Come on, Lena. Drink,” Kara encourages her, hand on her wrist, soothing her racing heart by tracing circle on the soft, fragile skin on the inside of her wrist with her thumb.

Lena drinks only when she is certain that her tears won’t betray her.

Kara watches her drink. Lena doesn’t know what Kara is waiting for. She doesn’t know how to voice her fear without being defensive. She doesn’t know how to tell Kara that the biggest lie she told her was that she wouldn’t live in fear when she never really stopped being afraid in the first place. Fear of not being strong enough to prevent a war Lena knows Kara will risk her life to stop. Fear of losing the memory of a Kara who might have loved her if given more time, if given a chance… But Kara, this Kara doesn’t like her like that and the second chance she has been looking for by coming to National City doesn’t exist and Lena needs to accept it and move on. She needs to let Kara live her life free from the expectations she had of a possibility that will never come to be.

“I’m sorry I kissed you that night on my balcony. I shouldn’t have… I’m sorry.”

Kara sighs and takes a seat next to her, pushing her a bit to the side, asking wordlessly for Lena to make some room for her. Lena does, confused as Kara makes herself comfortable, lying beside her, crossing her arms over her chest and staring at the ceiling.

“You don’t have to stay if you don’t want to…” Lena says quietly, her voice hoarse and weak.

“Do you want me to leave?”
Lena scoffs, staring at the ceiling. Does she really have a choice? The ceiling blurs before her eyes and Lena turns on her side to hide the treacherous tears that had managed to escape. “Aren’t you angry with me?”

“I am. But that doesn’t mean I want to leave.”

Lena nods, biting her lips to keep them from trembling. She breathes deeply, enjoying the warm, comforting heat at her back. Silence settles between them and it doesn’t seem so bad anymore.

“I- It wasn’t because I didn’t trust you or because you are a Luthor that I didn’t tell you about me being Supergirl,” Kara says after a while, heaving a sigh. Lena turns toward her but Kara keeps looking at the ceiling, her gaze seemingly far away. “I- I just wasn’t ready. I was taught to hide my powers and I was taught to blend in and be as normal, as human as possible. I’m so used to hiding who I am that sometimes it’s just- It’s just easier to hide behind one or the other.”

“I understand.” Lena takes Kara’s hand in hers, needing her to understand that Kara not revealing herself has never been a factor in why she kept everything that had happened back in Metropolis a secret. Lena has just been trying to protect herself. Sometimes too much… “Even though I knew who you were, I would have waited. I would have waited for you to be ready to tell me. I’m sorry. I hope we can still be friends?”

Kara laughs, bumping her forehead against hers playfully. “Of course, Lena. Always.”

Lena sighs in relief and startles as Kara’s phone vibrates against her leg

Kara takes it out of her pocket and frowns. “J’onn is calling for a meeting. I have to go,” Kara tells her, getting back up. “You still have a lot of explaining to do…”

“Wait,” Lena exclaims, grabbing Kara’s arm, preventing her from leaving. “Take me with you.”

“No.”

“Kara! I need to know what’s happening outside!”
Kara rolls her eyes, prying her hand away from her arm. “You just woke up. I’m not letting you leave this room.”

Lena narrows her eyes as Kara turns away and walks toward the door. “Either you let me come with you or I’ll make my way there myself.”

Kara stops in her tracks and glares at her. “I’ll lock the door.”

“I’ll pick the lock.”

“It’s an electric lock.”

“Even better,” Lena replies smugly.

Kara crosses her arms over her chest in an attempt to intimidate her but Lena can see the hesitation in her eyes. “You know Eliza is going to kill me, right?”

“She’ll be madder if you let me go alone…” Lena points out. “So? What is it going to be?”

“That’s just mean.” Kara grumbles, grabbing a pair of grey sweatpants and a sweater from a drawer near the bed and handing them to her. “You’re cruel.”

“What can I say?” Lena smiles widely. “Sometimes my Luthor genes just shine through.” She puts on the clothes Kara gives her, wearing them over her thin hospital robe. Kara gives her socks next and comfortable shoes and Lena frowns in confusion at all the spare clothes and toiletries inside the drawer.

Kara puts an arm around her waist and one under her knees and carries her out of the room.

“I- I can walk,” Lena protests, putting her arms around Kara’s neck and meeting the eyes of several agents, doctors and nurses who stop in their tracks.

“Well, you wanted to come with me. So this is how we’re going to do it.”
They pass Marcus, who nods at her and follows after them silently while Kara continues to walk, not bothered in the least.

“Everyone’s staring,” Lena murmurs, touching the scar on her forehead self-consciously.

“Don’t touch it,” Kara reprimands her and then softens, looking at the scar marking her forehead. “It makes the green of your eyes really stand out.”

Lena raises an eyebrow at the sudden, unexpected compliment. “Aren’t you the charming one?” She teases playfully.

“Shut up,” Kara replies with a blush coloring her cheeks. “We’re nearly there.”

Kara walks some more, taking a flight of stairs and a few turns before she stops in front of an oak door. Marcus opens it for them and Lena’s eyes widen as everyone suddenly turns to stare at them. Lena recognizes all of the faces around the room. She is surprised to see even Jess at the table.

“What is she doing out of bed?” Eliza gasps.

“It’s not my fault,” Kara replies promptly. “She blackmailed me.”

Eliza looks at her with a frown and Lena only shrugs as Kara deposits her gently on a seat next to the disapproving doctor. Kara sits beside her, starting a hushed conversation with Alex while Jess walks over to her, handing her Batman’s batarang.

“I was going to give it to you after the meeting.”

“It’s okay. Keep it for now. We’ll send him a message tonight.”

Jess nods. “I’ve been representing L-Corp,” Jess answers Lena’s quiet question. “But now that you are here, I’ll let you do it.”
Lena shakes her head. “I’m just going to observe. Do your thing.”

“Are you sure?” Jess whispers as the meeting begins. Lena nods and Jess goes back to her seat, tablet at the ready.

“What do we have on the two missing aliens?” J’onn asks. “Winn?”

“Right,” Winn puts up the pictures of the missing aliens and the location of their last sighting over the big screen. “I checked all CCTV in the surrounding area at the estimated time of their disappearance but I found nothing. It’s like they disappeared into thin air.”

“Maggie and I checked the first location. There’s nothing,” Alex adds. “No evidence. No traces of tires. Nothing.”

“Same for the second one,” James says. “No witnesses either.”

“How many have been missing?” Lena asks.

“Fifteen in a month. Seventeen now. Those two disappeared while called on a rescue mission. We believe the call was a trap,” J’onn answers and Lena wonders if her brother has anything to do with it. Jess told her that it’s been a month since he escaped prison. It couldn’t be a coincidence. J’onn nods at her. “We don’t think it is a coincidence either. But we found no evidence that your brother could be here in National City.”

“Yet,” Lena whispers and relaxes slightly as Kara holds her wrist in her hands, her thumb tracing lazy circles on her pulse.

“The Sanctuary is afraid of sending any more people outside.” Mon-El suddenly says. “They’ve voted for the formation of a militia around The Sanctuary.”

Kara shakes her head, a frown suddenly marring her face. “You’ll have to dissuade them or it will get worse. The DEO is protecting them already.”

“Not very well. Aliens are still missing!”
“And we are doing all we can to find them, Mon-El. You know that!”

Lena watches them glare at each other, uncomprehending until Eliza motions Lena to lean toward her so that she can whisper in her ear. “They named that old, industrial zone outside of National City The Sanctuary,” Eliza explains quietly as Mon-El and Kara’s heated exchange continues. “Aliens have been seeking refuge there as more and more of them have gone missing.”

“Isn’t that zone radioactive? I thought the government closed it down.”

“They did. But the radiation isn’t as bad for aliens as it is for humans. We can’t go in.”

Lena’s eyes widen at the realization and winces slightly as the grip on her wrist tightens imperceptibly. Kara clenches her jaw next to her and breathes through her nose in order to calm herself down. It doesn’t work and Lena watches Kara narrow her eyes at the accusations Mon-El throws at her from across the room.

“How can you say that?” Kara asks, outraged. “Of course I care! But it’s not us against them! I’m doing all I can to make sure the aliens still in the city are safe!”

“They aren’t, Kara! When will you realize that? There are two more aliens missing. Where were you when they went missing?”

Kara clenches her jaw and Lena interlaces their fingers together, giving her silent support. “Creating an armed force around The Sanctuary will be seen as a sign of aggression. We are trying to de-escalate the situation, and creating a militia is the exact opposite of what we should do!”

Mon-El huffs. “Don’t you get it? It’s not just Cadmus anymore! It’s humans! They believed the propaganda Cadmus fed them and they’ve been attacking us without reason. And you want us to do nothing? Let them beat us in the streets? Let them turn us over to Cadmus?”

“The Sanctuary was meant to be a safe place! Not the nest of a rebellion!”

“The DEO is the only defense The Sanctuary has against an airstrike, Mon-El.” J’onn cuts-in. “They won’t hesitate to step in if the government perceives them as a threat.”
“If they want to defend themselves I’m not going to stop them.”

“There are children in The Sanctuary!” James exclaims. “They will be all in danger!”

“We have already reinforced the security all around The Sanctuary and all the alien hideouts in the city,” Alex adds calmly, trying to calm the situation. Lena sees Winn making himself small as James and Mon-El glare at each other. “Creating a militia would just complicate things for us.”

“It looks like I’m outnumbered,” Mon-El chuckles humorlessly, glaring at Kara. “You wanted me to be like you. Be a hero. Help the weak and the poor. Well, I’m trying! That’s what I’ve been doing while you’ve been spending your nights looking after the one that put us all in this mess in the first place.”

Lena recoils as his glare is suddenly directed at her. Kara’s hand feels heavy in hers and Lena lessens her grip, eventually letting it go.

“Hey!” Jess exclaims. Her chair scraps loudly against the floor as she stands up and glares daggers. “None of them would even be alive if Lena hadn’t found Cadmus’ location and gave it to Kara. We would all have been thrown into space!”

Mon-El shrugs and focuses back on Kara. “The Sanctuary voted for a militia and I gave them my full support. Which side are you on?”

“None! Or both! We can’t choose side, Mon-El! If it comes to that,” Kara growls, exasperatedly and stands up, putting both hands flat against the table. The table groans. “If it comes to that we’ll all lose.”

A tense silence fall over the room and Lena watches the exhaustion, anxiety and weariness settle heavily on the shoulders of everyone around the table. The situation has spiraled out of control and Lena watches the rift grow larger as no solution is found.

“We are already losing, anyway,” Mon-El mutters, leaving the room. The door closes loudly and the walls tremble as the sound reverberates all around them.
“What do we do? Do we arrest him?” Alex asks J’onn, deadly serious.

“No. He has too many connections within The Sanctuary. There will be an uprising if they find out we arrested him,” J’onn sighs, frowning deeply. “It will be hard to be on two fronts. But we need to neutralize Cadmus and stop The Sanctuary’s situation from escalating any further.”

“It will be a bloodbath if there’s a confrontation,” James warns. “The relation between aliens and humans is deteriorating really fast. Everyone on both sides is scared.”

“What about Metropolis?” Lena asks. “Is National City the only city affected by it or is it globalized?” If it is, Lena fears she might just be stepping into the war her ghost had prophesized months ago. If it is, Lena already missed the beginning of it.

“It’s pretty much the same,” Alex answers. “Cadmus has been targeting the power plants of all major cities. The power has been mainly rerouted toward hospitals and government buildings and repairs are under way, but the cities have been experiencing blackouts, sometimes for hours on end, and protests and unrest have been multiplying.”

“L-Corp has been building new generators and wind and solar alternative energy sources to help offset the shortage of power,” Jess continues, putting up her own files on the big screen. “We are actively participating in the repairs but insecurity is high and it has been slowing us down.”

“The President?”

“She is battling the Congress over how to deal with the situation. She has been trying to calm the situation while Congress has asked for military actions.” J’onn tells her. “If aliens begin a rebellion there will be nothing she can do to stop them from bombing The Sanctuary.”

“How vulnerable would it be against an air strike?” Lena asks, absorbing as much information as she can. It’s like playing a game of chess that has already been started and Lena tries desperately to fully perceive the different pieces and their positions before she has to make her move.

“No one would survive,” Winn answers. “It’s just fences all around the industrial district. Their main protection is the radioactivity of the place. Completely vulnerable against an air strike. The place would just go boom.”
Lena nods. She needs to think… She needs to think of something that would defuse the situation. Memories blur in her mind until she grasp onto something. “Before I took over the company, Luthor Corp has been designing a force field for the army. The project was abandoned when I put an end to the contract. If I recall correctly, it was meant for small bases in case of an attack. I’ll have to go through the files again but would it help to reassure The Sanctuary? Can we use it as a bargaining chip against their militia?”

“It’s worth a try,” J’onn nods seemingly satisfied. His shoulders relax slightly as he smiles at her. “Welcome back, Lena.”

Lena smiles and nods gratefully before her attention is grabbed by Winn’s waving hand. “I want in on that!”

James shakes his head exasperatedly, bringing Winn’s waving arm back down. “What of Cadmus?”

“No suspicious activities so far which is pretty suspicious in itself,” Winn replies before catching Lena’s eyes from across the table and pointing to himself asking to be let in on the force field project.

“Keep looking. I want those missing aliens found! Dismissed!” J’onn orders and promptly leaves the room. The chair next to her scrapses loudly on the floor and Lena sees Kara run after J’onn, followed closely by Alex and James. The four of them talk animatedly just outside the door.

“Lena,” Eliza calls her, taking her wrist in her hand and measuring her pulse. “Are you okay?”

Lena nods. “I just feel like there’s a lot I need to catch up on.”

“Don’t push yourself too hard, sweetie. That was a lot to take in, and you need to rest to heal.”

“I know.”

Eliza smiles and pats her arm gently. “Come see me after this. We’ll need to talk about your treatment and your sleeping habits.”

Lena nods and watches Eliza leaves, giving hugs to both her daughters before passing out of her
sight. Jess sits next to her while Eliza’s newly liberated seat finds a new occupant.

“Hi! I’m Winn,” he says pointing to himself unnecessarily. Lena smiles as he flounders over his words. “I uh- we talked over the phone when… you know… I also helped you with the black body generator… under the stage…”


“No problem! So, um- about your time machine… We have it here. In my lab.”

Lena straightens up suddenly, having completely forgotten about it. “Did you test it?”

Winn guffaws loudly before throwing nervous glances at Kara. “Are you kidding me?” He whispers incredulously. “I mean I would have loved to,” he emphasizes quietly, “loved to test it but Kara would have killed me. She had me dismantle it and store it away. She was seriously freaked out by it.”

Lena frowns at the new piece of information.

“As we all should be,” Jess chimes in. “I told you not to build it.”

“Anyway, if you need a partner for-”

“For what?” Kara interrupts suddenly.

“Other projects, Kara. Geez!” Winn exclaims, holding both of his hands up as Kara narrows her eyes at him. “Well, I’m gonna go. You know where to find me,” Winn tells her before scurrying away.

“We should go too before visiting hours end,” Jess tells her.

“Where are you going?” Kara asks, holding Lena’s arms as she stands up.
“The hospital. I need to see Eli.”

“Lena,” Kara warns, frowning deeply, her hand still holding her arm. “You need to rest.”

“I will after I see Eli,” Lena insists not backing down from Kara’s intimidating glare.

Kara sighs, caving in. “Fine. But I’ll fly you there. It’ll be faster.”

“Well, I guess I’ll order the security team to stay put,” Jess quips in with a slight roll of her eyes. “Eli knows you are awake.”

Lena nods, her heart beating with sudden apprehension as her friend leave the room.

“I don’t think Jess likes me very much,” Kara whispers once Jess is out of sight.

Lena laughs. “Don’t take it personally. She is just protective.”

Kara nods, taking back Lena in her arms once again, and promptly flies them out of the building. Lena is surprised that Kara didn’t take the time to trade her jeans and shirt for her skirt and cape. She also would have never imagined ever missing the sensation of flying. But as Kara flies over National City, Lena is surprised to find herself enjoying it thoroughly. She missed the feeling of freedom.

“You’ve got yourself a good team. You even had Maggie working for you all this time.”

“Don’t let her hear you say that,” Lena chuckles, remembering how difficult the Detective had been at the start. “She was very adamant that she wasn’t working for me, even though I do pay for her apartment.”

“I heard about your therapist. I’m sorry.”

“Luke. His name was Luke. He was a good man,” Lena whispers with the loss sitting heavily inside of her. She should have protected him better… If only she’d been more careful…
“Here. Look. That’s the Sanctuary,” Kara points to decrepit warehouses and other buildings in the distance. “The registered aliens abducted by Cadmus tried to go back to their normal life. But most were outed and a part of the population didn’t react well to them. The aliens started going there seeking refuge and then words got around and now, there are more than two hundred aliens there. More have been coming ever since the abductions,” Kara explains, and Lena nods, breathless, as she now understands better Kara’s reasons for hiding her identity. The proof lies before her eyes and Lena marvels at the voluntary seclusion of hundreds of individuals just for the chance to live in relative safety. Even if safety means living in dilapidated warehouses, cut off from basic needs and comfort. Even if safety means risking their lives to defend it. Kara sighs, tightening her grip on Lena’s body. “Do you think me naïve for trying to stop it?”

Lena contemplates the question as they fly high and alone in the skyline. The fact that Kara is asking her advice about human-aliens relations is surprising in itself, especially after the way their first conversation about the Alien Amnesty Act had gone. And while they had argued over the detection device, Lena has been playing the foil to Kara’s pro-alien views. She can’t do that now. There’s no more role to play. They now have a war to prevent. “I think anyone would be a fool not to try.”

She feels Kara let out a breath as the tension in her shoulders relaxes slightly under her hands. Kara lands on the roof of the hospital and immediately goes down the stairs to the main building. They take many twists and turns, making sure to stay hidden from view. Kara deposits her gently on her feet and takes her in her arms suddenly. Lena gaps as her head is pressed against Kara’s throat, her face hidden from view as she hears people talking behind her. Kara pats her back awkwardly, whispering nonsense into her ear, and Lena wonders if she ought to cry a bit to sell the part. As soon as they are gone, Kara picks Lena back up into her arms and hurries away. Lena now understands why she didn’t wear the suit. That would have surely called everyone’s attention.

Kara finally stops and gently sets Lena down so she can stand on her own two feet. They are greeted by Maggie who seems to have been waiting for them for quite a while, leaning against the wall. “Hey Sleeping Beauty,” Maggie smiles and hugs Lena tightly. “Who finally kissed you awake?”

Lena rolls her eyes at Maggie’s not so subtle nudge. “How is he?”

Maggie sighs, shaking her head.

Lena nods with her heart in her throat. She doesn’t know what to expect. Eli has always been the one to joke, the one to get her out of her shell when she was sad or moody, always so eager to protect her, always trying to act tough. Lena looks at the door to the room where Eli waits, takes a deep breath, and opens it. She had always found him when they would play hide and seek. She
won’t let him hide now. The room is dark despite the open curtains and the artificial lights. Eli keeps his eyes fixed on the burning sky outside as she closes the door behind her. It is not a flattering light. The setting sun only accentuates Eli’s sunken cheeks, his unkempt hair, harsh stubble, and lifeless eyes. Lena stares, not sure if she is having one of her nightmares right now.

“Mind if I sit here?” Lena asks, walking to the bed. “I just woke up and my legs are a bit wobbly.” Lena waits for an answer. It doesn’t come and she sits on the bed, gauging his reaction. He doesn’t respond, and Lena tries to keep her tears at bay. “I’m going to lie down. I’m fucking exhausted,” Lena whispers, lying down next to him, and waits. She won’t push him to talk if he doesn’t want to. Having him next to her is enough for now. The ceiling turns a fiery orange before the dancing lights dim as the sun disappears below the horizon. The darkness settling around Eli is heavy, but Lena won’t give up. She can’t. “You look like Tom Hanks,” Lena mumbles without thinking, “in that movie… You know the one where he talks to a ball. Damn, what was the name of the movie again?”

“Cast Away,” Eli replies quietly.

“Right,” Lena nods, trying not to smile too wide as her heart fills with affection. “That beard must be scaring the nurses.”

He doesn’t answer and Lena tries not to let it get to her.

“Hey!” Lena says, turning toward him, showing her forehead. “Don’t you think I look like a pirate with this scar?” Lena waits until Eli finally looks at her, his tired, sad eyes staring at her scar. “Kara said it makes the green of my eyes really stand out,” Lena whispers playfully with a wink.

A slight smile appears on his lips before it fades away.

She can’t let him fade away.

“Thank you for saving my life,” Lena whispers taking his hand and holding it tight. “I couldn't have done all the things I did if you and Jess weren't there by my side.” Eli’s hand trembles and Lena holds it even tighter. She won’t let go this time. She won’t let him face the world alone. “And you were right. We are not the bad guys, Eli. We're heroes. It's time for us to step out of the shadows.” Lena feels Eli’s shoulder tremble against her own before the darkness surrounding him breaks away and Eli folds in on himself, leaning against her, sobbing silently into her shoulder. Lena bites her lip as tears fall down her cheeks, and takes him into her arms, holding his shaking frame. “It’s okay, Eli. We’re going to be okay,” Lena whispers and combs his hair with her hand like his mother would comb hers when she’d wake up crying from a nightmare. “It will take time. Healing always does. But we'll be there with you. Every step of the way. We'll keep going. Together.”
Lena stares at the ceiling, breathing deeply, steadily, like Luke taught her to, before letting herself fall asleep. She is beyond exhausted but she fears that when she closes her eyes, lifeless eyes will come back to taunt her. Eliza had offered a sedative but Lena had refused, afraid that it would keep her trapped in her dreams. She feels bad for the Agent posted outside her room, keeping watch. Agent Vasquez had introduced herself as her nighttime bodyguard. A role she had ever since Lena nearly sleepwalked out of the building.

The glass door opens and Lena frowns as a silhouette appears on the curtain, rummaging through the drawer near the bed.

“Who’s there?” Lena asks, ready to fight if she needs to.

The shadows stops abruptly and pushes the curtain to the side. “Why aren’t you sleeping?” Kara asks her, puzzled. “It’s four AM!”

Lena sags in relief. “What are you doing here?”

“I just finished patrolling the city. I need my pajamas.”

“Our what?” Lena frowns, not understanding why they would be here in the first place. Kara shows her the clothes she picked out from the drawer and then goes to the bathroom, coming back in a few minutes later, changed and ready to sleep. She walks over to her and climbs in her bed, slipping under the cover to Lena’s utter surprised. “What- What are you doing?”

“Sleeping,” Kara mumbles, turning her back to her, burrowing her face into the pillow, as if it was a nightly occurrence.

“Here? Why?”

“My apartment has no electricity and most of us have been crashing at the DEO lately. It’s just easier if we get called for an emergency which happens often now,” Kara sighs and turns back toward her, looking at her tiredly, patiently. “Why aren’t you sleeping?”
“Nightmares,” Lena answers and realizes that Kara isn’t telling her everything as she remembers what Mon-El said at the meeting, earlier. About Kara looking after her every night.

“Alright.” Kara takes her in her arms without hesitation, without being prompted and Lena gasps, finding herself pressed against Kara, her head resting under her friend’s chin as Kara’s hand traces endless lazy circles on her back.

“Kara?” Lena gasps, asking for an explanation, utterly shocked and breathless until her body loosens and relaxes into the motion.

“That’s what worked best when you’d scream in your sleep,” Kara whispers sleepily while adjusting her hold on her body.

Eliza hasn’t mentioned that earlier when they had talked about her sleeping habits. It would have been nice to have a heads up because now Kara is holding her and Lena is afraid that Kara’s kindness might spoil her too much for her to find sleep anywhere again but in Kara’s arm.

“I can hear you thinking,” Kara mumbles, voice leaden with sleep. “Sleep. We’ll talk tomorrow.”

Lena closes her eyes and falls willingly into Kara’s embrace. The darkness is still there. The lifeless eyes too. But Kara holds her and Lena doesn’t feel so scared anymore.

Lena falls asleep to the rhythm of Kara’s steady breathing.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading. I'm a sucker for the bed sharing trope lol. Take care!
Chapter Notes

Hi! Thank you all so much for the support! Huge thanks to Earthling3 who edited this chapter and made it more English than I ever could. Thanks to listen_to for putting up with my ramblings :) And have you guys seen Seriouslyficent's art for my fic Do not Go Gentle into that Good Night? http://seriouslyficent.tumblr.com/post/162436449930/supercorp-medieval-au-do-not-go-gentle-into-that
It's awesome! :D
Anyway, all lingering mistakes are mine. I hope you'll like this chapter. Enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Lena has never been one for cuddling. She just never felt comfortable having someone glued to her, feeling their breath on the back of her neck, or being trapped in their arms. She can’t recall ever cuddling with any of her past lovers, and yet she can’t deny having this longing for it; a need, visceral and greedy, to feel something. Something that couldn’t be as simple as cuddling.

Veronica wasn’t one for cuddling either. She was bursting heat and bruising kisses. She was the thrill of danger, the rush of adrenaline in response to the violence. She was vengeance, hatred, and punishment to the loneliness, the hurt and the emptiness Lena felt. It was simple, easy, and meaningless. Veronica couldn’t give her more than that. She couldn’t give Lena something that didn’t require a fight, or a show of dominance.

Lena got used to it. She never asked for more. Lena couldn’t ask for something that wasn’t there in the first place.

Luthors don’t ask, especially not for things like that. Asking was perceived as a weakness. Asking meant revealing something of herself that could be used against her. In that regard Veronica had been the perfect match for her. Neither had been willing to bring down the walls they had put up. Neither had been willing to be vulnerable, or be seen as weak.

But Kara is different. Kara gives.

Lena doesn’t ask but Kara gives. She gives without asking anything in return. She gives her
friendship, and protection, and support, and Lena is greedy. Lena craves the warmth Kara gives her, the comfort, and the flutter in her heart every time Kara smiles at her. Lena craves something she never knew how to ask for, and she is afraid to ask for more. She is afraid of trespassing across a line into unknown territory where she might lose it all. But it doesn’t stop her traitorous body from shifting closer, from pressing herself deeper into that warmth she suddenly can’t get enough of. Close enough for Lena to be aware of the steady breathing under her cheek. Close enough for her to breathe in the subtle scent of honey and mint. Close enough to feel the soft, supple skin under her hand.

Her hand flexes unconsciously, awoken by an increasing awareness, and Lena realizes too late what she has just done. Suddenly wide awake, Lena tries to extricate her sinning hand from under Kara’s shirt and move it far away from Kara’s chest as discreetly as possible. Her breath hitches when Kara suddenly moves under her.

“Go back to sleep, Lena.” Kara mumbles above her head, voice raw with sleep.

Lena flushes bright red. Wide awake and panicky, she tries to put as much distance as she can between herself and the evidence of her temptation personified. Kara is sleeping in her bed, holding her in her arms, and yet ordering her to go back to sleep as if Lena hasn’t just groped her chest. “I- I didn’t mean to- Kara. I’m so, so, sorry! I-”

Kara cuts off her apology with a groan and soothing circles on her back. Lena gasps, fighting hard against the slackening of her body and the ease and comfort that comes with it. She can’t let her body relax and sweep this incident under the rug as if it never happened. She can’t let Kara lull her back to sleep when clearly some lines have just been crossed. She can’t be confused about this. Kara’s friendship matters too much to her to let her hands go on an uncontrolled rampage across Kara’s body when her friend has been nothing but kind to her. Kara’s arm is heavy on her back and Lena doesn’t know where she stands or what she should do because what is happening right now is entirely new territory for her, and she can’t mess this up with Kara.

“Stop freaking out,” Kara mutters and Lena looks up in surprise, watching Kara press half of her face into the pillow in aggravation. “It’s okay. I’m used to it now. Just- go back to sleep.”

Lena’s thoughts screech to a halt. “What?” She can’t believe Kara easily flustered Danvers just admitted to being groped by her on a regular basis and being okay with it. To be honest, she doesn’t understand why she is the only one freaking out right now. Questions fuse in her head, deeply mixed with confusion, and Lena can’t help but wonder what the hell happened in that month and a half she missed. It feels like something has changed. Something has shifted and Lena wasn’t there to see it.

Kara shrugs, the movement reverberating into Lena’s body, and then sighs, untangling their limbs with an ease Lena still can’t quite get her mind around. “You move a lot in your sleep. Accidents are
bound to happen. It’s okay.”

Kara gets up and pulls the curtains slightly to rummage through the drawer before her attention is focused on her phone and then the inside of the drawer again… and Lena feels lost. She wishes Kara would just stop. Stand still and look at her. But Kara doesn’t. And Lena feels lost and out of her depth, sensing that same shift that had surprised her so much the day before when Kara had cried angrily in front of her and then ignored it, brushing that emotion away without batting an eyelash. Lena knows emotions are unreliable. They make people say and do things they’d never want others to see, and that was why Lena was always the weakest in the Luthor’s household. The easy prey. Emotions are more honest than words can ever be, and Kara keeps hers close to her chest; unwilling to share, unwilling to open up to her, unwilling to explain that shift Lena feels every time Kara looks at her in spite of the explicit promise she made last night. The promise that they would talk about it.

Kara gives but is unwilling to talk about it and Lena stares, at a loss.

“Kara…”

“I-” Kara sighs and chuckles suddenly, humorlessly, finally looking back at her. Lena feels pinned down by Kara’s gaze. By the heaviness of it. The weight of what Kara leaves unsaid and hides behind a smile is so heavy that Lena finds it hard to breathe. Her heart clenches in pain at the storm she sees rage briefly in Kara’s eyes before it disappears. Gone in a blink. “You’d scream in your sleep… thrash around… Medication worked at first. It helped you relax but then it stopped working…” Kara whispers with a slight trembling smile. She hides it immediately by taking the cup on the tray and filling it with water and giving it to her. Lena thanks her quietly and Kara smiles again, that same deceptive smile that hides, and yet hints at things Kara isn’t willing to say. Things Lena can’t afford to presume. “I sang to you once…” Kara jokes, laughing the tension off with a big smile stretching across her lips.

Lena sees it for what it is. A deflection. Kara looks jittery and anxious, and Lena decides to let it go. For now. “You did? I’m sad I missed that,” she says with the raise of an eyebrow and hiding her smile by sipping at her water before she grins unabashedly at seeing the blush on Kara’s cheeks.

“Ah!” Kara breathes, embarrassed. “You didn’t like it. You screamed even more when I did… So I’m not doing it again!” Kara insists with narrowed eyes at Lena’s implicit demand. Kara finally picks up some clothes and walks toward the adjoining bathroom. “Besides, it hurt my feelings,” she adds with a teasing smile.

Lena snorts. “Come on! It’s not like I did it on purpose. I was unconscious!”
“Still hurt my feelings,” Kara calls out from inside the bathroom and closes the door.

Lena sighs. She doesn’t think Kara needs any lessons in deception. She is doing very well on her own. She doesn’t have very long to ponder over it because Kara comes out of the bathroom soon enough, phone in hand, and with a frown on her face.

“I have to go.”

“Kara…” Lena pushes the cover to the side ready to get dressed and follow wherever Supergirl has to go. She gasps when she is suddenly pressed back against the bed, the cover thrown back over her with the edges tucked under the mattress, tight enough that Lena feels trapped for a second.

“No. You stay here this time! I texted Eliza. She’ll be here soon,” Kara says and disappears.

Lena huffs in frustration, her head falling back against the pillows.

Damn Kara and her superspeed.

***

Lena is not amused.

Eliza has been running tests on her for hours. Hours spent hooked to different machines, in a sports bra and sweatpants, and asked to perform mental and physical exercises as monitors beep around her. Lena isn’t sure what they are looking for or what they hope to find but she can’t help but groan when she is asked to walk on a treadmill next while doctors and scientists stare at their monitors, whispering quietly to themselves.

Lena hates it and she is cold.

“Is that how you run, Luthor?” Maggie taunts suddenly from behind her.

Lena gives her the finger and tries not to smile as she keeps walking calmly on the treadmill. Maggie
walks into her line of sight with a smug smile. Lena knows by the mischievous twinkle in her eyes that Maggie already has a repartee waiting for her.

“Just one? No wonder Kara has been so grumpy,” Maggie whispers with a cocky grin, wagging her eyebrows. Lena snorts as a nurse flushes bright red next to them. Eliza looks at them questioningly from behind her monitor and Lena’s neck reddens in embarrassment. She exhales deeply, biting her lips so that she doesn’t laugh as Maggie crosses her arms and winks at her. “Anyway, you clearly don’t know what you are doing so I’m taking back custody of the kid. Someone’s got to redo his education,” Maggie smiles, motioning toward the door. Lena turns around and smiles wide at seeing Jess push Eli’s wheelchair just outside the door. Waiting for her.

“I’m done!”

Lena steps off the treadmill and tears off the two electrodes stuck on her chest in annoyance. She winces as the tapes burn her skin but sighs in relief, infinitely glad to finally be able to scratch the reddened skin underneath. Alarms blare all around them as the heart monitor flat-lines in the room.

“Lena!” Eliza calls out exasperatedly.

Nurses rush to her side to power off the different machines around her and help her take away the wires and electrodes on her back and stomach before Lena tears them all off. Lena rolls her eyes as Maggie laughs at the scene. Lena shrugs helplessly while nurses work around her.

“I’ll wait outside,” Maggie points out of the door and Lena watches her go enviously. Eliza appears beside her with a frown on her face and holds her face still so that the nurses can take away the electrodes on her temples, undisturbed.

“We’ve been in here for hours. I’m done,” Lena pouts, ready to argue if necessary. But Eliza only chuckles and shakes her head at her with a fond smile. She hands her a sweater and Lena’s heart squeezes painfully, suddenly with longing. There’s this fond exasperation that Lena reads in her eyes, a familiarity and kindness Lena wished she could have seen in Lillian’s eyes for most of her life. Lena takes the sweater, gulping slightly, and hides the sudden swell of tears by putting the sweater on, grateful for the added warmth.

“Remember not to push yourself too hard, sweetie. You lost a lot of muscle mass during that month and a half. Your body doesn’t have the same limitations as it had before.”
Lena nods, mute, afraid her voice might shake if she utters a word.

“Alright, I’ll let you catch up with your friends,” Eliza smiles, patting her arm before starting a conversation with one of the nurses.

Lena exhales, feeling paralyzed. It’s the stress, Lena tells herself. It’s the fatigue. It’s waking up and realizing that a whole month and a half went by without her knowing. It’s everything but the warm look, or the gentle, maternal touch on her arm that makes her legs weaken so suddenly. It’s ridiculous as much as it is painful because Lena suddenly pictures another smile, warm and loving, a laugh, and the scent of an apple pie just fresh out of the oven. Lena squeezes her eyes shut, trembling, grappling tightly at those wisps of memories in the hope, the desperate hope they might lead her to see her mother’s face again. To remember it…

But she can’t. She can’t and no matter how hard she tries Lena only sees lifeless eyes staring back at her.

Warm hands cup her cheeks and Lena startles, eyes widening at seeing Eliza so close to her with a patient, worried gaze trained on her, calling her name over and over again.

“Lena. Can you hear me? Lena…”

Lena tries to jerk away but Eliza holds on fast and Lena feels tears, treacherous and vulnerable, roll down her cheeks.

“Breathe. Everything’s fine. Focus back on me,” Eliza whispers over and over again and Lena needs to go. She might break if she doesn’t leave. She might break if Eliza keeps looking at her like that. “Lena?”

“I have to go,” Lena croaks before repeating it again more firmly. “It’s nothing. I have to go…”

“Alright, sweetie. Be careful,” Eliza nods with understanding in her eyes.

It makes her feel even worse.
Lena dries her tears with a careless sweep of her hand and flees the room as quickly as possible, bypassing nurses on her way to grab the hand Jess holds out to her.

“I’m sorry. I’m okay,” Lena reassures them quickly, ignoring Maggie’s nod to Eliza. “I’m okay. I’m fine.”

Eli looks up at her worriedly and Lena pats his shoulder reassuringly.

“Let’s go grab a bite,” Maggie suggests to Lena’s relief, and pushes Eli’s wheelchair out of the Medical Bay. “You haven’t tried the DEO’s food yet, kid. It’s to die for.”

Lena chuckles. If the food was anything like the broth she had yesterday then, yes, Eli might actually die. Jess loops her arm through hers and Lena leans against her friend gratefully. They follow them quietly, a few steps behind the Detective who makes small remarks every now and then, pointing out a few things around the DEO. Eli seems interested by the various technologies they pass by.

“He’s been transferred to the DEO like you asked,” Jess tells her. “I gave his medical file to his new doctors this morning. Dr. Danvers will be supervising his recovery.”

“How has he been since yesterday?”

“Better,” Jess replies, squeezing her hand in gratitude. “Still quiet…”

“It’s okay. One step at a time,” Lena whispers, watching Eli listens to whatever Maggie is telling him with a small smile. One step at a time. Healing takes time, Luke always told her and Lena tenses suddenly at the memory.

“Are you okay?”

Lena doesn’t answer. To be honest, she doesn’t know what she is feeling. Too much has been going on since she woke up. She barely has the time to process the load of information she’s been absorbing constantly about her new environment. She has mapped in her mind all the parts of the DEO where she has been allowed in. She has memorized every face she met and has filed their function in the DEO inside her brain. She has a good understanding of the security team’s schedule in the Medical Bay and of those of the medical personnel. Lena is good at discerning patterns and the DEO is like a well-oiled machine. Functional. Repetitive. Predictable. All she needs now is to have a
full grasp on the atmosphere in National City to see how the situation with The Sanctuary might play out. She can’t afford to be unprepared. Not anymore. But that’s not what Jess is asking. Jess wants to know how she is emotionally, and Lena doesn’t know. There’s too much going on. Too much to process… Lena pats her pocket to feel the batarang, still silent, inside.

“Did Maggie get her hands on Luke’s case file?”

“Lena…” Jess protests.

“Did she?”

“I have them.”

“I want to see them.”

Lena knows Jess is about to protest again, trying to protect her, again, from pain. But there’s no protecting from this one. She needs to know. She needs to know what Luke went through, his last moments, his last thoughts… It’s her cross to bear. Her plea for forgiveness for when the night comes and lifeless eyes crawl toward her…

“I need to know.”

Jess sighs and nods stiffly. Maggie turns a corner and Lena sees a room full of DEO agents, talking animatedly among themselves. The glass doors open at their arrival and the noise inside drops as everyone stares at them. Lena stares back, head held high, clenching her jaw slightly at the agents suddenly whispering among themselves. It’s not very subtle but Lena is used to it. She is used to the scrutiny, the sidelong glances, and the gossip. She refrains herself from touching her scar, clenches her fists instead, and untangles herself from Jess. Lena stands tall. Alone.

“Hey! Over here!” Winn waves at them.

Lena exhales slowly, following behind Maggie and Eli, her steps controlled and calm as she feels the room stare at her. She takes a chair out from the round table and Maggie tucks Eli’s wheelchair into the spot. Lena sits next to him, facing Winn.
“I’m going to grab us some food,” Jess says, pointing toward the other end of the room where the sound of pans clacking was the loudest.

“I’ll help,” Maggie volunteers following Jess shortly.

Lena tries to meet Eli’s eyes but he keeps his gaze focused on the table, his shoulders slouched slightly, his jaw clenched tight as he tries to make himself smaller and smaller. Lena glares at the agents looking at them, satisfied when they finally look away and the weight of their gaze doesn’t hang so heavily on them.

Winn smiles hesitantly. “Hi. I’m Winn,” he tries, looking at Eli but Eli only nods shortly, gaze far away, hiding somewhere… Right now, Eli doesn’t want to be found. Eli hides and Lena lets him, afraid of making it worse, afraid he might clam up if she were to reach for him. Lena gives Winn a small, sad smile. She’ll wait for Eli to want to be found again… He always does.

“So…” Winn focuses back on her. “About that force field project… Jess gave me the files and blueprints this morning, and let me tell you. It’s amazing!”

“Have you read through all of them?”

Winn scoffs. “Twice already.”

“Then you know that we were unable to stabilize the core generator. If I remember correctly we were stuck trying to find the perfect equilibrium between the particles. All of our tests had resulted in either the explosion of the generator or the collapse of the force field.”

“Yes, I saw that. But what if instead of a big generator we were to use multiple small interconnected generators…” Winn says excitedly. “The charge would be more evenly distributed and easier to control…”

“I-” Lena stops in awe as calculations, mathematical and physical laws speed through her mind. “That- That could work. But they would still need a mainframe to balance and regulate the energy going through them. We need to program them to-” Lena’s breath hitches as she feels Eli grab her arm. She turns toward him and sees him look at her with that same light he used to have when she would find his hiding place, that same spark of excitement he has before hacking into government agencies she forbade him from hacking. “You want in?” Lena whispers, trying hard not to smile.
“Yes,” Eli whispers. He clears his throat and looks at Winn. “I’m sorry. I’m Eli,” he says more firmly, holding out his hand for Winn to shake.

“Hi!” Winn smiles, shaking his hand. “Welcome to the team!”

Eli smiles slightly and Lena can’t help herself… She ruffles his hair.

“Hey!” Eli squeaks, his voice breaking a bit from disuse.

Lena laughs, loud and free, as he shies away from her. Her heart lightens at seeing the small smile on his face. “Your hair is such a mess.”

“Isn’t it always?” Jess cuts in tentatively, and looks at her with a stunned expression. She takes a seat next to Eli and puts her tray on the table.

Lena grimaces at the brown broth Jess gives her.

“We should cut his hair,” Maggie says, taking a seat next to her.

Lena peers into Maggie’s tray but the food there doesn’t look much better.

“Don’t touch my hair,” Eli raps suddenly.

Jess gasps looking back at her with wide, misty eyes and Lena nods with a soft, proud smile.

Maggie gives Jess a plate of rice mixed with some red sauce and vegetables, and hides her surprise immediately with a smug expression on her face. “You look like a caveman, kid. It’d do the world a favor if I were to cut your hair.”

“And shave that beard too,” Jess adds, looking much more at ease, much more carefree than she has been for the past few months. She pushes a plate of mashed potatoes and what looks like chicken breast toward him. Lena bites her lips, wondering if he’ll let her have some of his food. But then Jess looks up at her, as if reading her thoughts, and points toward the bowl she gave her. Maggie and Jess
debate hairstyles and which one would suit Eli the best, and Lena sulks.

“Leave him alone. He doesn’t want us to cut his hair,” Lena finally says, patting Eli’s arm in support. He looks at her gratefully and digs into his plate, relieved. “We’ll just have to braid his hair. In a few weeks his beard will be long enough for us to braid it too…”

Eli stops mid-bite and looks at her, horrified. Lena winks.


“Oh, Milkmaid Braid!” Maggie crosses her arms over her chest and looks at Eli with a teasing smile. “Try that one! You’ll look great!”

Lena snorts as Eli looks to Winn for help, but Lena raises an eyebrow at the DEO agent, daring him to say anything.

“Uh, sorry man. You’re on your own.”

“Or you could let Kara cut your hair with her heat vision,” Alex suggests and joins their table. “It’s super cool.”

“Hi, babe!” Maggie greets the agent with a kiss. “Came back already?”

“Yes. Got the situation handled in no time,” she mumbles, digging immediately into Maggie’s plate.

Lena stares a bit surprised to see Maggie light up and lose that sarcastic edge she has been taunting them with on a regular basis. There’s an incredible softness in her features now that Alex has joined them, something tender and peaceful as her arm settles instinctively around Alex’s waist, and the two of them immediately become immersed in a kind of bubble where it seems like nothing and no one could break them apart. Lena doesn’t think she’s ever seen Maggie so relaxed before and just… being nice.

Eli meets her gaze, looking as stunned as she is.
“Whipped,” he mumbles while shaking his head.

“Hey! I heard that!”

Lena knows what’s coming. She rolls her eyes at Maggie’s predictability and leans back as Maggie takes a bit of rice from her plate and throws it at Eli. Jess bats the projectiles away effortlessly, now used to their bickering and the food fights that always follow. Lena tries to use the distraction to steal a bit of mashed potatoes from Eli’s plate but her spoon is pushed away by his fork.

Lena frowns.

“That’s my food,” Eli smiles.

“Traitor.”

“Drink your broth!” Jess tells her with a pointed glare and Lena sighs, sipping at the tepid liquid.

The flurry of activity ceases and things quiet down around the table as everyone focuses back onto their respective plates.

“You’re all crazy…” Winn breathes.

Lena shrugs, sharing a smile with Jess, Maggie and Eli. Crazy, indeed.

“James is on the way…” Alex says, checking her phone in between bites. “I miss pizza.”

Winn groans from the other end of the table. “Don’t talk about pizza…”

Lena jumps at the opportunity to gather more information. “How bad is it outside?”
“The city is paralyzed. Most businesses closed with the blackouts. No power means no internet, no public transportation, restricted access to banks, no fridge, no AC… And with the heat outside…” Alex pauses with a sigh and a scowl on her face. It makes her looks older, wearier than when Lena had seen her in Kara’s apartment months ago. Lena sees Maggie take Alex’s hand over the table and Alex smiles, relieved, comforted. “Civilians are getting impatient, angry. The military has already been deployed in major cities to restore order and supervise the food and water supply but the situation is volatile.”

“The police are overwhelmed with reports of looting and vandalism,” Maggie adds. “We’ve been trying to quell the riots but every time the power comes back on… It’s chaos.”

“Is L-Corp the only company involved in the repair?”

“No, Wayne Entreprises has been helping on the east coast. But the others…” Jess sighs. “Well you know them… They’re either milking the panic to make more profit or have retreated to protect their interests…”

Lena nods, not at all surprised.

“We haven’t managed to restore the power entirely for civilians yet,” Jess continues apologetically. “We’ve been alternating the power between the different districts of National City and its suburbs while repairs are made. We’ve done pretty much the same on the west coast but the limited power supply is quickly overwhelmed and there have been power failures every now and then.”

“So, it’s been canned food for everyone. Yay!” Winn groans.

“How’s Kara doing?” Lena asks, blushing slightly at look Alex gives her. “With the shortage of food…”

“She’s okay. Well, no. She’s grumpy,” Alex amends. “I don’t think she’s ever gone this long without potstickers. Eliza has been giving her food supplements, just in case…”

Lena absorbs everything. Besides her brother’s researches and the information she gleaned from the DEO, Lena doesn’t know much about alien biology. It was outside of her area of expertise and she’d have to seriously work on it if she wanted to help Kara. But that would take too much time, and now more than ever, restoring the power to National City was the primary necessity in order to defuse the tension. But she doesn’t know what she can do beyond what Jess has already been doing for the past
month. She’ll have to think about something when she finds the chance to brainstorm with her scientists and engineers. “And The Sanctuary is making the situation worse, isn’t it?”

Alex nods. “No humans can go there, and this makes them suspicious. Paranoid. Some have been protesting just outside the exclusion zone, calling for the aliens to come out. And Kara has been there all morning negotiating with The Sanctuary to keep them from forming a militia. It was still fifty-fifty last time she checked in.”

“It’s a powder keg waiting to explode,” James cuts in from behind her, dragging a chair to the table. The sound grates on Lena’s nerves and she breathes in relief when James finally sits next to Winn, facing her. He considers her quietly and Lena holds his gaze, resolute and unperturbed. She sees the wariness lingering in his eyes, the unease and suspicion people have directed at her ever since Lex was arrested. James crosses his arms over his chest, leans back in his seat, silent, until Winn elbows him in the side. James sighs. “People want a scapegoat. Aliens are an easy target. I just came back from the Plaza where Cat Grant has been holding daily debates. It gives the people an outlet and keeps them informed. Much better than if they spent that time listening to Cadmus’ propaganda. There’s nothing more to do. It’s a waiting game.”

Lena clenches her jaw when a sudden sense of defeat threatens to overwhelm her. She feels like everything she’s done since Kara came back to save her has been for nothing. Everything she’s done to prevent the war has failed. The war is raging outside, one step shy of utter chaos, and Lena has been powerless to stop it.

Kara was wrong to believe in her. Saving her life hasn’t changed a thing…

“That’s not true,” Lena whispers more for her sake than anyone else. She holds back her tears, feeling Maggie’s and Jess’ worried gaze trained on her. She sees Alex frown from the corner of her eyes, and push back her chair, ready for something Lena isn’t sure about… But Lena breathes as Eli grabs her hand and holds on tightly. She can’t break. Not now… “We can still prevent it,” Lena says firmly, determinedly. She has to believe that…

James laughs, derisive and mocking. “No offense, but you don’t know what it’s like outside. You’ve been out for most of it.”

“James,” Alex warns suddenly from the side. Eli’s hand trembles in hers and Lena squeezes it reassuringly.

“I would love nothing more than to prevent it, Alex!” James snaps, shoulders tense and tired, weary eyes. “I’ve been on the streets fighting Cadmus just as much as you for the past month. Helping the
police, and the city but- I do everything I can! It’s still not enough no matter what I do as Guardian! It’s not enough!”

“Then take pictures, James Olsen,” Lena says quietly. Deadly. “Take pictures of us and of the people of National City before it’s too late.” James deflates visibly before her eyes and Lena knows it’s been his anger, fatigue and helplessness talking. But she can’t deal with that or she might drown in her own. She stands up, locks eyes with Winn and then Eli who nods back at her. “I have a force field to build,” Lena mutters, leaving the table, hearing several chairs screech against the floor at her departure.

One step at a time, Lena reminds herself. One step at a time.

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Lena stares at the blueprints Winn’s projected on the wall of his lab. He and Eli have been arguing over algorithms and source codes for the last hour. And while she is happy Eli has been progressively more talkative in the few hours he’s spent with Winn, she can’t help but roll her eyes every time their conversation somehow deviates to MMORPG. Luke’s case file sits heavily on the desk in front of her. Jess had been more than reluctant to give it to her after what happened at the mess hall but her friend had finally caved in after a long glaring match. Lena still hasn’t opened it. Her fingers tremble every time she starts to reach for it. She needs to know. She needs to understand what happened, even though the guilt crushes her from the inside.

The batarang vibrates and then beeps loudly and repeatedly from the inside of her pocket. She takes it with trembling fingers, anxious, relieved, and angry that Wayne only just got her message. Lena presses the center. A needle pricks her thumb. A green light appears and Lena lifts the batarang to her eyes for the retinal verification. Wayne’s hologram appears, all suited-up, serious and somber as always.

The message is short. Just an address and an instruction. Come alone.

Winn and Eli look back at her stunned and Lena clenches her jaw with the sudden desire to strangle the vigilante.

“Was that… Was that Batman?” Winn whispers shocked and excited.

“Yes,” Lena replies distractedly. Her heart rate speeds up but her mind slows down. It feels so far
away and Lena needs to focus. She needs to formulate a plan. Eli looks at her with narrowed eyes, and Lena knows she needs to be quick. She scans the room furtively, and then she walks toward Winn, leans over his shoulder and points at his computer. “Can you locate the address for me?”

“Uh, sure. It’s a warehouse outside of National City.” Winn shows her on the map. “Why- What are you gonna do?”

“Lena…” Eli warns, moving his wheelchair as to block her access to the door.

Lena pockets the batarang and grabs the weird looking gun on Winn’s worktable, weighing it in her hand.

“Wait! No! That- That’s the prototype of a Maaldorian gun! It’s not-” Winn protests but Lena doesn’t listen and watches Eli apprehensively.

There’s fear in his eyes, helplessness and frustration as he tries to maneuver his wheelchair to better block the door. Lena stops him gently. “I need you to finish that programming, Eli. I’ll be okay,” she promises with a kiss on his forehead and sidesteps him, leaving the lab behind her with purposeful strides.

“You won’t be able to leave,” Winn calls out smugly, patting his pockets for his access card.

Lena smiles when he doesn’t find it. “It’s alright. I got yours.”

Lena presses the call button repeatedly. The doors finally open and Lena steps inside, catching Eli’s gaze as she presses the access card onto the control panel.

“Winn! Call Kara! Call Kara now!”

Lena curses under her breath as the doors finally shut. If she mapped the building correctly, the parking garage should be at Level -2. The elevator begins its descent. “Come on! Come on!” She needs to be quick. Quicker than Kara. Last she heard, Kara was still at The Sanctuary settling the decision about the militia with a one-on-one fight against Mon-El. That should give her enough time to get out of here.
The door finally opens on Level -2 and Lena clenches her jaw at seeing Alex, hands on her hips, looking at her with an unimpressed expression on her face. Lex used to look at her like that when she would lie about touching his experiments without his permission.

“I’m going,” Lena warns, stepping off the elevator.

Alex doesn’t move. The doors of the elevator close behind her and Lena takes a moment to analyze the situation. Silence and tension crackle in the air. She doesn’t know much about Alex Danvers. Only the little things Maggie’s divulged and what she saw at the renaming ceremony. It’s enough to make her wary. Alex still doesn’t move and Lena looks around. The parking garage is quiet with only a few cars around. She is certain she can start one of those cars in no time but Alex stands in the way. Lena glances at the unmoving agent, a bit thrown off by her passivity and calm. She only looks back at her with a raised eyebrow, intimidating and confident. Lena eyes the black, unassuming car on her right, the closest to them. She can make a run for it. Force it open before Alex stops her. Well, she might have to punch her first but… Kara might actually kill her if she does.

“I’m going,” Lena repeats as a warning.

Alex shrugs. “I’m not here to stop you.”

“What are you doing then?”

“Stalling…”

Lena curses under her breath when the elevator dings right at that moment. She got played. The doors open and Kara appears looking a little bit worse for wear, a frown on her face, tight-lipped, and angry eyes.

“Listen-” Lena begins but stops at the glare Kara gives her.

“Save it! Winn told us everything. We’re going together or we’re not going at all. Your choice,” Kara says, crossing her arms over her chest. There’s dirt on her face and in her hair. She looks a bit roughened up but still every bit the hero Lena got to see on TV, and in person, flying high above National City. Powerful and alone. Free and earthbound.

“He wants me to come alone.”
“Do you trust him?”

“I trust that he’ll leave if we go with a whole contingent of agents.”

The Danvers’ sisters share a look. It feels like there’s a whole conversation happening before her without either of them uttering a word. The silence in the parking garage grows along with her anxiety.

Alex nods finally, heaving a sigh. “Stand down. All teams stand down,” she orders, whispering into her wrist, and turns toward her. “You, Kara and me. Nothing more. Nothing less.”

Lena nods. It’s not like she has a choice anyway. Alex holds out her hand. Lena gives back the gun she stole from Winn’s lab.

“I’m going to hold on to that for now.”

Alex walks deeper into the parking, and unlocks her car. Lena follows dutifully, feeling Kara’s glare burn the back of her neck. Kara is walking closely behind her, and while the proximity would have comforted her before, Lena knows Kara is only making sure she won’t dupe them and make a run for it. Kara’s hand settles at the small of her back. The heat of Kara’s hand burns her skin, and Lena walks, tense and anxious as Kara guides her toward the passenger seat and opens the door for her. Lena climbs in, nodding her thanks.

“She’s going to make sure there’s no trouble ahead,” Alex explains.

Lena keeps her eyes trained on the streets of National City.

It’s the first time she’s been out in the city, at street level, and the difference is staggering. The streets are empty apart from a few military personnel patrolling here and there. There are no cars in sight and Alex speeds up, completely free through the silent streets. Shops are closed. Sidewalks usually
full of bustling people are empty, quiet. Ghostly. The silence permeates into the car. The heaviness, too.

Time and space no longer make sense.

There’s a month and a half gap in her life, but it feels like she had Luke on the phone just two days ago. Weekly sessions that became conversations between old friends. Old souls. Luke always made her feel safe and understood, and despite the years she spent without seeing him, their conversations remained the same, without pretense, or lies; with candid, innocent questions, and observations about life and the world surrounding them. Time and space no longer make sense. The pain flares and it feels like it will never end. The pain flares and it just feels too big, too overwhelming for her to understand it.

Lena’s hands tremble, and stop abruptly when Alex puts her hand onto her clenched fists and holds them tight, helping her contain the trembling and the panic. Alex keeps driving, her eyes trained on the road, one hand steering the wheel.

“She used to have nightmares too, you know,” Alex says after a while. “She’d wake up in the middle of the night screaming, disoriented. My parents always came running into her bedroom to calm her down, make sure she didn’t hurt herself and us without meaning to. She’d cry quietly as soon as my parents left her but I’d hear her every night.” Alex takes a deep breath and gives Lena a small trembling smile. “And I couldn’t do a thing. I felt so powerless... and resentful. She came into our life and I was supposed to protect her, but I was just scared she was going to replace me in my parent’s eyes...” Alex’s small, derisive laugh sounds pained. It’s full of bottled up emotions, old wounds, and insecurities emphasized even more by how unbreakable she seems. Lena wonders if Lex ever felt the same. If he ever resented her for coming into his life.

A billowing red cape comes out of National City’s grey clouds and Alex smiles gently.

“Until I realized how scared she was. How scared she must have been in that new house, new world, and new life. I didn’t know it then but I knew I’d protect her no matter what. I knew I would make sure she wouldn’t feel scared anymore... She’d crawl into my bed sometimes when she couldn’t sleep, or we’d sneak past my parents’ bedroom to the kitchen and have a snack, watch movies...”

Memories of Lex fill Lena’s mind. Sunrises spent in his room listening to his voice. Muffled laughs over experiments gone wrong. Stolen hours that made her feel special. Made her feel loved... Tears fill her eyes and Lena breathes hard to stop them from falling, wondering how and why the Danvers have this ability to break her walls down so easily. Lena keeps her eyes focused on the red cape flying high in the sky. The world blurs. Alex squeezes her hand.
“She is not mad at you,” Alex continues, and in that instant Lena remembers why she told Jess and Eli to be careful around Alex Danvers. She was too perceptive for those who didn’t want their secrets to be found. “She just wants to protect you but she doesn’t know how, and you don’t make it easy…”

Lena’s lips twitch in amusement at Alex’s playful dig.

“We came as fast as we could that night at L-Corp. They were still trying to get to you. Eli had destroyed his key card and they were trying to force the doors of the elevator open. We stopped them. I’m sorry we didn’t come sooner…”

“No one could’ve known…”

“Kara hasn’t talked much since. She feels guil-”

“It’s not her fault,” Lena says immediately. “It’s not her fault,” she repeats firmly, hoping Kara will hear her from the sky. Alex sighs, letting go of her hand to grip the wheel. They both know that no matter how many times Lena repeats it, Kara will always feel guilty. She’ll always feel like she hasn’t done enough. She’ll always wish she could’ve done more…

“We haven’t- We haven’t been talking much these last few months… We’ve been busy with our own lives and… Maggie told us what happened at Wayne’s gala. About Kara disappearing…” Alex’s voice breaks and the leather of the steering wheel creaks loudly under her grip. Lena sees the fear, ugly and visceral, reflected on her face. The agony associated with the idea of ever losing Kara appears in the scrunch of her eyebrows, and the hard clench of her jaw. Lena sees pain. And love, so much love… The car stops and Alex looks at her, serious and desperate. It makes her feel trapped. Trapped and envious of a bond she’s lost. “I might not agree with your methods but I’ll do anything to protect my sister. So, whatever you need. Just ask,” Alex insists. “You are part of the team now. Alright?”

Lena nods, trying hard to keep her composure. Alex smiles, and exhales forcefully. Lena does the same.

“Ready?” Alex asks her, jutting her chin toward the warehouse looming before them.

“Yes.”
Lena climbs out of the car and stares at the building. It’s big, dark, and decrepit, a box of old bricks with small windows. Kara lands softly next to them a few seconds later.

“I did a perimeter check. There’s no one around or inside.”

“He’ll come.” Lena knows he will. Wayne might be dark and secretive but he is a man of his word.

“Should we go inside?” Alex hands her a gun. “Only to defend yourself,” she insists.

Lena nods.

Kara examines the building, hands on her hips. “Still no one.”

They walk toward the entrance and stop at the door. Kara breaks the lock and slides the door open. Lena moves toward it only to be stopped.

“Stay behind me,” Alex orders her. “I move, you move. I stop, you stop. Got it?”

Lena nods and places herself behind Alex. Kara goes in first. They wait a few seconds before following her in. The inside of the warehouse is dark and musty. There’s old paper on the ground, broken tables all around, and pieces of machinery that have seen better days. Lena hears water drip somewhere in the building’s recesses. It falls heavily, rhythmically on metal, and the sound reverberates like a drum in the silent warehouse. Lena listens but it only accentuates how fast her heart is beating. Kara walks further into the building. The light gets dimmer and still no one. Lena’s heart feels like it might burst at any moment.

Watching Kara and Alex check the building is fascinating. They look like a well-oiled machine. Communicating with just a look, the jut of a chin, or a nod. Disagreeing in a few instances but always in sync, always watching the other’s back. Kara stops abruptly and it causes a ripple effect. Alex stops and presses her against the wall, standing protectively before her. They scan the warehouse and wait… Nothing happens.

“What is it?” Alex asks.
“I hear something,” Kara whispers, “I can’t pinpoint it.”

Water drips. Papers flutter. Something metallic rolls down the floor. White smoke fills the warehouse and Lena winces as she feels Alex’s back bump harshly into her front, pressing her tight into the wall as the smoke engulfs them.

“Don’t breathe it!”

The smoke is thick but harmless. Lena only sees shadows fighting in the smoke until it clears and Lena gasps at seeing Kara pin Batman to the side of a machine. Her hand around his throat. It doesn’t last long. Wayne uses his batarang to send Kara an electric charge. Kara winces and takes a few steps back. A batarang flies toward Kara and she freezes it immediately in a breath.

It explodes and the blast shakes the entire building.

Lena coughs as smoke and dust settle. Alex fires twice and Lena sees Wayne retreats, looking back at her, ready to leave.

“Stop!” Lena screams, pushing Alex away from her. “Stop!” Lena screams again running toward Kara and stops her from attacking again.

“I told you to come alone.”

“I had no choice,” Lena says, going to him. Kara tries to stop her but Lena doesn’t let her. She had sent him a message the night she woke up, hoping he would answer, but now that he is in front of her, Lena doesn’t know what to say. Lena doesn’t know what to do. Words fail her and there’s only this pain inside. This loss that makes her feel so hollow, so alone, and threatens to overtake her mind every time she closes her eyes. Lena walks toward Batman and his stoniness infuriates her. Batman is impassive, somber and serious like usual, while she feels like one of the pillars supporting her world has just crumbled. Someone she never thought she’d ever lose. “How?” Lena’s voice breaks and she punches him. “How could you?” Lena screams punching him harder and harder in the chest but Batman doesn’t react. He doesn’t react and Lena only hits harder. She bruises her hands against the reinforced suit but Lena doesn’t stop. She can’t. “I trusted you to protect him! You promised me you would protect him!”

Strong, familiar arms grab her from behind and Lena thrashes against them. Desperate and distraught. Kara whispers into her ear, holding her tight but Lena doesn’t listen. Words do nothing to
staunch the pain. Lena feels too much, and it feels like dying.

“Luke Perec is alive.”

Her heart stops. Her knees crumble under her and Kara holds her tighter against her, preventing her from falling, from breaking apart.

“What? How?” Alex says beside them, voicing the questions Lena can’t ask.

“He’s alive but I didn’t know if you were. I had to assume you were dead until you contacted me via the batarang. I had to be sure especially with that doppelganger of yours attending functions for you,” Batman explains calmly, looking her straight in the eye. “I knew it was only a matter of time before your brother came after you. I didn’t know how or when but I made preparations in case your friend was attacked. Lex was arrogant and careless. He let someone else do it.”

Lena listens, trying to breathe. Kara’s chest expands and recedes calmly against her back and Lena follows the rhythm, shuddering a few times, but holding on. Kara breathes and Lena feels hope grow inside her.

“The coroner at Metropolis PD is a friend of mine. He helped me fake your friend’s death. It was the only way for your brother to stop going after him. I can take you to him…”

“Y- yes,” Lena stutters, stunned and voiceless, holding on to Kara’s arms. Batman guides them deeper into the building and opens a trap door, which leads them to a dark tunnel. He disappears inside, leading the way with a flashlight and Alex steps in first. Lena follows, leaning heavily on Kara.

“You’re okay, Lena. He’s alive,” she whispers against her ear.

Lena presses her face into Kara’s neck, feeling faint, and tries to breathe steadily. Time and space don’t make sense. The walk inside the tunnel feels like the longest she’s ever done. It feels like time stretches infinitely. It feels like time has stopped. Her legs get stronger and stronger as hope continues to grow.

The tunnel ends. They all step into the light, and back into the world. It’s a forest, quiet, and secluded. Lena follows in a haze, trusting Kara’s arms wrapped around her to guide her, to catch her
if she falls. The wind rustles the leaves above her. There’s a stream running not too far away. The sunset makes the forest burn with colors. It’s peaceful. It’s unreal. Lena feels like she is breathing again.

There’s a windmill up ahead and the closer they get Lena realizes that there people moving about nearby. As they get closer, Lena realizes that those people are aliens. Aliens hiding in a windmill, working, living around it with tents spread around. They step into view and everything stops again. Everyone stares at them until a little girl breaks away from the crowd and jumps, from meters away, straight into Supergirl’s arms. Kara looks surprised until she breaks out in laughter, free and unrestrained, tickling the young child. Aliens flock to Supergirl and Lena steps away, looking for Luke in the crowd.

Batman guides her into the windmill and Lena feels like her heart might just break from joy when she sees Luke finish putting a bandage around the head of a young man with scaly skin.


He turns around, surprised, and smiles. In a few strides Luke takes her in his arms and holds her tight.

Lena feels like she’s five again.

“I thought you were dead!”

“He told me you were dead!”

Lena laughs, taking a step back. “You’re alive…”

“Didn’t I tell you not to worry about me?”

Lena shakes her head, wiping her tears away.

Luke shrugs with an easy smile. “In another life then.”
Kara and Alex join them and Lena smiles wide, stepping away from Luke’s arms to present him.

“This is Luke.”

Kara grins. There’s something soft in her eyes, something warm, tender when she looks at her and Lena blushes until Kara turns toward Luke.

“Hi! I’m-”


“Alex Danvers.” Alex presents herself, shaking his hand.

“Kara’s sister. Nice to finally meet you.”

“You’ll have to sign a few NDA’s, Sir. You too,” Alex says, glaring at Wayne.

“I have no interest in signing anything.”

Batman leaves before Lena has even a chance to thank him.

Luke sighs, shaking his head. “He is very moody and doesn’t work well with others but he’ll come back.”

“What is this place?” Alex asks, looking at around.

The windmill is filled with camp beds, aliens walking about, and medical supplies. Lena doesn’t think she’s seen so many aliens in one place in her life. They look at her warily until their eyes land on the protective arm Luke has around her shoulder, and then just go on about their business. Luke
seems to have gained their trust, at least enough for them to respect his friendship with her.


“Doctor?” A woman appears, cutting in shyly. “Someone just came in. They need stitches.”

“I’ll do it. I’m a doctor,” Alex says following the woman.

Muffled chattering and giggles reverberate throughout the building. “I think they’re waiting for you, Kara.” Lena says, pointing at the kids lingering by the door, and watching Supergirl with wide, awed eyes.

“Are you going to be okay?”

Lena nods with a reassuring smile. Kara smiles back and walks out the door, to the joy of the young children.

“So, this is her…”

Lena nods.

“Does she know everything?” Luke asks, guiding her to the back of the windmill, far away from the bustling of the refuge, and opening the door for her. There’s a stream at the back of the windmill, green grass and wild flowers. A few aliens prepare a fire a bit further out and Lena sees Kara suddenly fly into the field with a child in her arms and a few others running after them.

“We haven’t really finished talking about it… I don’t know where we stand.”

“I wouldn’t worry too much about it if I were you. It looks like she cares a lot about you,” he says with that pointed look she hates because she knows he is usually right. They walk toward a rock and sit on it, facing the water. “When all of this is over, I intend to have a talk with her. Make sure she treats you right…”
“Stop it! It’s not like that,” Lena hisses. Kara turns briefly toward them and Lena covers her burning face with her hands.

Luke laughs and pats her back sympathetically and the last of the sunlight reflects on the water…

“Come on, tell me everything.”

Lena does. She tells him all about what happened at L-Corp. She talks of Eli’s pain, Jess’ and Maggie’s. She tells him about the confused and painful memories brought to the surface because of the Danvers. She tells him about National City and her brother’s escape, about the fear she feels thrumming through her veins… Lena talks of Kara. She talks about the shift she’s noticed and the hope that comes with it that she shouldn’t let herself feel. Luke laughs, listens and sometimes teases her. It feels like they’re back in his office, trying to make everything better one step at a time.

“I’m proud of you,” Luke says suddenly, wrapping his arm around her shoulders. The night is well on its way but the summer air keeps her warm. The field is lighted only by the bonfire, with everyone gathered around. Lena hears Kara laugh in the distance. The flames dance beautifully over her. It makes the red and gold on her chest glow. The fatigue Lena saw earlier on her face is gone, replaced by twinkling eyes and bright smiles. Kara is hope and Lena feels hers grow and grow inside of her. “There might be still a few obstacles ahead but I know you’ll get past them like you’ve done so many times before. Keep doing what you are doing. Keep going…”

“One step at a time.”

“Yes. One step at a time, Lena.”

Kara lifts her head and meets her gaze. Lena holds it, unafraid.

“I believe in you. Something tells me she does as well,” he whispers. “It’s time for you to believe in yourself too.”

“Are you sure you don’t want to come with me?”

“I’m needed here. But I’ll be waiting for you. And when things will quiet down I’ll teach you how to fish.”

Lena snorts. “That’s boring.”
“It’s relaxing.”

Lena laughs. The night goes on. They join the group by the fire and Luke presents her to everyone. It’s awkward at first, tense, but the atmosphere eases when she becomes the newest attraction for the kids. Luke uses their curiosity about her scar to begin a story full of pirates and hidden treasures… A few adjustments to tradition are made and suddenly Supergirl jumps in and slays dragons and beasts from the sea, much to the delight of the children.

Lena watches everything play out, happy. Even Batman’s confirmation, later in the night, of Lex being in National City is not enough to dampen her mood. Seeing Luke laugh and be so well integrated among that community of aliens only makes her want to work harder at stopping Cadmus and her brother.

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“Are you going to scream at me again?” Lena asks playfully as Kara paces in the room.

“I’m not.”

“That’s what you said the last time…”

Kara smiles and continues her pacing. It is late. The light in the Medical Bay is at its minimum and surprisingly, now that she has showered and changed, all Lena wants to do is sleep. They’ve come back from the refuge with a load of information from Batman on Lex’s whereabouts but none of it makes sense to her yet. Aliens are still missing, but Lena doesn’t feel that overwhelming sense of defeat anymore. Hope grows and Lena is ready, eager to make the world better. But Kara is still jittery. There’s an energy running through her body that finds no outlet, and Lena watches her pace from her spot on the bed.

“So Batman, huh? You’ve known him for long?”

Lena laughs at the crinkle between Kara’s brows. “Don’t worry. You’re my favorite.”

Kara blushes. “Why didn’t you wait for me to go see him?”
Lena shrugs. She doesn’t really know. She prides herself on being smart and logical but when feelings are involved, Lena flounders. She gets blindsided and jumps in with no care for consequences. “I’m used to working alone.”

Kara heaves a sigh and it sounds broken and tired. It feels like a weight has just settled onto her shoulders and Kara is having difficulties supporting it. “I’m trying really hard to fix this mess but I can’t do this on my own. I need to know if you’re in this with me… I need you to stop leaving me in the dark,” Kara says voice hard and reproachful, only to be betrayed by the slight sheen Lena sees in her eyes. “I’m here. I’m here now. You need- You need to trust me. Just- Just tell me where you’re going next time. Wait for me.”

“I will,” Lena whispers. She pats the bed for Kara to sit with her and stop pacing. Kara considers her for a moment before taking a seat at the end of the bed. Kara doesn’t look any less tense but it’s a start. “What happened at The Sanctuary?” Lena asks, remembering the fight Kara had against Mon-El to settle the debate.

“I won. They agreed to hold off on the militia if we provide the force field.”

“I’ll get it done. I promise.”

“I know.”

“How did Mon-El take it?”

“Not well at first. But I think it was more because he lost to a girl than any real conviction about creating the militia.”

Lena frowns at Kara’s nonchalance. She thought she saw something happen between them. Their flirtation at her party and an unresolved tension at the meeting yesterday… “Aren’t you two…?”

Kara’s eyes widen as she understands what Lena is asking and quickly shakes her head. “What? No! No, we were never- I mean he did kiss me but you kissed me too. You told me to pretend it didn’t happen and he told me he didn’t remember it, which wasn’t true by the way…” Kara says in one breath, looking away and fiddling with the fabric of the blanket. “I was very confused. So, I rejected you both.”
“Oh…”

“Yeah… He dated Eve, James’ assistant just after. It didn’t work out between them but-” Kara sighs and rubs her forehead, looking frustrated, and looks at her apologetically. “I’m sorry. I’m sure you don’t want to hear about that…”

“What? Why?” Lena asks confused. “It’s important to you, of course I want to hear about it.”

Kara frowns. She looks at her as if she is trying to figure her out, unveil all of her secrets, when Lena has none to hide anymore. “But you love me…”

It takes her breath away. It should sound so simple said like that but Kara says it like it is an obstacle, a barrier that divides them when Lena only wants to be closer. Kara observes her and it feels like a challenge. Kara challenges her to deny it… Kara dares her to run away and Lena feels like she is only waiting for an excuse to hide, and run away too.

“I do,” Lena says firmly. Calm and assured. Kara visibly trembles and Lena doesn’t know if she’s done the right thing. But she is not afraid of falling anymore. Lena jumps wholeheartedly, makes herself vulnerable and damns the consequences. “I love you, but we’re friends first. And that’s what friends are for, right?”

Kara exhales forcefully. She still refuses to look at her but the shift is there. Lena feels it and thinks maybe she should let it go. Maybe she should ignore it like she did this morning, like she’s done her whole life, and never asked anything of anyone, but the shift hangs in between them silently, and Lena has to ask. If only to move forward.

“Kara, do you love me?”

Kara shudders and gets off the bed, looking at Lena with tears in her eyes. There are no clear cut answers in them. It feels like being drowned in an ocean of doubts, fears and fragility. Kara lowers her walls down and it is enough for Lena to see the emotions Kara has kept hidden for awhile. To see her strength only holding by a thread.

“I don’t know,” Kara whispers apologetically. “I don’t know…”
Lena nods, feeling tears well-up in her eyes. It makes Kara tear up even more and Lena tries to wipe them away quickly with her sleeves. Kara bites her lips, breathing shakily.

“Do you want me to leave?” Kara asks her. The question sounds so much more different than the way she said it yesterday. This one sounds small and insecure. This one sounds like Kara is waiting for her to reject her at any moment... because Kara doesn’t know what she is feeling. Because Kara can’t give Lena the answer she thinks Lena wants to hear. This one sounds like Kara is afraid, afraid of being alone, and it is enough to make Lena snap out of her own insecurities.

“No. I want you to stay.”

Kara exhales, walking gingerly back to the bed, wiping at the corner of her eyes with the sleeve of her pajamas. Lena slips under the blanket and holds it up for Kara to join her.

This time it isn’t Kara who holds Lena in her arms. Lena holds Kara. Kara tucks her head under Lena’s chin, breathing shakily, and Lena rubs at the back of her neck, soothing untold fears and nightmares.

“Don’t let go…” Kara mumbles shakily against her neck.

“I won’t.”

Lena was never one for cuddling. But right now, Lena doesn’t mind. Kara glues herself to her, breathes against her neck, and wraps her arms around her body seeking warmth, comfort and support.

And Lena gives willingly.

Chapter End Notes

Ha! I might have misguided some of you in comments about the fate of our therapist...
Sorry ;)
And yes, in this story Kara and Mon-El never went past that confession he did in 2x10...
I feel like if Kara had the choice she would have hesitated a bit more than just jump into a relationship with him...

Thank you for reading! Take care!
Hey guys! It was hard writing this chapter after what happened at SDCC. But then I remembered that what kept me going was your support, the encouragements you gave me and all the stories I wrote. It will be hard sometimes, the negatives voices are always louder than the ones that spread love, positivity and hope... and I know I write a lot, like a lot, of angst but I promise to always, always, always make it a happy ending... (and I fucking worked too hard on this story to let it be ruined by their fucking song). Let's all use our suspension of disbelief for the science used in this story. I don't know anything. Huge thanks to Earthling3 for editing, listen_to and Seriouslyficent for the pep talks and support! Enjoy!

WARNING: Mon-El is in the chapter. The first scene was written before SDCC. It might be upsetting...

Lena hates waiting. She can and she will if she has to, but she absolutely hates it. It stems from working alone, from being the one to call the shots, from waiting and waiting for things she’ll never have… It’s only Alex’s firm grip on her shoulder as the agent examines her that keeps Lena from crashing the impromptu meeting being held outside the heavily guarded medical tent the DEO has erected outside of The Sanctuary.

Their arrival hasn’t gone unnoticed by the protesters outside. The exclusion zone had been extended two nights ago to accommodate their arrival, and the protesters had quickly realized that something was happening. The DEO had tried to make it seem like it was a humanitarian mission, but that had not deterred the most vocal ones from shouting their demands for answers. It’s a mob waiting outside, prowling around the exclusion zone, clamoring their anger beyond the heavily guarded gate, and the walls of DEO agents patrolling in between. Their angry cries, vindictive and full of fear, slither into the tent, carried by a warm summer breeze that chills Lena to the bone.

The inside of the cage is no better. Lena still feels the dread, and gloom pulsing inside her veins from when she first approached the bustling heart of The Sanctuary. In spite of the apparent activity, there’s a silence, eerie and still, permeating the atmosphere. It stands in such contrast to the sound of the crackling fire and children’s laughter back at the windmill. The arrival of seven people decked in hazmat suits had done nothing to alleviate the heavy atmosphere. Lena still feels the weight of their stares, their wariness, animosity and helplessness pointed at them; eyes, some looking more human than others, following their every movement ever since her team began to set up camp two days ago. There’s a weight here in The Sanctuary; a kind of foreboding, like a sword hanging above their heads. A kind of awareness of their own vulnerability, of the cage they lived in, and of being the
prey of the predators outside. It’s a waiting game, James had said, a powder keg waiting to explode, and Lena can’t help but think that he was right, and she might have just sparked things off…

A shudder runs across her body as Alex presses an ice pack on her upper back and keeps it there. The strong smell of disinfectant wafting in the tent makes her nose twitch. Lena tries in vain to block out Winn’s panicked mutterings as he goes through calculations and formulas over and over again. He paces in the tent, hands buried anxiously in his hair, and Lena has to look away if only to stop her own anxiety from getting to her. The sight of her banged up team, waiting on gurneys, looking worse for wear, does nothing to alleviate the guilt and the bitter taste of failure on her tongue. The blast had projected everyone in the air, but fortunately none of their hazmat suits had been breached. They had been lucky only to have a few bumps and bruises.

It should have worked. The force field should have been up by now. It should have activated without a hitch. They knew the procedures by heart. Lena is fairly certain her team could have done it in their sleep if they had to. All they had to do was set up the sensors around the heart of The Sanctuary, bring in the generators, connect them together, and then connect the generators to the sensors… The particles should have been deployed all around the delimited area, pulsing in perfect equilibrium with the energy output…

Lena doesn’t know why one of their generators exploded. If Eli hadn’t cut off the connection between all of the generators from his computer back in Winn’s lab the warehouse they had been working in would have surely been blown to pieces, and everyone in it killed. They’d run simulations, countless numbers of them, in the past week before green-lighting the project. They’d barely slept because all of their energy had been directed to the construction of the force field. It had worked, albeit on a smaller scale, in Winn’s lab. It should have worked. The force field should have been up by now…

Lena hisses as Alex lifts the ice pack and probes at the tender skin. She applies a cream on her back with deliberate slowness, and Lena clenches her jaw as pain flares and annoyance twists her insides. She can hear Mon-El, just outside, commenting on the obvious failure to The Sanctuary’s delegates. Lena doesn’t understand what he is hoping to achieve by doing this. All it does is discredit Kara and J’onn for trusting her, and undermine their advice on how to handle the situation in The Sanctuary. Winn shrinks into himself as blame gets thrown around, only to be shut down by Kara’s voice coming up to their defense. It is firm, harsh, and authoritative but the delegates aren’t listening. They retort with even more spite and mistrust as their voices are fueled with fear.

The fear is deafening. It resounds all around them. It permeates through everything. Lena sees it in the flinch Winn tries to suppress every time the discussion gets too heated outside. Lena sees it in the slump of shoulders, the deep breathing, and the quiet way her team answers the questions the medics ask them. The tent reeks of defeat and weariness. A cloud, dark and stormy, crackles above their heads, and it only makes her crankier, restless and furious at the guilt and the doubt growing larger inside of her. Lena hates it. She absolutely hates it.
Now, if only Alex could speed up her check up…

“Are you sure you know what you’re doing?” Lena spats, trying to move away from the firm grip on her shoulder. “It’s been more than thirty minutes already!”

“Oh, I’m sure.” Alex finishes massaging the cream into her bruised muscle, and then holds a cloth in front of her. Lena grabs the shirt and jacket next to her to change from the gown they had given her earlier. She waits, folding the gown neatly next to her… Alex has been watching her like a hawk ever since she stepped out of the decontamination shower. There was just no way Lena could crash the meeting outside and give them a piece of her mind with Alex hovering over her. And so, Lena waits. She waits until Alex is distracted enough by another medic to take her chances, but as soon as she makes her moves, Lena is pushed back down by a firm hand settling heavily on her shoulder. “Nice try. I’m here to make sure you don’t do anything stupid.”

Lena would have been offended if she wasn’t so angry.

“They are talking about my team! I should be out there to-”

“Kara and J’onn are taking care of it.”

“It’s my team! It’s my responsibility!”

Alex pins her down with a glare, hands on her hips, and brows furrowed. “You’ll make things worse if you go out there. They’re not going to listen to you. They’re scared and they’re just waiting for an excuse to lash out. Don’t give them any reasons to.”

Lena looks away, biting the inside of her cheek.

“I- I don’t understand. It should have worked…” Winn mutters, approaching them, looking haggard. “I- The generators… I’ve checked them; I’ve run tests on them… I mean they worked… I-”

Alex grabs him by the collar and forces him to take a seat. Lena grimaces slightly as he knocks his shoulder into hers, and she scootches to the side to make some room for him.
“Snap out of it! Both of you!” Alex exclaims, startling them both, standing protectively over them. “It’s not your fault! It was only the first try…” Her confident frame acts like a barrier against the blame raging outside but it does nothing to assuage the storm breaking inside the tent.

How was it not her fault? She made a promise. The force field was their solution to put a halt to the escalation of violence in National City. Without it, there was nothing stopping The Sanctuary from creating a militia. Without it, there was nothing to stop the inevitable response from the government. Without it, the only viable solution would be to evacuate The Sanctuary at the risk of exposing them to Cadmus or to the mob outside…

Had she been too confident? There was a reason why Luthor Corp hadn’t finished the force field despite working on it for years. Had she overlooked something? It couldn’t be the generators… She and Winn had designed the twelve of them together. They had overseen their assembly by the best engineers she had at L-Corp… They had quadruple-checked the generators, every wire and every circuit, before bringing them to The Sanctuary. It couldn’t be the programming either… Eli’s programming was sound. They had tested it several times, and it was only thanks to the extra security measures Eli set up that Lena and her team were still alive.

Lena doesn’t understand why it didn’t work. It should have worked. All of the simulations and tests done at the DEO had been successful… The particles had been stable. Eli had been controlling the energy input from Winn’s lab. They’ve done it a thousand times. Over and over again before coming to The Sanctuary. But when they powered it up two hours ago… Something happened… The generators had become unstable and one of them exploded before the force field could even take form… Was it the theory then? Lena hopes not. Because if it was, there was just nothing to be done. If the project was impossible then she had made empty promises. If that’s the case, Lena doesn’t think she can look Kara in the eyes without breaking down.

“You’ll figure it out… It takes time,” Alex says.

Winn is silent beside her. Lena watches droplets of water drip from her hair. It leaves a damp spot on her black pants. She’s been wearing DEO-issued clothes ever since she woke up. They are comfortable and warm, but Lena misses her high heels, the tight dresses, and the red lipstick. It was easier to pretend then. She felt less vulnerable then than she feels now.

The yelling outside dissipates. It plunges the tent in total silence.

Lena looks up as the flap of the tent creases loudly. Mon-El comes in, sporting a frown on his face, locking eyes with her, and assessing her quietly. He crosses his arms over his chest. Lena doesn’t back down from his stare until J’onn comes in and motions for Alex to follow him outside with a grave expression. Alex steps out of the tent, but is promptly stopped by Kara. They whisper to each other, nodding every now and then, until Kara locks eyes with her.
Lena tries hard not to let the guilt swallow her whole.

They’ve been busy. They’ve barely had time to talk since coming back from the windmill. Lena had been consumed by the force field for the past week while Kara had been working closely with Batman, going on missions with him, and investigating deeper into Cadmus’ activities. They were following up leads into the aliens’ disappearances, arresting a few of Cadmus’ propagandists, and closing down underground pockets of sympathizers while still making rounds of all the aliens’ hideouts to make sure no more of them went missing. Lena would only see Kara in passing, at debriefings, when Kara would meet her gaze and keep her in her line of sight, or when Kara would glue herself to her back, hiding her face in between her shoulder blades whenever Lena would wake up from a nap in the break room next to Winn’s lab.

They don’t talk about it. Lena doesn’t need to because Kara is quieter than Lena has ever known her to be. There’s a constant tension between her shoulders now, something heavy weighing her down even when she flies. The smiles come less easily but when they do; they shine brighter than the sun, if only to hide the worry and uncertainties lurking beneath. There’s a quiet kind of fear in Kara’s eyes, something subtle that Lena would have missed if she hadn’t been so aware of her surroundings since the attack. It appears in the way they linger on each person when she steps into a room as if she was committing them to memory, or in the way she carries herself, alert and ready at a moment’s notice. There’s a kind of desperation in her movements too, a restless kind of energy. The same anxious energy Lena had felt after learning she was living on borrowed time… They might not talk about it, but Lena understands, and she gives Kara these small reassurances wittingly.

But right now her doubts are too overwhelming and Lena has to look away. She stares at her hands, clenched tightly in front of her, and waits, breathing deeply before facing Kara again and shouldering the responsibility of today’s failure.

“I.”

To her surprise, it isn’t guilt that closes in on her, but warmth, comfort, and protection as Kara takes her in her arms. Lena bites her lips, hard, before she falls into the embrace, and holds on to the fabric of Kara’s cape, soft and otherworldly, while blond hair tickles her temple.

“You okay, Winn?” Kara asks, guiding Lena’s head into her shoulder to move back the collar of her jacket and shirt, and peer at her back.

Kara hums, fingers ghosting over Lena’s back. “Are you hurt anywhere else?”

Lena shakes her head as tiredness catches up to her. “No. I’m fine. It’s just a bruise,” she mumbles, pressing her forehead deeper into the warm shoulder.

A sudden clap startles her. Lena feels Kara’s shoulders tense as Mon-El chuckles.

“Great! BFF is safe and sound. Can we get the show back on the road and talk about the utter failure we just saw back there? ‘Cause that was bad. Super bad… I mean what’s that old Earthling’s saying again? You never know until you try. Well, you tried…”

Lena narrows her eyes, tiredness forgotten, and clenches her jaw. The small, calming circles Kara draws on her neck do nothing to stop the rage, a cold kind of anger from twisting her guts as Mon-El continues, attracting everyone’s attention.

“You were lucky Supergirl and I were there and got you all out before anything else happened. See! That’s a good team, right there. Right, Supergirl?”

“Mon-El, stop! You’re out of line,” Kara hisses, stepping slightly away from Lena.


“I’m fine,” Winn grits as Mon-El clutches his shoulder. “Dude, you’re not helping!”

“Oh! My bad,” Mon-El says, taking a seat on the gurney facing them, looking at Lena with practiced insouciance, a boyish kind of arrogance that grates on her nerves. There’s something else too. A quiet kind of animosity, a challenge of sorts as he keeps glancing at the hand Kara left on the back of Lena’s neck. “I mean none of you would be in such a bad shape if you had listened to me in the first place.”

Lena knows she shouldn’t. She shouldn’t rise to the bait. But she had a long week and all she wants to do is punch something. “Please do tell, Mon-El.”
“Don’t,” Kara tells her with a tired sigh, adding a little bit more pressure to the circles against her neck.

“What would you have done?” Lena asks, disregarding Kara’s demand. Anger is safe. Anger hurts others before it hurts her, and Lena is tired. Tired of trying to prevent this war and failing, again and again no matter how hard she tries. Her muscles coil in anticipation, the anger just waiting to be let out… “What would you have done to stop the conflict from escalating?”

“Well, Lena. That’s your first mistake right there,” Mon-El taunts. “Thinking you can stop this with fancy shields and science stuff. We crushed our enemies back in Daxam before they could even think to attack us. We didn’t do weak talks or parleys. It’s kill or be killed.”

Lena chuckles coldly. Lifeless eyes appear in her mind, gaping mouths and blood. So much blood. Anxiety crawls up her skin like the thousands hands of the faceless bodies do every night. Kara’s hand feels heavy on the back of her neck and Lena shies away from the comforting touch. “And you would lead them? You would lead them in a conflict where they are outnumbered by millions? You would let them be slaughtered without even considering the options where they might be spared? I pity those looking up to you.”

“I never asked to lead them!” Mon-El barks, glaring at her. He stands, hands on his hips, tall and intimidating, and Lena rises too, rigid, and ready. “You are playing the hero like some goddamn martyr when we all know your brother is behind all of this! For all we know, you might have enabled this whole thing to have us defenseless from the start!”

“That’s enough!” Kara puts herself in between them, pushing them apart.

“You’ve been flaunting your powers for everyone to see,” Lena scoffs, cold and calm as she sees Winn escort everyone out from the corner of her eyes. She bats Kara’s hand away from her shoulder and glares at Mon-El. “But you are not invincible! Your powers can’t save you from lead!”

“Is that a threat?”

“A reminder,” Lena clarifies with a smug smile, “since the only life you seem to value is yours.”

Mon-El flinches. It is subtle. He tries to hide it, but Lena sees her words have struck a chord. She doesn’t have the time to ponder it as Kara suddenly glares at her.
“Stop it! Both of you!”

“So that’s it? She gets a strike but I don’t?” Mon-El asks, turning his attention solely on Kara. “She messes up; gets a hug, a pat on the back, and everyone goes on their merry way? How is that fair? You’ve been so hard on me, Kara! I did everything you asked! I stayed in The Sanctuary because you asked me to but it is still isn’t enough! You still side with her!”

“There’s no side, Mon-El! We’re all on the same team here,” Kara groans. There’s this tension again. Something unspoken happening between them and Lena just feels tired. This fight is pointless. They’ve been trying to prove two different things and Mon-El finally gets what he wants when Kara gives him her full attention. “We’re all trying to prevent this conflict!”

“Well. I hate to break it to you, Kara. But you are not doing a very good job!”

“Oh, fuck off!” Lena says exasperated.

Kara looks at her with clear disapproval shining in her eyes.

“What is going on here?” J’onn cuts off, looking at them, knowing full well what is happening from the raised eyebrow he gives her. Winn comes back in, followed by Alex, and Lena sighs, turning her back on all of them, taking a breath. Lena feels the ghost of heated fingers against her back, a caress, a gentle pressure.

Kara sighs. “Come on, Mon-El. Let’s just talk outside.”

Lena listens to their fading footsteps and breathes out slowly as they leave the tent. She shouldn’t let herself be distracted by petty things. Not after failing again.

“The delegates gave us an ultimatum. I’m sorry, Lena…” J’onn says. “But you have until tomorrow to find a solution…”

Lena clenches her jaw, twisting the crisp fabric covering the gurney. “I understand.”
“Come on. The car is waiting,” Winn says quietly as medics file back into the tent.

Lena inhales deeply, breathing in the smell of disinfectant and fear lingering in the air. Protesters still clamor outside. The Sanctuary lies in wait, and Lena can’t stop now. There’s nothing to wait for anymore. She follows Winn out of the tent, head held high, steps measured and calm. She makes sure to avoid Alex’s and J’onn’s eyes on the way out.

It’s still early, Lena repeats to herself. She still has time to fix this.

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The drive back to the DEO is quiet, contemplative. Eliza waits for them in the Medical Bay, and Lena can’t even muster a complaint about all of the tests and blood work done on them with how ragged she feels. Eliza gives them Potassium Iodide USP tablets just in case. Lena feels her hand tremble as she reaches for the cup Eliza gives her. Eliza rights the cup in her palm and Lena accepts the care, the nurturing, and the maternal touch as she swallows the pill and drinks some water.

“Thank you,” Lena says, squeezing Eliza’s hand. There’s other words she wants to say. Emotions she just can’t put into words as Eliza smiles at her with that same motherly look Lena couldn’t handle a week ago. “Thank you,” Lena repeats quietly.

“Anytime, sweetie. I’ll have your blood results in an hour. Go be with your team. They need you,” Eliza whispers, motioning to the engineers waiting with long faces, finishing up their checkups, no doubt replaying in their minds what they heard back in The Sanctuary. Eli and Jess wait at the door.

“Back to the lab everyone,” Lena orders.

The walk to Winn’s lab is as quiet as the drive back to the DEO has been. Jess’ arm around her shoulder gives her comfort. Eli’s hand on hers as she pushes his wheelchair gives her strength. The batarang safely tucked in her pocket, a reminder Luke’s support, gives her confidence. Lena walks with her head held high, looking for words that will make this situation better. Words that will reassure her team and make them understand that what happened today was only a mishap and not a failure.

Words don’t come easily. Lena has always used them as a weapon against the emotions she didn’t understand. Lena has always used them to deflect and lie. Lena has always used them to protect herself, but rarely to say what she really felt. Looking at her team now, with the weight of people’s
blame crushing their shoulders, just like after her brother was arrested, Lena has to step up. Say something. Be the leader they need her to be.

They join the rest of the team back in Winn’s lab. Winn and everyone look at her, waiting for her to give them instructions, waiting for the next step. Jess and Eli remain at her side, like they always do and Lena draws support from their warm, solid presence to face the fifteen people looking back at her.

*It’s time for you to believe in yourself too,* Luke had said, and Lena breathes, feeling calm and confident.

“What happened today was a blow,” Lena says unwavering. “We’ve worked so hard on this project. Skipping meals, sleepless nights… We’ve worked on it with the absolute belief it would be the solution to an already bad situation. We’ve worked on it with the firm intention of helping National City find peace again…” Lena exhales, chasing away her own doubts, her own fear in order to find hope. Give hope. “I know that what the delegates said was hard to hear. They don’t believe in us. They don’t believe we can do it. We’ll prove them wrong!”

“Hell yeah!” Eli whoops next to her and Lena smiles, seeing her team nod back at her.

“This is our new beginning. This is our chance to show the world what L-Corp stands for. This,” Lena emphasizes, looking at every one of them. “This is our moment! The first stepping stone to our legacy. We’ll show them what we’re made of!”

Smiles. Lena sees smiles on their face. The dark cloud hanging above them dissipates, chased away by this new energy, this vibrancy, this addictive buzz that comes with science, inventions, and the belief, the tangible faith of being able to make the world better.

“What’s science without a few explosions?” Lena asks cockily as everyone laugh.

“Alright,” Winn exclaims. “Let’s get back to work people!”

Eli gives her a thumb up before pushing his wheelchair to his desk, computer at the ready, immersing himself in the work. Jess smiles at her. It feels like old times, when they didn’t have the weight of the world on their shoulders. Jess begins to show her the progress they’ve made in the modifications of the solar power plants already existing on the west coast. Lena had designed, in between hours working on the force field, a new type of heliostat that not only reflected sunlight but enhanced it,
producing more energy. It won’t restore the power in National City right away, but it was certainly multiplying their power supply by two. Baby steps. Jess’ gaze strays over her shoulder and she motions with a jut of her chin for Lena to turn around. Kara looks at her with a small, hesitant smile.

“I really liked what you said.”

“About the explosions?”

“No,” Kara chuckles. “I’d rather no explosions in the future.”

“I can’t guarantee that,” Lena shrugs with a small smile, remembering how the blast had projected her high against the wall of the warehouse, and how Kara had appeared out of nowhere, catching her before she fell to the ground. It seemed that Kara had a knack for sensing when she was in danger. Always knowing when to rescue her.

“Can we talk?”

“ Aren’t we already talking?”

Kara sighs, looking at the room full of people nervously. “Alone, I mean.”

Lena crosses her arms over her chest, glancing at her team working behind her, feeling the buzz of their passion and excitement as they pore over charts and the remains of the generators that had exploded. There was just too much to be done. So much to recalculate. Mysteries to solve, and Lena was eager to join in too. To forget the blame, and just the overall tension she had felt earlier. “Kara…” Lena breathes apologetically. “I need to help-”

“It won’t take long,” Kara says rapidly. “I promise.”

Lena nods. Kara smiles and guides her to the small break room near Winn’s lab. Lena would nap on the couch there when her mind would get overloaded with information and designs, or when she would just get too tired to function. Kara would often join her, appearing in her small hiding place, as if sensing whenever Lena was ready to rest, so she could catch some rest too… Kara closes the door behind her, looking small, hesitant, such a contrast with the red cape flowing from her shoulders and the symbol on her chest.
“I- I’m sorry for what happened earlier. Mon-El shouldn’t have said what he said and- It just kind of spiraled out of control…”

“It’s not your fault,” Lena says frowning slightly at the guilt in Kara’s eyes. “You don’t have to apologize for what he did…”

“I do. He was angry at me, and he took it out on you,” Kara says tiredly, leaning back against the door, and looks to the ceiling, gaze far away. “He’s trying to be better though. He’s still learning…”

“What? Basic decency?”

Kara breaks out into a laugh. “Yes, that among other things.” Lena sighs and takes a seat on the couch. Kara looks back at her. “He was taunting you into a fight… I would have handled it. You should’ve let me handle it.”

Lena huffs mockingly. “I can handle a verbal spar, Kara. You can’t protect me from everything.”

“I-” Kara pauses, biting her lips. It looks painful the way her bottom lip gets trapped in-between her teeth only to be released a few seconds later bruised and red. Her jaw clenches, hard. Lena sees it in the way her neck strains under the pressure. Kara looks away, and exhales. “I know. I- I just… Lena, are we okay?” Kara asks, looking back at her with pain in her eyes. Crestfallen. Hesitant. “You seem… unreachable.”

“Yes, we’re okay.”

“Liar,” Kara breathes, with her back pressed tightly against the door, blocking the only exit. “Can we talk about this?”

Lena sighs, leaning back against the couch, breaking eye contact to look at the wall. “I’m tired,” Lena shrugs. “Mon-El thinks there’s some sort of competition going on. I could read it in his eyes. A competition for you. He’s been undermining my work and your position as a leader because of it,” Lena says, looking at Kara who meets her gaze, speechless. “We can’t have that if we want to make things better. You need to-” Lena closes her eyes and inhales deeply, trying to relax her aching jaw, to stop it from clenching too much. “I’m sorry but you two need to figure things out.”
“You’re right. I should…” Kara sighs, pressing a hand against her forehead, looking away, breathing deeply. “He told me he loved me…” she confesses quietly.

“Do you?”

“Lena…” Kara trails off, looking back at her, hesitant and unsure, with something looking a lot like guilt shining in her eyes.

“Just- forget I have feelings for you,” Lena says, biting the bullet. Kara frowns deeply, looking offended but it doesn’t stop Lena from moving forward. “We’re friends. Nothing will change that. So, if you need to talk it out, go for it. I’m here.” Lena pats the cushion next to her waiting for Kara to come and sit with her. Kara sits on the other end of the couch, looking slightly afraid and clueless on how to move forward from there. Lena sighs, reaching for Kara’s hand in reassurance. Kara holds on to her hand and doesn’t let go. “Back on my balcony… You said it could be lonely to save the world. Is that why you’ve been training him?”

Kara nods, playing absentmindedly with Lena’s fingers. “He’s not as powerful as me but he can help people. He can be a hero… like me.”

“Like having a partner…”

“Yes…”

Lena hums, turning her gaze back to the wall. “Have you considered being with him?”

“I- I did.” Kara’s hand trembles against hers and Lena holds on in support, giving Kara some time to unveil the things she seems to have kept quiet for so long. “We’ve both lost our worlds. Everything we had… is gone. I… wanted to be there for him. For him to feel less alone…” Kara pauses, tangling their fingers together and Lena suddenly doesn’t know what that means for her. Lena can’t discern any patterns and she doesn’t know on which side the scale will tip. The wait seems never ending. “Lena, I-”

A sharp knock shatters the bubble they are in. It shines a light on their hiding place and Lena takes advantage of Kara’s surprise to take her hand away from Kara’s burning hands. Lena lets go as the door opens. She lets go to protect herself.
An agent looks at them impassively. “There’s a situation at the port. It’s not clear but there’s two aliens fighting.”

“What?”

“Agent Danvers is already there.”

“Go,” Lena says, standing up, scurrying out of the door. “Alex needs you.”

“Wait!”

But Lena doesn’t wait. She keeps on moving forward. Running away.

“Ah, Lena!” Eliza calls out to her, exiting the elevator. “I was just looking for you. The blood results have come back for your team...”

Kara looks at her before stepping into the elevator. Kara keeps her eyes locked on hers until the doors close. Lena focuses back on Eliza.

“I’m sorry... you were saying?”

Eliza smiles. “There’s no radiation poisoning for any of you...”

Lena exhales, relieved, before an idea bursts in her mind. It feels like being struck by lightning.

“Wait... Radiation?”

Eliza nods, confused.

“Fuck,” Lena breathes smiling widely.
“Language!”

Lena laughs, shaking her head as the answer to why the force field didn’t work just presents itself. “I’m sorry,” Lena says, not really meaning it, and runs back toward Winn’s lab, leaving a bemused Eliza behind. “I know why it didn’t work!” Lena exclaims as the whole room turns toward her. “It’s the sensors! The sensors weren’t adapted to the radioactivity…”

“Of- Of course!” Winn exclaims. “They must have sent the wrong data and-”

“And overloaded the generators…” Eli finishes.

“I’ll go debrief the others,” Winn says, walking excitedly to the other room, separated from the lab by protective glass where the engineers had set up the eleven generators for further inspection.

Jess smiles at her. “What do you need?”

It does feel like old times, and Lena can’t help but smile widely as they fall back into familiar territory. “Radioactive samples from The Sanctuary.”

“I’ll call Susan and see if she can get me some.”

Lena startles at the ease and familiarity with which Jess talks about Agent Vasquez. Jess looks back up from her phone and Lena raises an eyebrow at her, waiting for answers…

“I’ll make the call outside…” Jess mumbles, sprinting out of the door.

“They’re dating,” Eli whispers with a smug smile.

“How do you know?”

“Maggie told me back when I was in the hospital. She’s really good at detecting things and a real
tattletale. Well, I think she was just trying to make me talk but anyway… They met when Susan,” he emphasizes wiggling his eyebrows, “was given the night shift of your protective details.”

“Interesting,” Lena hums looking at her friend talking on the phone just outside the door.

“I was waiting for you to wake up to tease her,” Eli says with a laugh until his voice wavers.

Lena looks back at him and sees his chin tremble as he looks to the ground, and grips his thighs. The veins on the back of his hands appear prominently with the sheer pressure. Lena immediately kneels before him, untangling his hands from the source of his pain and holds on to them tightly, with as much force as she can muster as their eyes lock.

“I should have been at The Sanctuary with you. I- I should have been there. If only I- I wasn’t.” The rest is left unsaid. Too obvious. Too painful. The reality speaking for itself as his voice breaks. “It doesn’t change anything, right? I’m still- I’m still me, right?”

Lena nods, sniffling quietly as she squeezes his hands. “It doesn’t change anything,” Lena insists as he looks away. Words don’t come easily usually but right now, Lena cannot stop them even if she wanted to. “You still protect me. Even when we were at The Sanctuary. Your programming saved us, Eli. You are still the one who makes me laugh even when I had a horrible day, or keep making jokes at inappropriate times, and be too damn involved in my love life.” Jess approaches them and wraps Eli with both of her arms now that her cast is gone. She holds on to him, her hands falling back on his chest, and grips at their clutched hands as she bends slightly to press her face against his neck. Lena wipes the few tears running down his cheeks, feeling how hard he clenches his jaw to keep himself from crying, and makes sure to keep her other hand firmly tangled with theirs. “You are still our annoying, little brother who keeps eating all of our food… It doesn’t change anything.”

Eli shudders, breathing heavily. “It’s usually me giving the group hugs.”

“Well, I guess that changed,” Lena smiles looking at Jess. “Has Susan turned you into a sap?”

“I don’t know what you are talking about…” Jess frowns, untangling her hand from theirs and taking a few steps back.

“Sure Jess.” Eli rubs his eyes, wiping away the few lingering tears. “Don’t think I didn’t see that massive hickey…” he snorts pointing at her neck.
“I-” Jess blushes, lifting a hand to her neck instinctively.

Lena bursts in laughter, quickly followed by Eli as Jess stops and glares at them.

“I’m so going to cut your hair,” Jess laughs, ruffling Eli’s hair. He yelps and tries to lean away from her. “In your sleep! And you Lena, I’ll make sure the only food they give you is that delicious brown broth you like so much.”

“Oh come on!” Lena laughs, and stands up, high fiving Eli. “When do we meet her? Officially, I mean. Is that why I haven’t seen her lately? Is she your nighttime bodyguard now?” Lena says wiggling her eyebrows as Eli roars in laughter.

“Oh, god!” Jess groans, hiding her face in her hands.

“Oh, god!” Jess groans, hiding her face in her hands.

“Oh no!” Eli screams, laughing even more. “Is that what you tell her when-”

“Don’t even finish that sentence!”

Lena laughs, clutching at her sides. “I’m crying,” she wheezes. “I’m actually crying.”

“You are ridiculous. Go back to work,” Jess orders them with a stern look but Lena sees the small smile tugging at her lips and the twinkles in her eyes. “Both of you!”

“Aye, aye Captain!” Eli raises his hand and salutes before turning his wheelchair back to his desk.

Lena winks.

Jess rolls her eyes.

***
They meet on the roof. An unusual place to hold a briefing but Batman has refused to set a foot inside the DEO and has instead turned on a device that emits a jamming signal all around them, making them invisible to the outside world. Lena leans against the wall, near the door, staring at the device absentmindedly, studying it quietly while Alex finishes her report on the alien attack back at the port. The atmosphere is thick, grave; only enhanced by the sunset’s bright, rosy lights reflecting on the empty skyscrapers of National City. Lena watches the light reflect on Batman’s device until a shadow falls over it. Lena looks up, and meets Kara’s anguished gaze as the light behind her seems to engulf her in flames.

The attack had been quick. A surprise. Incomprehensible and devastating in the fact they now had found two of the missing aliens. The DEO had been quick to respond, but not quick enough to stop the rabid aliens from attacking them. Three agents injured. One of the aliens dead and the other one kept under close surveillance in one of the DEO’s cells, severely injured. If she thought this morning was bad, this was way worse.

The match has been lit.

“We can’t tell The Sanctuary,” J’onn says, looking at everyone. His tone giving a clear warning. “Everything we say here remains confidential.”

“The Sanctuary has a right to know,” Kara growls, from her spot against the railing, holding onto the metal so tightly, Lena swears she can hear it squeak from where she is standing. “One of them is dead! We killed him!”

“It’ll only make things worse,” J’onn counters.

“We could have saved him. We should have saved him!”

“We didn’t have a choice, Kara!” Alex argues, not backing down from Kara’s glare. “It was a trap. They had Kryptonite with them. They were waiting for you! I had to make the shot.”

“Cadmus,” Lena cuts in loudly seeing Kara ready to retort with something she might regret. “Cadmus did this. We have to focus on them.”

“They are making their move,” Batman agrees, coming out of the shadows from where he had been listening. “This was only the first strike. A way to test our reaction, and the experiments they did on those aliens. There’s going to be another attack.”
“Do we know what they did to them?” Lena asks Alex who deflates a bit, looking wearier than she was this morning. So much more tired and uncertain.

“Eliza is conducting an autopsy as we speak and we’re monitoring the other alien but from the look of it I’d say brainwashing. Chemically induced brainwashing…”

“We’ll have to assume they did the same thing to the other fifteen missing aliens,” J’onn adds. “Has NCPD released any statements yet?”

Alex looks at her phone. “I asked Maggie to cover for us back at the NCPD. They think it was a gas line leak.”

“The next attack might be in a more crowded place. We need to be prepared. I’ll call if I find anything new,” Batman says and then jumps from the roof, disappearing as quietly as he came.

Lena shakes her head at the vigilante antics. “National City has to be warned. If Cadmus releases the missing aliens on the population, dealing with The Sanctuary might be the least of our problems.”

“We can’t do that without causing widespread panic,” J’onn frowns.

“Doesn’t Cat Grant hold meetings at the Plaza?” Lena says trying to make Kara join the conversation. “Kara Danvers surely can give her a story for us.”

“Snapper fired me after posting about the Alien Registry. I’m no longer part of Catco Media,” Kara says turning her back on her, watching the light fade over the horizon.

Lena freezes, looking at Alex who only nods sadly.

“What about the force field?” J’onn asks her.

Lena gulps; looking worriedly at Kara’s tensed back. “I- It’s going well. We’ve analyzed the samples brought back from The Sanctuary and we’ve been modifying the sensors accordingly. It’ll take us
the night to build a new generator but I’m confident we’ll be ready to install it tomorrow.”

“Good work,” J’onn nods, satisfied, squeezing her shoulder as he passes her by and goes back into the building.

“Talk to her,” Alex says, motioning at Kara with the jut of her chin, giving her a small smile before following J’onn.

Lena watches Kara’s cape sway with the wind, gentle and calm as blonde hair falls on her back; a few strands following the rhythm as best as they could. Lena is scared. Suddenly scared of moving forward. Of having the answer she’s been waiting for so long dangle before her in the sway of a red cape. Kara faces away from her, back tense, hands gripping tightly at the railing, as if she was unsure if she wanted to stay, or fly away… looking over National City, beautiful and lonely.

“You don’t have to stay if you don’t want to,” Kara points out, throwing her words back at her.

Lena leaves her spot against the wall and walks toward the railing, stopping next to Kara, watching the sky darken. “Do you want me to leave?”

“Aren’t you angry with me?” Kara counters, looking at her with that crinkle between her brows.

“I’m not.”

Kara scoffs, crossing her arms over her chest, leaning her hip against the railing. “You literally ran away from me.”

“I- I didn’t mean to,” Lena says not meeting Kara’s eyes.

“Then why did you?”

Lena sighs, biting her lip, looking at the lingering sunlight as the sky turns a dark red color. The herald of nightmares to come. “I was scared.”
Kara breathes deeply next to her, gaze far away. “I’m scared too.”

Kara takes Lena’s hand in hers and Lena’s first reaction is to step away, but Kara doesn’t let her and keeps her hand firmly in hers.

“Don’t run away like you did earlier. You get distant in that regal sort of way and I just- I get really intimidated by it,” Kara blushes slightly. “And my words get all wrong and I say things that aren’t what I mean… I mean I get it. I already knew that about you. You run away when you want to protect yourself and… what I’m trying to say is I’m sorry. I’m sorry I made you feel like- like you needed to protect yourself from me. I just-” Kara exhales, looking at their tangled hands. “We need to talk. Really talk. I wasn’t ready before but I am now.” Kara lets go of her hand, giving her space, giving her the choice to leave if she wants to. “Can we talk?”

Lena closes her eyes, long enough to breathe, long enough not to get sucked in Kara’s blue eyes, and she wishes it wasn’t so hard to resist, so easy to fall into her gravity. Lena falls inevitably once she opens her eyes again. “Okay.”

“I don’t love him,” Kara says immediately. “I could see it in your eyes that you thought… that I was choosing him or whatever when it’s not what I want. It’s not,” Kara insists. “I do wish for him to be better, not to feel alone, and to have the same opportunities I had but I don’t love him.”

Lena exhales, trembling slightly. “I-”

“Wait,” Kara whispers, sounding small and insecure suddenly. “I need to ask you something. And I- You can’t lie to me about this.”

Lena hates waiting, but whatever Kara is building herself up to ask, Lena feels that it might be a make or break moment. And so she waits, feeling the atmosphere breathe and fluctuate between them, standing behind that question Kara has yet found the courage to ask; something Kara has kept hidden for so long that the worry of what Lena’s answer might be brings tears to Kara’s eyes.

Kara breathes deeply. Lena does the same and waits as Kara looks to the sky. The stars shine brighter now that National City is mostly plunged in the dark. It feels surreal, nearly breathless to stand above the void, this dark ocean illuminated only by the moon, eerie and bright. Alone but not lonely, not with Kara’s warmth burning next to her.

“I- I felt blindsided. When- When you kissed me on your balcony. I didn’t expect it. It just never
occurred to me that it could happen, that you could feel that way for me… And I- I panicked.”

“I know,” Lena chuckles. “I was there.”

Kara smiles and the tension eases off a bit. “I thought you were in love with Supergirl… but not with Kara Danvers… I couldn’t stop thinking about the kiss and what it meant, and I thought how- how could I ever be with someone who didn’t know who I was? Who I really was? It wouldn’t have been fair to anyone because I would’ve had to keep lying. I would never have been… me,” Kara finishes quietly, pleading with her to understand what she’s trying to say. The weight of all these feelings that she had no choice but to keep hidden, because of other secrets that had been weighing down on her. But mostly asking Lena to see this want, this longing Kara has -to be loved as Kara Zor-El even when Kara Zor-El wasn’t allowed to exist. Not on Earth. “And then, you were attacked at L-Corp, and you had this time machine… Did you know that time travel has been forbidden back on Krypton?”

Lena shakes her head, understanding why Kara got hers dismantled so quickly. Lena stares fascinated as Kara smiles. A small, wistful smile as she looks to the stars.

“The Science Guild banned all experiments on time travel in the fear it would create another Phantom Zone… History books said that Krypton’s scientists had tried to harness the singularity of a black hole in order to travel through time… It didn’t work… It trapped everything in a kind of stasis… It used to remind us not to be too greedy. That there are forces you shouldn’t mess around with or you’d be cursed to exist indefinitely, outside of time. It was the worst punishment Kryptonians could be condemned to… To still exist when everything you had was gone…” Kara whispers with a haunted look on her face. A deep seated kind of pain that came from being the sole survivor of an entire civilization, cursed with the memories of a world that no longer existed.

Lena reaches out, grabbing Kara’s hand across the railing, holding on tight as Kara cries without a sound, trapping the sobs, the hitched breaths by sheer practice and volition.

“Jess told me about your ghost. This other me who travelled through time. This other me you knew before I even knew you…” Kara pauses, biting her lips, looking so scared and vulnerable, even a bit defeated as she smiles shakily. “And I remembered what you said that night on your balcony. You said that you conjured me. But it wasn’t me-” Kara breathes, letting go of Lena’s hand to clutch at the fabric on her chest, at her family’s crest as it gets twisted in her grip, implying some kind of punishment for daring to defy time itself. “You weren’t talking about me…”

Lena stares, breathless as Kara looks to her for answers.
“I guess what I’m asking is… Who do you see when you look at me? Because I’m not her,” Kara continues, clenching her jaw so hard her voice trembles. “Lena, who do you see when you tell me you love me?”

Lena exhales, trying to find back her breath after what Kara has confessed to her. Her heart is beating madly inside her chest, crushed by the pain, the uncertainty, and doubts Kara felt but couldn’t express until now. They both had been so afraid, protecting themselves so much that they only managed to hurt one another with their silence.

Lena cannot change the past. It’s been something she has wanted to do for so long. Something she had dreamed of and mused about late at night to chase away the nightmares. She had thought she could fix everything that had gone wrong in her life if she could go back in time. But looking at Kara now, waiting, winded and still, for Lena to answer, trying her hardest to conceal the barely controlled nervousness in her body, resisting that flight response with all she had, and being so scared, like Lena is, of everything changing… Lena only wants to move forward. Lena doesn’t want to linger in the past anymore. Not with Jess beginning a relationship, Eli trying to heal, and Luke making other kids, like her, feels like they have a home… Lena wants to fight for that future even if it’s hard. Even if it scares her.

Lena won’t give up.

“I never really cared about aliens before,” Lena says instead, catching Kara off guard, betrayed by the frown on her face and the stuttering breaths she lets out. “They were just part of my brother’s obsession, and I didn’t want to have anything to do with any of it.”

“What changed?”

“You,” Lena smiles, watching Kara’s eyes widen slightly. “Your words. You opened up my eyes to a world I didn’t want to see before. People I only was aware of through my brother’s hate-filled looking glass. You have this view of the world that feels so optimistic and positive… You make me want to make the world better. To be my own hero. You also make me less afraid, when I can’t remember a time in my life when I’ve not been afraid. You don’t give up even when it’s hard. Especially when it’s hard,” Lena adds, chuckling slightly, thinking back of all those moments Lena didn’t think she would make it only to have Kara rescue her, believe in her, when the world was just too eager to condemn her. “You’re passionate and you’re not afraid to fight for what you believe in and those you believe in…” Lena says as Kara exhales forcefully next to her, breaking eye contact, looking as if a weight has lifted from her shoulders or has crushed her under the pressure. Lena isn’t sure. Lena doesn’t know. Kara had asked her to choose. To make a choice between the different facets Lena saw in her when Lena never really succeeded at separating them in the first place. Supergirl and Kara Danvers. Her ghost and Kara standing next to her. She doesn’t know if it’s the answer Kara is looking for but it’s all she has. Words don’t come easily. Especially when it comes to what she feels. But Lena won’t lie. She won’t lie about her feelings anymore.
“Everyone will have an opinion of us, of who we are, and who we should be,” Lena continues looking at the stars. Remembering conversations with her brother back in Metropolis when everything was easier, when all she had to worry about was which part of the world she wanted to run away from next. Her brother had looked on to the stars with greed in his eyes. Lena looks on with hope. “Everyone is waiting for me to fail, like everyone is asking you to succeed. My victories will never be good enough and your failures will always seem too big.”

National City lay before them, silent, nearly devoid of life, paralyzed with fear.

“But we can’t let that stop us. We can’t let them stop us from trying. You might have lost your job at Catco, but it doesn’t change who you are. It’s more than just being Supergirl or Kara Danvers. Maybe the world doesn’t need one or the other. Maybe it needs both. Maybe it needs Kara Zor-El to tell her story, give a voice to those in the Sanctuary, and make the unknown a little bit less scary…” Lena finishes quietly, looking back at Kara. Feeling exposed and vulnerable but also strong and free. “That’s who I see when I tell you I love you.”

Lena waits as Kara stays silent next to her. The wind blows and Lena shivers.

“You’re really good at pep talks,” Kara croaks finally.

Lena snorts. “Thanks.”

Kara faces her, with a small smile on her face. No longer looking unsure or hesitant but looking at Lena with naked want in her eyes, a breathtaking look that makes Lena feel like falling and flying at the same time. “I feel like we’ve waited long enough…”

“Okay,” Lena agrees not really sure what it means for them, wondering what happens next? What’s the next step now that the wait is over?

While she used to be assertive in her physical relationships before, a relationship with Kara is different. A relationship with Kara would mean more than all her other relationships combined, and that knowledge is enough to leave her breathless as she lets Kara set the pace. Lena waits. She hates waiting but in this particular instance she wouldn't mind waiting another hundred years if it meant having Kara look at her like that. As if they were both suspended in time and Kara just couldn’t wait anymore.
The wait is over. Kara inches toward her, slowly, out of breath herself until they share the same space, the same breath, and Lena doesn't need for the world to make sense anymore.

Lena feels like she’s standing over the edge. If she backs away she will be safe, her heart will be bruised but she will be able to go on. But if she falls, Lena knows there is no going back from that, from kissing Kara's lips willingly, intensely, and from Kara kissing her back. Lena doesn't really know what to do. Pressing her forehead against Kara’s already feels like a surrender. The beginning of the fall. Kara doesn't move any further than to press her nose gently against hers, to breathe the scent of her skin, about to steal her heart right out of her chest.

Kara waits. Lips just inches away, waiting for Lena to take the plunge.

Lena falls only for Kara to catch her.

Time stops.

It's soft. It's slow. Lena feels like her sanity may just be hanging on the edge of Kara's lips. Her heartbeat feels out of sync. It’s going crazy. It’s beating so hard Lena has to rein herself in. Stop herself from rushing in and let Kara set the pace. And if the soft brushes of Kara's lips against her own make her go mad, then so be it. Lena will gladly fall a thousand times over just to breathe in Kara's sighs.

Eager lips meet inquisitive ones. Eager hands stay put, immobile, while inquisitive hands grab at Lena's waist shamelessly, drawing her closer to the heat of Kara’s embrace. Inquisitive hands roam free over Lena’s back, tracing the shape of her shoulders, and rubbing at the back of her neck while inquisitive lips kiss hers with a hint of desperation, a demand of something more. Lena follows the rhythm of Kara’s lips, of Kara’s tongue brushing against hers, capturing every breath, every sigh, and Lena finally allows her eager hands to wander over Kara's body. To reach for the connection she never thought she’d have.

Lena’s back gets pushed against the metal railing but she doesn’t mind as Kara nips at her jaw and explores freely, greedily, the skin of her neck.

“Are we going too fast?” Kara whispers, making her way back to Lena’s lips.

“I don’t care,” Lena pants, trapping Kara’s bottom lip in-between hers and not letting go.
The wait is over and it feels glorious.

Chapter End Notes

I don't remember them giving an explanation for the Phantom Zone in the show? I might be wrong but I love coming up with backstories for it. I had to remind myself why I love Kara Zor-El/Danvers/Supergirl so much. So this is my love letter to her. I hope you enjoyed this chapter. Thank you for reading. Take care!
Hi, guys! Thank you all for the support! I won't talk for long but has anyone listened to "Fall for you" by Leela James from which the title comes from? You should listen to it while reading this chapter. Again, let's all use our suspension of disbelief for the science used in this story. Huge thanks to Earthling3 for editing. listen_to and Seriouslyficent for always cheering me up. Enjoy!

WARNING : SEXUAL CONTENTS and me being my evil, angsty self... ;)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

National City has never been as quiet as it is now. No sound can be heard from the streets usually so vibrant with the honking of cars and police or ambulance sirens. There’s no one strolling on the sidewalks in search of the next bar, or hailing a cab to go home. The city mourns in fear and the silence clogs its arteries while its inhabitants cower in a corner, huddle in the dark, and wait - wait for the light to break… But the night has fallen and no lights can be seen from the many windows of the highest skyscrapers. It feels like a fog has embalmed everything and snuffed the life out of National City.

A fog broken by the moan escaping from Lena’s lips.

Lena exhales into the night, closing her eyes as Kara cradles her jaw in her hands, keeping her still and calm. The cold, night air caresses her skin and Lena shivers, holding on to Kara’s waist, listening, breathing in the sound of Kara’s sighs and of their hearts beating so loudly that Lena is sure it is the only sound pulsing through National City.

She opens her eyes and looks to the sky in order to breathe, just for a moment, away from Kara’s piercing gaze. She is greeted by an ocean of stars shining as bright as the universe is dark. But the brightest light doesn’t come from the sky. The brightest light is right here on the roof of the DEO, threading fingers in her hair, scratching her scalp, pressing closer to her body. Lena has to close her eyes again in order to breathe. But even with her eyes closed, Kara’s light doesn’t dim. It gets stronger. It gets brighter. Lena feels it light up every inch of her skin as Kara tugs gently at her hair and exposes her throat to the night. She waits, vulnerable and exposed, shivering under Kara’s hot, sweltering breath as it hits her skin.

It feels like torture. The anticipation as she waits for Kara to do something. For Kara to sink her teeth
in her throat. For Kara to suck onto the fragile skin until it hurts, until her skin becomes red and angry… Lena is ready for anything. Anything.

Except a feather light kiss.

Lena quivers, exhaling loudly, languidly, and opens her eyes wide when Kara carves a path on her skin with only the faintest touch of her lips. Her knees wobble, her thighs clench, and her hands grip at Kara’s back, holding on to her shoulders for dear life. It’s not what she expected and she has to bite her lip, hard, to contain the elation ready to burst out from her mouth. Lena arches her neck and presses Kara closer against her, infinitely closer, encouraging Kara to continue the slow, agonizing, bewitching exploration of her neck.

She dangles between heaven and hell, ascending to the sky every time Kara’s lips make contact with her skin only to fall faster and deeper into the abyss when the heat of their touch disappears. Lena wants more, reduced to a being that wants and needs; she’ll beg for more if she has to. She’ll beg to burn just once more. Lena moans when Kara’s lips land on her skin again, fueling the fire burning low in her hips.

Letting Kara set the pace might actually make her lose her sanity. Lena isn’t used to giving up control. To be the one left panting and wanting. To wait to be ravaged. Lena does the ravaging and her fingers itch to take the control back, to have Kara, panting and wanting under her own lips.

The wait is over and Lena is impatient. Greedy.

Her hands move on their own accord and explore the expanse of Kara’s back hidden under the red cape. Lena has no clue on how to get her out of the suit but it doesn’t stop her from kneading at the muscles she finds and at loosening the tension she finds settled high in between Kara’s shoulders.

Kara falters. She moans and breathes rapidly, pressing her head in the hollow of Lena’s neck. She presses her hips into Lena’s seeking relief Lena is all too happy to provide. Kara’s legs part and Lena slides her thigh in between. Her hands settle at the small of Kara’s back, encouraging her to grind her hips on her thigh with soft pressure.

Every exhale, every intake of breath, and every moan escaping from Kara’s lips feels like a victory, and Lena hastens to capture them all, selfishly trapping them in between her lips. Kara gasps, bracing herself on the metal railing, panting against Lena’s lips, grinding harder until the railing creaks. The sound reverberates all around them. Abnormally loud. Sinful evidence that feels like music to Lena’s ears. Lena smiles cheekily. She kisses, licks, and sucks on Kara’s bottom lip, on the skin of her jaw, and then on her lips again focused only on her desire to produce more of those breathy moans and
hear the metal railing at her back sinfully creak once more. Kara whimpers, trembling visibly at a hard press of her thigh and a lick of her tongue.

The metal railing bends and gives way. Lena gasps, breathless, losing her balance under Kara’s weight and releases Kara’s bottom lip in surprise. Kara looks back at her completely stunned.

They fall off the building.

Kara’s cape billows in the wind. Lena grabs instinctively at Kara’s shoulders. The fall doesn’t last long. Only long enough for Lena to wrap her legs around Kara’s waist and for Kara to embrace her tightly. In a gush of air they are back on the roof, far away from the edge and Lena hisses as she is pressed back against the wall she had been leaning on earlier.

“I’m sorry,” Kara whispers and peppers Lena’s jaw and neck with kisses. “I’m so sorry. I break things when I get too excited or angry…”

Lena blinks, trying to get her bearings back, breathing deeply and slowly, but Kara makes it hard to concentrate when she is hell-bent on kissing every inch of skin she finds.

“Well, more like all the time,” Kara continues, mumbling apologies with her lips against Lena’s wildly beating pulse. “Your heart is beating really fast. Are you okay?”

It is hard to think, what with Kara nibbling on the skin of her neck, apologizing still. It is hard to form any coherent thoughts with Kara pressed so closely, so intimately against her. Lena doesn’t think her heart is beating erratically because of the scare. Lena is sure the near fall isn’t the cause of her trembling fingers, of her weakened knees and the burn in between her legs. Her answer gets stuck in her throat, only to come out as something between a gasps and laugh.

“Yes. I’m okay,” she croaks, gasping for breath, squeezing her thighs around Kara’s waist.

Kara frowns, looking at her worriedly. “Are you sure? I mean… It was partially my fault and-”

“Partially?” Lena scoffs. “You broke the metal railing!”
“That’s because you did that thing with- you know,” Kara flusters, blinking rapidly, pressing Lena harder against the wall with her hips, freeing her hands only to gesture erratically. “And that- that other thing you do with your tongue…”

Lena bursts out laughing as Kara rolls her eyes.


Lena apologizes with little pecks on the corner of Kara’s lips, on her cheek, and on her jaw until Kara smiles again. “I can’t believe you made a hole in the railing.”

“Can we not talk about this anymore?” Kara groans, hiding her face in her shoulder. “Like ever?”

Lena chuckles, using the pad of her thumb to knead at the tension at the back of Kara’s neck. Kara’s cheek heats up in embarrassment and Lena guides Kara’s face out from her hiding place. “It’ll be our secret,” she says in all seriousness, emphasizing that seriousness with the cocking of her eyebrow.

Kara frowns.

Lena bites her lip to contain her smile.

“Stop it,” Kara whines, blushing madly.

“What?” Lena replies innocently, grinning at Kara’s scowl.

“That- That thing you do with your eyebrow! It’s like you’re looking straight into my soul!”

Lena laughs and reaches for Kara’s cheeks, caressing the skin there. There are dark circles under her eyes, small stress lines at the corner of her eyes and mouth. Lena smoothes them with the pad of her thumbs. Kara closes her eyes, breathing deeply. Lena smiles as Kara relaxes into her.

“Are you sure you are okay?” Kara looks at her with worry. “I know you don’t like flying and this really wasn’t planned…”
“I’m okay. I promise. It just- It just surprised me,” Lena smiles. “It’s not like you would have let me fall.”

“Of course not,” Kara says, tightening her hands under Lena’s thighs, powerful and assured. “I’d catch you. Always.”

Lena chuckles, feeling the last of her walls crumble under the heat of Kara’s gaze and their shared, trembling breath. She puts her arms around Kara’s neck, enjoying the care and warmth Kara provides so easily in the space of her arms. Lena closes her eyes as Kara kisses her forehead, running her lips softly along her scar.

Lena falls.

Kara is nothing like she expected. None of her plans, the information she stole from the DEO or the week she spent with Kara’s ghost has prepared her for this. Kara was just too vibrant, too intricate to be confined by the expectations people had of her. The facets she showed to the world and the ghost Lena knew so briefly had just been hints and clues of a being much greater, much more complex than Lena has ever known before. Supergirl, Kara Danvers, and her time-traveling ghost are all parts of a whole, and Lena finds herself wildly unprepared. Unprepared for Kara and her warmth, her smiles, her friendship and her intensity; and yet eager to provide shelter to the pain Kara only hints at - the nostalgia of different worlds Lena can see reflecting in her eyes, or the silences Kara falls into when words just aren’t enough.

Lena falls and it feels like flying.

“I can hear you thinking,” Kara mumbles, shutting Lena’s brain down for a few seconds with a quick kiss. “What are you thinking about?”

Lena hums, brushing her thumb over Kara’s bottom lip, enjoying its softness. Kara grabs her hand and kisses the inside of her wrist. It shakes Lena to the core.

“You.” Lena smiles out of breath.

Kara grins. “Good thoughts?”
“Maybe…”

Kara laughs, shaking her head.

Lena bites her lips as her vision zeroes in on Kara’s smile. A smile Kara gives so freely. A smile that can give strength and quiet the fear in people’s hearts. A smile that hides so much of the pain Kara rarely shows. A smile as strong as it is fragile. Lena kisses the corner of Kara’s lips and tightens her legs around her waist. She holds Kara closer to her and her knuckles whiten from the grip she has on Kara’s cape. Lena promises to protect that smile, that awkward tilt it does when she is embarrassed, or the too wide grin she gives sometimes when she fibs. She promises to protect Kara when smiling hurts too much, when smiling the pain away isn’t enough. Lena makes those promises with the press of her lips, the tightening of her arms, and the hammering sound of her beating heart.

Love has always been a weakness Lena couldn’t afford. As a Luthor, love always came with a price, and Lena holds on to Kara harder as she feels the fear, sudden and crippling, paralyzing her as it whispers in the back of her mind... It doesn’t matter how much Lena wants to give. It doesn’t matter how hard Lena loves because she might not be enough... She’s never been enough. Not for Lillian who’d rather choose a life of crime than choose her nor for Lex who-

“Hey!”

Lena blinks, breathing in sharply, filling her lungs with the scent of Kara’s skin. The faint smell of honey and mint.

“Where did you go?” Kara asks and kisses the frown forming between Lena’s brows, looking at her patiently, worriedly.

“I’ll make mistakes,” Lena says, clenching her jaw, making Kara frown. She’s hurt so many people already because of her mistakes and Lena might not be enough but she won’t hurt Kara anymore than she already has. “I’ll make mistakes,” Lena repeats with her heart lodged in her throat, stopping her trembling fingers from holding on to Kara any more than she already is.

Kara smiles. The fear that has lodged itself in the back of her mind abates, weakened by the smile Kara gives her, the smile Lena has seen her ghost, Kara Danvers and Supergirl give her every time she’s been scared.

“I’ll make mistakes too,” Kara says, pressing their foreheads together.
“I might want to run away,” Lena insists, trying to resist the pull Kara has on her. She fails. She’s tired of running away.

“I’ll wait for you to come back.” Kara shrugs and smiles, destroying the last of Lena’s fear with a quiet confidence and an unwavering steadfastness. “You don’t have to be afraid,” Kara promises again.

Lena nods, holding her tears at bay. She allows her trembling fingers to tighten at the nape of Kara’s neck. Lena falls, losing herself in Kara’s arms and the most surprising thing is to realize that she isn’t scared. For once, Lena truly isn’t. She’s always trusted Kara with her life. She’s always known that Kara would always save her. But now, with Kara holding her, with her lips just inches away, whispering promises against her skin, Lena wants to give Kara her heart.

She’s been falling for a while and Lena falls a little bit more for the powerful, sometimes clumsy, sometimes goofy woman who has never failed to make her smile or to make her feel safe. Kara Zor-El, as her friend, as National City’s protector and as a mysterious ghost, has always given her the comfort, the support, and the care Lena has never dared to ask for. Lena has been falling for a while for the reporter, the superhero and the amnesic ghost lost in time, a one-woman army who has been making a change in the world by the force of her determination, her selflessness, and her heart.

“What the hell are we getting ourselves into?” Lena says, kissing Kara’s lips, her jaw, and her neck making Kara laugh with butterfly kisses and gentle nips.

“I don’t know,” Kara says. Lena shivers as Kara’s warm breath hits her lips. “But we’ll figure it out together.”

Lena nods, holding on to Kara’s shoulders, to her cape, bunching the otherworldly fabric in her fists like a lifeline as Kara steers her into uncharted waters with kisses, the swirl of her tongue and a firm, suggestive grip under her thighs.

National City has become silent again, waiting with bated breath for any sounds to bring it back to life. Avid to feel again.

Lena exhales, feeling lightheaded as Kara resumes the slow, meticulous exploration of her neck, kissing every inch of skin, and going lower and lower. Lena gasps as the zipper of her jacket squeaks open and hisses in delight at feeling Kara’s scorching lips on her naked collarbone. Kara nudges the fabric of her shirt to uncover more skin.
A button pops open.

It shatters the silence all around them, reverberating on the empty skyscrapers, sliding down the streets with gleeful anticipation and desire when another button pops open, and then another and it’s like National City is breathing again.

Kara kisses the top of her breasts and Lena is breathless, her heart beats so loud, so fast, she wishes they weren’t on a rooftop so that Kara would do that swirling thing she does with her tongue again but lower, much, much lower.

Lena brings Kara’s lips back to hers, distracting herself from sinful thoughts with the slightly, slightly less sinful feel of Kara’s tongue against hers and the taste of her lips as Lena sucks greedily on Kara’s bottom lip, making Kara moan and her hips jerk against hers.

“Not fair,” Kara mumbles, freeing her lip and nibbling at Lena’s jaw in retaliation.

Lena chuckles. She whispers soft, sultry words in Kara’s ear, emphasizing them with the grind of her hips just to see Kara blush. Lena gasps, surprised as Kara teasingly bites her neck only to soothe the bruised skin with kisses.

Lena never liked surprises. The unpredictability, the lack of control, being taken unaware, were things she despised. But none of those thing bother her as much when Kara is kissing her senseless, surprising her at every turn.

She could definitely learn to love surprises.

A particularly well-placed kiss makes Lena hiss and moan. She trembles and rolls her eyes fondly when she feels Kara grin smugly against her skin. The last of her shirt’s buttons pop open, Kara’s fingers part the flimsy fabric impatiently and explore the skin of her collarbone, in between her breasts down to her bellybutton with a slow and torturous pace. Lena gasps, feeling Kara’s fingers travel back up, lingering just under her bra, caressing the fabric with maddeningly light touches. Kara looks back at her and waits, pushing her fingertips slowly, timidly under the black fabric only to retract after going up an inch. Lena grabs Kara’s hand and pushes it under her bra.

It makes Kara grinds her thigh in between hers and Lena chokes at the sudden, unrelenting pressure. She moans at the way Kara clutches at her hips and at her breast, bringing Lena closer, closer to
relief and fueling that maddening, electrifying throb just between her legs. Lena shivers and breathes shakily, gripping harder at the fabric of Kara’s cape, and hisses at feeling Kara’s lips on her jaw. She moans as Kara breathes against her skin, exhaling heated and intimate promises with the insistent press of her thigh.

Lena moans.

Kara pants.

A phone rings.

Kara chokes, stuttering to a stop and Lena closes her eyes in frustration, cursing loudly. Her feet touch the ground as Kara steps away from her. The cold, night air envelops her burning skin, freezing the spots where Kara’s hands and lips were.

“Is it mine? Yours?” Kara fumbles, patting at her suit.

“Yours. I haven’t had a phone since the attack at L-Corp,” Lena says, patting at the batarang in her pocket, blissfully silent, and rapidly buttons her shirt back up to ward off the cold.

Kara takes out her phone, eyes widening as the screen lights up her face. “It’s J’onn,” she whispers, looking panicked. Kara stares back at it, frozen, her cheeks reddening even more either from the cold or from sheer embarrassment. Lena isn’t sure but she urges Kara to answer the phone as it rings and rings in her hand.

“Hi!” Kara says, smiling wide as her voice gets incredibly high-pitched. “What’s up?”

Lena rolls her eyes.

Kara shrugs.

“Where am I? I- Uh… the roof?”
It isn’t hard for Lena to piece the conversation together, what with Kara repeating everything J’onn says. Lena moves Kara slowly to the side to glance at the device Batman left on the roof. She remembers Alex shutting it off before leaving but maybe-

The device isn’t activated.

Kara flusters. “My what? Oh! My earpiece,” Kara frowns, patting her ear instinctively. Lena smiles realizing Kara has failed to hear the bleeps of her earpiece… “No, it’s fi-”

*Broken*, Lena mouths emphatically, grabbing Kara’s arm to get her attention. *Broken.*

“It’s broken?” Kara repeats hesitatingly, looking at Lena for approval.

Lena nods.

“Yes,” Kara grins, relieved, making that awkward laugh Lena loves so much. “Completely broken. Smashed like a-”

“No, no,” Lena whispers furiously, trying hard not to laugh as she tries to stop Kara from exaggerating.

“Ah- a…” Kara frowns, looking at her, confused. “I mean… not too smashed?”

Lena bites her lips, rolling her eyes fondly, looking at Kara’s flushed cheeks with an amused grin.

“I- I didn’t hear a thing… I’ll have Winn check it out…” Kara agrees a few more times over the phone; hand on her hips, all serious and intimidating except for the red coloring her neck and face. “I’ll be there… Sir,” Kara finishes awkwardly before hanging up. “I think it went well.”

Lena snorts. “That was bad. You really don’t know how to lie.”

“He gave me twenty minutes to get ready for patrol…” Kara grimaces. “Do you think he knows?”
Lena shrugs and grips the front of Kara’s suit to bring her closer. Kara’s warmth washes over her and Lena smiles, choosing to tease Kara instead. “I thought you had superhearing. How come you didn’t hear them calling?”

Kara blushes. “I was kind of distracted.”

“Really?” Lena grins, raising an eyebrow, taking infinite pleasure at seeing Kara blush even more.

Kara groans and hides her face in Lena’s neck, breathing deeply as her hands slither under Lena’s shirt and settles on the skin of her back. Lena feels her fingers ghost over the bruise she got that morning. “Does it still hurt?” Lena shakes her head, sighing quietly as Kara hums, enjoying the bubble of safety Kara creates in the space of her arms. “Do you think there’s a day where we won’t be interrupted?”

Lena chuckles. “We can only hope. But we’ve still got twenty minutes…”

“Sixteen now.”

“Sixteen minutes,” Lena amends. “What do you want to do with our sixteen minutes?”

Kara sighs and kisses her lips gently. “Can we stay like this?”

Lena nods, making herself comfortable against the wall with Kara in her arms.

“And a cold shower,” Kara mumbles. “I need a cold shower before I can go on patrol with J’onn.”

“At least he can’t read your mind…”

Kara freezes, looking back at her horrified. “Please, don’t- don’t look him in the eyes. Like ever again. Don’t give him a chance to read your mind.”
Lena laughs. Kara groans.

The silence settles back over National City but this time it isn’t as suffocating as it was before. Lena welcomes the silence, the peace of having Kara in her arms for a few infinite minutes where there is nothing for them to do. Minutes in which they can just be.

“I should go,” Kara sighs. Lena feels the muscles in Kara’s back harden. The tension seeps back in, filling up every nook and crevice of Kara’s body. Kara is steeling herself for what’s out there. For the fear, the anger, the eyes of aliens and humans alike looking to her for guidance… Lena’s heart breaks as Kara looks back at her with a quiet sort of sadness. It’s not defeat, but there’s weariness in Kara’s blue eyes. There’s doubt and it bleeds slowly into her smile. “And I really need that shower…”

“Wanna shower together?” Lena proposes, hoping to chase away the dark fog that has settled in Kara’s eyes. “We’d save some water…”

“That- uh… that would be-” Kara pauses, looking dazed. “No, no, Lena! We’re not doing that,” Kara protests, shaking her head as if clearing her mind from whatever seductive thoughts appearing in her mind. It clears the dark fog away and Lena smiles as Kara blushes. “I- uh… I’ve got like seven minutes left before J’onn sends out a search party and we’ll never be finished in seven minutes and-”

Lena kisses Kara’s lips and smooths her suit. “Go. Be careful.”

“Always,” Kara smiles and looks at her with a soft, calm expression. The stress lines around Kara’s mouth seem to smooth out. She bites her lip, appearing deep in thought. “Bye,” Kara says finally, kissing Lena’s cheek and speeds out of the door before Lena can utter a word.

Lena sighs, leaning back heavily against the wall as the door clangs shut.

She’ll need a cold shower too.

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It’s a race against the clock.
The first team of engineers is nearly halfway done with the new generator while the second team checks on the eleven other generators for any damage that might have been caused by the blast. There’s still a lot to do. Tests to run. Eli’s programming still needs to be tweaked a bit with the new modifications from the sensors… Lena sees him typing furiously at his desk, behind the glass wall next to Winn as they modify the parameters of the sensors’ programming. There’s still so much to do and yet so little time.

Lena focuses back on her task at hand, making sure to check every one of the sensors for any damage. She breathes deeply, trying to forget the steady, immutable, and nerve racking ticking above her head, wondering if she can smash the clock down or throw a wrench at it… Time doesn’t speed up or slow down. Time doesn’t stop and Lena clenches her jaw, closing the lid of a sensor and puts it next to the twenty others she’s already checked over. She clenches her jaw at the fifteen others still waiting to be modified. The sensors were only meant to send data to the generators and deploy the particles like a net all over the delimited space. She can’t believe she overlooked the radioactive atmosphere of The Sanctuary. It feels like a rookie mistake… A mistake she can’t afford to make again.

It’s a race against the clock and her time with Kara on the roof already feels so far away. Lena breathes into the shawl, wrapped around her neck, that she borrowed from Kara’s drawer. It smells of honey and mint. Just like Kara’s skin. But as wonderful as their time was on the roof, Lena is now left with the evidence of Kara’s minute and dedicated attention blossoming on her neck.

Jess enters the main lab, bringing with her the dark and voluptuous scent of coffee. The lab sighs in relief as everyone gets a cup. Lena raises an eyebrow, staring up at Jess who stops in front of her desk but doesn’t refill her mug.

“Take a break,” Jess says instead with a stern look. “You haven’t moved for four hours.”

Lena glances at the clock. 2AM. Jess raises an eyebrow, keeping the pot of coffee to herself. Lena looks at it with envy, debating for a few seconds, before sighing heavily. She lets go of the sensor she was gutting open and bends her neck slightly until it cracks. Jess winces at the sound. Lena smiles.

“Didn’t I tell you to rest two hours ago?”

“You did,” Jess says, taking a seat beside her, looking at her with that same stern look until one of them surrender.

“Can you at least brief me on the investment proposal I made?”
Jess leans back against her chair. The corner of her eyes twitches. “It’s a success. Word got around and well- more like the Mayor has been heavily promoting it for the past two days... Anyway, we have five more local businesses and companies who have signed the agreement. I’ll dispatch teams in the morning to assess their needs.”

“Good,” Lena nods, grabbing the screwdriver.

Jess huffs with clear disapproval when Lena resumes her work on the sensors, refusing to take a break. “The Board isn’t happy, though. We won’t see any of the returns in months- maybe years if the conflict persists. They think you are doing charity.”

“All the more reasons to invest in the economy,” Lena chuckles and screws the lid back of a sensor only to open another one and tweak at a few things inside. It doesn’t surprise her. Her Board Members lacked vision. They were making the same mistake other major companies were making by retreating and protecting their interests. They didn’t think the conflict was going to end but Lena will make damn sure that it does. “Cadmus has disrupted everything, and more than electricity, we need normal. We need to get back to our everyday life.”

Jess hums, handing Lena the copper wire she’s been looking for among the mess on her desk. “You’ll have half of the west coast indebted to L-Corp once the conflict ends. I can already see the headlines. You’ll either be hailed as a hero or accused of having taken advantage of the situation.”

“I know,” Lena shrugs but her effort at nonchalance fails when she sees Jess looks at her with wide eyes and an apology on her lips. Lena waves it away. She is a Luthor after all. That’s how her father built his empire. By buying struggling companies, putting them back afloat, and stamping his name on every one of them. She knows how bad her reputation is. Mon-El hasn’t stop reminding her of it ever since she woke up, and it wasn’t getting any better what with her mother escaping prison to continue to lead Cadmus, scheming for genocide and mass deportation, and certainly not with Lex breaking from prison only to give the country the last push toward chaos. She hates chaos but chaos is tied to her name, and she’d rather dismantle Cadmus for good, even if it meant being seen as the bad guy later on, than have Cadmus expands any further than it already has. “I know,” Lena repeats quietly, clenching her jaw as her chest constrict slightly. “Better me than Cadmus.”

“Can’t argue with that,” Jess sighs, pouring Lena some coffee as an apology. Lena smiles as Jess takes out three small packets of sugar from her pocket and several milk sticks for her to mix in her coffee. “The opening was a success by the way. They sent some of their last batch a few hours ago. I kept them in the fridge back in your break room,” Jess emphasizes with a knowing smile. Lena rolls her eyes, blushing slightly. Her team had somehow come to the conclusion that the little room at the end of the floor was hers, and they all knew Kara was the only other one to use it. “I’m sure Kara is going to like the surprise.”
“So tell me about Susan,” Lena mumbles, bringing the mug back to her lips.

Jess laughs at the deflection but stays equally silent.

Lena sniggers at Jess’ stubbornness. They were pretty much the same. They both protected their heart to the point of being afraid of talking about it, of being afraid of the feelings and the people who made their heart beat faster in the first place. Afraid that talking about them would reveal a part of themselves they’d rather keep hidden and quiet just to protect themselves from the hurt when they’d leave.

“Are you happy?” Lena asks instead.

Jess startles, biting her lip before nodding slowly. “Yes. I’m happy. Are you?”

Lena looks at the steamy liquid in her mug. As a child, she’d never dreamed of happy endings. Her dreams were always filled with the scent of smoke, blood and rain, with lifeless eyes crawling toward her when other girls dreamed of falling in love, of saving the world, of becoming astronauts, doctors, princesses or pirates. As she grew up, she came to realize that endings were never happy.

She got scared when she learned she was meant to die on the Venture. She became reckless and fearful, acting out of despair and she’s made even more mistakes in trying to survive. She’s put the life of her friends in danger. She’s pushed Kara away just because it was easier. She’s made Kara doubt her character with the Alien Detection Device and when dealing with the Medusa virus. She’s confused her with a kiss stolen late at night. She’s made Kara run away with a proclamation of love for Supergirl when she’s already suspected Kara’s struggles to find balance in her life. It was easier to push Kara away than to tell her the truth.

Lena had refused to die, and yet she hadn’t known how to live.

The truth was out but everything she’s tried to protect now hangs in the balance. The conflict in National City grows more and more every day, Cadmus lurks in the shadows, and her team races against the clock in order to preserve the status-quo. Surprisingly, now more than ever Lena feels like she can actually succeed. She’s finally getting her shot at a second chance. She’s finally moving forward and reaching for the endless possibilities presented to her. She’s stopped looking back at the past.
That’s what Kara does. That’s what Kara fights for. That’s what she inspires others to do. Not giving up even when faced with immeasurable pain or fear. To hope, and hope again until the will to fight back shines bright again.

“Yes,” Lena smiles, locking eyes with Jess. “Yes, I’m happy.”

Jess nods, smiling wide and they both get back to work with renewed strength and conviction.

Time passes. The ticking clock above her head doesn’t scare her as much anymore. Jess works quietly next to her, handing her tools from time to time. Lena falls back into the groove and the sense of normalcy brings her comfort. She works on a few more sensors before her hands begin to shake. Lena cracks her knuckles, making Jess wince before going back to work. She frowns at the lingering pain she feels in her hand. An old wound. Time doesn’t make sense and Lena flexes her right hand again, feeling the pain tingle her nerves until it just disappears. Lena smiles, throwing herself back to work.

Time passes. Her vision blurs. Lena blinks several times and her eyes focus again.

“Go get some rest,” Jess orders, taking the clamp from her hand. “Winn will take your place.”

“I’m fine.” Lena clenches her jaw as a wave of dizziness passes through her.

“You’re not. It’s only been ten days since you woke up and you’ve been working for most of them...”

Lena frowns. She used to be able to work for days on end… “I can still-”

“And you were thrown against a wall this morning,” Jess adds with her hands on her hips.

“Don’t I have a say in this?”

“No. I’ve already covered for you when Eliza asked me if you were sleeping earlier. Take a break.”
Lena swallows back her protests as Jess guides her firmly out of the main lab. Winn and Eli turn toward them in surprise.

“Taking a break?” Eli asks.

“Apparently,” Lena grumbles. “There are still a few sensors that need to be checked over.”

“Don’t worry. I’m on it,” Winn says, squeezing her shoulder before going back into the lab.

Lena makes her way toward Eli and frowns when Jess steers her the other way.

“Break room. Don’t make me walk you there,” Jess warns, sounding way too motherly for her liking.

“Have a rest, Boss. Can’t have you tired when Kara comes back!” Eli singsongs with a shit-eating grin.

Lena glares at him. She adjusts the shawl around her neck nervously as Jess pushes her out of the door and points toward the break room.

“See you in two hours. Nice shawl by the way. Don’t think we didn’t see those hickeys on your neck,” Jess winks and closes the door.

“One hour!” Lena huffs and rolls her eyes as they laugh at her from behind the glass wall.

***

Lena opens her eyes at the sound of the door opening.

“I’m sorry,” Kara grimaces. “I didn’t mean to wake you.”
“You didn’t.” Lena smiles and sits up as Kara closes the door behind her. “I wasn’t asleep.”

Kara hums, unconvinced.

“I’m just waiting for the appropriate amount of time until Jess lets me back into the lab.”

Kara smiles, looking exhausted. “How long has it been?”

Lena glances at the clock. “Only fifteen minutes. I still have forty-five more to spare.”

Kara nods, stretching a bit and hides her yawn behind her hand, only to rub at her eyes and cheeks just after. Lena pats the space next to her, asking Kara to sit and have a rest.

“Wait… Is that my shawl? Were you missing me already?” Kara asks, giggling a bit. Lena feels her cheeks burn. “I like it. It looks good on you,” Kara adds taking her boots and cape off. She flops down on the couch and reaches for the fabric only to press it absentmindedly between her fingertips.

“I had to hide those hickeys you gave me,” Lena says, pushing the shawl to the side to show Kara her neck. The fact that it smelled of honey and mint was only an added bonus. Kara eyes widen and a blush appears on her cheeks. “It didn’t work. Eli and Jess saw right through me.”

“Sorry,” Kara whispers sheepishly, touching the reddened skin. “They didn’t give you too much of a hard time, did they?”

“Don’t worry,” Lena winks. “I have enough dirt on them both to last me several lifetimes.”

“Good,” Kara grins and kisses her softly. It’s slow, so slow that every breath and every brush of skin never seems to end. It goes on in one infinite heartbeat and Lena stays still, barely breathing, defying time with the seam of her lips until Kara ends the kiss.

“So,” Lena exhales a bit dazed. “I have a surprise for you…”

“You do? I love surprises.”
Lena nods biting her lip, feeling her heart flutter happily. “Don’t move.” She bounces toward the mini-fridge in the back corner of the room and grabs the take-outs quickly out of the fridge. Lena hides the box behind her back as she faces Kara who looks like she is about to leap toward her in excitement.

“Is it food?”

Lena nods, feeling quite proud of herself.

“Yes!” Kara whoops, urging her to give her the surprise with grabby hands. Lena steps closer only to stop when Kara suddenly narrows her eyes at her. “It better not be kale!”

“It’s not kale,” Lena snorts and reveals her surprise, unable to contain her smile any longer.

Kara freezes, staring at the box, unusually still. “I thought they had closed down…”

Lena gulps nervously wavering slightly at seeing the slight crinkle in-between Kara’s brows. “They-they did,” Lena says, moving closer to the couch where Kara still remains completely frozen and presents the box to her again. “I opened the restaurant and put it back in business.”

“You bought one of my favorite restaurants?” Kara asks, still not reaching for the box.

“I didn’t buy it. I invested in it,” Lena clarifies, watching Kara curiously. To be honest, she feels a little bit confused when Kara still makes no move to reach for the take-outs. Usually Kara would have finished a whole box by now. “L-Corp invested in a few other small businesses actually, and farms and industries on the west coast to keep the economy going. Hopefully, it will help keep the citizens out of Cadmus’ claws.”

“With potstickers?” Kara asks in disbelief, looking at her with misty eyes and a giant smile.

Lena exhales relieved. “Pure coincidence,” she shrugs with a small smile and gasps, surprised, as Kara tugs at her sweater. Lena finds herself straddling Kara’s laps and stares at Kara’s parted lips.
The box gets a little squished in between them.

Kara traps her bottom lip in between her teeth. When it gets released, it comes out redder and more tantalizing than ever. Lena kisses it, soothing the bruised lip with a few strokes of her tongue. The hand bunched up in her sweater relaxes slowly, only to run up her thigh and settle at the small of her back. Lena hums, inching closer until she feels Kara’s other hand reach for the box in between them. Lena laughs.

“They’re cold now. You should-” Lena pauses, watching Kara gobble two potstickers in just a few seconds. “- warm them first?” Lena suggests, knowing Kara is already too far gone to listen to her. She isn’t sure Kara is even chewing.

Kara shakes her head, swallows and smiles at her sheepishly. “No. No time,” she says, biting into another one. “This is just-” Kara gulps two more and Lena just hopes she doesn’t choke. “Oh, Rao. How I missed you…” Kara moans to the rapidly dwindling potstickers.

Lena shakes her head when Kara offers a potsticker to her. She watches, amused and in awe, as Kara finally heats the rest of them with her heat vision and pops them in her mouth one by one. The tension in the set of her shoulders decreases. The worried lines that had settled at the corner of her mouth and eyes disappear. Lena chuckles as Kara tilts her head back, eyes closed, smiling contentedly.

She falls again for that smile she likes so much. The same smile that has never failed to make her heart stutter. Not when her ghost beamed at her or Kara Danvers adjusted her glasses with a shy smile, nor when Supergirl flashed her a grin. A transcendant smile, unaffected by time or by all the masks Kara wears to protect herself. Something so pure. Something so essentially Kara, that Lena can’t help but fall all over again.

It doesn’t take long for Kara to clear out the box but while Lena would have expected a relieved sigh, an exclamation of happiness or for Kara to ask for more - like she has seen Kara do so many times - Kara is oddly quiet. The box is dropped to the floor and Lena frowns as Kara doesn’t meet her eyes but falls into herself instead. Kara brings her closer only to hide her face in the hollow of her neck.

Lena’s heart twists painfully when tears drip on her skin. She immediately embraces Kara tight against her.

“I’m sorry. It’s just-” Kara’s voice wobbles and the rest of the sentence disappears in a shaky breath.
The silence that follows tells Lena everything she needs to know. “A bit of normal feels good, doesn’t it?” She kisses Kara’s temple, keeping her lips there as Kara’s rapid breaths warn her of the impending storm begging to be let out.

“It does,” Kara exhales, brushing her trembling lips against her neck once, twice. “Thank you.”

“Anytime,” Lena promises, holding on to Kara as hard as she can. Her eyes fill with tears at feeling Kara’s jaw clench and then relax with a slow, drawn-out breath, only to clench again, harder.

Kara breaks. Lena tightens her grip on Kara’s shoulders as they sag and then tremble uncontrollably. She’s seen the signs of Kara’s own raging storm ever since she woke up from her coma. She saw it swell, rumble and be swallowed back in bursts of anger, in tears she never meant to shed, in the way Kara would cling to her when they slept, afraid of letting go, afraid of facing the storm on her own. It was bound to happen, and Lena tries to keep Kara’s falling pieces together. Weeks of worry and exhaustion finally seep out with tears Kara no longer tries to hide, coming out with harsh breaths and trembling limbs. Her stifled sobs speak of helplessness, anger and frustration. Her strong, steely embrace speaks of vulnerability and doubts she can’t show, especially when humans and aliens alike expected her to make the situation better, to bring peace and hope back in their life as she has done so many times before. Kara has been exhausting herself trying to fix everything. She has been wearing herself thin dealing with The Sanctuary, the concerns of the population of National City, and trying to stop Cadmus. Lena knows Kara’s confusion about her feelings for her hasn’t helped either.

“I’m sorry,” Kara repeats as she shakes uncontrollably. Lena shifts a bit and Kara latches on to her even more firmly. “Don’t let go!”

“I won’t,” Lena promises again. She’ll protect the bright light flickering in her arms from the storm within. She kisses Kara’s temple in reassurance, breathing in her scent, repeating those words over and over again, and waits, however long Kara needs her to, for the storm to end. For Kara to be ready to smile again.

“You said you liked surprises,” Lena jokes once Kara’s breathing has calmed down.

“I do.”

“I made you cry,” Lena says, rubbing the back of Kara’s neck soothingly. Kara sighs contently. Her trembling hands no longer clutch at her back but settle on her waist gently.
“That’s how good your surprise was,” Kara grins. “The best,” she insists.

Lena smiles and cups Kara’s cheeks, massaging the soft, reddened skin with her thumb. “Are you okay?”

“I will be,” Kara nods, kissing the inside of Lena’s wrist, keeping her lips on the soft, pulsing skin. “Is there any chance you also invested in a pizzeria?”

Lena laughs. “I did.”

“Really?”

Lena nods. “It’s an agreement. Any business can apply. Our team assesses the funding necessary to get them back on their feet, and hopefully they can open quickly.”

“You’re amazing.”

“The mayor does love me now,” Lena smiles, drying the last of Kara’s tears. “Did anything happen on your patrol?”

“No. Luke says hi by the way but…” Kara frowns, looking adorably confused. “It’s weird like… Does he get all quiet with you and like stare at you until you feel like you want to confess everything?”

Lena snorts. “Yes. He does that all the time.”

“Well, I told him about us.”

“I’m not surprised. You are like an open book for him.”

“Hey! I can keep secrets! He just caught me off guard.”
“Sure,” Lena laughs.

It’s peaceful in that small bubble of theirs. A reprieve. A breath of air when the world outside seemed to suffocate with fear. They lie down on the couch. Lena smiles as Kara tucks herself under her chin and falls asleep, utterly exhausted. In the silence that follows the clock on the wall suddenly ticks louder. Lena frowns as she sees there are only a few minutes left before she can be allowed back in the lab. She doesn’t want the hour to end… But Jess did say two hours so maybe-

Lena startles as her batarang rings. Her heart drops. Only Luke and Wayne were able to send her messages via the batarang and Lena knows that nothing good can come at this hour. Kara frowns, sitting up as Lena brings the batarang to her eye for the retinal scan. It lights green and Lena freezes as Wayne’s voice resounds in the break room, sounding gruffer than usual, almost wheezy.

_Help. Twenty minutes. Roof._

“I’ll get the others,” Kara says, putting her boots and cape back on before speeding out of the door.

Lena runs to the lab to explain quietly the situation to Jess and Eli, watching distractedly the engineers and Winn work in the other room. She can’t tell them everything. J’onn has forbid them to talk about what happened to the missing aliens and Lena sighs in relief when they promise to cover for her. No question asked. Lena makes her way to the roof with only a few minutes to spare. The wind freezes her skin and Lena blinks several times, trying to adjust to the sudden darkness. The moon is gone. It no longer shine over National City and Lena remembers Lex telling her as they would wait for the sun to rise that it's always darkest before the dawn.

The door clangs shut behind her.

J’onn nods at her, arms crossed, waiting in the middle of the roof, scanning the sky. Lena eyes the medical supplies at Alex’s feet and joins her and Maggie as they both keep an eye on the surrounding buildings. Kara paces next to them waiting for Wayne to show up.

_Batman is late._

Lena startles as Alex gives her the medical supplies and takes out her firearm. “Something’s wrong,” Alex says.
Maggie tenses, grabbing Lena’s arm and pushes her back toward the door.

“I agree,” J’onn says, crackling red light runs over his skin and he levitates off the ground. “Do you hear anything?”

Kara shakes her head, standing before them protectively. Her cape swaying softly with the wind.

Her back hits the wall. Maggie stands protectively in front of her. The wind blows. It’s silent. Too silent. Lena scans the dark sky, wrapping her hand around the batarang in her pocket, uneasy. They wait. Lena feels her heart pound painfully in her chest until it stops when Kara flies off into the dark sky.

A scream, shrill and inhuman, pierces the night.

Lena recoils in fright. J’onn flies off.

“Kara!” Alex screams.

“Did you see anything?” Maggie asks, gun pointed at the sky where the scream came from.

Lena shakes her head. “What can we do?” She asks as Alex runs back toward them. If there was an attack, they had to defend the building and call for back up. She could-

“We-”

Alex doesn’t get to finish her sentence as the building shakes with the force of an explosion just above them.

“Get down!” Alex screams pushing them to the ground.

The scorching air hits her skin and Lena looks up to see Kara battling a shadow as it screams and
latches on her back. Kara screams in pain. Alex growls in frustration, trying to line up a shot but it's no use. Visibility is at a minimum and the fight is too erratic. J'onn appears and rips the crazed shadow from Kara’s back. Kara falters, swaying unsteadily.

Several nets are thrown toward the shadow. Lena looks to the left and sees Batman, looking injured, barely hanging on form the side of a building.

The shadow screams stuck to the side of another building. Its hands sink in the tower, twisting the metal framework until thorns sprout out of its skin, shredding the nets.

Kara punches the shadow away when it leaps at them.

An explosion rings out, much closer, too close, and Lena throws her arms over her head before she is thrown against the wall by the blast. The world suddenly goes silent until Lena hears Maggie groan next to her, the sound distorted and drawn-out. Fire rains from the sky. The heat is unbearable. Lena screams as J’onn falls from the sky and crashes on the roof. Alex sprints toward him and drags him back toward them as he trembles, parts of his suit still burning from the blast.

“Take care of him!” Alex orders, venturing back out.

“J’onn, are you okay?” Lena asks, trying to snuff out the flames with her hands.

J’onn nods. “It’s the fire. I-”

The same scream, shrill and inhuman pierces the night until it stops and everything goes silent again. A body crashes on the roof next to them, unmoving. An alien. A woman with thorns all over her body. Her arms and legs angled unnaturally, a batarang lodged deep inside her neck. Maggie inches closer toward the body, gun pointed at her.

Kara lands on the roof unsteadily with Batman in her arms. “Alex!” Kara shouts, crumpling to her knees.

Alex runs toward them and Lena follows suit, bringing the medical supplies with her. Batman groans as he is laid down on the ground. She gasps, seeing several thorns lodged deep inside his chest. Kara winces next to him, holding her shoulder, blood seeping out between her fingers.
Agents flood the roof.

“Secure the perimeter,” J’onn shouts. “Call the medics!”

“What happened?” Lena hears Alex say as she kneels next to Batman assessing his injury.

“I don’t know. It happened so fast and—” Kara winces as a medic examines her shoulder.

“We have to get him down to Medical.”

“No!” Batman growls, pushing Alex off of him.

Alex growls back. “Hold him still!” Several agents run toward them, trying to hold Batman to the ground but it’s no use. Even injured, he pushes them away easily. Lena tries to help, pinning his shoulders to the ground with the help of a medic as Kara immobilizes his legs. “Keep him still, the thorns might kill him if he moves too much,” Alex shouts.

“It’s not the time to be stubborn!” Lena grits through her teeth, her arms shaking under the effort, her hands becoming red as his blood soaks his suit.

Wayne opens his eyes, focusing on her. Lena startles as he suddenly grabs her by her sweater and brings her close to him. “Don’t remove my mask. The defenses… will kill you.” He presses a flash drive in her hand. “I found them. Lex, he- he’s buil-!” Wayne coughs up blood. Lena feels some of it splatters against her cheek.

“You saw him?”

She doesn’t get her answer. His grip loosens and Lena stares at him, rendered mute, with blood all over her hands as his eyes flutter shut.
There are a lot of things Lena can’t control.

The flickering lights above her head do nothing to alleviate the headache she feels pulsing in her head, nor does the silence and the heat in the abandoned sub-level they had been forced to hide in ever since General Lane strolled in the DEO an hour ago. If General Lane got wind of what they were trying to do, J’onn would surely be demoted from his position and the force field repurposed. The floor is silent; her engineers even more so as some take advantage of the forced waiting period to catch up on sleep on the few chairs they’ve found while others just slump against the walls. Lena sneezes, frightening everyone, as the dust tickles her nose. She apologizes as the silence seeps back around them. Eli and Jess managed to avoid suspicion and had been giving her updates on the situation upstairs every few minutes. She glances at Eli’s phone, its screen dark and quiet and Lena waits…

The flash drive Wayne gave her led the DEO straight to one of Lex’s lab. A lab she had condemned as soon as she took control of Luthor Corp. A lab she knew all too well only because it was what had caused the rift between them way before he waged a war against Superman.

Lena remembers Lex telling her about this theory of his. About select members of the human race having a biological variant he called a “metagene”. A gene lying dormant until an instant of extraordinary physical and emotional stress activates it. He had wanted her to be a part of the project. Study her dreams, unlock them and Lena had refused. She had had enough of his talks on reincarnation. Ironically, that was where Cadmus had been hiding and experimenting on aliens until they went berserk. But the lab had been emptied out by the time the DEO barged in and no data was found nor leads to where they might have fled. They only found loose ends Cadmus wanted to get rid of. Eleven bodies locked in cages. Aliens who didn’t survive the experiment. Out of the seventeen missing aliens, three were missing, thirteen were dead and one was still gravely injured. But aliens were not all they discovered in Lex’s lab. Jeremiah Danvers was found screaming and raging in a cage, turned rabid by the same chemical used on the missing aliens. She’s let the DEO storm her brother’s lab while she focused back on the things she could control and the force field was ready. The tests had been positive and all they needed to do now was to go to The Sanctuary and install it.

It didn’t come as a surprise, halfway through testing the generators, when Batman went missing just after his surgery or when the autopsy of the brevakk who had attacked them confirmed the presence of kryptonite in her system. While the two aliens at the port did have small amounts of kryptonite with them, the brevakk didn’t, and whatever chemical Cadmus engineered to brainwash her had been enough for her to pierce Kara’s shoulder with one of her thorns.

Lena closes her eyes, rubbing at her temples, unable to forget the look of utter devastation in Kara’s eyes as she carried the lifeless woman back into the DEO. There are a lot of things she can’t control and Lena stares at her hands, clenched tight over her lap as the feel of Wayne’s blood on her hands just won’t leave. Even when she’s scrubbed her hands clean several times since the attack. The smell of it still fills her nose.
Lena’s fingers tremble as the wait stretches.

She breathes deeply through her nose and tries to think. She tries to understand Cadmus’ end goal. The experiments to turn aliens into killing machines seemed too risky, too time consuming, and the results too unpredictable for it to be their main plan. They might have diverted the government’s attention with the power outage but they would have known that the DEO and the Supers would go after them and close in on them eventually when the aliens began to protect themselves. Cadmus would have been forced to take more risks to abduct them at the risk of exposing themselves… It didn’t make sense. Unless they intended to spread whatever chemical they’d developed in the air and infect all aliens like they tried to do with the Medusa virus… But that would be too unpredictable to be viable. Jeremiah Danvers was the living proof. The chemical affected humans too.

Unless abducting aliens had been a diversion too… Lena clenches her jaw as tears of rage fill her eyes. Lex had something else up his sleeve… She startles as Eli’s phone buzzes next to her and smiles as she reads the message.

“General Lane is gone,” Lena announces to everyone’s relief. “Prepare to move out the generators,” she orders as her engineers file out of the room.

The elevator opens and Kara steps out, making a beeline toward her.

“How are Eliza and Alex?” Lena asks, noticing the sudden drop in her shoulders, the frown and the worry overtaking her features.

“Not great but they’ll find a cure,” Kara says, guiding her toward the elevator with a hand on the small of her back. The last of her engineers step into the elevator and they wait for the next one. “President Marsden took our side but General Lane won’t let it go that easily. Everyone heard the explosions. I need to go to the Plaza. Miss Grant asked Supergirl to make some sort of announcement. Make sure no one panics.”

“That’s probably best. How’s your shoulder?”

“It’s fine. Nothing the sunbed couldn’t fix.”

“And you?”
Kara’s hand trembles at her back. “I’m fine,” she croaks.

They step in the elevator once it opens. Lena takes Kara into her arms.

“We’ll stop them,” she promises, holding Kara tight against her.

“I know,” Kara nods against her shoulder, heaving out a breath. “The Sanctuary isn’t expecting us for another three hours. I’ll join you just after the announcement. Hopefully it won’t take too long.”

Lena nods, squeezing Kara one last time in her arms as the doors of the elevator opens on the lab’s floor. “See you there,” Lena smiles, stepping out. Kara’s hand closes in on her wrist and Lena turns around, looking back at Kara as she stops the doors from closing.

“You know it’s not your fault, right? You are not your family.” Lena exhales shakily as Kara squeezes her wrist. “Try not to make anything explode before I come back,” Kara adds with a smile, making Lena laugh. Kara lets go of her wrist and Lena watches the elevator close.

The clock ticks. It’s a race against time and Lena makes the last of the preparations until they are finally ready to move out. Winn’s lab is empty. Jess left to manage L-Corp and her engineers all went to check their hazmat suits while Eli left for the bullpen, ready to supervise the procedure on the big screens. They still had an hour left before they needed to head out and Lena uses that time to take a deep breath and indulge in a bit of quiet.

The lights flicker above her. Lena frowns as the buzzing gets louder and louder. Until it stops and Lena staggers back as Lex stands in front of her.

Her heart drops. Her fingers tremble. She can’t breathe.

“Hello Lena.”

Air rushes back into her lungs and hate fills her veins. Lena snarls and grabs his neck in rage only to falter again when her hands closes around cold, fluid skin, like a stream of water, very much like Kara when she came from the future. Lena recoils, taking a few steps back, bumping against a table.
Lex smiles.

“Surprised?”

Lena clenches her jaw and glares at him.

She hates surprises.

Chapter End Notes

Special thanks to listen_to for providing me with that line: "Not when her ghost beamed at her or Kara Danvers adjusted her glasses with a shy smile, nor when Supergirl flashed her a grin."

The metagene thing is taken from Everyman Project Lex does in 52 comics. But I used it to fit my story so it won't play any part it did like in the comics.

I hope you enjoyed this chapter. Thank you for reading. Take care!
Hi, guys! Thank you all for the support! This story is part of a serie and this chapter will reference to Do not go gentle into that good night. You don't have to read the previous story to understand the chapter but you'll miss out on how the two stories connect and the whole idea of reincarnation I have been working on... Again, let's all use our suspension of disbelief for the science used in this. Huge thanks to Earthling3 for editing this ass long chapter. listen_to and Seriouslyficent for the continuous support. Enjoy!

WARNING : Angst and... Lex being manipulative (just tread carefully)

Time doesn’t make sense.

It’s dizzying. It’s mad.

There’s an uncomfortable heat burning just under her collar. A cold kind of sweat running down her back. The lab is silent, so silent, except for the pounding of her heart. Lena can’t move. She can’t blink, or breathe, or stop her fingers from trembling.

Lex observes her quietly.

She crosses her arms over her chest, straightens her back, and glares harder. She can’t be weak. She can’t be afraid. She can’t be the little girl that used to hide in his shadow when the world felt too big, too scary, too overwhelming for her to handle. Her eyes sting with unshed tears. She grips at her biceps tightly and squeezes hard until her fingertips mark her skin. She tries to shake herself out of this stupor she has fallen into, out of this haze enshrouding her mind, this uneasy feeling that was making it hard for her to breathe.

Lex steps toward her with a fluid-like motion. His feet skim across the ground, silent and eerie… Unnatural. It makes her recoil instinctively. The desk shakes behind her with a groaning sound. Pens tumble out from their holder. She hears them roll on the desk and rain down the floor. He pauses a few feet away from her and stares at her with twinkling eyes.
“You’re afraid of me.”

“I’m not!” Lena grits out.

He smiles with that same indulgent smile and smugness she’d seen on his face every time he caught her in a lie. He steps closer. Lena yanks the chair out from under the desk. Its legs screech in protest against the floor before she throws it at him. The chair flies through Lex. It crashes into a table, knocks a computer to the ground, and finally tumbles down on the concrete floor. The sound resonates like a gunshot, loud and sudden, accentuated by the silence, Lena’s harsh breaths, and Lex’s surprised look.

“You’re angry,” he states, rubbing at his chest but immediately stops when his hand passes through his body. His right eye twitches in annoyance before he looks back at her utterly composed. “You’ve always had a terrible temper. Always so angry,” he says gliding closer. “So terrified of falling asleep. You’d beg me not to open my door so that your nanny wouldn’t come get you. I’d find you hiding under my bed—”

“Stop,” Lena whispers as he stands before her. Too close. Lena shudders as he tilts his head, eyes incensed, calling forth memories with that calm, enchanting voice of his, spinning images inside her mind she’d rather forget, awakening old worries and fears from deep inside her heart. She can feel herself slip away, dragged against her will back into that pool of memories. Everything gets blurry and muffled as if she was underwater; her limbs become sluggish and heavy…

She had forgotten how dark it was under his bed. She had forgotten the ease and the comfort she’d find every time she’d slip under it and hide for hours. She forgot how safe and calm she felt as Lex would sit on the ground and talk to her about anything, filling up the silence with the sound of his voice, chasing away the nightmares with his presence…

“Us against the world we used to say…”

Lena chokes on a sob as the memory shatters with the malevolence she reads in his eyes, that same kind of obsessed curiosity that pushed him to go after Superman, pushed him to ask more and more about her dreams and turned him into the madman the world knew him as.

“You used to sleepwalk a lot. Do you remember?” Lena gasps for breath as he smiles at her knowingly. “I’d hear you walk past my door every night. I’d follow you. Make sure you didn’t hurt yourself—”
I won’t let you hurt yourself.

Lena inhales abruptly as Luke’s voice echoes in her mind. Lena holds on to the memory as hard as she can, picturing Luke’s awful red carpet in his office, his books, and his dusty shelves… She closes her eyes tight as Lex goes on and on, talking of nightmares she’d had as a child, nightmares she had later learned to deal with after hours of silence, screams and tears that Luke had held her through. Lena holds on to the memory of Luke’s voice telling her to breathe, not to be afraid, and to believe in herself.

“Shut up!” Lena screams and pushes Lex away from her. Her hands make contact with his chest and he stumbles a few steps back. Lena breathes harshly and stares as he touches the spot where she made contact. His hand passes through his chest again. Anger flashes in his eyes.

She has to…

She has to call for…

“Help,” Lena croaks, staggering away from the desk, trembling and sweating. Her fingers won’t stop shaking and the lab is blurry… The floor tilts sideways and Lena crashes against another desk as she tries to make her way out, to get away… get away…

She chances a look over her shoulder. Lex is following her out of the main lab, passing through the glass door, examining his body with a perplexed look as it does so… Lena runs away but Lex is close on her heels, only a few steps behind, following her like a shadow. The corridor is empty. She sees the elevator not too far away… She has to get out. Her hand grips the doorknob desperately while Lex hovers behind her.

She can’t run away…

Tears of rage slide down her face. Lena presses her forehead against the cool glass, clenching her jaw so tight and so quickly the hot, wet taste of iron fills her mouth, gushing out from the inside of her cheek as the tender skin breaks under her teeth.

He’ll follow her wherever she goes.
I can’t… I tried… But every time I tried to leave I’d find myself back here… with you.

That’s what Kara had told her back in Metropolis when Lena had asked her to leave. Kara had been tethered to her, disappearing from her sight a few times but always forced to remain at her sides somehow. Lena doesn’t understand what is going on. She presses her forehead harder against the cool glass, urging herself to keep calm and focus… The concept of time is as complicated as it is mysterious, and all the theories she read to make sense of it give her little comfort even when being confronted for the second time by something so extraordinary, so frightening, and so overwhelming.

Her mind jumpstarts painfully as she tries to understand.

Has Lex come from the future like Kara did? She can’t forget the sensation of his cold, fluid-like skin in between her fingers. A sensation she’d first associated with Kara. Does it mean he’ll build a time machine in the future? Was Lex – the one from her timeline - making one now? But how? Her mind fusses with questions and Lena tries to focus back on what she knows, on the present, on this incorporeal Lex standing behind her. Unlike Kara, he’d retained all of his memories. But unlike Kara, it seemed like he couldn’t touch objects or physically interact with anything. He was surprised when the chair went through him. He was angry when he realized his hand went through his chest. Lex was trying to figure out the limitations of what he could do and he wasn’t happy with the little control he had. She was his only link to the world, his only way to get answers, and he knew it.

Lena breathes deeply and steps away from the door.

That’s why he’s been taunting her relentlessly. He knew it would make her run away. He was forcing her to leave the lab. He’d always get awfully chatty when they’d play chess. He would talk in circles, break the silence with mindless chatter and observations, pleasant conversations Lena always participated in because they seemed like nothing, only meant to pass the time while they played. Until she realized Lex was doing it to destabilize her, trying to make her lose focus, and push her to make a mistake.

That had always been his strategy.

Lena doesn’t know what his end goal is or what answers he is looking for but she’ll be damned if she gives in to his intimidation tactics without a fight.

“You remember that night in father’s office?” Lex asks.
She clenches her right hand instinctively and turns back toward him. Lex scowls as she walks right past him and makes a quick inventory of the room. She eyes the prototype of the force field, sitting on a table next to Eli’s desk and the set of sensors just next to it. It was the first generator Luthor Corp built. They had modified it and tested on it before building their own. A plan quickly forms inside her mind. She doesn’t know if it’ll work. The prototype was only a tenth of the power and not as stable as their actual force field, but it had worked the last time they had tested it. It could probably deploy around the room without a hitch, but there were a lot more variables to take into account now that she wasn’t in the safety of a testing lab. The impulse will probably short-circuit all the electronics dispersed around the room. It might disrupt the flow of energy and the force field might deal her a consequential electrical charge in the process… or the generator might explode like it did at The Sanctuary… The chance of failure was high, but she can’t take the risk of having Lex run free if it turns out he is not linked to her, and if she can’t run away, she’ll trap him with her...

“You were quiet,” Lex continues, “like a little mouse. I didn’t hear you walk past my door that night but I knew something was wrong. The door to father’s study was open,” he whispers, giving life to the nightmare that had changed everything. They had never talked about it. They never talked of what had happened that night. She only remembers the pain in her right hand, the blood, and Lex looking at her with this shocked expression on his face, completely frozen. “You had pushed a chair against the wall and you were about to grab the sword on display. I tried to stop you but you pushed me away. You grabbed it by the blade… There was blood everywhere but it didn’t faze you and then you pointed it at me.”

Lena faces Lex again, trying hard not to flinch.

“You tried to kill me that night.”

“Is that why you want me dead?” Her voice trembles and she backs away from him, inching closer and closer toward the generator. “You want revenge for something I had no control over?”

He waves away her questions and raises an eyebrow at her, challenging her to dig deeper. To ask something else. Something more meaningful. Something Lena has always refused to do. Something Lex has always resented her for.

“Do you know what you told me that night?”

Lena shakes her head. She doesn’t want to know but Lex loses himself in memories and Lena bumps against the edge of Eli’s desk.

“There’s more to this world than what you see,” he recalls fondly. Lena grabs the sensors discreetly
and backs away from him as he follows her, gaze far away, distracted, and carried away. “That’s what you said to me. Imagine my surprise! My sweet little sister telling me to look beyond the limitations of my own perception. There was so much conviction and so much pain in your voice... As if,” he pauses, seemingly searching for words to describe that night that very much feels like the shift that had changed their lives. “As if you were merely a vessel for someone else, for an experience you had yet to have... How could I not listen to you? How could I not follow your advice?”

“You’re not making sense...”

Lex chuckles, locking gaze with her. “You were right, of course. Human’s perception is flawed. We are weak, fragile and pathetic. We idolize gods who hide among us. Aliens with a human face thinking they are above the human race. But you are special Lena. You see things none of us can see if only you had the courage to embrace it...”

“What is that why you wanted me to work in that lab of yours?” Lena asks quickly as a sensor clatters to the floor. Lex narrows his eyes at her. She keeps on walking away from him, placing the last of the sensors to complete the circle. “You wanted to make me a lab rat like the people you abducted!” she accuses him, trying to get his attention back on her. But Lex doesn’t answer her. His brows furrow and his eyes focus on the spot where she dropped the last sensor.

LEX SCRAMBLES AFTER HER. SHE RUNS, BYPASSING CHAIRS AND DESKS, AND GRUNTS IN SURPRISE WHEN COLD ENERGY PIERCES THROUGH HER ARM AS LEX TRIES TO STOP HER AND FAILS. HE SNARLS, POWERLESS, AS SHE ACTIVATES THE FORCE FIELD.

A red blur. Glass shatters. Lena is thrown backward as shards of glass fly across the room. She closes her eyes and protects her head but the impact never comes and Lena exhales in confusion as warm arms wrap around her protectively. A tingle runs down her spine. A kind of static electricity prickles at her skin and energy pulses out of the generator. The air crackles. The lights get brighter and brighter until she hears the light bulbs above her explode. Lena watches the force field deploys around the room, creating sparks in some of Winn’s computers and machinery. A few bits of his hardware catch on fire and the smell of burning plastic begins to permeate the air. Wisps of smoke surge to the ceiling, merging with the shimmering dome above until she feels blond hair tickle the side of her face, a hand press her head back into the safety of a warm shoulder, and in a breath Kara freezes the electronics that had started burning.
“What did I say about explosions Lena?” Kara groans, rolling her shoulders. “Why do I feel like I’ve been zapped?”

Lena gasps, taking hold of Kara’s face with trembling fingers. “How- How come you’re here?”

“I was at the Plaza when I heard your heartbeat going crazy,” Kara tells her with wide blue eyes scanning her face worriedly. “You screamed and then I heard you call for help so I rushed here… Who were you talking to?”

Lena tries to speak a few times, but she’s voiceless as pure relief submerges her. She latches onto Kara. Her trembling arms wind around Kara’s neck, and Lena breathes deeply, choking a few times, holding on to that sense of safety and warmth she always finds in Kara’s embrace.

Kara traces slow, calming circles on her back. “Lena, are you okay? What’s going on?” She asks against her ear. Lena nods, taking a deep breath to tell Kara everything, and hopes she will believe her.

“Oh, Kara?”

Lena startles, looking past Kara to see Alex, J’onn and Winn standing outside of the force field with broken glass all around them, looking completely bewildered.

“Kara, I think you should turn around,” Alex urges her with an edge of panic in her voice. To Lena’s utter surprise Alex is not looking at them. She’s looking directly at Lex. The particles above him react weirdly and threads of lights crawl all over his skin, crackling slightly before they merge back with the force field around them.

“What the hell is that?” Kara says.

“You can see him?” Lena asks tentatively. “You can really see him?”
Lex moves to the edge of the barrier and thrusts his arm into the force field. Winn screams as Lex tries to reach for him only to stagger back as his arm gets sucked into the flow of energy.

Winn’s face whitens in seconds and he scrambles behind J’onn. “That- that white, swirly, wispy thing? Yeah, I think we all see it,” Winn squeaks. They don’t really see him, Lena realizes, only the reaction he creates while standing inside the force field.

“What is this?” J’onn muses, walking closer to the barrier. He steps on broken glass, ignoring the utter chaos that has wrecked Winn’s office, and reaches his hand out only to be stopped by the force field. He tries again. His form shimmers and his hand seems to bend the barrier. Static crackles at the point of contact. It creates ripples all around the dome as it suddenly solidifies and becomes visible for a few short seconds. J’onn hisses in pain when it zaps his arm and retreats.

“Wait… Is that- Is that the force field? Get out of there!” Winn shouts. “Deactivate it, Lena! You’re trapped inside with that- that thing!”

Kara makes her move, too fast for Lena to do anything about it, and is suddenly standing behind Lex. He turns toward Kara, his eyes linger on the symbol on her chest and Lena sees his eyes darkening with anger.

“No! Kara!” Alex screams, pounding her fists on the force field. “Step back!”

“It looks like a body…” Kara muses and thrust her hand straight through Lex’s chest to everyone’s astonishment. Lex’s eye twitches, his jaw clenches and Lena runs toward them as Kara is about to do it again.

“Kara,” Lena screams. “Kara, stop!”

He lunges at Kara before Lena can stop him. Lex tries to grab Kara’s neck but his body passes through her just like the chair and the glass door did. Lex screams in rage, powerless, and paces behind them angrily.

“Whoa! Okay, that- that was weird,” Kara says, patting her body, turning around to stare at the swirly, wispy white kind of body they seem to see but can’t hear.

“Lena?” J’onn looks back at her expectantly. His eyes flash red for a few seconds only to widen with
surprise and looks back at her for confirmation.

“It’s Lex,” Lena confirms. Kara gasps next to her. She hears Winn let out a high-pitched scream of surprise while Alex orders them to get the hell away from him.

But Lena knows better.

Lex looks displeased and sulky, pretty much like the Lex she’s known while growing up, and apart from being able to give her a headache or try to manipulate her, Lena knows he can’t harm them and he knows it too. He can’t interact with the physical world at all and whatever reasons pushed him to travel through time, it looks like it didn’t work like he thought it would. Lex is trapped and she’s just gained the upper hand. Slightly.

“I think he’s from the future,” Lena says as Lex clenches his jaw and glares at her.

***

There’s a clock ticking somewhere. Steady and unperturbed by the chaos reigning in Winn’s lab. It goes on, uncaring and indifferent to the DEO’s efforts to contain the situation at hand. The whole floor is on lockdown. Agents had blocked every exit as soon as J’onn had given the order. Lena doesn’t know if it’s meant to keep people from getting in or to stop anything from getting out…

J’onn had asked permission to settle a small connection inside her mind in order to see what she saw. Kara had protested vehemently. The stiffness in her voice had let Lena know that Kara’s opposition had nothing to do with her being embarrassed at J’onn finding out what they nearly did on the roof. It felt like the anger had come from deeper and Lena had stared in confusion as a battle of will had broken out between the two of them. In spite of Kara’s refusal, Lena had agreed but interrogating Lex had been useless. J’onn had asked about his plan, about why he was here, and what he was trying to accomplish. Alex had asked about what he did to Jeremiah and if there was a cure but Lex had remained completely mute, content to observe with a sick sense of joy in his eyes at the chaos he was creating. Alex had been silent ever since, frustrated and livid, her gaze fixed on him.

What Lena hadn’t expected was the headache the mind intrusion would cause her and so J’onn had given her a reprieve, cutting the connection off so that she could rest.

They were now at a standstill.
Lena might have gained the upper hand but she knows the game Lex is playing is far from being over. It was just a reprieve. A pause for him to get his bearings, analyze the situation and attack harder. The only thing giving her comfort was that she knew she was right about Lex coming from the future. The slight surprise in his eyes, immediately covered by a cold mix of anger and nonchalance, had been enough to confirm it to her. He hadn’t expected her to know. He hadn’t expected her to figure it out so easily. He hadn’t known Kara had done the same to her already… Lena rubs at her temples in desperation. She needs to figure out how far into the future he’s from. Why appear to her now? Was it a choice of his? The vague thought of her being a magnet for stranded time-travelers quickly crosses her mind before she dismisses it. What bothers her most is how Lex could have had the time to cook up a time machine after escaping prison and still being on the run… Dread fills her. Had Alana found out about her time machine? Did she somehow give him the plan while he was still in prison? Jess had been right. She should have never made a time machine because if Lex stole it from her…

When Kara had appeared Luke had told her that the only way to make her leave was to understand why she was here in the first place. It had worked. Kind of. Kara had appeared a week before she was supposed to board the Venture and had saved her from a certain death. It was still hard to gauge the full extent of the change it had caused, but the effects had created ripples and events she had been widely unprepared for despite Kara’s warning. Knowing about the future had felt like watching the world blur past her from the window of a speeding car about to crash, and no matter how hard she had tried to prevent it, it had felt inevitable. Lena knows she needs to tread carefully. Whatever reasons Lex was here for couldn’t possibly be to save her like Kara did and any changes she’ll make will have a direct consequence to the future, making it harder for her to understand what happened in Lex’s timeline, why he was here, or what he was trying to do… It couldn’t be a coincidence that Lex appeared just before she had to leave for The Sanctuary. It couldn’t be…

“Wait!” Lena hears Winn say, coming out of his stupor. “We’re just going to accept that this is Lex Luthor and he came from the future? That’s just crazy!”

Her body stiffens at the remark. “Crazy? Kara can fly and shoot out laser from her eyes,” Lena fires rapidly. “And J’onn can read minds. How is Lex coming from the future any crazier than this?”

“I know. I know…” Winn backpedals. “It’s just- I know Kar-”

“No you don’t!” Lena interrupts curtly. Lex moves from his spot at the far back to come closer toward them. Lena berates herself for giving up so much information in anger. Lex can’t know Kara’s future self has come to visit her already. She can’t lose that advantage…

He observes them with a gleam in his eyes, that same spark of curiosity and noisiness that made it so hard to lie to him. “Oh, please don’t mind me. This is getting interesting,” he drawls, motioning her to continue.
“What is he saying?” Kara whispers.

“He’s just being a jerk. Us arguing entertains him,” Lena says, feeling Kara’s warmth at her side and a calming hand settle at the small of her back.

“What do we do?” Alex asks. “We can’t have both of you stuck in there indefinitely.”

Lena sighs. Alex is right but playing mind games with Lex was hardly anything new for her... Sometimes bait was needed to lure the prey out. “I can grab him,” Lena suggests, keeping an eye on Lex. “I can stop him from leaving. I’ll release Kara from the force field, and as soon as she leaves I’ll put it back on.” Kara begins to protest but Lena cuts her off with a shake of her head. “You don’t need me to go to The Sanctuary. Winn can easily supervise everything. I’ll remain here until we figure this out…”

Lex tenses besides her. She looks to J’onn asking silently to play along.

“We’ll do that,” He nods imperceptibly at her. “Kara, you will-”

“He’ll never make it,” Lex interrupts to Lena’s satisfaction but it quickly morphs into horror as Lex looks straight to Winn. “He’ll die before he even reaches The Sanctuary. I saw you drag his broken body out of the car you were in.”

Her heart clenches painfully. She doesn’t know if Lex is telling the truth. She glances at Winn who looks back at her in confusion.

“What? What did he say?”

J’onn reads her mind. His features contort with anger and grief. His eyes glow bright red and Lena startles as he locks her in place, reestablishing the connection that allows him to see Lex through her eyes. Lena winces at the sudden intrusion. A burn spreads throughout her brain. It extends down to her neck and smothers her throat. She tries to breathe. “Tell us what happened!” J’onn growls. “What are you after?” She tries to move but all she hears is J’onn’s growling piercing her mind.

The connection breaks. Her knees buckle under her.
“I’ve got you.” Lena hears Kara say close to her ear. It feels like her head has been split in two and she gulps for air, holding on to Kara, soaking in the comfort of her embrace. It takes her a moment to shake out the dizziness, but when she does, she is surprised to see the outside world completely blurred out. The crackling sound ringing in her ears wasn’t coming from her head but from Lex who was creating sparks and ripples all around the force field by letting it feed from his body.

“He cut out the connection,” Kara tells her.

Lex grimaces in pain. His arms get sucked into the barrier in white crackling lights. Lena stares in confusion as he staggers away from the force field, panting harshly, and glitches. He flickers in and out of existence like Kara had done before, and reappears with a wistful look on his face. He wasn’t protecting her, Lena tells herself. His quick glance toward her couldn’t be concern for her well-being. It wouldn’t make sense. He’s tried to kill her several times. He’s only done it because he needs her. He couldn’t be the brother that used to protect her. Could he?

“Are you okay?” Kara asks, cupping her cheeks. “J’onn won’t do it anymore. I’ll make sure of it.”

“It’s okay. I just need a minute,” Lena says, watching Lex curiously from behind Kara’s shoulder. He clutches at his chest only for his hand to disappear through it. He walks out of sight somewhere behind her and Lena focuses back on Kara who looks at her worriedly. “I gave him my permission. I just wasn’t prepared for it.”

“Lena…” J’onn says apologetically.

Kara turns around and glares at him. The animosity between them cranks up a notch and Lena tries to keep the peace by taking Kara’s hand in hers and holds it tight.

“It’s okay,” Lena says, slouching in a nearby chair. “Just- Just give me a heads up next time.”

He nods and turns to Winn. “You’ll take the lead on the project. Go brief your team, make sure everything is ready, and wait for further instructions. And remember, not a word about this, Agent Schott.” Winn frowns, looking a bit taken aback by J’onn’s abrupt dismissal. He glances back at Lena hesitantly. She smiles and wishes him luck. Alex startles as J’onn makes eyes contact with her. Her body stiffens and her brows scrunch in concentration as he relays the information to her. Alex nods stiffly and looks at her.
“What’s going on?” Kara frowns, feeling left out of the loop. She lets go of Lena’s hand and edges closer to the force field, seeking answers from her sister. Alex closes her eyes briefly and relates the warning Lex has given them.

Lena rubs at her temples. She doesn’t know if it was a scare tactic on Lex’s part or if it was the truth. There’s still a lot to consider. Lex protecting her is messing up with her mind and-

“And you let Winn go?” Kara asks incredulously. “He has no idea what’s waiting for him! We have to delay the convoy-”

“We don’t know if Lex is telling the truth,” J’onn retorts. “They are supposed to leave in thirty minutes, Kara. The Sanctuary will be waiting for them and if they don’t show up-”

“Then we tell them the truth! We tell them about the missing aliens and the attack!”

Alex leans as close to the force field as she can. Kara focuses back on her sister. “We can’t,” Alex says. “It will give them reason to create the militia and-”

“I’m thinking that it’s not such a bad idea right now,” Kara huffs.

Alex gives her a stern look. “General Lane will ask permission to strike if they do.”

Kara stiffens. Barely breathing, barely moving. Lena can just see the tension rolls off of Kara’s shoulders from where she sits. Kara juts her chin and stares at J’onn defiantly. “I told Miss Grant to warn the population of an impending attack.”

“We’ve already talked about this!” J’onn grits through his teeth. “We can’t create unnecessary panic.”

“It’s not unnecessary panic if civilians are legitimately in danger,” Kara retorts. She looks to Alex for support but Alex remains impassive. Unreadable. Kara muffles a scream. “You saw what happened to Batman! To Jeremiah! You saw what they turned this woman into. She was raging. Completely mad. We were three on her and we’ve barely stopped her. Don’t you think that at this point hiding information will only make it worse?”
“This will have consequences,” J’onn reprimands her with a shake of his head. “I’ve been among humans for 300 years. They’ve never been ready for anyone who was different from them.”

“Well, they already know we’re here,” Kara scoffs. She challenges him to say something, change his mind, but he stands his ground and Kara sighs, sounding more disappointed than angry. “This situation is our doing! We’ve been cultivating this fear among aliens and humans alike. Aliens feared us because they thought we were out to hunt them! We’ve put civilians in danger when we failed to contain the threat and lied to them! I worked in the media and I saw how false information and rumor can spread like wildfire. I saw the theories on the internet. The fear that kept spreading because we refused to give them answers. This situation is as much our doing as it is Cadmus’! We can’t do this on our own anymore! We need to ask for help. NCPD needs to know what they are up against. They’ll have no way of defending the city if they don’t even know what to look for!”

J’onn crosses his arms over his chest. “It’s not as easy as you make it out to be,” he says with a deep frown on his face.

“Who are we protecting, J’onn?” Kara counters. “The people or the lies we hide behind?”

His experience clashes with Kara’s optimism but Kara stands her ground. Silence falls over the lab. J’onn scowls. A clock ticks somewhere. Lena scrambles out of her chair when Lex edges closer. She puts herself in between him and Kara as a precaution. Kara moves back toward her protectively.

“What does he want?” Kara grumbles, watching Lex warily.

“Let’s make a deal.”

Lena tenses. “What kind of deal?”

“Tell them I’ll give them Lillian’s location but,” his eyes linger on the arm Kara wraps around her waist, “you’ll have to leave for The Sanctuary as you were supposed to. I don’t care about The Sanctuary or the experiments mother conducted, and my former self is supposed to attack the convoy very, very soon. You’ll let yourself be captured. Make sure that the Girl of Steel doesn’t intervene this time...” Lex says, looking at Kara. “You and I are meant for greater things, Lena.”

Lena curses quietly. Objectively, it wasn’t that bad of a deal. Stopping her mother was a sure way to de-escalate the conflict. The threat of the three missing aliens wouldn’t hang so heavily over National City anymore... Lena tries to think of what Batman tried to tell her about Lex before he lost
consciousness but she can’t remember and it frustrates her to no end.

“What does he want?” Kara asks again.

She gulps, feeling Kara’s arm stiffen around her. Lena’s fingers tremble and she leans back into Kara, taking Kara’s hand in hers to keep her close. Relief washes over her when Kara tightens her arm around her wordlessly.

“What happens if I refuse?”

Kara’s hand tenses. Lena holds on tighter.

“Well, you’ll have to wait and see then. But we’ve read too much about time travel and its implications not to be aware of the consequences.”

Lena does know the consequences. They can’t deal with The Sanctuary, General Lane, Lex and Lillian at the same time. Something has to give… “What do you need me for?” Lena surrenders.

“Wait,” Kara protests. She tugs on her hand, trying to break free but Lena keeps Kara’s arm firmly around her. She knows that Kara now has a pretty clear idea of what Lex wants. But Lena is selfish. She keeps Kara’s comfort and warmth around her just for a little longer until she has to let go. A clock ticks somewhere. Unstoppable. And if she was going to leave like she was supposed to, Lena fears she might already be running late.

“Do we have a deal?” Lex looks at her and waits.

Lena nods.

“Wait! No!” Kara exclaims and turns her away from Lex. “No deal! You’re not leaving with him.”

“Kara, he’ll give you Lillian’s location.” Kara’s breathe hitches. She glances at Alex before focusing back on her, completely torn. Lena smiles reassuringly. “She’s the one who engineered the drug,” Lena continues, hoping Kara will understand that she’s not giving up. She knows her brother. She knows how to outsmart him. It’s like playing a game of chess, and Lena knows that in order to win,
she has to let him think he won. “Lex, the one from our timeline, is going to attack the convoy for The Sanctuary. He isn’t after the force field. His goal is to capture me, and I think you prevented it in his timeline.”

“Then I’ll stop him again!”

Lena shakes her head. “You can’t interfere, Kara.”

Kara’s arms slacken around her waist. Lena bites her lip, trying hard not to let it get to her. Kara frowns, steps back and begins to pace angrily away from her. It makes her want to rethink everything. It makes her want to hide in the safety of Kara’s arms and stay there, but she can’t… She can’t. Lena makes eyes contact with J’onn and prepares herself for the mind intrusion.

“Are you sure about this?”

Lena breathes deeply. She isn’t sure about anything but it’s the only way and so she nods. “We’re already spread thin, J’onn. Stopping Lex from capturing me would only be a short term solution. We’d still have no clue as to where Lillian is or what she is planning. Stopping Cadmus has to be our priority.”

J’onn turns toward Alex and relays everything to her.

“Will you stop with the mind reading?” Kara growls. “I’m right here! I’d like to know what’s going on.”

“I’d very much like to know too,” Lex pipes up.

Lena looks back to Kara apologetically. Kara’s jaw slackens in disbelief.

“Alex suggests that we hide you,” J’onn whispers in her mind. “We could reinforce the convoy for The Sanctuary. Nothing guarantees us that he’s going to tell us where Lillian really is.”

“Really?” Kara scoffs, watching the three of them angrily. “You’re really leaving me out of this?”
Lena closes her eyes and swallows back her tears as Kara screams at them to stop ignoring her. She hears Alex try to calm her down but it doesn’t seem to work. Lena focuses back on J’onn. “I know,” she sighs. “But even if he does lie about where Lillian is hiding we’d still be closer to him than we’ve been since he’s escaped. If Lex is looking for me he won’t hesitate to wreak havoc just to find me,” Lena muses. “I think he told us the truth about not caring about the conflict. He’s been trying to kill me for months, J’onn. There’s must be a reason why he had a change of heart, and I think it has to do with the time machine....”

“Your time machine?”

“I don’t know,” Lena frowns. “We trusted Alana and it’s possible that she got her hands on the plans. I’m sorry…”

“It’s not your fault. If he knows that much about your itinerary for The Sanctuary we might also have spies in the DEO. I’ll have Winn check on whether we still have the plans and all the parts of your machine we took from L-Corp still in safe holding. Are you sure you want to do this, Lena?”

“I know what I’m doing. I’ve been shaping the future ever since I came to National City. The more changes we make the more variables it creates. We can’t reach a point where we lose our advantage on the Lex in our timeline.”

“What do you mean?”

“The Lex in our timeline is not aware of any of this and if his future self has been telling us the truth about the attack then we can use this opportunity to gain the advantage. But I need to keep it as close as possible to Lex’s future-self’s future for the time being so that I can control what I change and how I change it. That’s what I did with Isotope 454. That’s how I prevented the dispersion of the Medusa virus.”

“What about this one?” J’onn motions to Lex who lingers behind an exasperated Kara. Kara tries to bat him away while he taunts her to let the anger out. He shrugs with a smug smile when Lena glares at him.

“He doesn’t know it yet but he’ll start disappearing as soon as I’ll make changes to the timeline. It has already begun,” Lena says, noting the slight shimmer across his body that wasn’t there before.
J’onn turns to Alex who absorbs the information. Alex glances at her from time to time with a deep frown marring her face while J’onn communicates with her. “We could put a tracker on you or one of his operatives during the attack.”

“You can always try,” Lena shrugs, “but I know they’ll check me and Lex is too paranoid not to check his own agents.”

“Lena,” Kara pleads. “Please tell me what’s going on.”

Lena shakes her head. She can’t… She can’t because Lex is too close to Kara, pestering her while still listening in on everything they are saying and observing them quietly. She can’t take the risk… Kara would be an open book for Lex much like she had been for Luke. Tears appear in Kara’s eyes and she turns away from her. Lena looks to the ceiling to keep her tears at bay. She can’t take the risk… Lex has to believe he’s getting what he wants.

“Alex says she’s not agreeing to any of this until we find a way to find you.”

Lena nods. She racks her brain for a solution. A clue. Lex wasn’t far away from National City. He surely had spies around the DEO or The Sanctuary if he knew when she was scheduled to leave for The Sanctuary. He seems confident the DEO won’t find her once his present-self gets to her and if he’s been building a time machine he’d need equipment and power. They would have noticed it if he was pumping the power from the main grid. L-Corp would have noticed them making a dent in the power supply. It had to be an independent power source. “Talk to Eli. Make him look into the L-Corp’s database. My brother had a few labs and hideouts we didn’t manage to get access to. I had them listed. Make him do a cross-reference with Lex’s labs that had an independent power source.” And if Lex had her plans then he also needed Kryptonite… “Look out for Kryptonite radiation. Lex seems confident that Kara won’t find me so it might be one of his underground labs where he used to experiment on Kryptonite. It’ll reduce the possibilities.”

J’onn turns back to Alex. Lena startles when a chair flies across the room, kicked away in anger. It shatters against the force field. The sound ripples inside with a loud thud.

“I may have angered her,” Lex says, fleeing back to Lena.

“Tell him to stay away from me!” Kara fumes, glaring daggers.

“Yes, definitely angry.” Lex chuckles. “I wouldn’t ignore her if I were you.”
Lena groans in aggravation.

“That’s a huge risk. What if you’re wrong?” J’onn asks. Alex stands rigidly next to him, arms crossed over her chest, and looks at her, still not convinced.

“Contact Batman,” Lena touches the batarang inside of her pocket. She doesn’t know if it got damaged by the force field. The smooth and cold disk, as thin as a coin unless activated, could probably escape Lex’s attention. Surely Wayne could find her with it. “Try the Windmill, he’s too far away from Gotham and too injured to have gone far. He might have gone there to rest. Luke would have taken care of his wounds… Or hell, call Superman. I’m sure he would know a way to contact him,” Lena sighs, rubbing her forehead. “Kara is right. We can’t do this on our own.”

Alex tenses as J’onn leans a bit toward her and furrows her brows in concentration as he whispers into her mind. Her jaw clenches for a second only to look back at Lena and gives her a curt nod. “I’ll brief everyone. Be ready to leave shortly,” J’onn says and walks away. Lena trundles back to her chair, sits, and rubs at her temple now that the pressure in her brain has lessened.

“Wait! That’s it? J’onn!” Kara shouts. J’onn doesn’t stop and Kara screams in frustration. Alex walks up to the force field to Kara’s relief. “Tell me what’s going on, Alex. Please.”

“You need to wait.”

Kara’s whole body stiffens. “That’s it?”

“Stopping Cadmus is our priority,” Alex nods calmly, repeating the same words Lena has told J’onn earlier. “It has always been. Just wait Kara,” Alex insists, her eyes darting to Lex’s form.

“But,” Kara protests, confused by Alex’s attitude. “Lex is part of Cadmus!”

“I’m not actually,” Lex chimes in. Lena sighs, exhausted by her brother’s antics.

“And what?” Kara utters quietly. Her voice breaks and Lena shivers as Kara turns to her. “You want me to do nothing?”
Lena nods, urging J’onn to hurry up so that Kara can be let in on the plan. Powerlessness fills Kara’s eyes. She looks to the ground, warped up in silence and it tears at Lena’s heart to see the bottomless pit of sadness and solitude Kara has fallen into, as if she’s been set adrift in the infinity of space. There’s something unreadable appearing in her eyes, a kind of blankness, a haunted look that seems to cast a shadow over her face. Alex tries to bring her back but Kara shakes her head angrily.

“I need to talk to Lena,” she hisses, moving stiffly away to the other end of the force field, swallowed in near darkness as the lights coming from the corridor don’t reach that far back into the room. Lena breathes deeply, glancing at Alex who only nods back at her, reassuring her that she will explain everything to Kara once Lex isn’t able to listen in.

“Did I stir up some trouble?” Lex pipes up and glides next to her.

“Lex,” Lena sighs, “just-” To her surprise, Lex slinks away without much of a fight. He drifts about the room, coughing slightly, and clutches at his chest with a rictus of pain. Lena averts her gaze before he catches her looking at him.

Kara watches her approach with steel in her eyes. “You can’t be serious about this,” she hisses angrily. “I’m not going to let you be captured and do nothing about it! Tell me you have another plan,” Kara whispers expectantly. Lena sees Lex look at them from the corner of her eyes and shakes her head. Kara breathes deeply, her nostrils flare, her jaw clenches. “Lex, let’s make a trade!” Kara calls out and stomps toward him. “I’ll take her place-”

Lex scoffs.

“Stop,” Lena sighs, taking a hold of Kara’s arm only to bite her lip when Kara wrenches it away and glares at her. “You can’t interfere. It’s me that he wants. He- he might release me once it’s done.”

“Do you really believe that?” Kara laughs derisively. Lena nods. Kara’s fists clench in anger. “He might be lying about everything! How can you trust him? How can you trust him after everything he did to you?” Lena doesn’t. She doesn’t trust her brother at all but she stays silent because Lex is just a few feet away, walking about the room, nonchalant and bored but she knows he’s listening in on them. If only J’onn could hurry up… Kara stares at her in disbelief. “He tried to kill you, Lena! Not once, not twice- It was at least four times! How can you- how…” Kara flounders, frustrated. “I don’t trust him!”

“I’m not asking you to trust him,” Lena snaps. “I’m asking you to trust me!”
Kara deflates, torn between anger and sadness. The pain Lena has seen her let loose in the privacy of their break room just a few hours earlier is back in full force, tumultuous and unruly as a storm. It settles deep in the blue of Kara’s eyes. “Of course I trust you but we can find another way! You don’t have to-” Words fails her and Kara exhales, closing her eyes in frustration. “I- I should… I- I can protect you. Please, just- Let me find another way.”

Lena would like nothing more but there’s a clock ticking somewhere and the window of opportunity for her to shape the future is quickly closing in on her. “We don’t have time.”

“Then we’ll make time!”

“Kara-”

“Why are you so willing to put yourself in danger? I’m here now! I’m here!” she insists with tears in her eyes. “You said you wouldn’t let go…” Kara croaks. “Was that a lie?”

Lena heaves a breath, feeling her insides twist with the pain, the confusion, and the loneliness she reads in Kara’s eyes.

“Lena. It’s time,” J’onn says from the other side of the force field.

She tries to reach for Kara’s hand but Kara steps back, out of reach, unwilling to say goodbye. Lena bites the inside of her cheek, feeling tears well up in her eyes and nods. Lex waits for her next to the generator and Lena walks away. She grunts in surprise when Kara tugs her back and wraps her arms tightly around her.

“I don’t care what he said. I don’t care what he wants,” Kara whispers. “I’ll find you.”

Lena exhales, nodding quickly, and hugs Kara as hard as she can. “I’m not letting go.” Kara tenses and looks back confusedly at her. “You’ll find me. You always do,” Lena whispers as quietly as she can and kisses her cheek. She steps away from Kara’s embrace and grabs Lex’s arm. “You’re not going to leave are you?”

Lex shrugs. “And where would I go? The action is happening right here.”
Lena deactivates the force field. Time doesn’t make sense. It ebbs and flows with no control, and Lena feels it accelerate as a team of heavily armed agents surrounds her and ushers her to the elevator. J’onn follows closely behind and Lena sees Kara speak to Alex before the doors close. The parking garage is filled to the brim with agents. A line of black SUVs waits. The engines grumble with impatience. She asks Lex to give her Lillian’s location but Lex refuses to give it until they are on the road. Lena grips Lex’s arm more firmly as they walk her to the car. She slips the batarang discreetly in between her breasts before they strap her in a bulletproof vest. J’onn opens the car door for her. Her heart aches when she realizes that the two agents in the front seats of her car are Vasquez and Maggie. They both give her a reassuring smile.

“They’ve been briefed. They know to get away as soon as Lex shows up. Winn and your team will leave for The Sanctuary immediately after the attack.” J’onn claps her shoulder and gives her a reassuring smile. “We found Batman. He’s en route. Keep the batarang close. He’ll trace you.”

“Thank you.”

“You’re in for a scolding, Luthor.” Maggie looks at her from behind the wheel as the door of the parking garage opens slowly in the distance. “The kid and the lackey,” Vasquez’s shoulders tense at Jess’ nickname, “really aren’t happy with you right now.”

“You shouldn’t be here. Both of you.”

“I made a promise, Ma’am.” Vasquez clips her seatbelt and checks her weapons.

“And tell that asshole brother of yours that I look forward to putting him back in jail,” Maggie says with that same dangerous edge she had when they first met at Wayne’s Gala. Still fiercely protecting the secret that cost her the position of captain of the Metropolis Special Crime Unit.

“Still mad at me for threatening her daughter…” Lex chuckles. “Tell her she’s welcome to try.”

Lena doesn’t. He doesn’t know it yet, but he’s going down today and so she keeps silent, waiting… A clock ticks somewhere and the decoy convoy leaves the DEO in a grim procession, moving slowly through National City’s silent streets. The sun filters through the blackened windows and bathes her in a small halo of light and warmth.

“You know what I missed the most in prison?”
Lena clenches her jaw. “Why did you try to kill me?” Lena asks instead. She feels Vasquez stiffens in front of her. Maggie gives her a look from the rearview mirror.

“It wasn’t personal.”

Lena scoffs.

“You were in the way,” he shrugs. Lena sees him make a move to touch his chest from the corner of her eyes, only to refrain himself.

“And I’m not now?”

“Not as much,” Lex says with a small smile.

Lena snorts. Lex’s smile grows wider, and in the silence and the tension crushing down on her, it almost feels like… There’s something she can’t quite discern about Lex. Something has changed ever since he’s thrust his arms into the force field to cut J’onn’s connection with her mind. There’s a bit of playfulness to him. A light dancing in his eyes she hasn’t seen for years. “What did you miss? Back in prison?”

“The sunrise.” His eyes twinkle with genuine happiness, and for the first time Lena sees the brother she’s lost in the smile he gives her. “We used to watch it together.”

Lena nods, remembering nights where they would sit on the balcony, bundled up in blankets, and wait for the sun to rise. She still remembers the feel of the morning dew settling over her skin, the darkness and the cold enveloping her body before the first lights appeared. They would sit in silence, looking at the sky, and Lena remembers being the happiest right there with her brother by her side and the promise of a better tomorrow rising beyond the horizon. Tears fill her eyes. Lena wipes them away.

“It’s too late to be my brother.”

Lex sighs and nods. “I guess it is.”
He gives her Lillian’s location. Lena relays it to Vasquez. A clock ticks somewhere. Loud and ominous. Inescapable.

The car comes to a screeching halt. The hood tilts downward and the back of the car lifts up for a few infinite seconds where Lena sees Lex clutch at his chest and scream in pain. He flickers. The rear of the car crashes back onto the ground. Shards of glass pierce her skin. Lena hears Vasquez grunt in the chaos and she raises her head only to see her battling with her door to get out. Smoke fills up the car and all Lena hears is Vasquez because Maggie is already out of the car, blood dripping down her face, shooting at Cadmus’ operatives flooding the street. Lena unbuckles her seatbelt with trembling fingers and screams when something wrenches her door open. Vasquez manages to get out of the car. She fires her weapon. Once. Twice. Before she is tackled to the ground.

A hand grabs her by the vest and Lex, the one from her timeline, dark eyes and evil smiles, decked in a warsuit not unlike the one she saw in that vault her mother took her to, lifts her out of the car. Lena sees the destruction he caused just to get her. Upturned cars strewn on the ground, agents firing their weapons and some hiding behind cars to seeking cover from Cadmus’ operatives. Lex’s arm slides around her waist and the propellers at his feet lift them into the sky.

“LENA!”

Kara is there, on the ground, battling against Cadmus’ operatives who pin her down with heavy looking guns that shoot green beams of light. Kara takes cover, her eyes trained on Lena’s, and gives her a small nod. Lena exhales in relief and nods back.

Lex chuckles mockingly. “We’re going to do great things, Lena.” He presses a cloth to her mouth.

Lena falls unconscious.

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Time doesn’t make sense. Especially when time machines and time-travelers are involved. She doesn’t know how much time has passed since her abduction, but when Lena wakes up in an empty, grey, windowless room she finds Lex, the one from the future, seizing on the floor. Lena scrambles to her feet, only to be stopped by the chains on her ankles. She curses and examines the lock. She takes the batarang out from her bra and presses on it. The two blades on each sides spring out and it’s only a matter of minutes before Lena is free from her chains. She tries to send a message but it
Lena curses quietly.

Lex coughs, looking paler than usual, flickering in and out of existence.

"It won't be for much longer," Lena whispers and goes to examine the lock on the door.

He groans behind her and chuckles. "You knew this would happen."

It's a reinforced door with no handle. Electric lock. A door only opened from the outside. "I knew you'd disappear as soon as I began to make changes to the timeline." Lena runs her hands over the frame and on the wall next to it.

"How?"

Lena slams her eyes shut as he grunts in pain. "Kara came back to the past, too. That bomb Corben put in the Venture? It would have killed me if Kara hadn't come back and stopped me from boarding." There's a small indentation between the door and the frame. Lena eyes the concrete wall, takes out the batarang and begins to hack into it. The blade pierces through the concrete. Thank God for Batman and his gadgets...

"Well played," Lex laughs, wheezing slightly. Lena turns around only to see him look back at her. There's none of the malice Lena saw when she first saw him in the lab. Only regrets, sadness and that same light, that playfulness he's had ever since she's known him. "Who would've believed it?" Lex croaks. "A Luthor and a Super... In love. I didn't understand why she'd save you every time. Why she'd always protect you, but I get it now. I get it..." he coughs. His neck strains in pain. Lena turns around and hacks harder into the wall. "I hate to admit it, but I kinda like her."

The batarang slips from her hand and draws a small red line in her palm. She picks it up and holds it tight... Tighter... "She kicked a chair through you."

"Yeah, I know. It was fun. Don't tell her I said that though," Lex grunts. Lena hears him grits his teeth in pain. She looks over her shoulder and sees his body flicker again, drawing out a muffled scream every time his body reappears. There was nothing she could do for him. Only wait... wait for the pain to pass and for the end to come.

"It won't be for much longer," Lena repeats, hacking into the wall with renewed vigor, willing her
hand to stop shaking. Small bits of concrete fall to the ground. “It won’t be for much longer.”

“I know where your dreams come from,” Lex blurts. Lena rolls her eyes, refusing to listen to his nonsense. “Come on, Lena. Try to guess. It makes sense,” he challenges her in that same tone he would use when she was younger and trying to solve an equation he had given her… “How can you be the only one to see me when no one else did? I assume no one else saw Kara either…”

“Only when she began to disappear…” Lena finds herself saying.

“That’s what I thought. I bet if anyone else was here right now they would see me too… So, any guesses?” Lena keeps quiet, concentrating on stabbing her wall. “You can see through the fabric of time,” Lex laughs. “I did research on it. There have been occurrences, records of people able to see things they couldn’t explain, say things too advanced for their era… burned on a pyre, decapitated, rejected by society and their own family… because people didn’t understand… You can see the repetitions… You can see through the cracks… That's why you can see me. That's why you could see her,” he whispers rapidly, excitedly. His speech cracked and slightly incoherent.

Lena rolls her eyes, scoffing slightly. A big chunk of concrete falls and Lena sees the wires of the lock appear. She makes a bigger hole. “It doesn’t make sense.”

“It does,” Lex insists. “We’re like stars, Lena. We shine brighter until we die. Until we go back to the very fabric of the universe… To our past, present, future or otherwise distant self’s… Reincarnations. Parts of a whole. That’s what we are… That’s what we all are…” Lena looks back to her brother. He smiles shakily. “We could have done so many great things together… I thought- I thought if I led you down here. I could jump in time again… I would have taken you with me,” he coughs, his body looking more and more insubstantial than it was before. Lena looks to the wire and then to her brother… She could leave… Open the door and deal with the Lex from her timeline… the one who thought he’d won. The one still hell-bent on destruction… The one it didn’t hurt as much to fight as the one trembling on the floor, smiling at her like the brother she used to love… “We could have changed the world.”

Lena breathes deeply and kneels next to her brother. “Tell me how to get to the time machine.”

“Why?”

“As long as there’s one, we’ll be stuck repeating our mistakes in trying to fix them. I have to destroy it.”
Lex grimaces as a wave of pain passes through him. He looks at her, lost and unfocused. “Thirty-two consecutive life sentences… Do you think it’ll carry over? To the afterlife? In my reincarnations?” Lena frowns as he tries to clutch at his chest. His hand passes through. Lena unbuttons his black coat and discovers the red spot staining his shirt just near his heart. A perfect circle. A gunshot. She looks back at him, beginning to understand why he kept clutching at his chest… why he made the jump. “I didn’t want to die,” he laughs with tears in his eyes. Lena takes his hand in hers and feels it tremble, becoming cold, so cold against her skin. “I just didn’t think it would be like this.” He looks at his body, a mockery of existence and grunts as another wave of pain passes through him.

“How?” Lena croaks, staring at that small red stain on his chest. A wound frozen in time.

“It’s not your fault,” he whispers. “It was either her or me… You chose her. I get it… I get it now…” Lena bites her lip, hard, feeling the skin break under her teeth as she tries to stop it from trembling. She slams her eyes shut in trying to stop the tears as Lex babbles about it not being her fault… He repeats it over and over again and Lena breaks at the weight of that knowledge. His hand disappears from hers. Lena opens her eyes in panic only to see him reappear. She hates him. She fucking hates him for everything he made her go through. For the fear, the pain, and the hate he made her feel… but most of all for the disappointment and the heartbreak… the love she thought she had and lost…

“I hate you,” she cries, griping at his coat, not sure if she wants to hit him or hold him closer. “I fucking hate you!”

Lex smiles, that same smile he always gave her when he knew when she was lying. “The time machi- machine…” He glitches and his voice gets quieter and quieter… “Is on Level -25. You’ll need to- to bypass the guards first. Go on your left. There is a staircase that…” Lena leans closer as he whispers to her where to go. She holds his hand through it until his hand begins to disappear. She holds on to his arms, his shoulders, his jaw… “See you in another life, little-”

Until there is nothing to hold onto anymore. Her hands close around nothingness. The silence, heavy and overwhelming, settles deep in her heart and Lena doesn’t know what to feel anymore. Nothing makes sense. The world blurs with tears and she tries to breathe through it…

The batarang rings loud and distorted. Lena picks it up with trembling fingers and holds it to her eyes. It lights green.

“I’m here. I’m here, Lena. I’m coming to get you. Wait for me,” Kara’s voice fills the silence, slightly distorted from the malfunction but still clear for her to understand. “I’m really mad at you but you better wait for me before you make anything explode.”
Lena laughs.

Time doesn’t make sense but she can still save her brother. He’ll rot in jail but she can still save him… Lena breathes deeply, clutching the batarang tightly in her fist. It was now time to destroy the time machine…

She walks to the hole she made in the wall but stops mid track when the door opens…

Chapter End Notes

One more chapter left. Thank you for sticking with me so far and thank you for reading. And thanks to Seriouslyficent for the input on Maggie’s backstory!! I wanted to change it a bit from canon. :) Take care!
Chapter Notes

This is it, guys! I just wanted to thank you for the support. I don't think I knew what I was getting myself into when writing this story. I wanted to write something lighter than Do not go gentle and this work turned out to be pretty angsty. Anyway, I hope you had a good time reading this story and that you will enjoy its resolution. English is not my first language so huge thanks to Earthling3 who has been beta-ing those very, very long chapters for months and dealing with my inability to use commas correctly ;)

WARNING: GRAPHIC DEPICTIONS OF VIOLENCE. GRAPHIC DEPICTIONS OF DEATH. SEXUAL CONTENTS. (Do not shoot at fire extinguishers or build a time machine)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Lena dreaded endings.

Late at night, she’d often knock on Lex’s door, tear-stricken and soaked with sweat, having woken up from another nightmare. He would open his door and look at her with bleary eyes, but she never had to explain herself or say anything. He would always let her in, let her snatch the big woolen blanket he got from Lillian at Christmas, and help her wrap it tight around her little body. She never had to say anything because Lex always knew how to make it better. On most nights, they would sit at his desk and they would talk science while tinkering at some of his projects. Lena would watch, listen, and pretend she wasn’t falling asleep against his warm shoulder.

But on the nights when the shaking and tears just wouldn’t stop, he’d wrap her up in that big woolen blanket and nudge her toward his balcony. The cold always got to her first. The ground freezing the soles of her feet and the cold air rushing inside her lungs felt like electrical shocks running through her. Her body would tense up, and the silence would be broken by the clattering of teeth and a few sniffles. But then Lex would bring her a cup of hot cocoa and Lena would feel warm again. She liked those nights the best, because on those nights Lex would tell her stories.

His voice would make sense of the darkness, conjuring adventures and beautiful images she never got to see when she slept. She dreaded the sunrise. She would watch the first lights chase away the darkness and surprise herself wishing the night would last longer, just a little bit longer so that Lex’s stories wouldn’t have to end. But they did. Lex would take her back to her room quietly before the sun was fully up, and Lena would fall sound asleep.
As she grew up, Lena came to realize that endings were never happy. The comfort she had found with her brother was never the same after that incident in Lionel’s office.

Lex had pushed, probed, and had tried to dissect her dreams relentlessly. Lena hadn’t understood what he was looking for, what he was hoping to find, and she had tried to answer as best as she could, but all she had wanted was to forget about them. All she had wanted was to move past it. Lex didn’t let her. He would disregard Luke’s diagnosis with an air of superiority, absolutely convinced that her dreams were something more than the manifestation of stress and loss. He was convinced that they were the beginnings of other stories and other lives …

They would fight and bicker about it, and during the rare times they were both at the Luthors’ Manor, Lena would restrain herself from knocking at his door, until she stopped knocking altogether. It had felt like an ending. The loss of something Lena hadn’t known how to mourn.

It was years after that they found themselves back again on a balcony, waiting for the sunrise. The big, thick woolen blanket had been replaced by an MIT sweater, and the hot chocolate by a glass of bourbon. After days of forced smiles, handshakes and speeches, the silence in the hours following Lionel’s funeral had felt like both a reprieve and a burden. A burden too heavy to shoulder alone. Lena had mourned the man who had taken her under his care, while Lex, distant and sullen, had taken up the mantle of the Luthors’ legacy.

They had watched the sun rise over Metropolis that day, and in the void left by their father, the silence had felt like a truce. A white flag. A sign that it was time to put their grievances aside and just be… Many truces had been sealed that way over the years. Stepping out on the balcony and waiting for the sunrise was as much a sure way for her to stop Lex from pestering her about joining Luthor Corp as it was a way for him to dodge her questions about the rumors she’d heard about his activities as CEO. It would stop him from asking her about her nightmares, and it would put an end to any escalation when she would confront him about his increasing animosity toward Superman. Both had been walking a fine line, and those quiet moments spent on the balcony had been a way to hold on to the memories of who they had been when they couldn’t recognize the person the other had become…

The truce always ended when the lights appeared beyond the horizon, and with time Lena had come to dread those endings.

Kara’s message ends and Lena laughs. It bubbles out of her throat without much control. It chases away the silence, that oppressing silence weighing down on her ever since Lex, his future-self, disappeared. Lena doesn’t want to think about the future Lex told her about. The bits and pieces he revealed were enough for her to know that it wasn’t a future she wanted. Losing her brother or losing Kara… Lena would like to believe that there is a future where she can have both. A future where she
wouldn’t have to choose. A future where her brother could be saved… Because she can. Lena can change the future and she can save her brother.

She can rewrite the ending…

Lena turns back toward the door, ready to go out, only to stop dead in her tracks when the door creaks open. The harsh, white light of the corridor illuminates the room and Lena hears more than she sees the tray of food clatter to the ground. The guard stares at her, frozen, until his hand spasms toward his gun in a moment of indecision.

It happens in a blink.

The batarang, clenched so tightly in her hand, slices the air and sinks into his throat. He shoots at her but his aim is thrown off. She gasps as pain shoots up through her arm. It burns. Lena grits her teeth, breathing harshly, pressing her hand over the wound in order to stop the blood flow. The bullet only grazed her arm, she thinks… She looks up when his gun clatters to the ground. His wide eyes fixed on her and blood bubbling out of his mouth. Lena shudders violently. Her fingers begin to tremble and her chest constricts painfully as she watches him crumble to the ground, and stare at her with lifeless eyes.

His radio crackles to life.

“The perimeter has been breached! Security protocol is in place. Over.”

The alarm screeches immediately after. The white light is replaced by a sickly red one, which glows and pulsates to the rhythm of the alarm’s long, plaintive cry. Lena tries to steady her breathing but fails miserably as the light seems to blend in with the red liquid pooling on the ground - and staining her hand. It feels like she’s in one of her nightmares, and Lena stares, paralyzed, as his lifeless eyes stare back at her accusingly, and his wide, gaping mouth, frozen in a perpetual scream, wails hollowly in her head.

“Team Five en route to secure the target! Over.”

The crackling of the radio startles her out of her trance. They are coming for her. They are trying to get to her before Kara does… Lena can’t let that happen. She can’t let them capture her…
Lena rushes toward the body and yanks the batarang out of the man’s throat. She winces when spurts of blood splatter onto her. It was too late now, Lena repeats to herself, trying hard not to look at the body. She needs to keep moving. She can’t stop… She can’t stop… She wipes her hands on her pants and grabs his gun and his keycard.

If what Lex told her was true, they couldn’t access Level -25 without a Luthor’s DNA, and if Lex’s henchmen captured her, Kara would have no way of getting into that secret floor… Lena pokes her head out of the room. The corridor is empty. The alarm still shrieks like a banshee and is immediately followed by the stomping of heavy boots Lena can hear coming from her right.

She flees to the left and turns around a corner.

Lex had warned her that it would feel like a maze. That every corner could be treacherous… But he didn’t tell her about the annoying alarm blaring over her head, making her heart race more than was necessary. He didn’t tell her about the light plunging her in a red haze either. Lena feels her muscles tense up. Her senses are on high alert. The burning in her left arm becomes a blessing more than a hindrance at this point. The throbbing helps her stay focused. She needs to get to the staircase Lex told her about, because the first thing they’ll do when they realize that she’s missing will be to search this floor. Every hallway, every room will be swarmed by guards and she’ll have nowhere to hide.

Her heart stops, paralyzed by a dull sound coming from behind her. Lena looks over her shoulder. Nothing.

There’s sweat sliding down her temple. Tendrils of hair fall into her eyes. Lena swats them away, regretting it immediately as she leaves a streak of blood on her forehead. She sighs, annoyed. She can’t afford to get distracted, not now… but the sickly red light makes it hard for her to see and the alarm makes her head pound painfully. It doesn’t help that Lena feels like she can hear the sound of stomping boots follow her like a shadow. Every sound becomes a guard. Every shadow becomes the barrel of a gun. Lena berates herself for not taking the guard’s radio with her…

Back pressed against the wall, she moves on as the hallway opens on another one much larger than the one she has been in. She tries to concentrate and listen for any footsteps, any indication of guards in the vicinity… But all she hears is the fucking alarm screeching in her ears, joined perniciously by the mad pounding of her heart. The gun feels slick in her hand. Lena inhales deeply before taking a peek around the corner.

There was nothing to the right but flickering red light all the way down to the next corner. Lena smiles when she spots on her left the exit sign above the staircase.
The sound of her shoes slapping on the concrete floor feels too loud in the empty corridor. It fills up the space and adds a bit of desperation to the ambient cacophony. Her breathing feels out of sync compared to the noise reverberating around her. Lena runs, keeping an eye over her shoulder, and trying to discern if the thumping sound she hears is coming from her or from something else…

It might be her imagination but it feels like the floor is shaking under her feet. Lena isn’t sure. Her surroundings feel surreal enough that she wouldn’t be surprised if she began to imagine things… It happens again. But longer this time. The vibrations are strong enough that Lena nearly loses her balance and has to lean on the wall to keep herself from falling over. She looks up to the ceiling.

What the hell is happening?

A noise echoing on the walls snatch her attention. Lena waits, scrutinizing her surrounding, waiting to hear that sound again. The red light flickers. Lena creeps toward the stairs, still fifty feet ahead of her, alert and gun at the ready with her back pressed against the wall, becoming dizzy and slightly nauseous with the sheer amount of focus and stress exerted on her body and mind. She chances a look over her shoulder but sees nothing. The gun in her hand feels heavy and slick with sweat.

Until…

Heavy boots stomp the ground. Lena hears it as clearly as her heart stomping inside her ribcage. There’s nowhere for her to hide. Lena doesn’t know if the sound is coming from behind her or the corner before her, further away from the stairs… A string of expletives resounds inside her mind like a long litany. The only thing she can do is sprint to the staircase and hope for the best.

Out of breath and a bit delirious, Lena keeps the exit sign in her line of sight and runs. The next time someone asks her for help, she’ll just go back to sleep and never wake up. She won’t. But the thought is nice. It feels petty and vindictive. Just like her right now. Lena runs but the distance between her and the staircase seems to stretch in a long, stringy line and no matter how hard she wills herself to run faster, the distance never seems to shorten. Her breath does though. As does the interval in between every pulse of her heart. Sounds blend together in a mess of thuds and beats where the alarm is the lead and drowns every other sound with its long, annoying cry. It pulses in her head in a perpetual-

A gunshot booms like a gong.

The scare cuts off her breath as the bullet punctures the wall, daring her to move any further. Lena gulps at the clear warning. “Fuck.”
“We found the target in the left wing. Level -14. Over,” one of the guards says, holding his radio to his mouth and watching her warily while his two buddies aim their weapons at her.

She can’t believe it. The stairs were just there. She was so close. So close…

“Bring her to me,” the radio crackles. Lex’s voice is unmistakable in spite of the noise around them. Lena would recognize it anywhere. It sounds cold and calm even through the static, a far cry from the warm, playful lilt his future-self had. She knows that by changing the timeline, she also forfeited the chance of having back the brother she got a glimpse of. She’s no fool. Lena knows he’d only changed because of the bullet she shot at him in his timeline. Being so close to death had changed him. It had shifted his point of view. It had stripped him off of his obsessions and superiority complex. And by saving him now, Lena knows this realization might never come to him again… But it didn’t mean he couldn’t change. If there was one thing Lena got from Lex coming back to the past, it was that her brother was capable of change, that he was still there somewhere under the layers of hate, contempt and arrogance. And lucky for him, Lena can change the future. She can rewrite the ending…

She racks her brain, her eyes darting left and right in search of a solution.

“Don’t move!”

The fire extinguisher on the wall shines like a beacon, situated just in between the guards and the stairs. It could be enough of a distraction for her to escape. Lena inhales deeply, feeling her muscle coil in anticipation as they edge closer toward her.

“The walls have been breached,” the radio crackles again. It wasn’t her brother talking this time and Lena can just discern a hint of panic in their voice. “Levels -1 to -3 are compromised. All personnel are to converge back on the lower levels. Containment security system is activated. Over.”

Her shoulder knocks against the wall as the floor shakes under their feet. Dust falls from above and Lena sees the guards look up as small cracks appear on the ceiling. It’s all Lena needs to make her escape. She aims and fires at the fire extinguisher. The bottle explodes and envelops the guards in a thick white cloud.

Lena makes a run for the stairs.
The door clangs open. In the precipitation, her arm bumps into the doorframe, making her groan and clutch at her wound. Lena rushes to lock the door behind her just in time to see the guards run into it. Lena sees one of them talk into his radio from the small window and immediately flees down the stairs.

Level -15.

Several doors above her burst open.

“Target is in the left wing stairs! All remaining teams in pursuit!”

Level -16.

She can’t outrun them. She can’t take the risk of a team cutting her off from below either. Lena stumbles on a step and crashes against the wall when the floor begins to shake under her. The stomping above her ceases for a moment only to pick up again.

Level -17.

She pushes the door open and dash to the first hallway on her left when she hears another set of heavy boots coming from her right. Several doors line up the walls on both sides. She edges to the end of the hallway cautiously. It opens up on a much larger corridor. Her heart stutter to a stop when she hears another set of heavy boots echoes on the walls.

She needs to hide.

She uses the keycard on the first door she sees, hoping that there’s no one inside or she’ll be royally screwed. Thankfully for her, the room is empty except for a bunk bed and a small table in the corner. She presses her ear against the door but it’s no use, Lena doesn’t hear anything but the sound of her own respiration and the alarm still screeching in her ears.

She needs to calm down. Deep breaths. She can’t let the panic get to her. Focus. She can’t fuck things up. Not now that Kara was so close to finding her… All she needs to do is remain hidden long enough for Kara to find her. It’s all she needs to do. Lena paces around the room, steps measured and controlled, trying desperately to stop her quivering insides from taking over her body.
The last time she’d played hide and seek, well, she and Eli nearly died… She closes her eyes and focuses on her breathing…. She can’t let the fear get to her… She can’t- Quiet and still, her body strains toward the door, and yet is too afraid to get any closer when heavy boots bypass her door and fade in the direction of the stairs.

She can’t stay here. The stairs were compromised. Hell, the whole left wing was compromised now that they had seen her… It was only a matter of time before they guessed which floor she was on and began to search the rooms one by one. She needs to keep moving…

She opens the door cautiously, all of her senses alert for any sign of movement, any noise or shadow appearing on the walls. Lena turns around the corner, away from the stairs, only to bump into a guard.

His radio crackles to life.

“Levels -1 to -11 are compromised.”

The guard grabs her arm and twists it behind her back. Lena screams, feeling tears well up in her eyes as the burning in her arm intensifies. She tries to defend herself but fails when he slams her into the wall and knocks the breath out of her. Lena trashes around, gritting her teeth, trying her damnedest to stop him from crushing her against the wall. He disarms her and presses his weight into her back. Lena groans as black spots appear in her vision.

He chuckles and leans over her, close enough that Lena can feel his breath hit her ear. “Don’t move, doll. It’ll hurt less.” He reaches for his radio. “Jackson here. I’ve got-”

Lena headbutts him with the back of her head. He stumbles back and groans with his hands cupping his nose. Lena grabs the gun at his belt only to see it skids to the floor when he kicks it away from her hand. She grits her teeth, reeling from the blow while he smiles at her cockily with blood running all over his teeth.

The ground shakes under them. A cloud of dust falls from the ceiling and Lena uses the opportunity to dash toward the weapon. She doesn’t go very far because he grabs her from behind and immobilizes her torso.

“Mr. Luthor said not to kill you,” he sneers. Lena grimaces in disgust, struggling from his hold, when
his breath hits her cheek and a bit of blood sprays on her face. “He didn’t say anything about not harming you.”

“I think that was implied, asshole!” Lena brings her legs back toward her chest and pushes against the wall with all of her strength. The momentum sends them both flying back. Lena clenches her jaw as they crash against the opposite wall.

He grunts, loosening his grip around her just enough for her to fish the batarang out of her pocket and stab it deep into his thigh. The scream he lets out feels like music to her ears. Lena elbows him in the face but it isn’t enough to make him release her. If anything his arm tightens around her even more and crushes her into his chest. She tries to hit him again but he dodges it this time.

“Just give up already!”

Lena curses when she sees the knife come toward her throat. Without thinking, she encloses the blade in her fist, screaming as it cuts into her hand and struggles to keep it from coming any closer to her face. Blood flows down in a steady stream. The blade gets closer and closer. Lena feels her arm shake and her hand go numb.

“You wish!”

Keeping a firm hold on the blade, Lena grabs the batarang still lodged in his thigh. She twists it and yanks it out. Warm blood hits her fingers. His arms go slack. The knife clatters to the ground as does the batarang. Lena pushes him away from her. He falls down on his knees. The look of shock on his face is not enough to stop her from pummeling his face again and again until her knuckles bleeds, until she can’t discern her blood from his, until he falls to the ground, unmoving.

His radio crackles to life.

“Jackson! Waiting for status. Over.”

Lena gasps for breath, staring at the pool of blood growing under him. There’s a scream stuck in her throat. Tears she can’t shed. The light accentuates the red splattered on the walls, pooling on the floor, and flowing down her hand. Her back hits the wall. The smell is sickening. Sickening and yet familiar. Lena slides down to the ground. The red haze pulls her back into visions of nightmares. Fields of blood and bodies with lifeless eyes and gaping mouth crawling toward her.
Lena feels like she might vomit.

“Hold your position. We’re coming over!”

The sound of heavy boots joins the screaming in her head. Jackson lies on the floor next to her and Lena cradles her injured hand into her chest, listening to the heavy boots getting closer and closer… Maybe she should have listened to Lex. Maybe she should have looked further into those dreams. It might explain why the sensation of blood on her hands feels so familiar…

Lena never liked endings. Endings felt final.

The floor shakes under her. The wall trembles. The vibrations whisper words of reassurance while heavy boots stampede in the corridor. The ceiling begins to crack just when guards round the corner.

The ceiling gives in.

A cloud of dust obscures her view of the guards only to be replaced by the welcomed sight of a red cape and blonde hair.

Supergirl was there too!

Lena giggles uncontrollably at Kara’s timing. White smoke fills the hallway. She chokes in on a breath as strong, familiar arms wrap around her body protectively and fly them both through several walls, far away from the thundering sound of gunshots. Lena keeps giggling. She tries to muffle it in the crook of Kara’s neck but fails miserably when the warm feel of Kara’s skin pushes her into another fit of giggles. There’s nothing funny and yet she can’t stop. She can’t stop…

Another wall crumbles out of their way, until Kara deems it safe enough to let her sit on a table that is miraculously still intact in a room that had just been blasted open. There’s a crinkle in Kara’s brow and worry in the blue of her eyes. Lena tells her that she’s fine. That everything is just fine and that she is absolutely not freaking out. But by the look Kara gives her, Lena doesn’t think she is fooled one bit.

“I need a medic! We’re four rooms to the left of the landing point.” Kara cups her cheeks so gently, so softly, Lena begins to tear up a bit. Just a bit.
“You- you sure took your time…” Lena wheezes with a small teasing smile, which falls flat when her lips begin to tremble. She frowns, confused when Kara disappears from her sight, only to exhale in relief at feeling her pressed against her back and her arms wrapped around her waist. Lena leans back into Kara’s arms and sighs contentedly at feeling Kara’s cheek pressed against hers.

“Sorry, I was trying to be sneaky…”

Lena chokes out a laugh and points at the holes Kara made. “I don’t think you succeeded in that part.”

“You kept moving and I was getting frustrated.” Kara presses her lips on her shoulder and tightens her arms around her just enough to stop her from trembling. Just enough for Lena to understand that she’s safe now. Kara is here… She winces when Kara takes her injured hand and examines it. “It’s bleeding really badly. What happened?”

“A knife, but you should see the other guy,” Lena chuckles only to feel panic submerge her body at the memory of his breath hitting her cheek and of his blood pooling under him. Someone rushes toward them and Lena feels her muscles coils in anticipation. Her heartbeat accelerates. She tenses up, ready to bolt.

“Hey! Hey,” Kara whispers against her ear, tightening her arm around her. “It’s just the medic. You’re okay. I’m right here. We’re gonna get you out.”

Lena feels her body slacken, lulled by Kara’s reassurances, despite the thrumming energy running through her veins. She closes her eyes and breathes deeply. The sound of gunshots still resounds around them. Screams of pain echo against the walls. “I can’t leave. There’s a time machine that I need to destroy.”

The medic approaches them, walking over the rubble with ease. Lena lets him examines her, feeling a little bit queasy as he rummages through his bag and takes out a syringe, gauze, tweezers… and other things Lena doesn’t want to think about. “I’ll need to stitch your wounds.”

“Is there any chance you have some alcohol in that bag of yours? The drinking kind?”

“Sorry,” he chuckles and applies a rude bandage on her arm. Lena hisses as he tightens the gauze over the wound. “But I can numb the surrounding area…” He takes a vial and fills the syringe with
Lena whimpers feeling said hand tremble uncontrollably before Kara immobilizes her wrist and drapes her other hand over her eyes, plunging her in darkness. Lena startles before relaxing slightly, focusing on Kara’s voice.

“So, the time machine… Any plans on how to des-”

Lena screams, jerking wildly, kicking the medic away from her as he disinfects her wound.

“Stop her from moving!”

Kara presses her harder against her chest and tightens her hold on her wrist. Lena feels him pry her fingers open and resume his work. “I thought- I thought you said you were going to numb it!”

“Well, it might still sting a little.”

“A little?” Lena shouts incredulously.

“Lena!” Lena stops moving at Kara’s remonstrance. She breathes harshly as Kara kisses her cheek. “Any plans on how to get to that time machine? How do we destroy it?”

Lena grits her teeth, feeling faint and feverish, and tries to relax, infinitely glad that she can’t see anything right now. Listening to the medic butchering her hand was already traumatizing enough. “Level -25. I’m sure- I’m sure Lex is there. He’ll be waiting for us. We- We destroy it and- and there won’t be any going back. No do-overs. This is it,” Lena hisses, feeling the medic press gauze after gauze on her hand to stop the bleeding.

“What happened to the other Lex?”

“He’s gone. The changes we made to the timeline were too significant for him to exist any longer.”

Kara tenses. Lena hears her breath stutter against her ear. “Is that- Is that what happened to… to
“There’s hesitation in her voice. Reticence even. Lena knows how Kara feels about time travel. Kara sees it as an offense to the natural order and from what Kara told her on the roof, Lena knows she is still struggling with accepting the fact that the Kara Lena saw back in Metropolis was indeed her. It was easier to think it was someone else, someone separated from her, rather than to face the fact that she had transgressed one of Krypton’s fundamental rules in another timeline, or that she could do it again…” “Back in Metropolis?”

“I think so,” Lena whispers cautiously. Having Kara for her only basis hadn’t been enough to give her any certainties, only assumptions that she still felt were a bit too far-fetched to explain what had happened. But now that she has seen it happen again, Lena was nearly one-hundred percent sure that that’s what had happened. What happened to their future-selves after that, Lex’s theory still echoes in her mind… “Lex said that he was like energy. Parts of a whole… His energy might have gone back to his present self or to others… I don’t know. He said he went back to the fabric of the universe,” Lena smiles derisively by sheer habit. “He believed in reincarnations… He would pester me for hours about it when we were younger…”

“Nothing is lost, nothing is created…” Kara trails off, seemingly deep in thought.

“…Everything is transformed,” Lena finishes the quote and frowns slightly. Her hand has become numb and she focuses on Kara’s breathing rather than imagining her flesh being sewn back together. “Do you- Do you believe him?”

“I don’t know, but…” Kara sighs. “My- my best friend back in Krypton… she was going to enter the Religious Guild before-” Kara pauses, gulping slightly. The hand over her eyes trembles lightly, letting a bit of light pass in-between her fingers and Lena turns her head a bit, enough to be able to nuzzle Kara’s cheek before being plunged back in darkness. “She used to tell me stories about these two legendary creatures. Well, more like Gods. Flamebird and Nightwing. She loved telling me about them. They were mates and opposites. Every time they would be reborn they would look for each other. In every cycle…” Kara’s voice breaks with grief. “So, why not?”

Lena kisses the corner of her lips, noticing Kara’s rapid breathing and the slight clench of her jaw. “What was her name?”

“Thara Ak-Var,” Kara says quietly, solemnly. A whisper between a prayer and a fond memory.

The medic begins to work on her left arm. Lena hisses as she feels him peel away the tissue stuck to her wound. The sound of gunshots around them ceases. Lena only hears orders being given, maybe even Maggie’s voice among the chaos.
“I’m sorry…” Lena whispers, trying hard to control her breathing, as the burning in her arm intensifies. “For lying to you.”

“It’s okay,” Kara sighs. “Well, not really, but I understand why you did it. We’ll need to have a talk about it though…”

“Anything.”

“And we’ll need to come up with secret codes…”

Lena laughs. “Secret codes?”

“Stop it. I’m being serious,” Lena bites her lip, listening to Kara list all the ideas she had on establishing said codes, and tries hard not to laugh. She listens, content to focus only on Kara’s voice, on her breath hitting her cheek, and on her lips running over her skin. Soft and warm. “We’ll do a test run at game night… like if you blink twice I’ll know that you are lying…”

“We’ll lose,” Lena snorts. “Or they’ll think I’m having a stroke.”

Kara pouts, ready to retort.

“All done,” the medic says. Lena blinks now that Kara has taken her hand off of her eyes. He packs things up quickly and Lena takes a look at her wounds. “Try not to tear the stitches. Dr. Danvers warned me about you.”

Lena rolls her eyes as Kara chuckles behind her.

Lena hops off the table, seeing Maggie walk up to them through the walls. Well, if this isn’t Lena Luthor, hiding… Lena smiles, remembering the first words the Detective had spoken to her. It wasn’t the words, per se, that made a lasting impression on her, but the tone. It had been said with such defiance and such animosity, Lena nearly doubted she could succeed in making Maggie Sawyer her ally, or even a friend. And yet…

“Rough day, huh,” Maggie smiles and hugs her tight.
Lena hugs her back, glad that she has come out relatively unscathed from Lex’s attack on their car. “Pretty rough. Is Vasquez okay?”

“Yes, don’t worry. She’s over there,” Maggie says, pointing toward the holes. “Somewhere. We’ve cleared the floor. They seem to have retreated.”

“Lena spoke about a level -25,” Kara says, looking back at Lena for confirmation, and then back to Maggie. “Do you have the layouts Eli gave us? Because I don’t remember this hideout having a level -25…”

Maggie frowns, looking at her phone. “Nope. No level -25.”

“It doesn’t surprise me,” Lena says. “He told me that it could only be accessed with a Luthor’s DNA. Much like the vault Lillian took me to. It wouldn’t appear on any of the construction plans.”

“I swear,” Maggie sighs, rubbing her forehead. “Your brother is more paranoid than Batman. He put booby traps all around the perimeter and on the first ten levels…” The alarm ceases. Lena gasps at the sudden silence. “Ah! Finally! Batman left to cut it off now that we’ve found you,” Maggie says, seeing Lena’s surprise. “He’s going to try to reestablish communications with the DEO.”

Lena gasps, wincing when she makes an attempt to grab Maggie’s arm with her injured hand. “Do you know what happened with the force field?” Kara sighs and grabs Lena’s hand in hers before she makes anymore damage to her stitches. “Do you know if Winn succeeded? And what about Lillian?”

“As far as we know, Winn was still working on the force field when we left and Alex and J’onn were waiting for Superman to go after Lillian…”

Lena stares at Maggie incredulously. “That’s it?”

“Our communications have been down ever since we entered the perimeter. There’s something jamming our signal with the outside world…” Kara explains, tracing slow circles on the inside of her wrist.
“Lena sighs. “Do we-”

“It’s the time machine,” Batman says, making his way toward them. *It's a dangerous game. If you continue down this path your brother will come after you.* That’s the first thing he had told her as Batman. Lena can’t believe how right he had been.

“You knew he was making one…”

Batman nods. “I tried to tell you but I thought we would have more time…” He hands her a batarang. The one he gave her months ago and had saved her life twice today. “Don’t lose it.”

“Thanks.”

“After I found where they were keeping the missing aliens I heard two of his scientists talking about it. It seems to create an electromagnetic field all around it. That’s all the information I could get before they found me.”

“We need to stop him,” Kara says. “Did he tell you how to get to it?”

Lena nods. They put her in a bulletproof vest and give her a gun. Batman gives her a little pill that fires up her brain, making her feel nearly brand new.

“What’s in it?”

“It’s better if you don’t know. The effect will last for a day but after that you will crash. Hard.”

They move out as one. The floors are cleared quickly. The floors are all empty, only increasing the anxiety at knowing they were all waiting for them on the last level. Lena sees Kara stumble.

“There’s Kryptonite,” Kara hisses. “It’s in the walls.”

“Maybe you should sit this one out,” Maggie tells her.
Kara shakes her head. “I’m okay. As long as we don’t stay here too long.”

Maggie looks back at her with a slight frown. “Alex-”

“I’m fine! Let’s just finish this,” Kara stomps away.

Lena locks eyes with Batman. He nods at her.

It isn’t long before they all find themselves in front of the wall Lex told her about. Lena runs her hand over the smooth metal, trying to find the mechanism that would reveal the biometric lock pad. She finds it. Everyone around her stands at the ready. Kara squeezes her shoulder.

“As soon as you open it, you step back. Maggie will protect you.”

“I know,” Lena whispers, kissing Kara quickly. “Be careful.” She puts her hand onto the pad and steps away quickly when a door appears out of the metallic wall.

It opens. Batman swoops in. Chaos breaks out.

Maggie grabs her arm and pushes her behind her as everyone rushes into the small entry, firing their weapons, rushing to find cover, with the white smoke Batman released their only protection.

“Grab the back of my vest. Whatever happens, don’t let go!”

It’s the only warning Maggie gives her before rushing inside the door. Bullets whiz past them, puncturing the walls, and Lena follows blindly, hanging on to Maggie’s vest for dear life. They find cover behind a slab of concrete that must have been ripped out from a wall. Lena ducks as a volley of bullets hits their cover.

Maggie fires back immediately.
This level is different. Lena can see it from the high ceiling and thicker walls. The layout was also different. It was less like a maze and more like a deep cavernous hall that stretched on, with a second level overlooking the whole floor. Lena glances at Maggie, watching her shout something and holding her earpiece. Lena peers cautiously over their cover. She needs to find that time machine…

An explosion rings out. A wall is blasted to smithereens next to them, showering them with stones and dust. Lena looks at the damage and sees an opening carved in the wall, revealing what looks like stairs. Maggie grabs her by the collar and brings her back down.

“Do you have a death wish?” Her hair is white with dust. She looks at her deadly serious and all Lena sees is the blood pouring down from her temple.

They tense up when they hear Lex scream in rage among the firing of guns, followed by a loud thud and another cloud of dust and rumbles projected in the air.

“There’s something I need to do,” Lena says. It’s reckless. They won’t have much cover but Lena needs to know what energy source is used to power the time machine… If he used Kryptonite or not… Maggie waits for her to elaborate. “I can do it on my own I just need-”

Maggie scoffs. “Cut it out. I’m not leaving you out there alone. What’s your plan?” Her eyes dart to the blood flowing down Maggie’s face. Maggie sighs and wipes it away, only managing to make more of a mess. “Don’t worry. I just got hit by debris. What’s your plan?”

“See that room over there?” Lena points to control room protruding from the wall on their right. “That’s where we need to go.”

“How?”

Lena points out to the hole that has just been carved by the explosion. They duck as another volley of bullets hit their cover. Agents around them retaliate immediately. “It’ll lead us to the control room. I can disable the time machine from there.”

Maggie glances over their slab of concrete, a deep frown on her face before ducking back down. She chuckles, checking her gun. “Alright, I’m in.”

Lena nods, taking a deep breath, and waits for Maggie to finish giving her instructions. They’ll need
“Ready?” Maggie asks her. Lena doesn’t think she’s hiding her doubts and fear very well if the nod she gives Maggie is enough to make the Detective soften around the edges and give her a dimpled smile. “Don’t look around. Just run straight toward the hole. I’ll be right behind you.” Lena nods, steeling herself for the signal. “Go!”

Lena runs.

Bullets rains down on them but Lena keeps running, bypassing bodies and rubbles. Screams resound around her but Lena ignores them and focuses on getting to the hole. A shadow blocks her way only to be gunned down immediately. Lena runs. Focused. Terrified. And dives into the opening. Her body crashes onto the ground among the rumble as bullets pellet the wall. Lena ducks and crawls away from the opening. She looks behind her… Maggie isn’t there.

“No! No, no, no!” Lena scrambles back to her feet, rushing back toward the opening only to scream in surprise when Maggie rushes in and bumps into her. Lena hisses as her shoulder takes the brunt of their fall.

“Damn!” Maggie chuckles and scrambles back to her feet. “That was fun. I didn’t know you could run that fast, Luthor!”

“Fuck off,” Lena laughs, relieved to see her well enough to make jokes.

“Come on.” Maggie helps her back up. “I had a team make sure no one gets in after us but you can never be too sure. We need to hurry up.”

Weapons drawn, they make their way up the stairs and toward the control room. Except for the gunshots ringing under them, the hallway is silent and eerily still… The area seems to have been abandoned when the attack began. There are chairs overturned, papers on the ground, and mugs of coffee still half-full on the desks. The light flickers above them and Lena follows Maggie as she clears the rooms one by one, edging closer and closer to the control room.

It is locked. Maggie motions her to step aside and be ready to shoot before kicking the door open. Several scientists raise their hands up in the air, begging to be spared. Maggie gets them out of the room, guiding them toward another office, and calls for back up. Lena rushes toward the computer and looks into the plans for Lex’s time machine.
To say that she is shocked at seeing the beginning stages of her theory and sketches of her time machine appear on the screen would be an understatement. Lex did steal from her… and then filled in the blanks.

How?

“Mercy?” Lena whispers, dreading the worse, hoping she was wrong.

“Yes, Ms. Luthor?” The robotic voice answers from the computer before her.

“Fuck!” Lena screams, slamming her fist onto the table, feeling her stitches tear and rage fill her up. How could she have been so stupid! Stupid enough to let Lex’s creation have access to her phone and most of her data until she deemed it unsafe to continue her research on her computer and opted to finish the plans of her time machine on paper because she had been afraid that Jess would find out… The only relief she has is that Lex hadn’t used Kryptonite to power it, unable to find the right balance to use it.

A loud crash shakes the walls. Pens roll down to the floor. Lena feels the vibrations crawl up to her legs before she sees Batman get thrown in the air, followed by Lex in his warsuit, ready to punch him again.

“Tell everyone to evacuate!” Lena screams to Maggie, typing quickly the command to destroy the time machine. She glances out from the window and sees Kara grab Lex’s attention by aiming her heat vision at his back. Lena focuses back onto her screen and types the final commands. “It’s done!”

The alarm blares.

“Come on!” Maggie screams at her, disappearing down the stairs with the scientists. Lena rushes after them only to stop dead in her tracks when Kara crashes through the wall.

“Well, Lena. You caused me more trouble than I thought you would,” Lex says, flying up to the opening he carved with Kara’s body. “And here I thought you’d be glad to see your creation come to life. It would have been ready in a day or two…” Kara tries to stand as he walks closer to her, but fails when the kryptonite powering his suit renders her powerless.
“Don’t hurt her!”

Lex looks back at her with a perplexed look, stopping the kick he was about to deal into Kara’s body. Their eyes meet. His eyes are cold and impassive with a hint of that same obsessive madness she had seen after he got arrested. That wasn’t the brother she knew and loved… *I’m Lex. I’m going to be your new brother… Wanna play?*

“Stop,” Lena pleads. “Please, Lex. It’s over.” She can still save him, Lena tells herself. She can still save him…

“You’re wrong. This is only the beginning,” He grabs Kara by the neck and readies his Kryptonite canon. It hums and glows from his right hand.

Kara groans, struggling to break his hold as green veins appear on her skin. The gun feels heavy in her hand but Lena knows… She knows.

“Lex!” She calls out, gritting her teeth, willing her hand to stay steady. “There’s more to this world than what you see!”

His eyes widen and he looks back at her in shock. “How…”

Lena shoots at the Kryptonite fueling his canon. The Kryptonite breaks and the canon powers off. He looks back at her stunned. Kara falls back to the ground, gulping for breath as he loses control of his warsuit. Lex stumbles back and falls through the hole. There’s a thrumming in the air. Lena feels goosebumps rise over her skin before the time machine explodes below them, shattering the windows and shaking the floor. She only has time to put Kara’s arm over her shoulder and protect both of their head before they are propelled forward by the blast.

Time doesn’t make sense. It exists in abstraction when all we have is our perception of it. Some years go faster than others. Some days seem to drag on indefinitely. Time travel makes everything even more confusing. Time travel made Lena think she could change things… Kara takes her out from the rubble. There’s blood running down her arm and cuts littering her usually impenetrable skin. They get up to the main floor amidst the chaos and destruction. Lena sees agents looking around for any survivors while Maggie is coordinating the evacuation. The smoke clears and Lena sees Wayne kneeling on the ground next to a slab of concrete before looking back at her.

“He doesn’t have much time…”
Lena freezes, breathless, unable to move forward. Kara’s arm around her is the only thing holding her upright, and Lena walks, dreading every step, every stuttering breath until she finds Lex impaled in the chest by a scrap of metal. She falls down onto her knees, next to her brother. His face is badly burned. There’s blood staining his lips and his eyes are wide open, darting left and right, unseeing.

Lena wraps her arms around him, clenching her jaw as he latches onto her arms with gasping breaths. “Lena? I can’t see! I can’t see!” He trembles in her arms, his breathing hoarse and wet. He clutches onto her tightly, so tightly, just like she would cling onto him when the night felt too dark.

“I’m sorry…” Lena says, biting her lip to stop them from trembling. “I tried… I tried…” She stifles a sob, holding on to him as hard as she can. “You remember when we used to watch the sunrise?” Lex nods with bluish lips and trembling limbs. His breathing drags on in a long, gravelly gasps. “Remember the first lights? That soft light rising beyond the horizon?” His breathing ceases. “That’s the sunrise, Lex. That’s the sunrise…”

His chest stills and his body falls limp into her arms.

Lena hears nothing but silence.

The ending she thought she could rewrite unravels between her fingers.

***

Lena never liked endings. It always felt like losing something. Something she could never get back.

Once the time machine had been destroyed, the communication with the DEO headquarters had been reestablished. Lena learns that her mother has been arrested. The cure to her mad project had been found and two aliens out of three survived the confrontation. The real Hank Henshaw did not survive the fight.

But the fight itself had dragged to the outskirts of National City, rousing up the military from their slumber. Lena learns that Winn succeeded in putting up the force field but that the military has been camping outside the exclusion zone with the vitriolic population at their back. The President and the Congress were locked into a political battle, while General Lane was waiting for permission to strike.
A lot had happened, and maybe the most surprising thing was when she realized that it didn’t end with her brother dying. It didn’t end with Cadmus locked behind bars. The fight didn’t end… Maybe it had been naïve of her to think that it would. That slaying the monsters would be enough to bring back the peace and end the conflict. Shouldn’t it have been enough?

It is dark outside. Agents are running in and out of the bunker. SWAT teams are lingering at the perimeter, looking for other booby traps they might have missed. Ambulances go back and forth. Their flashing lights illuminate the dark roads ahead. The atmosphere is heavy. It feels like the sky is about to break at any moment.

The medic from earlier sighs while stitching her hand again in the back of an ambulance. Lena doesn’t even flinch or grumble. It might be because of the pill Wayne gave her, or sheer weariness, but Lena doesn’t feel a thing. She can barely feel the warmth from the blanket they had thrown over her shoulder, only the blood and grime sticking to her body. She can hear Kara and Maggie, next to her, arguing over a phone, talking with Alex, while medics fuss over them. The situation at The Sanctuary isn’t getting better… Lena realizes that evil doesn’t end with killing the monsters. It comes back, replacing the defeated monsters with new ones… The medic finishes putting in the last stitches and gives her a warning look before walking to another agent in need of medical attention.

“Any word from the President?” Kara asked.

Alex sighs. “Nothing yet. The situation here is pretty volatile. Superman has tried to make the General see reason but I think it only made things worse.”

“Alright. I’m on my way,” Kara winces, clutching at her ribs as she gives the phone back to Maggie and let her wrap up the conversation with soft, loving words. The two medics fussing over Kara hasten to finish up while another medic makes sure to shine the sun lamp on her. “I’m going to talk to General Lane.”

“Let me give you a ride there,” Maggie protests at seeing Kara ready to fly off.

“No time,” Kara says, brow furrowed and the hint of tears just at the corner of her eyes. “I need to fix this.”

Lena grabs Kara’s wrist, stopping her from flying away. “You don’t have to fix this on your own, you know that, right?” Lena croaks, catching Kara’s eyes.
Kara sighs, pressing her forehead against Lena’s. “I need to fix this,” she repeats quietly.

“Be careful.” She lets go of Kara’s wrist and watches her fly away.

“Let’s go,” Maggie says, jogging back toward her car.

“I can’t help you with The Sanctuary, but I’ll take care of things here,” Wayne tells her, appearing at her side. “I’ll make sure to destroy any traces of Mercy and the time machine. Your brother’s body will be safe with me.” Wayne grunts, surprised when Lena hugs him. He stands rigidly in her arms before giving in and hugging her back.

“Thank you,” Lena whispers, pressing her face into his hard shoulder as tears well up in her eyes. “Thank you for everything.”

“Go,” he grumbles as Maggie stops the car next to them.

Lena smiles and climbs into the car. It’s barely 11 PM. The day hasn’t even ended yet and Lex appearing in Winn’s lab already feels like ages ago. The world blurs past them to the soft humming of the engine. The road stretches before them, illuminated only by the car’s headlights and framed by tall trees on both sides.

“Her name’s Jamie,” Maggie says after a while. Hesitation, fear, and a lifetime of wariness shows by the dashboard lights reflecting on her face. “She’s going to be eleven in two months.”

Lena nods silently. That information had been in Lex’s files, but Maggie had kept silent. Maggie never said anything, and so Lena hadn’t asked about the daughter Maggie had protected from being anything more than a pawn in Lex’s game.

“I- I was,” Maggie chuckles, clearing her throat. Uncomfortable.

“You were sixteen.”

Maggie nods. “My parents had kicked me out for being gay. And I- I was,” she heaves a breath, hands tightening on the wheel. “Lost and messed up. My aunt took me in but I just- I wanted to try.
Try to be the person my parents wanted me to be. I thought maybe they would take me back…” Maggie chuckles derisively. “The only time I did with a guy… I- I got pregnant. I wanted to keep her but I… I knew I wouldn’t be good for her. Not the way I was back then. I couldn’t give her… give her a good, happy life.” Maggie clenches her jaw, blinking back tears. The leather creaks under her fingers and Lena doesn’t think Maggie would take it well if she were to take her hand. She seems too wound up, nearly ready to bolt, the faint lights coming from the dashboard still bright enough to show the tear falling down her cheek.

“You did,” Lena whispers. “You gave her a good, happy life. The only way you knew how.”

Maggie hums, unconvinced, sniffing quietly.

“After I learned what my brother did to you, I made sure to check on her, make sure she was safe. She is,” Lena assures her. “And she’s happy. Her adoptive family takes good care of her.”

Maggie sighs in relief, eyes fixed on the road, the tension slowly seeping away from her body.

“Have you told Alex?”

Maggie shakes her head. “Not yet. I was waiting for- For all of this mess to end…”

The car doesn’t make it all the way to the exclusion zone. Cars and people carrying torches and clamoring their fear and anger are blocking the way. They try to make their way to at least one of the DEO’s outposts but the roads to get there are too overcrowded to continue by car.

It’s a mob. Anonymous bodies bumping against one another with nothing else but rage in mind. Lena grabs the back of Maggie’s vest as they carve their way into the crowd. It should have ended, Lena thinks. Lex died but his rage continues on.

The exclusion zone is no better. The army is there, unperturbed by the clamor at their back, as their rifles are trained toward The Sanctuary. Too far away to do any harm, but menacing enough to fuel the crowd waiting at their back. Lena begins to see the makeshift headquarters only to notice a commotion at one of the tents, and someone running toward them.

“No! No! Go back! We need to go!” Winn grabs them by the arm, covered in dust, and makes them run the other way. “General Lane took command! He is-”
Several jets charge toward The Sanctuary.

“Will the force field hold?” Maggie screams over the deafening sound.

Bright flashes of light illuminate the sky. The shockwaves renders everyone silent as the ground shakes under their feet. There’s nothing Lena can do, other than watch them bombard The Sanctuary and hope, hope with all of her heart that the force field will hold.

The gasps of surprise when the force field appears in the distance protecting The Sanctuary from being destroyed are enough to make her smile.

“Lena! We need to go! He knows it was us!” Winn tugs at her arm and runs deeper into the crowd. “The others got arrested. Alex broke me out to find you!”

“Have you seen Kara?” Maggie pants, running behind them.

“They tried to arrest her but she got out. I don’t know where she is.”

They blend into the crowd just as some of General Lane’s men infiltrate the crowd looking for them.

“Eli and Jess are at the DEO,” Lena whispers, hiding her face.

“I know,” Winn says, face grim as they make back toward Maggie’s car only to be stopped and surrounded.

“Lena Luthor. Winn Schott. You are under arrest.”

“Fuck,” Lena breathes as they aim their weapon at them. The crowd around them hushes in shock. Winn is brought down, face pressed to the ground. There’s nothing she can do. Everything around her blurs in a smear of colors and sound until Maggie is tackled to the ground and her weapon skids on the ground, at her feet. Lena makes a move to grab it only to flinch when a shot rings out.
Lena never liked endings but all stories must come to an end.

The pain she thought she’d feel doesn’t come. There’s only silence. Silence and warmth as Kara wrap an arm around her and stop the bullet with the other. Blood flows down from her hand, still weakened by the Kryptonite in Lex’s hideout. She turns and blows the soldiers away.

Lena doesn’t know what is happening but suddenly Cat Grant appears with a television crew, parting the crowd around Supergirl. Lena steps back, huddled with Winn and Maggie at the edge of the circle as they watch, stunned and in awe as Kara steps in front of the cameras, accepting the microphone Cat Grant gives her.

“I know you are scared. I know you want answers. The last two months have been hard,” Kara says, addressing the crowd. Her voice reverberates everywhere around them. Lena even sees Kara’s face projected on walls for everyone to see. “Cadmus abducted seventeen aliens after Lex Luthor’s escape. They turned them into monsters, into weapons meant to turn us against each other. Of those seventeen aliens only six survived the experiments Cadmus did on them, and only two are still alive today, waiting to be cured. Cadmus had been pitting us against each other, creating chaos and doubt in a world I know has so much love to give… But now, all the Cadmus terrorists have been arrested, and Lex Luthor has been stopped. And this- This isn’t us. This isn’t what we’re fighting for,” Kara exclaims with faith, conviction, and hope shining in her eyes. “The people of The Sanctuary are not the enemy. They are scared just like I was when I was sent to Earth!” Her voice wobbles but Kara powers through, looking at all the faces around her, laying herself bare for the first time. “I witnessed the death of my planet and of everything I knew. I came here as a thirteen-year-old, alone, scared and confused. All I wanted was to go back home, but even my powers couldn’t bring my parents back.” Lena startles as Alex suddenly appears next to them, panting and looking at Kara with worry and immense pride, as the people of National City listened. “I was put under the care of a human family who had no idea what they were getting themselves into, and I wouldn’t be who I am without them. They gave me a home and a new family. They made me feel less alone. They made me feel loved.” Lena hears the commotion before she can see it. General Lane obstinate and furious carves a path through to the grumbles of the crowd. “There’s a light in every one of us. A child looking for a home. You gave me something to fight for. A place to call my own. We can’t let fear blind us with hatred. We can’t let fear change us from who we are.”

General Lane breaks into the circle, his men surrounding Supergirl all at once.

“Supergirl, you are under arrest.”

“For what?” Cat Grants demands with a defiant look. “For telling the truth?”

Alex is ready to jump into the fray, but she doesn’t have to as the people of National City begin to protest against the General. The tone changes, and the crowd’s rage transforms to a loud defense of
their hero, Supergirl. Lena heaves a sighs of relief when General Lane is forced to retreat, faced against the people who had never recognized his authority in the first place.

Kara turns toward them with a beautiful smile and gives them a thumbs up before Cat Grants takes her away to meet the crowd.

It doesn’t end here.

Superman comes back with the President and General Lane is arrested, charged with unauthorized attack on undocumented aliens and US citizens who had signed the Alien Amnesty Act and found refuge in The Sanctuary. J’onn is reinstated as Director of the DEO. The following hours are filled with meetings. The Sanctuary’s delegates meet with the President and peace is slowly put back on track.

They are called to report before the President in secrecy. With J’onn’s and Kara’s support, Lena details the role she had played in the protection of The Sanctuary and the death of her brother. The President takes everything in stride, and maybe the most surprising thing isn’t her lack of reaction when being told about the existence of time travel, but the fact that President Marsdin happens to be an alien herself. The revelation is made in confidence, assuring every-one present that they are working toward a common goal.

Lena powers through every meeting after that, juggling her duties as L-Corp’s CEO while remaining a crucial factor in the resolution of the conflict. Lena doesn’t break when she sees her brother’s body at the DEO, waiting for burial. Lena doesn’t break when Jess takes her in her arms or when Eli squeezes her hand. Batman’s pill still holds strong and Lena powers through as she is called in every other direction. Lena doesn’t break alone in the shower, when the water running down her body turns a pinkish hue as her blood and the blood she’s spilt are washed away. Lena powers through another check-up, and somehow doesn’t break until Luke takes her in his arms. Then Lena breaks, and she doesn’t know how to stop herself from crying.

The first tremors hit her body when Kara flies them to her apartment. The effect of the pill is about to end, but even dusty and cold, the comfort of Kara’s apartment is enough to make the trembling cease.

“Are you hungry?”

Lena shakes her head. “But I think- I need another shower,” Lena croaks because the feeling of Lex’s blood on her hand just won’t go away. It won’t leave.
Kara draws a bath. Lena raises her arms mechanically when Kara takes her shirt off, wincing as the pain in her arm flares again and shudders, standing bare in the humid room, after the rest of her clothes fall to the floor. Kara clears her throat, making a move to step out of the room but Lena stops her. She grabs the fabric of Kara’s suit, twisting the red symbol in her fist possessively. She doesn’t want to be alone. After everything, she wants Kara to stay right here, feel her skin on her skin, her breath hitting her lips, and her hands holding her close...

Kara takes her boots off. Her red cape falls to the floor, followed by the rest of her suit... Lena stares, breathless at the skin unveiled before her. Her hands trace the slope of Kara’s shoulders, feeling the smooth, unyielding skin burn her fingertips. Lena smiles at the goosebumps she sees on Kara’s skin, appearing in the wake of her exploration. Kara shudders as Lena’s lips follow the path traced by her fingers... and stay there, anchored to the skin of Kara’s shoulder as she feels the world around her tilt uncontrollably.

Kara kisses her temple, gathers her in her arms wordlessly, and steps into the bathtub. Lena gasps when the warm water caresses her skin and leans back into Kara’s body, sighing contentedly at the feel of Kara’s skin pressed so closely to hers, and of her lips kissing her shoulder softly, slowly.

“I’m glad I went back to the past,” Kara confesses, tightening her arms around Lena. “I couldn’t have done it without you.”

The water sloshes around them as Lena turns around. Kara looks at her, smiling softly with a hint of vulnerability shining in her eyes. They still have a lot to talk about but Lena doesn’t feel pressed by time anymore. And so, she savors every press of lips and brush of skin. Content to just be.

They get out when the effect of the pill fades and her body can’t stop trembling. Lena sleeps in clothes that smell of mint and honey, wrapped in arms she would recognize anywhere, her ear firmly pressed to Kara’s chest, comforted by the steady heartbeat. Lena sleeps for more than twelve hours. It’s the most she’s slept in a very long time.

It doesn’t end here either.

It turns out that peace, even hard-fought and won, is even harder to build. Kara is called back to The Sanctuary, while Lena has to suffer through meetings with her shareholders. Their surprise at her hardened appearance and their contrite looks at being proven wrong about her handling of the company is nearly enough to make the meeting worth it.
Weeks pass.

She and Kara are swept up in the reconstruction. There are more meetings and even more press conferences demanding their attention. The role Lena played in the conflict remains confusing for the general public, and as Jess predicted, some herald her as a hero while others chide her as an opportunist, but Lena doesn’t mind. It doesn’t stop the businesses that have signed her investment proposal from thriving, and if a part of the press needed a monster to replace those slain, she’d rather it be her.

It rains the day of Lex’s funeral. Unlike Lionel’s, his funeral is a quick affair. Held in secret back in the Luthors’ Manor, and Lena doesn’t linger more than she needs to. The confusion, anger and overwhelming sadness clash inside her like a stormy sea. Lena can’t make sense of it and so she ignores it.

They won, and yet Lena doesn’t feel like she won at all. She invests herself body and soul into National City’s recovery, into Eli’s and Jess’, and into any projects that need her attention, immersing herself in anything and everything in her attempt to forget the void she feels. She doesn’t talk to Luke about it. She could, but Lex’s memory and the hurt he has done to her friends is too fresh to be able to talk about him with them. Lena keeps silent, tearing every newspaper with her brother’s face on it.

“You don’t have to forgive someone to miss them,” Kara tells her one night after an argument has driven them apart for three nights. Lena stiffens, feeling Kara land behind her on the balcony of the penthouse she had bought and never really lived in. The glass of bourbon feels heavy in her hand. The liquid sloshes inside, and stops when Kara pries the glass away from her hand. “It’s okay to miss him.”

The night is cold and Lena shudders, biting her lip as tears well up in her eyes.

They stand in silence, side by side, looking over National City until Kara tells her about her aunt Astra, and how close she had come to getting her back, only to lose her again. Lena listens to Kara’s story, edging a little bit closer as Kara unravels before her. Kara tells her about Alura next, and the lies she told her, the way she used her to deceive her sister. Kara tells her about Zor-El and his reasoning behind creating the Medusa virus. Whispers of shame and guilt painfully familiar to her. When Kara falls silent, Lena is holding Kara tight in her arms with her face pressed in between Kara’s shoulder blades.

“Did you forgive them?”

Kara doesn’t answer for a long time until she grabs Lena’s hand and kisses her knuckles. “I don’t
know… But I’ve stopped feeling guilty about it.”

Three days has been too long. Three days in which she had let anger and fear dictate her actions. Three days has been too long and Lena apologizes with a kiss on the nape of Kara’s neck, with tightening arms, and with words of love on her lips.

Turning around, Kara forgives and chases after Lena’s lips, nudging her back into the penthouse and pressing her against the nearest wall as clothes are shed.

There’s a new hole the size of Kara’s elbow in the hallway leading to her bedroom. A few artsy frames fall off the walls, shattering on the ground but Lena doesn’t mind; she had only agreed to put them up to stop Jess from pestering her.

The bed groans when they fall on it. Kara grins sheepishly when she flings Lena’s bra away and shatters the lamp in the corner of her room. Lena only raises an eyebrow with a teasing smile. Kara settles over her after taking off the last of their clothes, and presses into her, grabbing the back of her thigh to press her closer, closer… Kara’s thrusts are slow, deliberate, maddening and Lena feels like she’s losing her mind as her body follows the rhythm, the gentle pace, the torturous pleasure flowing through her veins, leaving her breathless, and begging for more.

Kara exhales, whimpering into her ear, and the heat of her breath burns a path through her skin, fusing with her blood, shooting straight into her heart. Kara’s heart thunders against hers to a different rhythm than that of their hips, and the discrepancy is maddening. Her hips are steadier, unrelenting and Lena holds on to sweaty skin, kissing hungry lips, sharing incandescent, stuttering breaths until she feels her toes curl and her body tremble. Head thrown back, she sees Kara bend the metal bar of her headboard with slow, timid thrusts against her thigh until Kara tenses and a long, drawn out moan is released.

“Ohh,” Kara whispers, as the metal comes off. Lena laughs, gasping for breath, as Kara groans and buries her face in her neck.

The night goes on and a few more pieces of furniture get damaged. Her dining table does not survive the night. A few tiles in her bathroom fall out and there’s another hole in the hallway… But Lena doesn’t mind, she needed to redecorate, anyway.

Healing takes time.
The power gets reestablished, and National City recovers bit by bit.

There’s still lingering wariness but Kara Danvers from KaraDanvers.com never fails to report on The Sanctuary’s situation, conducting interviews with high-level officials, humans and aliens alike, while getting information no other reporters manage to get. Her blog becomes the most popular source of information on human-alien issues in the wake of the conflict, and the number of her followers still grows every day.

It does help that after Supergirl’s confession on the night the conflict came to an end, more and more aliens have begin to open up about their experience, no longer hiding, no longer afraid, but actively working and changing people’s perception of them.

L-Corp becomes the first major company hiring aliens after the conflict, and their knowledge and skill helps L-Corp make great strides in technological advancement, opening the way for aliens to get hired in scientific fields. Some take up their pens and write books. Autobiographies soon adorn the shelves of local libraries; works of fiction, and even history books about far distant planets become best sellers. Others take to activism, working their way up through the government to defend alien’s rights, and others simply go back to their normal life, living a peaceful life they didn’t get to have on their home planets.

Mon-El leaves, deciding to explore the world and learn more about Earth and its people, promising to come back once he finds what he’s looking for, once he becomes the person he chooses to be in this world so different from his own.

James Olsen receives a few prizes for the pictures he has taken during the conflict. An exposition is held, and his pictures don’t shy away from the grim reality that had shaken the country. Pictures of riots and protests are showcased, as are pictures of citizens from The Sanctuary waiting anxiously, and yet among the harsh reality, pictures of resilience, courage, and acts of heroism from regular citizens stand out, and pictures of young aliens smiling and chasing after Supergirl, after she had made the headlines. James Olsen had captured hope with the lens of his camera when the world had moved too fast to see it.

He also holds an exposition in the privacy of Kara’s apartment, and Lena sees herself in the pictures. There is a picture of her, with Eli and Jess laughing. One of her and Winn, looking tired but happy after they had finished building the generators. And photos of her in meetings with J’onn, Alex and Maggie. Lena loves the one of her and Kara, talking quietly while holding hands.

“You told me to take pictures,” James says from behind her. “I didn’t do it because I thought it was too late. I took them because I knew we would make it.” Lena smiles, remembering the words she told him back in the mess hall. “There’s one over here you might like,” he says, guiding her to a picture where Jess is stopping Maggie from drawing on Eli’s face on a day he unfortunately fell
asleep at his desk.

Lena laughs and makes sure to have it framed in her newly decorated penthouse. The place had never felt like home to her until Kara forced her to take a break and made her watch *Pirates of the Caribbean*... just because they could. It is not long after that they organize movie nights, having to work out a schedule to give everyone a chance to choose a film. Everyone groans when Luke makes them watch *Rubber*.

There are still rogue aliens, and humans instigating chaos, but as per the President’s order, the DEO sheds a bit of its secrecy and strengthens their ties with local police to deal with any threat to the peace, while Supergirl becomes more of an ambassador and intervenes only in major threats... or when she gets bored.

Bruce Wayne goes to L-Corp one day, interrupting her in her meeting with his usual flair. The press talks and speculates over his visits, inventing rivalries or secret agreements, when in reality they are only making sure nothing of her time machine remains. Lena destroys all records of its’ ever having existed, keeping the secret safe inside her head. When the press begins to talk about a love affair, Lena snuffs it out immediately by kissing Kara Danvers from KaraDanvers.com after a press conference. Kara’s number of followers explodes exponentially after that.

A year passes and surprisingly, Jess is the first one to tie the knot. Lena gives her a month vacation with Vasquez before assuming her position as new CFO of L-Corp.

After making sure that his patients are taken care of, Luke retires, choosing instead to work with the DEO as a liaison with the alien community. He takes Lena fishing, which bores her to death until she finally catches her first fish, after which she only grumbles for show. Wayne joins them sometimes and Lena tries not to get competitive when he catches more fish than her.

Maggie does tell Alex about Jamie. It only brings them closer, and they get married on a warm summer day. True to her word, Maggie takes Eli under her wing, intent on teaching him everything Lena didn’t. Lena isn’t worried until Eli shows her a knife trick Alex showed him at the DEO.

There are hard days and easy ones.

Eli destroys her kitchen the day after they learn that the damage done to his spine is permanent. Plates are smashed against the wall. Her drawers are wrenched from their emplacement and Lena holds him when he breaks down in her arms.
Healing takes time. It takes months, sometimes years filled with hard days and easy ones until it happens one day without notice.

Luke takes Eli to a basket ball game one day, and a year later, their whole bunch of friends explodes in cheers when Eli, as the newly appointed point guard, brings home the first victory of the season. Lena cries when his team gets the gold at the Paralympic Games.

Scars scab over and Lena sighs contentedly when Kara soothes hers with kisses. Kara tells her the stories of the scars she has worn too long for them to have been healed by the yellow sun, calling forth memories of Krypton still alive on her skin, and the invisible ones; Lena kisses them with words of love. Lena’s nightmares don’t end but Kara holds her through them, whispering I love you with every kiss, every sigh, every thrust of her hips, and every new sunrise. It doesn’t mean mistakes aren’t made or that words aren’t said in bouts of anger. Kara gets frustrated sometimes. Lena retreats when things get too overwhelming. But they work things out, one step at a time.

Healing takes time, and the fourth year after Lex’s death, Lena feels ready to visit his grave. She goes there just shy of the sunrise and waits in silence.

“I’m going to ask her to marry me…” Lena whispers, just before the night ends. “Do you think she’ll say yes?”

The cold stone doesn’t answer but Lena imagines her brother rolling his eyes at her, chuckling slightly as his arm drapes across her shoulder and he begins a speech about the superiority of the Luthor genes and how it is scientifically impossible for Kara to say no. Lena laughs wetly, as the first light shines upon her face.

It takes her more time to gather her courage to propose than she thought it would. But for all her preparations, on a night as they watch TV, ready to eat donuts after a long week, Kara actually pops up the question before she can.

“Marry me?” Kara asks, propping the box on a donut.

“What?” It isn’t the reaction Kara was hoping for and Lena berates herself it.

“Oh, Rao! You don’t want to. Oh! I mean… That’s okay. I just-” Kara puts the box back on the table and bolts from the couch. “I think we need more donuts. I’m getting us some more… Be right back!”
Lena grabs the back of Kara’s shirt before she can fly away and pulls her back to her arms, revealing her failed master plan in between giggles and kisses. It shouldn’t surprise her to learn that all of their friends knew or the bet they made on who would crack first. Alex wins the bet. What surprises her most is Alex sharing her gains with Luke.

Jess organizes everything knowing full well that if Lena did it, she would definitely go overboard.

The ceremony is simple. Kara is beautiful and Lena can’t stop smiling.

“Ready?” Kara asks her when the party ends, encircling her waist, and kissing her forehead. Lena nods and they fly off.

Sometimes, there are more hard days than easy ones but healing takes time, and Lena is okay with that.

“She said yes,” Lena says feeling the grass tickle her shins and the cold caress her skin. Kara stands a bit behind her and Lena takes her hand. “Lex. This is Kara. My wife.”

“Hi,” Kara whispers.

The stone doesn’t answer, but Lena sits on the grass with Kara’s arms wrapped tight around her.

“We’ll watch the sunrise with you,” Lena says, smiling as the first light shines upon their faces.

Chapter End Notes

I have another project in the In Every Life, In Every Other World serie. Nothing's been written yet but I've been throwing hints about it since chapter 9, I think. Go check out seriouslyficent.tumblr.com for excellent content and maybe info on this new project. Anyway, I hope you've enjoyed this crazy ride. It's been such a weird, intense, love/hate experience for me. (Only because it revealed things about me I guess I didn't want to see lol)

Thank you for reading this story. Have an amazing day! Take care! :D
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!