My first ever fanfic, so it's a randomized series based around Kara/Mon-El interactions throughout Supergirl Season 2. Most stories/chapters attempt to fill in the gaps between episodes/scenes that left me wanting more. POV switches between K&M as the impulse strikes me, and Alex, Winn, J'onn, Maggie, etc. show up to have fun and conversations. Starts from the 2x03-2x04 gap & adheres to canon pretty closely because I struggle with going against what my shows establish as fact (basically, I like to color inside the lines--it's like a fun challenge). I love all the Supergirl characters, so pretty much anyone who appears in an episode could pop up. (Also: I've had Do Not Plagiarize beat into my head for years, so I want to state here and now that unless otherwise noted, all characters belong to DC Comics and/or CW's Supergirl.)
A decent Daxamite.

That’s new.

Or maybe it wasn’t. Maybe people who had just got through apologizing for making assumptions about other people they knew nothing about shouldn’t start making assumptions all over again. Wrinkling her nose as she shut her apartment door behind her, Kara kicked off her shoes and winced as the left one zipped through the air and narrowly missed the vase of flowers on her dining table. She had to remember not to do that anymore. Too many cute vases and lamps had been sacrificed upon the altar of her forgetfulness over the years. And she really liked her beaded chandelier. That wasn’t a piece of décor she was okay with losing.

“Dial back the muscle, Kara,” she muttered, smiling to herself as she recalled all the times Alex had told her that over the years. It would serve her right if she punched a hole in a sofa pillow (again) because she couldn’t be bothered to just go and deposit her shoes in her bedroom. Especially considering the fact that she had superspeed.

Humming to herself, Kara snatched up her flats and sped into her room, where she quickly changed into the rattiest pair of sweatpants she owned. After the day she’d had, comfortable clothing was a must. And hey, what Cat Grant never knew wouldn’t hurt anybody, right? Kara couldn’t help giggling at the idea of what the older woman would say if she ever saw the kind of clothes her former assistant hung around the apartment in. Then she sighed. It hadn’t been that long since Cat had aband—uh, left Catco, but it already felt like it had been forever. Cat was just such a presence. So—so confident. So sure of every move she made. So unafraid to speak her mind. And so aggravatingly right about things! Kara was positive that Cat Grant would never have accused a complete stranger of attacking a public figure. Not falsely, anyway. For that matter, neither would Alex. No, if Cat or Alex wanted to catch a perpetrator, they would take their time, get all the facts, and then they would just take the evildoer down. Jumping to conclusions—yeah, apparently that was just a Kara Danvers thing.

“Ugh,” she groaned. Even though there was no one around to see, she covered her eyes. Being wrong in front of Alex, J’onn, Winn, and literally everyone in the DEO had been embarrassing. Apologizing to Mon-El, the Daxamite guy, had been so embarrassing. But what really got her was Alex’s cop friend, Maggie. What if Kara’s conclusion-jumping had cost Maggie her life?

Not even the sweatpants and the thermal shirt she had just pulled on could stop her from shivering at that idea.

“Last time that’s happening, Kara,” she muttered. “No more putting people in boxes! You are going to listen! You are going to think first! No more of this I-have-a-lot-of-passion business! You are going to be a reporter. You are going to be calm, and fair and, and…objective.”

On her way into the kitchen to raid her refrigerator, however, it occurred to her that being calm and fair and objective might be difficult where Mon-El was concerned.

Rats.

She slumped back against the countertop, her forehead wrinkled as she thought it over. Earlier, she’d been pretty surprised when he’d taken her offered hand. A big part of her had expected him to ignore her attempt to fix things between them, and honestly, she wouldn’t have blamed him. If
she’d been in his position, she wouldn’t have been too crazy about the person who’d read her the riot act slinking back in and apologizing as if mere words could make up for everything. Clearly he wasn’t the type to hold grudges, and that was a point in his favor. Plus he’d looked so torn up when she’d told him about Daxam’s destruction that she couldn’t help feeling for him. But all the same…he was a Daxamite. She was a Kryptonian. Even if he wasn’t the evil villain she’d thought he might be, it didn’t seem like they were going to agree on a lot of stuff. And he was really good at being aggravating. Like—really good. Kara had no idea how he’d even done it, but she’d gone in there to interrogate him feeling in charge and untouchable, and okay, yeah, very Cat Grant-like, and in less than a minute, he’d evaporated her calm and made her just plain mad.

No, wait.

She grimaced. She did know how he’d done it—it was the dumb jokes. There he was, locked up and being questioned by the very powerful alien (if she did say so herself) who’d just thrown him around an empty warehouse, and instead of offering some kind of defense, he sat there being all smart-mouthed. A normal person—or alien—would have been at least a little intimidated, but nope. Not him. Mon-El had treated it like a joke, and that kind of behavior both confused and irritated Kara. Did he have no dignity or, or caution whatsoever? Sure, it had all worked out okay, but he hadn’t known that at the time! She could have been an evil bounty hunter or something—who was that “Judge-Jury-Executioner” woman that Winn was always mentioning? She could have been like the judge lady—and Mon-El wouldn’t have known. He’d have just been dead.

Kara shook her head. Lack of seriousness, that’s what he had. By the buckets. And lack of seriousness was definitely a Daxamite trait. Why, five minutes after she’d told him that his home—his whole life, for Rao’s sake—was gone for good, he’d introduced himself to Alex, Winn, and J’onn as Mon-El, the Homeless. It wasn’t in the least funny, but he’d acted as though it were, and had chuckled as he said it. Alex thought he was just trying to use humor to cope with the loss, but Kara wasn’t so sure, and the notion was unsettling. If he couldn’t even take the destruction of his home world seriously, how was a girl who still had nightmares about losing every single thing she’d ever known going to handle being around him? What if he made fun of her for holding onto every little scrap of Krypton that she could? She could see herself now, trying to relay some important piece of information to Alex or J’onn while Mon-El hopped around in the background, cracking jokes about stuffy Kryptonians who didn’t know how to have a good time. Insulting her people like he’d done before…

After she’d insulted his, of course. Which she was still kind of doing.

“Oh, great.” Kara rolled her eyes at herself and yanked open the freezer door. This called for a whole gallon of ice cream. “Way to be fair, Kara! Way to be objective.”

Grabbing a big spoon—all she really wanted was to scoop the stuff out with her hands, but that would be messy and Alex would never let her hear the end of it if she came over to visit and found another chocolate handprint in a weird place because Kara had run off to a crime scene and forgotten to clean it later—she took the gallon of Neapolitan ice cream with her to the couch and plunked down.

“Maybe I can just…not react to him,” she said, addressing her ceiling as she shoveled a glob of the frozen dessert into her mouth. “Be cool. I can be cool, right? Sure! Yeah. Of course I can…not. I cannot. Oh gosh, what am I going to do?”

Defeated, she slumped back against the cushions. Who was she kidding? Snapper got her goat on a daily basis. She had been ready to rip Lena to shreds in print for allowing the creation of the alien-detecting device (which was Lena’s job, yes, but still not a good thing) and she even liked
Lena! How was she ever going to be able to exist calmly around a person who she suspected could tick her off by raising an eyebrow at the wrong time?

And who, more importantly, was a living, breathing reminder of the fact that her parents, the people she still loved so much that it hurt, had let not one, but two worlds collapse?

Kara sighed, hugging the plastic tub to her chest. Well, there was no help for it. She was just going to have to avoid him. Not all the time, of course, because given the fact that he now lived at the DEO and she spent a lot of hours over there, total avoidance would be close to impossible. But she could at least make sure that there were enough people around to form some sort of buffer zone. Like Alex. Alex would do it. As long as she didn’t know that Kara was trying to semi-hide from the new arrival, of course—that was the kind of thing that Alex never let Kara get away with. And Winn! Winn could be a human buffer, too. J’onn had said they’d have to run lots of tests on Mon-El, and Winn would eat that kind of thing up. If Kara was lucky, she could keep Mon-El at arms-length without anyone ever being the wiser. And really, it was for the best.

Wasn’t it?
Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x04, after the "She is a babe" scene, after Alex gets the "Wear something nice" call from Maggie, and before Alex and Maggie go to investigate Roulette's alien fight club like the awesome crime-fighting duo they are. This is WAY-HAY-HAY longer than I meant for it to be, but I got carried away, so...oops.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

I don’t think that’s a good idea.

Because you’re from Krypton and I’m from Daxam.

No—I just…I’ll see you later.

Even though she knew he wasn’t following her or anything, Kara practically scurried down the hall away from Mon-El. It wasn’t because he’d done anything so very bad—though he had called her mother “a babe,” and that was just all kinds of grossness and wrongness, and someone really needed to have a talk with Winn—no, it was more a fear that if she stuck around much longer, she’d end up spilling all kinds of things she didn’t want anyone to know to him. And that wasn’t good. Just because they had a destroyed-world background in common didn’t mean that they were all that alike. And yes, maybe he was ridiculously easy to talk to when he wasn’t locked up and trying to be a pain, but still. Kara wasn’t sure why, but the Daxamite set off all sorts of alarm bells in her head when she looked at him. It was as though the nicer he was, the more she distrusted him, and that didn’t make any sense. What had he done, besides walk into the middle of a private conversation she was having with Mom—or, well, Mom’s hologram? Mom had even insulted Daxam and everyone on the planet, and he’d just laughed it off. Which was either very nice of him, or yet another example of his not taking anything seriously.

But wait.

Kara stopped mid-step as she recalled the expression on his face after he’d said the word alone. No, he wasn’t immune to the empty feeling that came from losing your planet. Was Alex right in thinking that Mon-El was just acting extra-lighthearted because he didn’t want to face up to the fact that he was the last of his kind? Was he feeling like J’onn had, once upon a time? Like she herself did, sometimes, until she remembered that she had Clark? A quick stab of sympathy hit her and she half-turned back around before she caught herself.

No.

She frowned, resuming her walk. She wasn’t going to worry about all that. She had already decided to stay away from him. It was a good plan. The best plan. For sure. Because, hello? That megawatt grin he’d given her when he’d tried to compliment her into taking him out of the DEO? That was all the proof she needed! That grin was a problem. A—a trouble grin. For a split second (or two, or three, or ten) it had made her forget that she was trying to avoid him and she found herself wondering what it would be like to hang out with a super-powered friend. Sure, she and
Barry had had a lot of fun that one time, but Barry wasn’t an alien, and he cringed every time she got a little too excited about something and hit him in the shoulder to get his attention. Kara already knew the kind of effort it took to just knock the wind out of Mon-El, and it was unlikely that a stray shoulder punch of excitement would hurt him. But while that had a certain appeal, he was still so very full of that practiced Daxamite charm. Nope, staying away from Mr. She-Is-A-Babe was a very solid plan.

Most powerful woman in the world indeed. Hah! As if she couldn’t see right through that—that blatant attempt to get on her good side.

“How obvious can you get?” she muttered, rolling her eyes.

“About what?” said her sister’s voice from just behind her.

“Alex!” Kara yelped, whirling around. “Hey! Uh, nothing. Nothing, just, ha-ha, you know me—I’m just…walking around, talking to myself.”

“Right.” Alex’s brows rose. “I just scared the alien with super hearing almost out of her skin because she was so busy talking to herself about nothing that she couldn’t hear me calling her. Yeah, that makes sense.”

Kara hoped desperately that whatever her sister needed her for was urgent enough to keep the questions from coming. “So, why were you calling me?” she asked, plastering on her most convincing smile. “Got something for me to punch? Kick? Freeze with my wintery, Elsa-like powers?”

The look Alex gave her was nothing short of suspicious. Thankfully, though, she let the matter drop. “No,” she said, folding her arms. “I just wanted to let you know that I’m going out tonight.”

“Ooh!” Kara perked up instantly. This was news. “On a date?”

“Um, no.” Alex laughed a little, waving a hand quickly. “No, uh, nothing like that. I just got—well, Maggie. You remember Maggie, right? She called with a lead on the case. And I uh, I mean, she and I have it handled, but just on the off chance that something goes wrong, because apparently, I have to ‘wear something nice’ which basically means it’ll be impossible to hide all the usual weapons, I wanted to make sure you were available for backup?”

“Duh.” Kara threw an arm around her sister, taking special care not to squeeze too hard. Alex was tougher than most people three times her size, but Kara had learned over the years that the smaller girl tended to swallow down a lot of the physical pain Kara’s hugs inflicted because she didn’t want to make Kara feel bad. “You know I’m like a favorite pair of jeans, right? Always there when you need me?”

“Yeah. By the way, Kara, you do know jeans are made of cloth and that cloth rips, don’t you?” Alex asked, the eye-roll apparent in her voice as she patted Kara’s hand. “Kind of easily, actually. I tore one of my favorite pairs the other—”

“Just go with it, you party pooper,” Kara responded, making a face. “And oh! Something nice? Does that mean you have to go shopping for a dress?”

“Maybe.” Alex narrowed her eyes. “Why?”

Kara beamed, trying to appear as nonchalant as possible. “Does that mean that I can go with you and help you pick it out?”
“Go with me, yes.” Alex began walking away. “If you want. Help me pick it out, absolutely not.”

“Hey!” Kara yelled, catching up to her sister in a blur. “I have good taste in clothes!”

“You do,” Alex agreed. “For you. Not for me. Because sorry to burst your bubble, Kara, but I am not going to wear a red lace dress for anyone, okay?”

“Oh, fine.” Kara pouted as they headed toward the lobby. “How do you feel about pink sequins?” she inquired, sneaking a glance over at her sister and biting her lip to keep from laughing.

“I don’t know.” Alex never broke stride. “How do you feel about kryptonite?”

“All right, all right,” Kara giggled, covering her mouth with the back of one hand. She let another beat pass before leaning in and whispering, “What about ruffles?”

Alex tilted her head, surveying Kara with calm dignity. “What about Daxamites?” she challenged. Instantly, Kara’s laughter died away. “That’s not—” she began.

“Sure it is.” Her sister held an arm out, stopping her just outside the doorway to the lobby. “You’ve been a little weird around him ever since you let him out of that cell. What gives?”

“I have not been weird.” Kara tried not to feel a little panicky. She’d been so careful to act normal and stay calm. To seem—well, if not quite friendly, not unfriendly either. No way had she been obvious about it. “I’ve been totally fine around him. Totally! And that’s, that’s so not what this is.”

Her sister sighed, gazing upward in a give-me-patience kind of gesture. “Kara. You were running in and out of the room to check on him when he was in a coma, and that’s when you weren’t sitting by his bed and talking to him.”

Embarrassment slammed into Kara. “H-how did you know about that?” she asked, crossing her arms over her chest and resisting the urge to check over her shoulder to make sure that nobody else was in the hall to overhear.

“We are in a secret government facility,” Alex said dryly. “There are these little things called security cameras all over the place, and when superheroes are grabbed by the throat and thrown through glass, we DEO agents have this kooky habit of checking over the security footage for possible clues.”

“Right.” Kara grimaced, mentally kicking herself. Stupid security cameras.

“So,” Alex continued, “unless my baby sister is a creep who gets her thrills from checking out shirtless guys while they sleep—”

“I DO NOT!”

“—I’m going to have to assume that she has a problem being around someone who’s not from the place she originally thought they were from.”

“Okay, okay, you win!” Kara hissed, looking wildly in all directions. A few curious glances were thrown their way from agents in the lobby who had no doubt heard her screech, but that was all right. Just so long as no six-foot-tall aliens in DEO-issued sweats came swaggering down the hall, everything was still all right. Exhaling loudly, she rubbed her forehead. “Yes,” she told her
sister in a low voice, leaning forward. “Fine. It’s Mon-El. Mon-El is bothering me. I am bothered by Mon-El. I am so bothered by Mon-El, in fact, that I’m actually trying really hard to avoid him. Are you happy now?”

“No,” said Alex, making Kara groan and cover her face with both hands. “I want to know why.”

“Does it matter?” Kara demanded, her voice muffled by the fingers splayed over her face.

“Yes.”

Kara grumbled under her breath as Alex reached out and attempted to remove her hands from her face. No ordinary human could ever get the Girl of Steel to budge anything if she didn’t want to, but then, Alex Danvers was no ordinary human. She was an older sister trying to help a younger sister. So, one by one, Kara allowed her fingers to be peeled away.

“Now,” Alex said, her voice kind as she rested both hands on Kara’s shoulders. “Tell me. Why does he bother you? ‘Cause I got to be honest, Kara, even J’onn likes him.”

“It’s not him, exactly,” Kara explained, wondering even as she said the words what she was trying to say. “I like him. Or, not like exactly, but…he’s nice. And he’s just so confused about earth—but he’s…well, he’s just so…so…”

“Daxamite-ish?” Alex suggested, raising her eyebrows.

“Yeah,” said Kara. But she frowned a little, because that wasn’t quite right either. “Kind of. Oh, I don’t know. It’s just weird. He’s weird.” She scrunched her face up as she thought about it. “It’s like I can tell he’s upset about what happened to Daxam, you know? But he won’t act like it. Not for more than like, point-three seconds at a time, anyway. He’s all, let’s do this, and let’s go here, and let’s make jokes and laugh! instead of settling down and just talking about it. And it—it kind of makes me mad.”

Alex smiled at that. “Yeah, but Kara, everyone has different ways of protecting themselves from pain.” She poked Kara’s nose with a forefinger. “You get angry. You go out, you punch things, you wear yourself out, because that gives you something to focus on besides the pain. I don’t think that’s how Mon-El handles things. When he was asking about the signal earlier, I saw his face when I told him no.”

Kara frowned, trying to remember whether or not she’d been looking at him then. Oh, right. She’d been trying plan an exit that wouldn’t seem suspicious. “And?” she asked.

“And it hurt him.” Alex shook her head. “For those point-three seconds you mentioned. Then, boom. He’s got his happy face on, and he’s talking about playing whatever that stupid dragon game was that you guys were talking about.”

“Garata,” Kara said automatically. “It’s kind of cool, actually.”

Alex snorted. “With dragons, yeah. I’m sure it is. But the point is—” She glanced at something behind Kara and straightened. “Never mind. We’ll finish this later. While we shop, okay?”

“Huh?” Kara stared at her sister, confused until she realized who the footsteps she’d been tuning out as they progressed down the hall belonged to.

“Hey, Alex,” Mon-El said, his voice still cheerier than Kara thought it should have been. “Kara.”
Shoot, Kara thought. This was worse than all those times at Catco she’d said goodbye to a coworker and then headed to the elevators with them, said goodbye again, and then exited the building with them. “Hi,” she managed, giving him a quick nod and smile before finding a spot on the wall across the way to study.

“Hey, Mon-El,” Alex said. “You didn’t use Winn as a spear during testing, did you?”

He laughed, the sound making Kara reach up to rub at the back of her neck. Why was he so cheerful? Didn’t he realize the enormity of what had happened to his planet? What hers had done to it? How could that kind of shared past not bother someone?

“No, Winn’s fine.” He glanced at Kara before returning his attention to Alex. “He’s chillaxing, as I understand. I uh, just don’t know where.”

“I do.” Alex rolled her eyes. “He’s in the break room, probably raiding the vending machines. Mon-El, when you see him, tell him that if he gets Cheeto dust everywhere again, specifically on any of my guns, I’m going to pop the heads off those little plastic dolls he keeps trying to leave on his desk.”

Kara looked up at her sister, surprised enough to enter the conversation. “Wait. His action figures?”

“Whatever.” Alex waved the detail away.

“You don’t let him keep them on his desk?”

“No, J’onn won’t let him keep them on his desk. Not since he was playing with them and one of his Star Wars ones lost a helmet or something. J’onn slipped on it and almost fell in the middle of a security briefing. It got ugly.”

“Sorry, what’s a Cheeto?” Mon-El asked when Alex finished speaking. “And…what are these Star Wars?”

Kara exchanged glances with her sister. “Uh, well…” she started.

“No, no.” Alex pointed at her. “Don’t you dare, Supergirl.” She grinned at Mon-El, who raised his eyebrows in response as if gathering that there was a joke somewhere. “Mon-El, I want you to go find Winn and repeat those last two questions to him. After you deliver my message, though. Okay?”

“O-kay,” Mon-El said slowly, eyeing Alex with a half-smile that was more than a little wary. “Is this another one of those earth-things that I think I get but then it turns out I really don’t?”

Alex pursed her lips. “I don’t know. Have you had any of those recently?”

“No,” said Kara quickly at the same time that Mon-El said, “Yes.”

“All right, then,” Alex commented, glancing back and forth between the two aliens. “On that note—Kara, do you want to head out now?”

Kara refused to look anywhere but at the wall, since she could feel both her sister and Mon-El watching her. “Yeah, sure,” she said. “That fancy dress of yours isn’t going to buy itself.”

“Whoa, fancy dress?” Out of the corner of her eye, Kara saw Mon-El turn toward Alex. “Nice. Winn told me about that. You have a date, then?”
“It’s not a date! It’s—okay.” Alex slapped Mon-El on the shoulder, the sound reverberating through the hallway. “Kara, hang on a sec,” she said, shaking out her probably stinging hand. “You were right. Someone needs to have a talk with a bigmouthed tech guy about imparting faulty information. I’ll be right back.”

“You don’t have to—oh, okay. Never mind.” Kara shut her mouth with a snap when she realized her sister was too bent on Winn-chastisement to bother listening to her. Or to notice that leaving Kara alone with Mon-El meant a sad lack of normal conversation.

“So, uh…” Mon-El said finally, just before the silence between them became unbearable. Kara glanced over to see him twiddling his thumbs, his smile more polite than anything else. “Should I follow her, or is there going be a lot of yelling?”

Kara folded her arms, supplying a laugh that was only half-forced. “Probably. To the yelling, I mean. You uh, you might want to wait a little bit before you follow her. She can be…pretty intense.”

“Wow. You know, I did not get that from her at all?”

Kara’s lips twitched in spite of herself. “Just don’t mess with her guns, and you’ll be fine,” she told him.

He laughed, resting his hands on his hips as he swung his head around to check over his shoulder before turning back and making an exaggeratedly scared face at her. “Yeah. I wouldn’t dare. I’m thinking nobody in their right mind gets between Alex and her guns.”

“Ah, see! There you go.” Kara waved a hand, wondering as she did so if her movements had always been that stiff and spastic. “New Earth lesson learned! Those are always fun. Well, not always. But sometimes. I mean, kind of. They can be.” Oh, Rao. What was she even talking about, and how could it possibly take Alex this long to scold Winn? The breakroom wasn’t that far away, and the woman had been running!

Mon-El tipped his head to the side, his expression caught between a confused frown and a smile as he studied her. “Are you okay?”

“Yes! Yes.” Kara drummed her fingers along her biceps, willing Alex to come back already. “I’m fine. Uh, h-how are you?” Okay, and now she knew why Han Solo had shot the communications out instead of trying to keep talking to the empire-guy on the Death Star. Gah, this was turning into a nightmare.

“I’m…also fine,” he answered, the furrow in his brow deepening. “I’m kind of starting to wonder, though—did I do something wrong?”

Kara’s eyes widened. “What? No! No, why uh—why would you um, why would you think that?”

The grin he gave her was a little too knowing for her taste. “Just a feeling,” he said, lifting a shoulder. “Was it the babe thing? Because I didn’t intend to insult your mother or—”

“No, no, no. That’s not a big deal,” Kara hastened to assure him. Then she wrinkled her nose. “I mean—actually, yeah, it is a big deal, so definitely don’t go around calling random beautiful women babes, because that’s just…yeah, that’s just not good. That word’s really only acceptable in certain contexts.”

“Ah, okay.” Mon-El nodded, looking thoughtful. “Uh…for future reference, what are the
Oh, thank Rao. Kara could hear Alex’s footsteps in the distance. “Um, well…it’s okay to use it when talking about small children,” Kara explained, talking fast so that they could hopefully be done with this conversation by the time her sister arrived. “You know, like infants? It’s short for ‘baby.’ But that’s kind of outdated, now. Most people just go ahead and say baby. And couples sometimes use it when they’re talking to each other. It’s an—an endearment. Like a nickname you save for the person who’s really special to you.”

“Ohh.” Mon-El nodded, looking intrigued. “So it’s like saying ‘My love?’”

“Uh, yeah,” Kara said, hoping he wasn’t planning on marching around the DEO and practicing his endearments. “Basically. You don’t want to just...throw it around.”

“Okay.” He nodded again. “Thank you.”

“Yeah, no problem,” she answered as Alex came striding up. “Ready to go?” she demanded before her sister could say anything that might prolong this very awkward exchange.

“Yep.” Alex gestured behind her with a thumb. “Mon-El, Winn’s waiting on your questions. I already gave him my message, so you don’t have to worry about that.” She smiled at him and grabbed Kara’s arm. “We’ll see you around.”

“Right.” He returned Alex’s smile and gave her a small wave. “Have fun.”

“It’s not—ugh.” For a second, Kara thought Alex was going to continue the correction, but then her sister just tilted her head a little like she did when she was mildly annoyed, and breathed out a laugh. “You know what? I will. Thanks.”

“Uh-huh.” Mon-El sent Kara a quick smile. “I wish you both luck in your hunt.”

“I appreciate that,” Alex told him. “More than you know. Now, go.” She shooed him down the hall with a hand. “Go find Winn. Ask him your Cheetos and Star Wars questions. It’ll be worth it, I promise.” Once the Daxamite had departed, laughing his way down the hall, Alex prodded Kara in the arm. “So?”

Kara groaned. “Alex…”

“Okay, so we’re not over the Hatfield-McCoy issues yet,” Alex said, tugging Kara toward the doors. “That’s all right. You’ve got all afternoon to explain it to me.”

Kara groaned louder. “Fine. But there had better be food.”

Alex rolled her eyes again. “Of course there will be food, you bottomless pit.”

“Good. Because if there isn’t, I’m going to pin you down and wrestle you into pink sequins.”

“You can try.”

Chapter End Notes

Words in italics at the beginning are taken from the show (which if you're like me,
you already know because they're kind of seared into your brain). It's always been my opinion that Kara liked Mon-El right off the bat and distrusted that feeling, so this chapter thingamabob is the result of that opinion. She's so wary of letting others in where they have the power to hurt her, and she really seems to hate being confronted with Krypton's not-so-great past that it just seems to stand to reason that she would want to avoid any potential heartbreak/reminders of her planet's failings.
The Start Of Something New

Chapter Summary

Starts just before the "I'm in your hands, Kara" scene in 2x04 because I'm a sucker for that part. It's where I was fighting tooth and nail to not fall in love with Kara and Mon-El as a pairing, so I'm now super (pun kind of intended) attached to it :) *Note: Rumors about Daxam's sordidness mentioned. Nothing specific, though, because I've got just enough of Oh-God-Get-It-Out-Of-My-Ears Kara Danversness to prevent me from EVER writing anything that would make my mama blush :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Kara hesitated at the door for a long time. She could hear Mon-El inside, practicing who-knew-what kind of maneuvers on the equipment, clearly experimenting with its toughness. She knew he was bored out of his mind from being cooped up for so long, but even that knowledge—and pity, because as someone who hated being cooped up herself, she could totally feel his pain—wasn’t enough to spur her on. No, she was not going in there to talk to him until she had at least a hazy idea of what she was going to say. Because when she’d gone in to talk to him earlier about the barhopping fiasco with Winn, she’d done it on an impulse and had ended up telling him about avoiding him, about her parents—Rao, she’d even told him about the awful Scott Klein incident from years ago, and she’d hoped to prevent any other living soul from ever finding out about that cringe-worthy debacle. Only Alex among her current friends knew about that, and Alex was her sister. Sisters didn’t judge things like that. Outsiders did.

So yep, she needed a plan.

Plans were good. But the best she could come up with after another five minutes of scowling, standing, hemming, and hawing, was Hey, so, I talked to the DEO, and you are now under my control, and that just didn’t have a great ring to it. Plus, maybe it was just her, but it also sounded a little dirty. And dirty wasn’t how she wanted to come across to a guy who’d guarded the royal family on Daxam. He’d probably written the book on dirty. Or had at least seen it written. Kara had been young back on Krypton and yes, most Kryptonians had frowned on gossiping about a planet as frivolous and corrupt as Daxam, but even so, she’d heard rumors of some of the Daxamite practices. And if half of those things the older kids used to whisper about were true—well, Mon-El had probably been around the block so many times that he’d lost count.

“Fair and objective,” she mumbled, shaking her head to wipe away that line of thinking.

Regardless of whether or not Mon-El had done the gross, irresponsible things she understood to be typical of Daxamites, she’d yet to see anything about him that indicated he might enjoy—okay, no. No, no, no, no, no.

Kara, you are so not going there.

She clapped both hands over her ears, as if that would help drown out her thoughts. Once she’d been old enough to understand what that whole set of terms she’d heard whispered over Kryptonian lunch tables had meant, she’d vowed never to think of it ever again. And to be honest,
she still kind of suspected that the girl in her class who’d sworn her older sister had told her about it was making it up. Alex had sat Kara down in college and given her a long, scary, and totally uncomfortable speech about creepy perverts on earth (now Kara knew it was because Alex had just started her DEO training and had been so snowed under by a mass of information about unsavory characters with the potential to prey on the people she loved that she absolutely had to pass the warning along), and even the stories in that awkward conversation hadn’t come close to touching the school rumor.

Which she was NOT going to think about ever again, thank you. Nope, no, nuh-uh. She was going to gather up her courage and storm the castle, so to speak.

“You’re Supergirl,” she reminded herself sternly. “And hey, if J’onn can extend the olive branch, so can you.”

With that, she pushed the door open and started down the stairs. Holding onto the rail, more for mental than for physical support, she watched as he batted away at the arms of the metal training thing that Alex always got annoyed with Kara for calling the “punching tree.”

It was stiff and awkward at first, as she greeted him and tried to figure out how to bring up the news while talking with him about her win over Draaga. But then he made an offhand comment about how he’d thought having powers would be fun, and Kara saw her opening.

“It can be,” she told him, taking a quick breath to give her courage. “It will be. I’m going to teach you.”

Surprise flitted across his expression before one of his smirkier smiles replaced it. “I got the impression you didn’t want to spend time with me,” he said, watching her closely.

Kara almost laughed. “Well, you’re right. I didn’t.” She got no small amount of satisfaction from seeing that her admission surprised him again. “But,” she added, “I asked the DEO to release you into my custody.”

It was a much better sentence than the ones she’d been practicing, and she couldn’t help being a little proud of it. Especially because now she really seemed to have his attention.

He eyed her carefully. “Really.”

The word was more statement than question, and for a moment, Kara wasn’t sure where this was going. A tiny bit of that casual, wheeler-dealer seductiveness that made her nervous had crept into his voice, and she tensed. It was like she was sixteen again, floundering away as she tried desperately to tell teasing from flirting. Not that anyone had ever really, truly flirted with her. Or had they? The uncertainty of it all still haunted her.

But then a small crease appeared in Mon-El’s forehead, and she relaxed. No, he was just being his usual jokey self, trying to work out where they stood. And if he wasn’t openly rejoicing, at least he seemed not…displeased.

“Why?” he asked.

Kara was pleased to see him taking this so seriously. “I wasn’t sent to Planet Earth to be a hero,” she explained, trying to keep things as simple as she could. The instant the words left her mouth, though, she felt their truth in her very core. It wasn’t something she had ever really talked about with anyone—not Clark, not even Alex, but it was something she felt all the time. That lingering, background sense of loss, of emptiness, as though she’d been cheated. Maybe it was silly
of her, maybe it wasn’t. All she knew was that not getting to be there for Clark felt like being deprived of a part of herself. “I was sent to protect my cousin. To teach him, and keep him safe.” She paused, remembering the moment she’d realized that the man helping her from her pod was none other than the tiny little baby she’d loved singing to and playing with back on Krypton. “And I never got to fulfill that purpose. So, in a weird way, helping you—it gives me another chance to do that.”

Ducking her head so that she didn’t have to see his reaction to her words, she moved past him and headed toward the back of the room. Why, she wasn’t sure. It just seemed like moving around was better than standing still and waiting for him to say something.

“Who would’ve thought.”

Kara spun around to see that he’d turned, too.

“A boy from Daxam, and a girl from Krypton.” The easy grin was back, along with the maybe-flirty tone as he moved toward her. “Working together.”

“Why?” Kara inquired with more than a little sarcasm, because he was right. The idea really was ludicrous. “Is it because you come from a planet of partiers?” she joked, propping her hands on her hips as her head tilted of its own accord.

Mon-El barely blinked. “No, because you come from a planet of snobs,” he deadpanned, matching her head tilt with one of his own.

Caught off guard by the swiftness of his response—that was, without question, the most lightning-fast, straight-faced zinger she’d ever seen, and she had grown up with Alex Danvers—Kara’s mouth dropped open. Then, unable to stop herself, she laughed.

Mon-El joined in her laughter, seeming relieved that she’d decided to go with the joke. There was a strange beat or two where Kara found herself beaming in a semi-dumb sort of way at the Daxamite, but she didn’t bother to evaluate it because Mon-El was sobering up quickly, his eyes going from hers to the floor, and back again. He was more subdued than she’d seen him since she’d relayed the terrible news about Daxam, but this time it wasn’t shock or sadness on his face, and she knew that for once, he was prepared to be totally serious.

“I’m in your hands, Kara,” he told her.

His gaze held hers without dropping this time, and immediately, Kara’s face bunched itself into a self-conscious smile. She wasn’t quite sure what her stomach was up to, acting all of sudden as though she’d just jumped off a cliff and not yet started flying, but what did that matter? There was work to be done. Problems to solve. Aliens to acclimatize to earth! So she gave him a brisk nod and decided to ignore the irrational flutter in her zany insides. Probably she was just excited about finally, finally getting to show someone how it was done.

“Are you ready?” she asked him, another wide and weird grin escaping at the same time as a little enthusiastic hop.

Mon-El chuckled, but he didn’t seem put off by her eagerness. “Ready as a jackrabbit in spring.”

_Ooh._ Kara stopped short. Yeah, Winn needed to be banned from Mon-El teaching like—right away. “Um…”

“No good?” he asked, grimacing in apology.
“Nuh-uh.” Kara shook her head, nose wrinkling. “How about you say born ready, instead? It’s a little more…appropriate.”

“Okay,” Mon-El agreed, following her to the stairs. “By the way, what’s a jackrabbit?”

"We’ll get there," Kara assured him. "Soon. First, we need to go find Winn."

Chapter End Notes

Dialogue between Kara/Mon taken from the ending of episode 2x04. Chapter title taken from High School Musical, I know not why. It just popped into my head and I went with it. Does anyone actually know what the "punching tree" is called? I didn't and didn't have easily accessible internet at the time I wrote it, so Kara's forgetfulness is really just my laziness. Also: I haven't really proofread this chapter because I went straight to work on writing the next (Crossfire is still one of my favorite episodes this season and I couldn't wait to start writing), so there may be some errors. Please forgive me in advance.
Random thoughts:
* do Kryptonian schools even HAVE lunch tables? I just kind of assumed they did. Now I'm wondering.
*I have no idea what kind of Terrible Things Kara supposedly overheard about Daxam. I think it's fun to let everyone fill in their own gaps, because those of us who have evil minds tend to imagine much worse things. It's always funny :)}
The (Rude) Awakening

Chapter Summary

Inspired by the very first scene in 2x05 "Crossfire." It's in Mon-El's POV because I sympathize wholeheartedly with him in this scene. As much as I love Kara Danvers, if she burst into my room and did this to me, the first words out of my mouth would probably be "Somebody get me some kryptonite."

*NOTE: copy and paste did some funky things for whatever reason. I fixed everything I saw, but there may be random words/symbols in weird places :( 

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"It’s your first day of work!"

The voice, far too joyous for the hour, startled Mon-El out of the nice, soft, warm world of sleep. Heart pounding, his eyes flew open to a room flooded with light.

“No!” he yelled reflexively, mind racing to figure out what was happening as he lifted his head off his really, really awesome pillow. Was it an attack? Krypton exploding? Time to run, don’t look back, and do not stop for anyone?

No, it was Kara. Kara was the source of the noise. But wait, what was Kara even doing in his room?

“Yes!” she shouted, again at a decibel that made him wince and fall back on his pillow with a groan. “Come on! Up, up, and away! Mon-El, let’s go!” In a flash she was beside the cot, shaking him by the shoulders so hard that for a second his sleep-fogged brain wondered if some gigantic bomb had exploded beneath the DEO and was now sending shockwaves throughout the building. “Rise and shine, Daxam! Come on, what’s wrong with you?”

Mon-El groaned. What was wrong with him? “It’s morning,” he mumbled, squeezing his eyes shut.

“Yeah, I know.” Kara actually went so far as to pry an eyelid open. “Mornings are great!” Even through his hazy vision, he could tell that her smile was already a mile wide. “So…come on! We’re going to get you ready for work, remember?”

Oh, right. Work. Mon-El had promised his new and very energetic Earth mentor to wake up early so that they could go over to her place and get him human-ed up, or whatever it was called. Humanized, that was it. Now that he was facing the evilness of morning, though, it struck him that that had been a pretty foolish promise to make. Because…well, because it was morning. And oh, Rao, how he hated mornings. He’d kind of thought everyone did, but no, no; there was Kara, practically dancing in place while she talked so fast about anything and everything that he could barely keep up.

If she’d been anyone else, he would have just covered his ears and tried to ignore her in the hopes that she would give up and go away. But it was Kara. Kara, a Kryptonian who had decided
that protecting a bunch of strangers on a human planet was somehow her responsibility, and who had been willing to apologize (to a Daxamite) when she realized she’d accused him of something he didn’t do. Kara, who could punch through some really thick walls and stop bad guys in their tracks, but couldn’t come up with a good retort to save her life and had no idea how to take a compliment without turning into a squirming, awkward mess. Kara, who was bound and determined to fix everything for everyone everywhere, and who was probably the sunniest being in the entire universe. The least he could do in exchange for her helping him learn about Earth stuff was wake up like he’d said he would.

“Yeah, yeah,” he said, twitching his eyelid out of her grasp and blinking rapidly. “Work.” He sat up with great effort, wondering if the DEO blankets were made out of some heavy alien substance, or if all blankets felt like this when you woke up too early. “I’m up…ish.”

“Wait!” Kara shrieked, holding out both hands as he started to swing his feet out of bed. “Stop!”

“Hmm?” Mon-El stared blearily at her concerned face. Hadn’t she just told him to get up? “Why?”

“Um.” Kara was looking up at the ceiling now. “You uh, you…you need to get dressed. Before we can leave.”

Mon-El frowned. “I am dressed.”

“No, no, your um…your uh, your boxers?”

Mon-El watched in groggy fascination. Kara’s face was turning very red as she stumbled her way through whatever it was she was trying to say.

“My boxers,” he repeated, hoping to prompt her.

She made that funny scrunched-up face she always did whenever someone said something that made her uncomfortable. “Yeah, um…those uh…those don’t actually count as clothing. I mean, you have to put on pants when you go outside. It’s like a polite thing, you know?” Her eyes widened. “You know that, right?”

That’s what this was about? The necessity of wearing pants? A laugh bubbled out of Mon-El.

“Kara,” he said, rubbing his eyelids and swallowing down a yawn the size of an asteroid. “I know how underwear works.”

Okay, apparently he’d said something else wrong, because she was still looking like she’d eaten a doughnut that didn’t agree with her.

“Besides,” he added, deciding to spare them both the agony of her coming up with something to say, “J’onn told me all about that my first night here.” He drew himself up and lowered his voice in imitation of J’onn’s deep rumble. “This is a government agency, Mon-El. We have certain protocols here that I expect you to follow. That means no sleeping in boxers, briefs, or naked.’ None of which, for the record, I was going to do.”

Although he hadn’t really seen where the harm was in sleeping in boxers. It wasn’t like he planned on strolling around the DEO in them. They were just comfortable. He grinned at Kara, expecting her to enjoy his J’onn-voice, but she was looking funnier than ever and didn’t seem to notice, so he just shook his head.

“All right. I swear I’m really awake now.” He stuck a navy clad leg out from under the blanket.
“See? Pants. No fretting necessary.”

“Ha-ha.” Kara crossed her arms in the nervous version of her Supergirl stance. “I wasn’t fretting.”

“Sure you were.” He grinned at her again, wiggling his eyebrows. “You were all worried about seeing a little too much of the Daxamite scenery, weren’t you?”

“Huh? What? Are you out of—no! Ew!”

Her flabbergasted exclamations made him grin again. Kara really was fun to tease. He tried not to do it too often because she took everything so seriously that it was easy to, as Alex had once put it, wind her up, and it made him feel bad sometimes at how embarrassed she got when he was just joking around. But a lot of times, like in this instance, the jokes just seemed to make themselves. Scenery and landscape and view in connection with physical attractiveness was something Winn had had to explain to Mon-El. They were watching a lot of earth shows on a thing called Netflix—although Mon-El had been warned not to tell anyone ever that Winn had given him his password—and Mon-El had gotten hopelessly confused about why the two main characters of one of the shows kept talking about a ton of boring trees and bushes when they were clearly dying to jump into bed together.

“No, see, that’s the double-talk,” Winn had explained. “They’re like, flirting or whatever. Come on, man, you have to have said something like this before.”

“Nope.” Mon-El had shaken his head, his attention glued to the screen. “Never. Why would I talk about a beach, or—or a lake or something, if they’re standing right there? Is that something people do, here? Talk about trees? Does that even work?”

In the end, Winn had made him understand that it was just another strange piece of Earth slang, but it had taken a while. Now, he was kind of proud that he understood it well enough to make a joke about it to Kara.

But Kara was still red-faced and sputtering, so he figured he’d probably better make it clear that he didn’t really think that she was trying to see him in his underwear. Not that he would necessarily mind that, of course. He wasn’t particularly shy. He just didn’t think Kara was very interested in seeing him like that. Because although she was kind, sweet, and easily embarrassed by suggestive humor (Alex had told a joke once that went right over Mon-El’s head but he’d known right away that it was dirty by Earth standards because Kara had blushed to the roots of her hair and gotten so uncomfortable that she had to leave the room), Kara had a mischievous streak and was dead honest. He had a feeling that if she wanted a closer look at a person, she’d probably just tell them straight out.

“Kara, I’m kidding,” he said, raising his voice so she could hear him over her hand-waving rant. “I’m sorry. I don’t actually think you’re a creeping tom.”

“Peeping tom,” Kara corrected, pausing long enough to give him her disapproving stop-teasing-me-this-is-serious look. “Although I guess creeping tom works, too. Huh.” She bit a knuckle in thought for a second or two before she narrowed her eyes at him again. “But hey. No more kidding until we’ve got you dressed for success, okay?”

“What about ‘smart remarks?’” he inquired, doing the finger-quotes thing Winn and Alex had shown him one day at the DEO. Kara was always whacking him on the arm for sarcastic stuff that just sort of left his mouth without permission. Which he personally thought was pretty hypocritical of her, since she usually laughed or tried not to laugh whenever he said them.
Like now. He could tell now that even though her lips were twitching, she was considering thumping him in the shoul—oh, nope. Never mind. He closed his eyes right before Kara brought his own pillow down on the top of his head.

“Thank you,” he said, making her giggle.

“You’re welcome. Now, come on, Mon-El!” She beckoned him toward the door, her whole face aglow. “We are burning daylight! Chop-chop. We’ve got things to do, hair to cut, pancakes to eat.”

“Daylight doesn’t burn,” Mon-El pointed out, following her to the door. “And what exactly are we chopping? I didn’t think my hair was that long.”

“It’s an expression,” said Kara, hooking an arm through his and yanking him with her toward the main DEO room. “They’re both expressions. The daylight one is another way of saying we’re wasting time, and chop-chop means hurry up. Now, are you ready to take off?”

“Only if I get to ride piggyback and nap on the way.” Catching sight of her raised eyebrows, he laughed. “Sorry. Last joke. Yes, I’m ready.”

“Great!” Kara beamed at him again, making him wonder how the Kryptonian hadn’t split her own face with smiling long before now. “’Cause it’s time to use that superspeed, Mr. Matthews.”

Mon-El’s brow puckered. “Who now?”

“Later. Readystgo!”

Chapter End Notes

This is the first of what will probably be several chapters based around 2x05 because it's one of my favorite eps (I was interested in all the plot threads for once) and there just seem to be so many gaps in the transitions. The chapters may or may not fall in exactly the right scene order, because I just finished writing one that takes place near the middle of the episode and promptly realized that I wanted to do another one that relates to the opening music sequence + one that takes place BEFORE the middle of the episode but AFTER the music sequence. So...the semi-neat chapter order might get wrecked very soon.

*Random note: The music sequence is where I officially gave up trying to not ship these two. The instant he walked out the door in the uber-baggy shirt I knew I was in serious trouble. When he came back out in the little sweater outfit and she got all cute and happy and excited, my goose was cooked and I knew it. (The words "Crap. They got me." actually left my mouth at that point.)

*Random note #2: The first time I saw this scene, I was positive that the reason Mon-El jerked awake so fast was related to what happened to him back on Daxam. After 2x16 came out and we learned the full story, I'm more convinced than ever, so I decided to include my theory in here.
The Wanderer

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x05 after Kara catches Mon-El and Eve and a little before James shows up to the DEO to talk to Winn (I'm assuming James waited until he got off work, seeing that he's a fairly responsible guy). Rating changed from G to Teen, because I got tired of trying to write around the word "sex" and take rules about warnings seriously. It's more like PG, though :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

By the time Mon-El’s first day at Catco drew to a close, Kara’s nerves were ready to snap. She waited impatiently for him by the elevators only to have him arrive in the midst of a small crowd of people she didn’t know, chattering away. She recognized most of them, of course, because she’d seen them almost every single day for the past couple years, but she’d never spoken to them ever, so it was more than a little awkward when Mon-El (in flagrant breach of universal elevator etiquette) spent the entire ride down introducing Kara to every single one of them. How he’d met them all, or how he could possibly remember all their names was a mystery Kara had neither the energy nor inclination to solve, so she smiled, nodded, shook hands, and hoped to Rao that she wouldn’t ever have to address anyone by their actual name.

The instant the gleaming gold doors opened on the ground floor though, she threw an arm out to keep him from exiting along with the group.

He glanced down at the pink elbow in the middle of his sternum. “You’re still mad at me.”

“Aren’t you serious right now?” Kara goggled up at him in disbelief. Did he really think she was going to just act like everything was okay after what had gone on that afternoon?

“Um…” He scratched at a spot just above the nose of his glasses. “Yes?”

Kara pursed her lips. “O-kay, then.” She motioned for him to follow her out of the building now that their elevator buddies had all left. With any luck, the walk to the DEO would help her cool off. “You’re right,” she said with false brightness. “I am still mad at you. Got any ideas why?”

“Uh, yeah,” he responded, laughing a little as he half-jogged to keep up with her wrathful stride. “A lot, actually. But I was kind of hoping you’d give me a hint which one’s the uh, the top dog, though.”

“Yeeaaah.” Kara breathed out a sarcastic laugh. “How about you give it a go instead?”

“Okay.” He stayed silent for exactly nine steps before clearing his throat. “Is it ‘cause I…pretty much invited myself to your friend’s party? I didn’t think about ‘til later, but I know on Daxam there used to be this really old rule about formal invitations, and the whole point of it was to not infringe on someone else’s enjoyment, and I didn’t even think to ask if you had that here before I asked her if I could come, too.”
What? Kara stopped so suddenly that Mon-El had to make a weird, twisting hop to avoid crashing into her. “Oh no.” She cocked an eyebrow, studying his face for any sign of levity. Then she pivoted abruptly and resumed her march. “No, there is no way you’re being serious.”

“Um, yeah,” he responded, his voice taking on a tinge of sarcasm. “Actually, there is. I forget the name of it because it went out of vogue like—forever ago, but it was a thing. The parties sometimes went on for so long that it was hard on the hosts to have to—”

“Mon-El!” Kara half-shouted. “I’m not mad about the party!”

His entire face wrinkled. “You’re not?”

“No, you—ooh!” Kara pressed her hands against the sides of her face, beyond frustrated with clueless Daxamite interns. “Mon-El. This is not about the stupid party. This is not about you going to the party or you inviting yourself to go to the party although yeah, you definitely shouldn’t do stuff like that because it can be considered really rude. This is about earlier!” Seeing his confusion deepen, she ground her teeth. “In the printing room?” she reminded him. “With Eve?”

His mouth formed an O of remembrance. “Right, when you, uh, you walked in.”

“Yeah. I guess we probably should have sealed the door,” Mon-El said speculatively. Kara slapped a hand to her forehead. At her current clip, she was going to reach the DEO faster than she ever had before without using superspeed, and that was more than okay with her. She was feeling the need to raise her voice in a place where no one would stare, and the streets of National City weren’t an ideal location. The DEO had tons of available rooms.

He coughed out a sheepish laugh when she didn’t comment immediately. “I uh, keep forgetting doors here don’t do that on their own. Did you have that problem when you first got here?”

“No, not really,” he responded, frowning.

“Mon-El!” Kara caught herself just before she stomped her foot and smashed a hole in the sidewalk. “You’re not those other people! And, and anyway, the other people who do stuff like that? Other other people end up talking about them behind their backs!”

His forehead wrinkled. “So?”
“So, so…oh, crap.” Kara sped up, her shoes beating out an angry rhythm on the concrete. How could you possibly explain the concept of necessary social conformity to someone who didn’t seem to care whether anyone liked them or not? “So, you make a bad name for yourself. It’s—it’s just not good. People say things.”

“What kind of things?” He sounded genuinely curious.

This was going nowhere. “Just…things. Insults.” Kara waved a hand in the air. “Again, that’s not the point.”

“Because the point is don’t do it again,” Mon-El said as they approached the doors of the DEO.

“Yes.”

“Because people will talk about me.”

“Yes.”

He nodded, lips twisted into something that was part pout, part purse as they entered. “Got it,” he said, pulling off his glasses the second they were officially indoors. “But uh, what if I don’t mind people talking about me behind my back? Can I—”

“No! No.” Kara shook her head so hard that her glasses almost flew off and she had to push them back in place. “No, you can’t. That’s not okay.”

“No even if—”

“No,” Kara told him, slashing her arms through the air in a horizontal x-ing gesture. “No, you can’t. That’s not okay.”

“Not even if—”

“OK,” Kara told him, slicing her arms through the air in a horizontal x-ing gesture. “Not. O. Kay, Mon-El.”

He huffed in disgust. “You don’t even know what I was going to say!”

“Doesn’t matter!” Kara swung around to face him, arms folded. “If it had anything to do with, with…what we just talked about, the answer is no.”

Mon-El folded his arms too, his chin jutting out ever so slightly as he tilted his head. “Well, I think that’s very unreasonable.”

For a second or two, Kara just stared at him. Somehow, in the excitement of getting Mon-El ready for his first real venture out into Earth and human life, she’d kind of forgotten about the stubborn, smart-alecky Daxamite she’d first faced-off with. He hadn’t argued about anything she’d suggested that morning, even though she was pretty sure he’d wanted to laugh at most of the options she’d insisted he try on. It figured that he’d suddenly decide to fight back on this issue.

“Well, I—I think that’s just too bad,” she responded, stammering a little over the words as she suddenly realized that they were attracting an awful lot of curious glances from various agents. Great, now more people were going to find out that her very first mentoring attempt was failing miserably. “If you want my help,” she informed him in a quieter tone, “you’re going to have to get over it.”

“Kara. Mon-El.” Leaving his position in front of the big monitors, J’onn moved toward them. “What’s this all about?”

Kara hesitated. J’onn was one of her favorite people to confide in and seek advice from, but how exactly were you supposed to bring up a subject like this to someone who was both your
“Apparently, I can’t have sex,” Mon-El said.

Of course, there was always the direct approach.

J’onn’s eyebrows shot to the top of his forehead and he glanced at Kara.

Kara closed her eyes and took a deep breath before shooting ‘Mike of the Interns’ a pinched scowl. “I didn’t say you couldn’t,” she hissed, her eyes darting around the room to see how many agents had overheard his statement. “I said you couldn’t at work! What you do on your own free time is your business. You can, can—get it on with a whole roomful of people for all I care! Just not. At. Work!”

“All right,” J’onn announced, holding up a hand when Mon-El started to protest. “This is hardly the appropriate time or place for this conversation.”

You can say that again, Kara thought, trying very hard not to care that every agent in the vicinity was blatantly listening in.

“But—” Mon-El began.

J’onn shook his head. “Later, Mon-El. Kara, I need you to verify some information about those alien weapons you saw earlier. I’ve done what I can, but I didn’t actually see them. The technicians have been working on a couple of prototypes—well, more like pre-prototypes—and they want to make sure they’re on the right track.”

“Yeah, of course,” Kara said, the response automatic. “I can do that.”

“Unlike other activities,” Mon-El remarked (in what he clearly thought was an undertone) without missing a beat. “Which are frowned upon.”

“You know, I have superhearing,” Kara snapped, propping her hands on her hips. “And I just told you—”

“That, and I quote—”

“Oh, don’t even start quoting me on—”

They both broke off when J’onn clapped his hands in front of them.

“Enough,” he commanded, his tone brooking no refusal. “You’re both decades too old for this. Kara, head to the labs, please. Mon-El, I suggest you make use of the training equipment.”

Kara exchanged a squinty-eyed glance with Mon-El.

“Fine,” she said at length, striding off in the direction of the labs. “But J’onn, if there’s a printing room anywhere in this building, make sure he stays out of it.”
*Kara and Mon-El reach the DEO very quickly. My justification is that they walk
anabnormally fast anyway, and the show always makes it seem like Catco and the DEO
are pretty close.

*In my mind, Alex is at home eating a lot of junk food and doing some soul-searching
after talking to Maggie at the attack site.

*One of the things I find interesting about K&M is the introvert/extrovert angle. Kara
cares a lot what random strangers think of her/how she appears to them. Mon-El
doesn't. He's always carrying on a conversation with someone (in 2x09 when he comes
to Catco looking for Kara and steps off the elevator talking, at the bar in 2x11 while
Kara's talking to M'gann, he's talking to someone, he knows the names of the regulars,
etc.)

*I'm positive Kara and Mon-El have argued in the DEO prior to 2x13 (the agents were
all WAY too calm about that fight), so this happened. Plus, I'm pretty sure Kara
wouldn't have let Mon-El off with just the one "You can't do that!"

*The title is one of my favorite Dion songs (it's safe to say I didn't grasp its meaning as
a child), "The Wanderer." I was listening to it while I wrote this, and I thought it kind
of fit Mon-El at this point (or at least, what Kara thinks of Mon-El at this point).
Boys Just Wanna Have Fun

Chapter Summary

Takes place in episode 2x05 at Catco, some time before Kara rants to Alex ("Your steps were exceptionally stompy just now." "Mark almost got fired today.") because my mind has always wondered WHAT HE DID (or didn't). I wrote this before posting Chapter 4 and before writing Chapter 5, so there may be some slight continuity errors.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Oh, not again.

Kara barely registered the sound of the pencil breaking between her thumb and forefinger. Who could pay attention to trivial things like that when they were watching an actual disaster unfold right in front of them? A bow-tied, plaid-shirted, glasses-wearing, licorice-devouring disaster, who, once again, instead of sorting through the tall stacks of paperwork he’d been given (tall as in Bismuth Mountains tall), was yammering away with Eve Teschmacher like he hadn’t a care in the world.

Not. A. Care.

He wasn’t letting Eve do his work for him anymore, thank Rao, but had anything even gotten done since Kara had put a stop to that? She didn’t think so. She’d been watching him for about two hours straight now, ready to body check him at a moment’s notice if he showed signs of wanting to wander down to the printing rooms again with cute coworkers. And in the space of that two hours’ time, she’d seen a lot.

First, there had been the snacks. While Kara sat in on a meeting and stared daggers at him through the glass to make sure he wasn’t about to commit some awful breach of earth etiquette, “Mike” was slouched in his desk chair, eating candy. Where he kept getting it, she had no clue. She’d confiscated everything from him yesterday after the Eve Incident, yet here he was again, gobbling up processed sugar as if he needed to be any more hyperactive. And the salty treats were becoming nearly as bad. The area beneath his desk looked like it had snowed pretzel crumbs, and it was taking everything in her to not call up Alex and Winn and ream them out for introducing him to Cheetos, because now she had to sit here, watching him leave little orange fingerprints all over his station. It was maddening.

And then there was the socializing. Kara had never before thought that there could be such a thing as too friendly, but apparently, yes there was. And Mon-El was it. He’d been working (although she used the term “working” very loosely) at Catco for less than three days, yet he already seemed to know every person on the floor by name. He didn’t stop there, though. No, he talked to everyone he met, whenever and wherever, and since Kara never knew what oddly-turned phrase would burst out of him at any given moment, she was constantly on edge. The worst part was, though, that everyone seemed to find his innumerable social gaffes charming, so the parade of journalistic-minded people who could potentially expose him for the super-powered alien he was grew ever larger. Just during the meeting, no fewer than six female (and two male) Catco employees Kara had never even laid eyes on had stopped by Mon-El’s desk.
Officially, they were there to chat.

Unofficially, but very obviously, they were there to check out the so-called "Daxamite scenery."

And Kara had just about had enough. There was work and then there was personal life, and if anyone knew the dangers of mixing the two, it was Kara Zor-El/Danvers/Supergirl. The sooner Mon-El learned to keep his identities separate, the better. For everyone concerned.

She stiffened when Eve patted Mon-El on the shoulder, laughing at something he’d said. Since the awkward moment yesterday, Kara hadn’t wanted to use her hearing to listen in on his conversations. But this one was beginning to look like it could be going bad places. Okay, not bad places per se, because yes, Kara did understand that every adult had the right to make their own choice about what—or who—they did, and Mon-El and Eve were both old enough to Netflix and chill without the Netflix if they wanted to. Not that Mon-El and Eve chilling was any of Kara’s business. At all. In fact, if she were given the choice, she would never think about the two of them that way ever again. The mere suggestion was enough to nauseate her, yet here she was with the images of them half-dressed and staring at her emblazoned onto her mind in glorious Technicolor. Ew. Ew, ew, ew.

She didn’t realize she was making a face until she caught sight of James’ befuddled expression across the table. He didn’t stop talking about whatever it was he was saying (she hadn’t been paying strict attention for a while now), but he raised his eyebrows at her in that pull-it-together-pal sort of way. So quickly, she straightened up. She missed Cat Grant a lot, but this was one of those moments she was really glad that James had been left in charge. He was far less likely to draw the rest of the office’s attention to woolgathering employees.

Taking a deep breath, she forced herself to listen to the discussion in front of her. The second the meeting ended, however, she was on her feet and moving toward the door. Nothing had happened yet, but Eve kept playing with her hair and Mon-El seemed to be smiling way too much, and Kara wasn’t going to take any chances.

"Danvers. Get over here."

Kara spun so suddenly at Snapper’s gruff order that she skidded on the floor. No, not now. Her boss’s crotchety personality took a toll on her most days, but today, after watching Mon-El mess up just about everything he attempted, Snapper hating her was just the evil cherry on top of a very frustrating sundae. And oh, God, she’d just heard Eve say the words no clothes. She so, so, so did not need to break up another rendezvous amongst the printers. Hadn’t she made it crystal clear yesterday that in-office hookups were not something professional people did?

“Uh, yeah, Chief?” she said, giving him what she dearly hoped was a smile and not a grimace.

As usual, the man radiated annoyance with the world in general, and her in particular. “The alien weapons piece.”

“Yes?”

Oh, how she wanted this to be a thing she could control. It would be really nice to have something in her life that didn’t make her feel like she was strapped into a rocket ship, barreling blindly through a minefield toward a destination she knew nothing about. ‘Cause honestly, she’d been there and done that, and she wasn’t happy at the prospect of repeating the experience.

Snapper glared at her over the top of his glasses while the room emptied around them. “I’ve got
three other morons investigating the story already. Since you obviously weren’t listening in there earlier, I’m gonna say this one more time. You want any assignments in the future, you want any prayer of keeping on my good side, you stick to reporting just the facts, and you keep your wild accusations and theories to yourself. Got it?"

“Got it,” Kara answered. He was halfway out the door by the time she finished the first word, making her bite down with a snap on the t of it. “Right.” She leaned her forehead against the edge of the doorway for a second, wishing she could bang her head against it. But her current list of problems didn’t need the addition of a collapsed wall.

“Wait, so that’s Snapper’s good side?”

Kara stifled a groan. Well, at least she didn’t have to go far to scold him. “Mon—”

“Mike,” he corrected.

“Mike.” She raised her head, the urge to smack him for enjoying her forgetfulness strong. “What is it?” she demanded, preparing herself for anything from a question about latte machines to a confession of elevator make-out sessions.

He blinked. “Are you okay?”

“Oh, I’m great,” Kara said, plopping her hand on her hips and giving him a big, fake smile. “I’ve just been sitting in a meeting for close to two hours watching you talk to every person in this building. Have you even sorted anything?”

“Yes!” He brightened, looking pleased that she’d asked. “I finished A and started B.” Lowering his voice, he leaned forward conspiratorially. “But you know, it would go phenomenally faster if you’d just let me use—”

“No,” Kara hissed, grabbing his arm and yanking him fully into the glassed-in area so that he was out of easy earshot of anyone passing by. “That’s not happening,” she informed him for what had to be the hundredth time. “There’re too many people around.”

“But they’re not looking all the time,” he insisted. “And I’m like, so fast. Look, let me show you.”

“Absolutely not.” Kara snagged him by the collar when he made a move as if to race to his desk. “Mon-El. Mike,” she added, seeing him open his mouth. “Whatever. Listen to me.”

He nodded, brow furrowed.

“I know everybody here seems really nice, but broadcasting your powers to the world—it’s just not safe.”

“I know,” Mon-El said, the little frown deepening. “You told me. But I don’t want to broadcast anything, I just want to—”

“Eat candy and have s—fun?” Kara inquired sarcastically, catching herself just before she started them on a line of conversation she knew she’d regret.

Mon-El squinted at her for moment. “Well, yes,” he said, chuckling a little. “I do like candy and fun. But I was going to say I just want to get the work done faster. Reading all those papers is really boring.”
Kara gaped at him. “Reading all—oh, my gosh. Okay.” She pushed her glasses up and pinched the bridge of her nose, something between a laugh and a groan escaping as one of the reasons behind his sluggish pace became clear. “Mon-El,” she sighed. “You’re not supposed to read every single piece of paper in the folders.”

“What?” He stared at her, eyes wide. “I thought you said to be thorough.”

“I did, but that’s not how filing works,” she explained, whimpering a little on the last words. If she were in a better mood, she would probably find this funny. Hilarious, even. After all, she’d made plenty of blunders herself after arriving on earth. But Mon-El was an adult, not an adolescent, and no matter what Alex claimed, Kara knew she hadn’t screwed up this many basic things. “Rao. All right, um…yeah.”

She exhaled loudly and let her head fall back for a minute while she inspected the ceiling and tried to calm down. He’d made an honest mistake. It wasn’t laziness. Laziness was okay to get mad over. Ignorance could only be fixed with education. Lecturing him on how he should try to not make mistakes would only be counterproductive, because there was no way she could talk about how easy an error that was to prevent without going into freakout mode. And that didn’t need to happen again, because in the past couple days, Mon-El had already seen Freakout Mode Kara more times than anyone whose last name wasn’t Danvers.

“I can go get one of the pillows from the couch in James’ office if you want to hit me again,” Mon-El offered after a bit. “That is, if you’ll let me use my superspeed.” His voice dropped to the softest of whispers on the last word and he followed it up with a big, cheesy grin. “Thoughts?”

Oh, Kara had thoughts. Kara had a lot of thoughts.

Before she could decide whether or not to air any of them, though, she spotted Eve hurrying toward them and pinched her lips together instead. In discussing his turtle-like productivity, she’d completely forgotten to remind him about the socializing.

“Mon-El,” she hissed, leaning forward. “I thought we cleared up the whole don’t do that at work thing yesterday.”


Kara made a vague, circular gesture, trying to convey her meaning without giving it away to anyone who happened to see her. “No. You know…that.”

“That?” he repeated, frown deepening before the light finally dawned. “Oh, you mean se—”

“Yes, hush!” Kara said hurriedly, clapping a hand over his mouth. Or at least, yes, hush was what she’d intended to say. It ended up emerging louder than she’d meant it to and sounded more like YUSH! thanks to her hasty attempt to shut him up before Eve got close enough to hear. (Kara didn’t want Eve to think she was being criticized behind her back for wanting to get all up-close-and-personal with a cute new intern.)

Not that Kara thought Mon-El was cute. She was far too busy worrying about whatever embarrassing thing he’d say or do next to bother with wondering whether or not he was cute. She just knew that some people—Eve, for example—thought that he was, and she didn’t want to make them feel like she thought less of them as a person for giving into the impulse of a moment. Even if that impulse had been to do it with a coworker you’d just met in the building where you both worked in a room that literally anyone could just waltz on into without warning. Atop a printer, of
all things.

Oh, the romance.

Mon-El tapped the hand she still held over his mouth and cleared his throat. “Kara?”

“Yeah,” Kara said, snatching her hand away. Annoyed with herself for zoning out, she rubbed her palm against a pant leg, trying to brush off the temporary warmth his breath had created against her hand when he said her name. The smoothness, too, because *wow*, Clark’s face-shaving tips were effective. “Sorry.”

He shrugged. “It’s fine.”

Kara narrowed her eyes, trying to gauge whether or not he was gearing up for a joke. But Eve arrived then, panting a little from her in-heels hustle.

“Hi, Kara,” she said, giving a quick smile (Kara couldn’t help being a little impressed at how unembarrassed she seemed) before turning her attention to the other occupant of the room. “Mike, Snapper’s looking for you,” she whispered, pointing subtly back over her shoulder. I think he’s really mad.”

Kara shuddered. Now those were some words she never wanted to hear aimed at herself. “What’d you do?” she asked Mon-El, leaning around Eve to peer out into the main workspace where an apoplectic-looking Snapper stood holding a cardboard box.

“Oh, who can tell?” Mon-El answered breezily, clicking his tongue against his teeth. “Guess I’m going to find out, though. Thanks, Eve.” He smiled at the little blonde and gave Kara the expression she was fast learning to classify as his oops-face—one part tooth-baring grimace, one part *this is still kind of funny and I’d laugh but everyone else is being serious* grin—before departing.

“Any idea what he did?” Kara asked Eve as they stood side by side, watching Mon-El approach Snapper.

“No.” Eve shook her head, curls bouncing against her shoulders. “But I don’t think I can watch. Snapper’s really unhappy, and it gives me too many flashbacks to my first day as Ms. Grant’s assistant.”

Despite her mingled worry and irritation, Kara had to laugh. “I hear you on that one. She really does care, though. Deep down.”

“Oh, I know.” Eve patted Kara’s shoulder. “All the same—I don’t think I want to repeat the tough love.” She jumped when Snapper’s raised voice (“EVERYWHERE, YOU NUMSKULL!”) drifted over the room. “Okay, that’s it. This is when I go find some urgent business downstairs where I can’t hear anything, so bye, Kara.” She shook her head as she rushed for the hall. “Poor Mike,” Kara heard her say as she practically sprinted for the stairwell.

“Bye,” said Kara absently, frowning as she tried to figure out what Snapper was raving about. Now that Eve was gone, she could tune into the conversation better, but the words were all insults, so it didn’t really clarify anything except the fact that he was mad.

Until Snapper pulled a stack of papers from the box in his hands and waved them in Mon-El’s face.

“Ugh, you’ve got to be kidding me,” Kara muttered.
He’d gotten snack crumbs and coffee stains over an entire pile of mocked-up pages.

Yep, Mon-El was so going to get fired.

Chapter End Notes

*The glassed-in area Kara is watching from is (I think) not James' office. I still can't tell whether the place she and James walk from in the show right before she sees Eve with the stack of files is within range of his desk, but it seems to be. In my mind though, she's augmenting it with x-ray vision.

*Ever since I heard Kara tell Alex that Mon-El almost got fired, I've wondered what he did. I feel like it related to Snapper, because I'm sure that Mon-El would annoy Snapper out of his mind. (Plus, when Mon-El talks to Kara about "blobbing" later, his first question is "Will Snapper get mad or something?" which to me implies that he hasn't just heard Kara talk about him--they've met.)

*2x05 was my first moment of total empathy with Kara. Season 1, I couldn't relate to her at all--she was such a flat, cardboard cutout kind of character that I was genuinely insulted when a quiz told me I was her (I wasn't watching S2 at the time having been disappointed by S1). But when I caved and started watching, this episode hit home. Kara's got some control freak tendencies, and she doesn't really know where to draw the line. Mon-El brings those "You don't do it your way here, you do it MY way" issues to the forefront, because he's just no good at fitting neatly into the boxes Kara creates for him. And he does not go gently into that good night, so to speak, when Kara tries to squash him. He resists, and that throws Kara for a loop--because he's not Following The Plan. And that is STRESSFUL to her. It makes her go even more uptight than before, because she sees her orderly world disintegrating and her instinct is to lash out and protect it (remember when she told Cat "I don't do well with change"?). Watching her learn to fight those instincts has been one of my favorite aspects of this season, and since I feel like it was really showcased in this episode, I wanted to include some of that in her thoughts.

*Eve doesn't get enough credit for being so nonchalant around Kara after all that. I would've died. (Or quit and moved to Antarctica to live among the penguins. Something like that.) Girl's kind of a boss.

*The next chapter will definitely mess up the scene order (it'll take place after Kara and Mon-El leave the DEO and head to Kara's to get Mon ready for work). I tried not to do it, but I just really felt like there was a gap there, so...yeah.
The Metamorphosis

Chapter Summary

An out-of-order scene that takes place in 2x05 after Kara and Mon-El leave the DEO to go to Kara's apartment (Chapter 4, I think, but don't quote me). Basically, it attempts to fill in the little gap between the first and second scenes in the music montage.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“This is it,” Kara announced, holding out both hands in a ta-da! gesture toward her front door. “The Apartment of El. Well, one of them, anyway. Because technically, my cousin has one, too. Although I guess his would be the Apartment of El, hyphen Lane.”

“The Apartment of El-Lane,” said Mon-El. His smile still looked a little sleepy to Kara as he slouched against the wall. “Awesome.”

“Hey,” she cautioned, poking him hard in the shoulder when he shut his eyes for a second. “No going back to sleep! We’ve got a lot to do if we’re going to get to Catco by nine.”

“Yes, but don’t we have superspeed?” he inquired in a voice garbled by a yawn. “I think we could probably make it on time.”

Kara laughed as she turned the key. “I don’t know. I have this one friend who’s got superspeed, and he’s late to just about everything. They call him ‘The Fastest Man Alive’ on his planet, but he’s still rarely on time.”

“Well, that would be kind of a bummer.” Mon-El clapped a hand over his mouth when another yawn hit him.

“Oh, hey! You know ‘bummer,’” Kara said, swinging the door open. “Nice.”

He beamed, his obvious pride in using the word correctly making her press her lips together to keep from laughing. It was fun getting to watch someone else’s enthusiasm over one of those little victories most humans took for granted. Kara remembered how good it used to feel when Alex or Eliza said something as simple as Right, see? You’ve got it, Kara.

“Yes. Winn taught me it last night, before he left.”

Yeah, that made sense. Winn Schott Jr. was the king of trying to bring back words nobody really used anymore.

“What about?” Kara asked. She motioned for Mon-El to follow her inside, and hung her purse up quickly.

“Um, this, actually,” he answered, scooting out of the way as Kara leaned around him to shut the door. “I told him you’d said we were going to get up early and prepare me for work, and he said, Ooh, that’s a bummer. So I asked what a bummer was, and he told me.”
“Oh, he did, did he?” Kara frowned in the general direction of the DEO. She was not overly-enthusiastic in the mornings, no matter what her friends and family claimed. Just because she didn’t need to rely on coffee to form her entire personality before ten o’clock… “Well, the joke’s on Winn,” she declared, “because we’re going to have pancakes. He’s probably going to have cold cereal.”

Mon-El’s bewildered smile-and-frown look was back on his face. “Is…that a bad thing? I don’t really have a point of reference.”

“Not really. But pancakes are better than cereal any day.”

He laughed. “Okay. Guess I’ll uh, take your word for it.”

Now that they were fully inside her apartment and he was looking to her for his cues, a little twinge of apprehension snaked its way through Kara. Yesterday, she’d been so antsy about the whole thing that she had spent half the night texting Clark and Alex about her concerns. Well, mostly Clark. Because after twenty-seven patient messages filled with advice, Alex had told her to stop worrying, she was going to be fine, and that she (Alex) was going to sleep. Clark had kept responding, right up until Kara got a message reading Oh my GOD, you’re going to do great! Stop texting and let me get some shuteye!!! followed quickly by a Sorry, L took my phone that effectively ended the conversation. Then she’d spent a lot of time lying on her bed with the nearest thing she could grab—a fluffy sock whose match she was convinced the dryer had eaten since even x-ray vision couldn’t locate it in her apartment—over her eyes to remind her to keep them closed so that she could maybe fall asleep. It had worked eventually, but Kara was kind of amazed that she was not only able to form actual sentences, but struggling to hold back her excitement. And her worry. Yep, at this point, she decided, she was essentially just a big ball of adrenaline. And while that was great for superheroing, she wasn’t too sure about its mentoring benefits. But she was the one who’d decided to take on the mentor mantle, and there was no way she was going to back out now because of something as silly as nerves.

Clearing her throat, she mentally dashed away her jitters and extended her hands. “So, this is my place,” she said for lack of a better topic, twirling in a small circle. “It’s pretty nice. I like it, anyway.”

“Very nice,” Mon-El agreed. Kara watched from the corner of her eye as he inspected the room, arms folded. After a full rotation, he gave a nod and glanced down at her, the left side of his mouth hiking up in a grin. “Very…light. And colorful.”

“Mhmm, I like bright stuff. It makes me happy.” She pulled off her coat and tossed it onto the coatrack. “Oh, um. Just so you know,” she added, linking her fingers together in front of her. “If you ever need to, uh, come talk to me about something—you know, like if you have any, any questions about Earth stuff, or powers, or anything like that, you can. Come talk to me, I mean. Anytime.”

“Oh, yeah?” He smiled. “Even if it’s late?”

“Well…” Kara huffed out a laugh. “Actually, yes.”

His eyebrows rose. “Really?”

She lifted a shoulder. “Sometimes it’s nice to just have somebody you can tell things.”

And have them know what you’re talking about.
At times, being the only alien in the room felt almost oppressive. Like when she was watching a movie with Alex or Winn, and she made a joke that she’d forgotten they wouldn’t get. They were always willing to listen to her explanation, ready to understand, but it just wasn’t the same. Having J’onn around helped a lot, because she didn’t have to constantly explain her references, but J’onn ran the DEO. He didn’t have a lot of free time, and anyway, he wasn’t a big chit-chatter. It always seemed wrong to waste his time talking about things that weren’t of dire importance. And yes, she was quite aware that if he knew she thought that, he would assure her that he always had time to talk with her. She just didn’t want him to stop doing his part to save the world because she was feeling a little lonely. It seemed petty, and…and weak, even. If she could lift trucks and stop bullets, surely she could withstand a little lonesomeness every now and then.

All the same, it wasn’t something she wanted Mon-El to go through. Not when it lay within her power to prevent it.

She looked over to see his reaction and found him watching her, a half-smile on his face.

“What?” she asked, immediately self-conscious.

Since she’d decided to scrap Operation Avoid Mon-El, things had been a lot easier between them. He was funny, and friendly, and lighthearted, and just so confused by Earth and eager to learn about it that she couldn’t help enjoying being around him (plus, she’d been right—it was great having a friend who was difficult to accidentally injure). But every once in a while, she got the distinct impression that he found her absolutely hilarious, and it was usually when she was at her most serious. Now, she kind of suspected that he was laughing at her.

“Nothing,” he answered, his smile widening until his eyes crinkled at the corners. “Just…” He gave his head a small shake. “You’re a very generous being, Kara. Thank you.”

“Nahhh, it’s not…” She waved a hand, trailing off into fidgety silence.

Why it was so hard for Kara Danvers to gracefully accept a compliment, she’d never know. Supergirl got them all the time and took it in stride. One nice thing said to her as just plain Kara, and hello awkwardness! And the weird part was, she loved having people tell her she was doing good. It made her all warm, happy, and fuzzy to know that someone saw and appreciated her efforts. Actually, come to think of it, maybe that was her problem to begin with—Supergirl was forever being thanked for heroic save-the-day efforts. Kara received thanks for just doing what any decent person would, and it always threw her.

Although yes, she’d be lying if she said it didn’t still give her all the warm fuzzies.

“Um.” Chuckling nervously, her face scrunched up into a toothy, nose-rumpling grin as she attempted to finish her deflection. “It’s—it’s not a big deal.”

Mon-El tilted his chin down, eyeing her skeptically. “Okay,” he said, the tone implying he disagreed. “If you say so. Now, uh…” He shifted so that he was facing her fully. “What do we do first?”

Right away, Kara’s compliment-engendered discomfort melted back into zeal. Talking could be a little dicey sometimes. Doing things—now, that she was good at.

“Well, first,” she told him, zipping into her bedroom and returning with a spare towel which she flapped briskly at him, “we give you a haircut. Supergirl style.” She pointed to the barstools around her counter. “Grab one of those, drag it over here, and take a seat.”
“Okay,” he responded, moving to comply. “I can do that.”

“Oh, and definitely close your eyes,” Kara added, waiting for him to seat himself. “Heat vision can send the hair flying.”

“Sure,” said Mon-El, shutting his eyes obediently while she settled the towel around his neck and shoulders. “Question, though: are there any other hazards associated with heat vision haircuts I should know about?”

“Nope, that’s the only one,” Kara assured him, giving him a light—for aliens with superstrength—pat on the shoulder. “I’ve got the rest, so don’t worry.”

“Okay,” he said again as she moved away. “And when this is done, what, uh, what’s next?”

Kara bit back a laugh as he addressed the completely wrong spot, his eyes clamped shut. “Pancakes,” she said, focusing her gaze near the top of his head where the tufts of dark hair stood up the most. “Pancakes are next.”

Chapter End Notes

*Kara texts Clark in here because I'm pretty sure the only reason we haven't seen her doing that on the show this season is a legal thing (have to ask permission, etc. to talk about Clark Kent/Superman) and it seems like something she'd do in this situation. *This basically happened because one of my favorite things about Kara and Mon-El is how well they mesh in the everyday areas of life. They come from different places, both literally and figuratively, but there's a sameness way deep down that's really sweet. Their approaches to life may vary, but at the core, they're just so darn JOYFUL, and it's something I think Kara was missing a lot in her other relationships (nothing against Alex/J'onn/James, but they're just naturally more serious, and my poor lil' Winn has a bit of a negative outlook on life thanks to his evil father). I definitely think that's one of the things Kara first responds to in Mon-El, even if she can't necessarily put her finger on it right away, and I think this episode is where that starts becoming really apparent.
*I really like how direct Mon-El is in the show about everything. At this point, I don't think he liked Kara at all romantically (it seems more underlying attraction/"hey, you're kind of fun"), but he always thanks her straight out, no embarrassment, the same way he confronts her, and I think it's great for Kara to have someone who doesn't wonder whether or not they SHOULD say something before they DO. She tends to use Supergirl as a shield, but Mon-El doesn't seem to see a difference between Kara Zor-El, Kara Danvers, or Supergirl; he just talks to her.
*Ok, seriously. What time does work start/end at Catco? I'm so confused. Everyone has SO MUCH free time.
*There should be more chapters from Mon-El's POV soon. For whatever reason, I just saw a lot of these scene gaps as needing to be from Kara's perspective (which is unfortunate, because Kara is quite difficult for me to write, but whatevs).
***Thanks to everyone reading/commenting. You guys are awe-and-some! :D :D :D
**SUPERGIRL RETURNS TONIGHT!!!!!!!!!!! There. It had to be said. I feel like it's been half of forever. I didn't realize how much of an addict I'd become until they took away my fix. It wasn't a pleasant realization.
When He Saw Her Standing There

Chapter Summary

At Lena's benefit gala in 2x05, told from Mon-El and Kara's POV. Basically what Mon-El could have been doing before he runs into Kara, and Kara's thoughts up to the dancing. I tried to make this work as two chapters, but it got really messy, so I ended up combining them into one too-long one. *makes apologetic face*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Mon-El tried hard not to smile at the blaze of lights and colors all around him.

Not too hard, though. It was a party after all, and you were supposed to enjoy a party. Some things were the same everywhere. So he settled for not giving every single person he saw a huge grin. Winn had suggested that some humans—he'd pointed at Alex when she wasn’t looking—might find that behavior more creepy than friendly, and Mon-El really wanted to get something right for a change.

He had spent the last several days trying to ‘intern’ at Catco, and so far, it appeared that what instincts he had were all wrong for the occupation. Kara had insisted that he would figure it out as time wore on, but Mon-El had his doubts. And he was pretty sure now that Kara did, too. That forehead-crinkle thing he’d pointed out had been happening a lot when she talked about everything being okay, and it was becoming a bit of…some kind of Earthen animal in the room. An elk? No, an elephant. Or was it an elephant seal? Mon-El forgot which. Winn had told him, Alex had told him, and even J’onn had told him, but it was hard to keep them all straight when most four-legged inhabitants of this planet were just example-less names to him. Dogs, cats, birds, rabbits…he got all those; they were all over the place in National City and in movies. Rats, too, because they frequented the alleyways around the bar J’onn’s friend M’gann worked at. Though apparently, rats also came with rules attached: the ones he saw on the street were gross and he was supposed to shun them, but the ones he saw in the windows of shops that sold animals to people were okay to stop and admire.

Or so Kara and Winn said. Mon-El didn’t see the difference. They were all small, furry, and whiskery, weren’t they? So what if the ones scampering around in the alleys didn’t have little plastic wheels to run around in? How did that make them bad?

It was, he’d decided, just another thing he’d have to learn. And the thought was kind of depressing. He wanted to learn how you were supposed to act on Earth—how to be human—but it was so confusing. Like, first, you were told to be nice and make friends. Then when you started to do that, you got in trouble, because that wasn’t the right way to go about doing it. He hadn’t even known there was a ‘right way’ to make friends; he’d assumed that you just dove in like you did everywhere else in the galaxy. And then there were all the cards and numbers and stuff he’d memorized, only to find out that nobody ever mentioned that kind of information. Except when they did, because after Kara had told him not to add things like VP of Finance and Senior Editor after giving their names. That was the kind of thing that really puzzled him.
But even if life as Mike the Catco Intern wasn’t Mon-El’s favorite, and even if he sometimes missed Daxam more than he ever thought he would when he was actually living there, he liked Earth. It was new, and exciting, and different from anything he’d ever known.

And best of all, no one here knew who he was. Watching someone’s whole manner toward him change the instant they found out who his parents were had been one of Mon-El’s least-favorite things; it didn’t matter whether they changed from being rude to scraping and bowing, or from liking him to despising him—both were horrible.

“Hey, hey, Matthews. Long time no see.”

Mon-El turned to see Winn heading his way, glass in hand. Earlier, the tech wizard (Winn insisted that was his unofficial title though Mon-El wasn’t too sure about that, seeing as how he’d waited to say it until both Alex and J’onn were out of earshot) had told him that Kara had to be both Supergirl and Kara Danvers at the party, and that he, Winn, had been enlisted to help. Since Mon-El had seen Supergirl arrive along with the rest of the room, he assumed Winn’s part had been played, and he wanted to hear about it.

He returned the other man’s grin. “Hey. You, uh, you’re…loving the refreshments?”

After the bar mishap, where Winn downed an impressive number of beers and shots and made a lot of slurred jokes about Schott doing shots, he had been very against the idea of ‘drinking on the job.’ Mon-El was surprised he’d decided to even hold a drink.

“Oh, this? No, no. This is just a prop. Well, kind of.” Winn pointed to the glass. “I may have loosened my teetotaler stance a wee bit.” He glanced around before muttering, “I was the distraction.”

Mon-El lifted his eyebrows. He had no idea what a teetotaler stance was, but that wasn’t his main question just now. “The distraction for…?” He didn’t finish the sentence, but Winn nodded anyway.

“Yeah, that. Went pretty well, if I say so myself. Turns out I can pretend to spill champagne like nobody’s business.”

“Nice.” Mon-El raised his glass in salute. “Skills are good.”

“Yes, they are,” Winn said, pointing at him. “And speaking of skills, isn’t this, I don’t know, kind of your scene?” He circled his glass around, gesturing to the area in general. “I mean, party, hey, woohoo! I thought you’d be more…”

“Convivial?” Mon-El suggested.

Winn’s chin tucked into his neck as he squinted at Mon-El. “I was going to say sociable, but yeah. Convivial works, too. Why, ah—why aren’t you being that?”

Mon-El shrugged. “You said to tone down the smiles. And, uh…” Swirling the golden liquid around in his glass, he grimaced at it. “Frankly, this tastes all right, but it’s no Zakkarian ale.” He grimaced. “Ten of these and I feel nothing.”

“Ten?” Winn’s eyes widened into near-perfect circles. “Of—at a…? Okay, buddy.”

Mon-El frowned. “What? No good?” Great, another mistake. He lowered his voice to a whisper, even though nobody else around them could possibly hear. “Is it supposed to be strong?”
“Well, that depends on who you ask,” Winn answered. “But uh, yeah. No, at a party like this, you don’t usually drink that many. Not as quickly as you just did. ‘Cause…people will definitely expect you to not feel anything. Like, anywhere. That should probably be your last glass.”

“Okay,” Mon-El answered, nodding as he surveyed the beverage in his hand.

On Daxam, it had always taken large numbers of drinks to lay him out. But because of either his alienness or his yellow-sun superpowers, drinks on this planet appeared to be unable to get him even a little drunk. Now, he was kind of curious to see how many of these it would take to affect him. He knew better than to mention it, however. Winn had been very nice about the hangover Mon-El was essentially responsible for, but Mon-El doubted the man would be supportive of another such venture.

“Hey, I need to go check on something real quick,” Winn told him, suddenly looking tense. “Do not drink any more of those, okay?”

“Yes,” Mon-El agreed. Not that he’d been planning on it. “None of these drinks taste good enough to keep drinking, anyway. Not if I can’t get drunk.”

Winn halted halfway past Mon-El.

“Wait. You uh…you didn’t drink anything else besides the champagne, did you?” he asked, his voice just above a whisper. “Nothing like, say…vodka, right?”

Vodka. Mon-El tried to remember which one that was. In the two Earthen bars he’d been in, there had been a lot of different colored bottles with both familiar and unfamiliar names. But wait —no, he knew about this one.

“That’s the clear, boring one, right?” he asked.

Winn visibly gulped. “You—you didn’t, did you?”

“No. It was brown and had those little ice squares in it.” Mon-El nodded at a nearby group. “I think it was whatever that woman’s drinking.”

Wincing, the shorter man heaved a sigh. “Um, okay; probably scotch, then. God. You know what though, that’s fine, just…seriously, Mon—Mike, don’t drink anything else, all right?”

“I won’t,” Mon-El promised, thinking he’d become really good at saying those words this last week. “But you do think it’s okay if I, if I mingle?” Please, please, please say yes.

“Yeah, sure.”

Mon-El couldn’t keep back his grin.

Seeing it, Winn held up a hand. “Whoa there, Casanova. You can have fun. Chat with the ladies. Just, you know—no funny business. Stick to the small talk. The polite small talk.”

“Right.” Mon-El wondered if he was getting this warning because Winn had heard about him and Eve. “I can do that.”

“Hey, great! See you around, all right?” Winn gave him a friendly punch in the shoulder and then let out a sharp hiss. “Ouch. Yeah, I’m going now.”

“See you.”
After Winn disappeared into the crowd, Mon-El turned his attention to the rest of the room. The buzz of energy he always used to experience at parties on Daxam was back, and every bit of him fairly ached to jump right into the middle of everything. The music, the people, the food—everything sounded, smelled, and looked interesting, and he could hardly decide where to go first. But of course, the people won out. Mon-El just had too much to say.

So he wandered around for a bit, striking up conversations here and there and removing himself from them politely whenever he realized that someone was getting a little too interested. Eventually, he found himself strolling amongst the little white tables, looking for someone to talk to that wasn’t already in a conversation, and holding a fresh glass of that yellowy drink in his hand (the man carrying the tray had been very insistent and Mon-El got tired of trying to explain his refusal without saying something like *I’m an alien, so it doesn’t work on me*).

It was then that he spotted Kara, talking to one of the food-carrying people. Even with her back to him, he knew it was her. Because who else besides Kara could ignore all the dazzle around them in favor of food? Mon-El’s appetite had definitely increased since he’d arrived on Earth, but he was pretty sure Kara’s put him to shame. Like now, she was grabbing more of those strange little crispy-looking things shaped like half-circles as though someone were trying to steal them from her.

He bit back a chuckle, shaking his head. He’d heard a lot of jokes about Kryptonians at parties during his time as prince, but he doubted this scenario was in any of them.

Before he even thought about it, he headed toward her. He hadn’t seen her all day, and even though their conversations had involved a lot of differences of opinion lately, he still missed talking with her.

But then the words *What’s your name, beautiful?* somehow popped out of his mouth, and immediately, he went rigid with horror. Where had that come from? That was just the kind of thing Winn had warned him not to do!

Kara froze, and his mind scrambled to come up with something—anything—to fix the situation as she turned around.

“Oh,” he said in his best monotone, trying to not laugh while she stared at him, cheeks bulging like those little furry animals who carried all that food in their mouths. She really was startlingly cute at times, so maybe that’s what had sparked the comment. “It’s you.”

Oh, Rao. It was him. Even knowing he maybe shouldn’t have invited himself to the party hadn’t stopped him from showing up, which now that she thought about it, really shouldn’t surprise her at all. This was exactly the sort of thing he’d do; Mon-El was practically impossible to embarrass.

Unlike Kara, who was currently standing and staring at him like an absolute dork, clutching potstickers and trying to choke down a gob of them so she could speak. How come stuff like this never happened to other people? After her talk with Alex, she’d just about made up her mind to go see him, maybe explain her overly-intense reactions to his less-than-stellar interning, but this…this wasn’t the setting she’d pictured. At the very least, she’d wanted to seem calm, and, and mentor-like, and as though she had some idea of what was going on. And in no way would she ever have wanted to be caught by him stuffing her face—literally stuffing her face!—with some of the best food in the universe.

But wait—had he just said ‘beautiful?’ As in…she was? Although he hadn’t known it was her
when he said it, so probably that negated everything. And if that didn’t, the potstickers sure did.

Still, though. Was he joking or serious?

“Um…you gonna yell at me again?” he asked, looking and sounding resigned to his fate.

Quickly, Kara shook her head. “I’m not gonna yell at you again,” she started to say, but the semi-chewed potstickers changed the words into something that sounded a lot more like *Ahm nog —noggunyellatyouaggin*.

He looked concerned, probably about her sanity. Maybe he thought she was so angry she couldn’t speak correctly. “What’s wrong with your mouth?”

With a mighty gulp, Kara finished her food. “I’m not gonna yell at you again,” she gasped out.

He looked relieved, his face relaxing into its usual easy expression, and Kara found herself studying his appearance. After all that fussing she’d done over his First Day of Work outfit, it was a little humbling to see that he’d done just fine in choosing his own. Because, well…he did look pretty good. For an annoying alien pretending to be a human. And yeah, for a human pretending to be a human, too. Not that a human would actually need to go to all that trouble since they were already—and why did any of this matter, anyway?

Kara shoved her rabbit-trail thoughts away. “Where’s the suit from?” she said abruptly, tilting her head to check out the effect of a lavender tie with gray cloth.

“Oh, you like it?” he answered, visibly perking up as he made a movement that wasn’t quite catalogue model, but was close enough to make her smile.

“Yeah, it’s nice,” Kara agreed.

He grinned cheerfully at her. “Yeah, Eve gave me her little uh—” he held up his fingers to demonstrate “her plastic rectangle to buy things, so…”

*Holy Rao.* “You used her credit card?” Kara blurted out, her voice rising.

The apprehensive grimace was back. “You’re gonna yell at me again.”

Smiling tightly, Kara exhaled. It made her feel lots better, but she was beginning to realize that this calm mentor thing might not be as easy as Alex and J’onn made it look. Not for her, at least.

“I’m not gonna yell at you,” she assured him again, making an effort to mean it.

She must’ve succeed in convincing him because he nodded, and they stood side by side, watching the dance floor as the music shifted to a bouncier tempo. Kara chewed a (much smaller) bite reflectively as she watched the dancers adjust their rhythm in response. It was funny, she thought, how different combinations of notes could take you back to different points in your life.

“Aw, I miss dancing,” Mon-El remarked, his tone somehow merry and wistful at the same time. “I used to dance a lot on Daxam.”

*I’ll bet you did,* Kara thought, but for once, there was no disdain in it. Instead, she smiled at the idea of Mon-El dancing up a storm. Yes, he could irritate her like no other on occasion, but there was something about him—an enjoyment of life, a zest maybe, that was just so contagious.

“Yeah, we danced on Krypton, too,” she told him around her food.
Out of the corner of her eye, she saw him glance at her before setting his drink down carefully on the table.

“Well, then,” he said.

Next thing Kara knew, his hand was curling around hers, and she was suddenly, acutely aware of the fact that now both their hands were curled around a potsticker. A **greasy** potsticker. And he was looking down at their joined hands (and the potsticker) with mild surprise while she gasped and wondered why in the world she wasn’t using the actual **stick** stuck into the stupid hors d’oeuvre. What, was she **two**?

“Sorry, hold on,” she apologized, hastily setting her snacks down and wiping her fingers off on a napkin as best she could. Of **course** she would be holding food that wasn’t supposed to be finger food in her bare hands right when someone wanted to dance with her. “Eeeh.”

She couldn’t restrain her giddy smile when she turned back, however, and grabbed Mon-El’s outstretched hand before he had a chance to rethink the prospect of dancing with a fried-food devouring girl who’d once stomped on a guy’s foot and broken his toes. He didn’t seem too put off by the occurrence, though. Joining in her laugh as she half-sprinted to the dance floor, he kept up without a falter and even steered her to an open spot she had overlooked.

“Do you know this one?” Kara asked as they faced each other amid a sea of other dancers.

“Nope,” said Mon-El cheerily, dropping her left hand on his shoulder before placing his right against her back. He grinned, eyes twinkling behind his glasses. “I thought we’d just, uh, **wing it.**”

He arched his brows, wiggling the fingers of his left hand at her in invitation. “What do you say, Krypton?”

Kara rolled her eyes, but the laugh escaped anyway. “All right, Daxam,” she answered, unsure whether to enjoy or dread the sudden, feathery warmth in her chest. Matching his grin, she rested her hand in his. “Let’s wing.”

Chapter End Notes

*Title comes from the Beatles' "I Saw Her Standing There" (apparently I can't stop listening to oldies whilst writing).
*Winn talks to Mon-El after running interference for Kara, and leaves to talk to James.
*The scene cuts make it feel like some time has passed between Kara talking to Lena ("Golly!") and Kara locating the food, so that's what I went with. Plus, it just seems like she's been there for a bit when Mon-El shows up.
*This is the point where I believe Kara's really starting to feel the attraction. The very first time I saw this ep., I started cracking up at how long she took to check out "the suit." And it really gets me how she didn't care at all that the waiter saw her chowing down, but she had that kind of "oh, great, I look like an idiot" moment when Mon-El showed up.
*The first time I saw 2x06 I got the impression that Mon-El already knew M'gann, and it definitely seemed like that wasn't his first time at the bar ("Mon-El took me to happy hour" suggests to me that this isn't his first rodeo). Rewatching it months later, I'm not so sure, because M'gann says "your friends are nice" to J'onn, implying that she's just meeting them. But since she could also be just now getting the chance to TELL J'onn
that, I decided to keep it where Mon-El maybe goes there on J'onn's recommendation once he's got some freedom.

*The explanation here for the "What's your name, beautiful?" is a compromise between my main 2 theories: (1) He's been watching too many bad shows/movies with cliche womanizers and honestly didn't know that was Kara or he wouldn't have said it (it just seems like Daxam would've had better pickup lines, you know?). (2) He totally knew that was Kara and said it anyway to see her reaction. I'm not sold on either, so I came up with a new one that seems kind of plausible.

*This chapter got a little random on me. I'm not really sure what happened.Possibly it was the leftover box of Peeps I ate.

*I'm moving on to 2x06 after this one, because I'm too fond of the "I get the feeling I'm always gonna be a little mad at you" scene to attempt writing their individual thoughts just yet.<3

**Thanks to everyone for reading/commenting! May the odds be ever in your favor :)
A Kryptonian And A Daxamite Walk Into A Bar

Chapter Summary

Starts between the end of 2x05 and the beginning of 2x06 and leads up to the opening bar scenes (Mon-El's POV). I don't have a great explanation for this chapter, because it's hands down the most frustrating thing I've done so far. It worked like Jack's magic beanstalk and WOULDN'T STOP GROWING, which is why it doesn't include the actual drunk scenes like it was originally supposed to. It just got so doggone long and kept going places I didn't intend for it to that I had to make it stop somewhere, so sorry if it feels abrupt. (Also, the last half was written and the whole thing was proofread by Sneezy Me. The allergy med says non-drowsy, but it lies. There's a solid chance of typos.)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

In the weeks following his Catco firing, Mon-El learned more about the types of jobs available on Earth than he’d ever wanted to. From the papers Kara brought and the sites Winn showed him, he understood that there were certain jobs that were considered desirable and others that were considered undesirable by humans, and the amount of rules and requirements that went along with each option was enough to make Mon-El wish he lived on a planet that had never even heard of money. He kept quiet about it, though, because he didn’t want anyone to suspect how new even the idea of worrying over things like money and jobs was to him.

Just pick something that you like.

When Kara first told him that, Mon-El had thought that it would be easy enough advice to follow. But when he actually took the time to think it over, he realized that he had no clue what he liked. (And anyway, being prince of a place like Daxam didn’t exactly give him a lot of ‘marketable’ skills.) Until the moment he’d woken to find the world falling to pieces, he’d known exactly what was in store for him; what he liked or disliked didn’t matter to anyone, so what good was thinking or even arguing about it? Inevitable was inevitable, and dwelling on a life different than the one right in front of you just seemed so pointless. And needlessly depressing, because why bother imagining something better if you knew you’d never be able to make it happen and already had the kind of life that others on your planet would kill to have?

Of course, the point was that he needed to find something that paid enough Earth money to support him. Kara, Winn, Alex, even J’onn—they all said that your first job usually sucked, but eventually, it improved. He was okay with that.

So when he heard from a guy at the bar about a ‘bookie’ that needed somebody strong and durable to do some bill-collecting, he didn’t hesitate. He went out and got the job. It turned out to be pretty uncomplicated, which Mon-El appreciated: chase down people who wanted to gamble but didn’t want to pay anything back, and make sure they knew they weren’t supposed to do that. The durability was just in case the pay-dodger was an alien who got a little feisty, or so the bookie said, but Mon-El wasn’t worried about taking a stray punch or two. He seriously doubted any payment-skipping alien in National City could punch as hard as Kara.
He was right. Only one alien swung at him when he showed up to collect, and just like the human guy with the ugly fake head who’d punched him that night at the bar with Winn, the fist bounced off him harmlessly and left the alien howling in pain and then reaching for his wallet. For the rest, all he needed was the sarcastic voice he used to use on other planets whenever someone was trying to pick a fight. Even when he didn’t have his powers, it had made people think twice; here, where he could deliver his message, smile, and crush something metal with one hand if they didn’t seem convinced, it worked even better.

He forgot all about the neat match of job and skills when he walked into the DEO to change, however, and saw J’onn.

“Wait, are you going somewhere besides home?” he demanded, pointing to the man’s non-DEO attire. “And before midnight?”

J’onn sighed loudly, folding his arms as he gave Mon-El the look Winn and Alex referred to as his Children look. “Yes, Mon-El. Contrary to popular belief, I do go other places on occasion.”

Mon-El grinned. “So, does this mean I’ll see you at the bar in a few?”

Even though he practically radiated stern disapproval, J’onn’s mouth twisted into a reluctant smile. “Provided you don’t waste an hour deciding what color shirt to wear, yes. You will.”

“Ha, yes!” Mon-El pumped a fist, turning a laugh into a cough when J’onn raised his eyebrows. “Sorry, no. Not funny. Not exciting. Not at all.” He rubbed a hand over his chin to hide his smirk. “Seeing the Martian head of an Earthen government agency in a dingy bar with a drink in his hand will not be any kind of a first. And hey, you know, I think M’gann’s on duty tonight, so…”

J’onn shook his head, sighing again. “Mon-El, I do have several available cells if you’re interested in continuing this line of conversation.”

Raising his eyebrows, Mon-El zipped a finger across his lips, the way Alex had showed him once. “Excellent choice.”

The voice was gruff, but J’onn dropped an eyelid in a quick wink as he passed by on his way out, making Mon-El grin again. It was funny to him how most of the agents at the DEO—including Winn—seemed a little afraid of J’onn. Ever since Mon-El had arrived, the man had been nothing but kind and fair. He wasn’t the peppiest, and yes, he could sound very scary from time to time, but he was so obviously good that Mon-El didn’t really get why everyone tiptoed around him. And hey, the Martian could tell an awesome monotone joke. That was a highly underrated skill.

Humming a catchy tune he’d heard four different times during the day, Mon-El headed to his room to dig out a clean shirt. Maybe it was force of habit from always having to change for dinner back on Daxam since his mother hated sloppy appearances, or maybe it was sheer vanity (Winn and Alex had both informed him that it was the latter), but Mon-El liked to make sure he tidied up at least a little before heading out of the DEO. Either way, he didn’t much care. The goal now was to get dressed.

He was in the process of struggling to get his head out the armhole he’d tried to put it through again, when the door banged open behind him, making him start.

“Hey, Mon-El, do you know where—oh! Oh, I’m sorry! I’m so sorry, I should’ve knocked!”

Knocked? Kara’s high-pitched voice made Mon-El frown into the gray cloth.
“Why?” he asked, tugging carefully at the shirtsleeve to free his head. He’d torn a few of the flimsy things before by getting impatient, and he wasn’t about to do that with this one, which had become one of his favorites. “You never do.”

“W-well…yes, that’s true, but that’s no excuse! I—I should remember to do that.”

Mon-El shrugged. A final pull released his head and revealed Kara standing in the doorway with her back to him. She was wearing regular clothes, so it couldn’t have been an emergency. All the same though, she sounded a little out of breath, and Mon-El wondered if she’d run or flown there.

“Could’ve been worse,” he said cheerfully, hoping to put her at ease. “I’m just changing my shirt.” He flapped a sleeve at her before remembering that she couldn’t see him. “Oh, and hey,” he added, chuckling, “you’ve already seen me without that, right?” Come to think of it, a lot of people in the DEO had. Good thing he wasn’t the self-conscious sort.

“What?” Kara’s head jerked up, her back straightening. “When did—oh-ho-ho, right.” She laughed, drawing a vague picture in the air with her right hand. “The, uh, the great escape.”

“Yeah. Sorry about the choking, by the way,” Mon-El said, sliding the shirt over his head. “I’m not like, positive what I was thinking at the time, but I am pretty sure ‘panic’ was in there somewhere. ‘Cause I remember that giant ‘S’ like it was yesterday.”

“And what? You thought, Oh, Rao. The Kryptonians have got me?” Kara joked, rising up and down on her toes. “They’ll never take me alive?”

“Something like that.” Mon-El sped across the room and poked one of her braids before darting back out of her reach in case she felt like retaliating. “You can look now. I’m decent.”

He grinned when she turned around, already rolling her eyes.

“Well, that’s debatable.” She gave him her mock-mad face, the bridge of her nose all wrinkled. “Oh! I came to ask if you knew where J’onn went? He was gone when I got here, and one of the agents said you were talking to him earlier.”

“Yes?” said Kara, watching him warily.

“So you finished your work,” he said slowly, “and then you came here to look for…more work.”

“Yes?” said Kara, watching him warily.

“Well.” Mon-El’s tongue made a clicking noise against his teeth. “That’s very sad.”

“What?” Kara stared at him, her mouth falling open. “It is not! I have free time and I want to use it to find some bad guys! It’s…it’s called being concerned, okay?”

Mon-El grinned at her scoffing. “Actually, Kara, I think it’s called being bored? You’re bored.”
The forehead crinkle was back. “I am not.”

His grin widened. Did she honestly expect him to believe her? “Really?”

She held firm for about a minute, then blew out a breath and folded her arms. “Fine. I may be a little bored. I just…I want something to do. I need something to do. Do you or do you not know where J’onn is?”

“I do.” Mon-El’s eyebrows lifted as an idea struck him.

Kara’s eyes narrowed suspiciously behind her glasses. “What?”

Mon-El pointed at her. “He is where I am going to be, and where you should be.”

Kara sighed, propping her hands on her hips. “And that location would be…where?”

“At the bar where M’gann works.”

As he expected, her eyes widened immediately at the news.

“J’onn left work on time and went to a bar?”

“J’onn left work on time and went to a bar?”

“I know! It’s awesome.” He grinned at her. “Come on, you should come too. You’re bored, and you never have any fun.”

He winced inwardly the second the words left his mouth, because that hadn’t quite been what he meant. Of course, it was pretty true, but still—he hadn’t meant to phrase it so bluntly. Kara was a lot more sensitive about things that sounded like criticism of Kryptonians than he was about anything related to Daxam, and he kept forgetting that.

“I have fun,” Kara informed him, sounding offended as she re-crossed her arms. “For your information, I watched a movie! Just last night! And my sister comes over—well, she’s been kind of busy lately, but still—and sometimes, sometimes Winn, and James? They come over and we play board games. So, see?” She lifted her chin, nose going slightly into the air. “Fun. I have fun.”

Mon-El bit the inside of his lip, trying not to laugh. “Yeah, that’s—that sounds like a lot of fun,” he agreed. And it did. That just wasn’t the point. “I uh, just meant that you’ve been working lately? Like…a lot. And you could probably use the break. And since you’re not doing anything just now…”

The little squiggle in Kara’s forehead deepened, and he held his breath. He hadn’t had company at the bar since he’d started going—well, no one had gone there with him; he rarely lacked company once he arrived—and if he was lucky, he’d have two actual friends there tonight.

“What do you say?” he prompted, eagerness overruling patience when half a minute went by and she was still silently thinking it over. “They have this thing called ‘Happy Hour.’ It’s really great.”

Kara eyed him, her mouth puckered into a small, crooked line. “If I go, can we talk about you and jobs?”

“Yes!” Mon-El gave a small—a very small, since the last time he’d gotten too excited he’d nearly knocked a hole in the ceiling with his head—hop. “Yes, yes we can.”

She looked torn between wanting to laugh at his enthusiasm and wanting to look suspicious.
“Promise?”

“Yes, I promise.” He beamed at her. “Come on! Let’s go. I want to see if J’onn can still be serious in a bar.”

Kara snorted, stepping out into the hallway. “You do know that a lot of people go to bars because they’re depressed, right? Seriousness isn’t unusual.”

“Yes, but they go there to cheer up,” Mon-El pointed out, following her. “It’s hard to be depressed when you’re drunk.” He saw Kara staring at him out of the corner of his eye and laughed. “What?”

“Nothing.” She cleared her throat, looking away quickly. “Um, okay. So, how do we get to this place? And what kind of stuff do people wear there?” She plucked at the hem of her sweater, frowning down at it. “This is kind of old. Do I need to go home and change first?”

Mon-El chuckled. The idea of Kara being underdressed for the bar was hilarious. No one except for maybe him and M’gann and the occasional human ever seemed to take much pride in personal appearance. Besides, Kara could probably wear one of those big black plastic bags for garbage and still look nice.

“No, Kara. You look great.” He gestured dramatically toward the doors. “Shall we?”

“Okay,” Kara sighed, tilting her head from side to side until her neck popped. Then she squared her shoulders the way she did when she was being Supergirl. “You know I can’t even get drunk, right?” she asked suddenly when they stepped out onto the sidewalk. “Seriously. It can’t be done.” She pointed at her chest. “Girl of Steel, remember?”

Mon-El had to laugh at that. “Alien rums know no titles, Kara Zor-El,” he told her teasingly. “Not even that of superheroes.”

Kara wrinkled her nose. “Yeah, well. We’ll see.”

“Yes, we will.” Mon-El smirked at her, laughing when she huffed in disgust. “Oh, come on. I bet you’ve never even tried anything that wasn’t some sort of weak, earthling brew. How do you know it won’t get you drunk unless you try?”

“Because…” Kara tilted her head up, frowning at the wall of a building as they walked past. “Just because,” she said after a minute. “Girl. Of. Steel. It’s kind of in the name.”

“Uh-huh.” Mon-El wiggled his eyebrows at her. “You’re afraid you might do something embarrassing if you ever got drunk, aren’t you?”

“No,” Kara snapped, unconvincingly. “I…I just like to know what I’m doing while I’m doing it.”

“Mmhmm.” He grinned at her. Rao, she was a terrible liar.

“Oh, hush.”

Mon-El pulled a straight face and made a deep bow, laughing when she shoved him. “All right. No more Kara’s-afraid-of-getting-drunk jokes. Until I’m drunk, because I can’t make any promises about then.”

Kara’s snorting giggle made him smile. If he were honest with himself, more than half the
reason he enjoyed teasing Kara so much was her laugh. She was so serious and so worried about everything at times that it made him sad for her and right away, he found himself doing something dumb to make her laugh. He didn’t really know why; it just seemed like someone who was always trying to defend the world deserved a break every now and then, so he did what he could.

They spent the rest of the walk to the bar discussing the hazards of superpowers (Mon-El had accidentally broken a showerhead in the DEO by sleepily turning on the cold instead of the hot water, jumping, and ripping the fixture straight out of the wall, and Kara told him about all the remotes she’d crushed in her hands when a movie got too intense), so that by the time they arrived, they were both already laughing.

“Here it is,” said Mon-El, following Kara inside. “What do you think?”

Kara glanced back at him, her eyebrows near her hairline. “You guys weren’t kidding,” she whispered, glancing around the dim room where a mixture of humans and aliens sat in varying stages of sobriety. “It’s like everyone’s here!”

He grinned, bobbing his head in agreement. “I know. Isn’t it great?” He motioned toward the counter where yep, sure enough, there was J’onn talking to M’gann. “Let’s tell M’gann what we want.”

“And then we can go sit down,” Kara added under her breath as they headed to the bar. “Not on the barstools.”

“Because J’onn wants to socialize,” Mon-El whispered back, grunting when Kara elbowed him in the chest. “I’m just saying.”

She gave him a stern look, but her lips were pinched at the corners the way they did when she was working to hold back a laugh. “Don’t say anything. This is good for him.”

“Right.” Mon-El held up hand when M’gann glanced over. “Hello.”

“Hey, Mon-El.” M’gann smiled at him. “And you must be…” she added, turning to Kara.

“Kara,” said Kara, holding out a hand. “Nice to uh, officially meet you.”

The two women exchanged laughing smiles while J’onn twisted around in his seat, brows raised.

“Kara?” he said, the tone a question.


“Ha,” said Mon-El, lowering his voice so only Kara could hear. "You got what, now?”

“Shut up,” she murmured back, pretending to fix her hair. “Uh, M’gann, can I have a—ah, okay, I don’t even know what that is.” She frowned up at the drink list. “You know what? Can you just give me something light that you think I’ll like? Something alien,” she added, giving Mon-El a squinty look that made him grin.

“’Course.” M’gann’s eyes twinkled as she looked at Mon-El. “The usual, I assume?” she inquired, hands flying as she prepared their drinks.

He nodded solemnly. “It’s like you read my mind.”
“Mon-El!”

Kara whacked him in the arm while M’gann and J’onn sighed simultaneously.

Mon-El pointed behind him, enjoying the exasperated amusement on the two Martians’ faces. “Should I uh, go sit down, now?”

“Yes.” M’gann set their drinks down in front of them, shaking her head at him. “A joke of that caliber deserves a seat far, far away from here. But, since we don’t have a ton of spots open just now, that’ll do.”

She tilted her head to a booth behind J’onn, and Mon-El nodded.

“Good idea.” Picking up his drink, he followed Kara to the booth and waited for her to choose a side before sitting. “What do you think?” he asked, watching her take a tiny sip of her drink. He had no idea what M’gann had given her, but clearly, she didn’t hate it.

“It’s not bad.” Kara pursed her lips, inspecting the liquid closely. After a moment she raised it to her nose and gave an experimental sniff. “By the way, what is ‘the usual?’” she asked.

Mon-El grinned at her over the top of his glass as he took a gulp. “Zakkarian ale.”

She rolled her eyes, and he knew she was remembering their rather unpleasant conversation-slash-interrogation in the DEO. “Of course.”

He shrugged. “It’s excellent stuff. And cheap, too.” Tilting his head back, he drained the tumbler easily and set it down with a sharp click. “Two points in its favor.”

Kara paused, her glass suspended. “Wait. Mon-El, you got fired. How do you buy drinks here all the time?”

He scratched at his chin, trying to decide how best to answer that. He got the feeling that Kara wouldn’t be too excited about the answer, but Mon-El didn’t see that there was anything wrong with accepting the drinks someone else wanted to buy you. Especially if they’d already spent the money.

“Well…” he started, but he was saved an explanation when M’gann turned up, two glasses in her hand.

“One more of the same for each of you,” she said, shaking her head at Mon-El. “With regards from the brunette at the far end of the bar. Enjoy!”

Kara stared at him while he thanked M’gann and then raised his glass with a smile to the woman who’d sent the drinks.

“What?” he said, turning back to see that she hadn’t moved.

Kara gave her head a quick shake. “Wow. Okay. Uh, never mind. I guess that answers my question.”

“Oh.” Kara frowned. “Okay. Uh, what are we toasting?”

A good question. Mon-El tapped a fist against his head, thinking it over. “Huh…I don’t know. Fun?”
For a second he thought she was going to object, but then she tilted her head back and smiled up at the ceiling, a chuckle bubbling out.

“All right,” she said, picking up her glass. “We can toast fun. But be careful,” she added, pointing at him.

He pouted jokingly at her. “You’re kind of missing the essence of the toast, Kara.”

She made a face at him. “Ha ha.”

Mon-El laughed. “Look, I’ll hold still.” He swished the glass around. “To fun?”

Kara tapped her glass against his, rolling her eyes again even while she laughed. “To fun.”

*Yep, Mon-El thought, giving her a wink when she finally took a good-sized sip. To fun.*

But as Kara started telling him about something hilarious that had happened at Catco that morning, he couldn’t help noticing that it was kind of easy to forget about basic things like blinking when you were sitting about two-and-a-half feet away from a kind, animated Kryptonian with very blue eyes.

Very, very blue eyes.

So, quickly, he drained his second glass, grateful for the chance to look at something else.

*To fun, he thought, pretending he didn’t see her jaw drop at his ale-chugging speed. And also to being really, really careful.*

Chapter End Notes

*I cannot stress enough how this thing didn't end up at ALL where I expected when I sat down to write it. If stories had a neck, I'd wring this one's. GRRRRRR.*

*I've always enjoyed the implied Mon-El/J'onn friendship. I think there's a good reason Mon-El is ready to hand himself back over to CADMUS when he thinks they have J'onn, and scenes like the ones in "Homecoming" ("Walk this puppy down to HR"), "Duet" ("I think you'll find that J'onn is more than just a pretty face"), and "Distant Sun" ("Keep an eye on her"/"So are we!") make me even more convinced. Mon-El is really like a puppy to J'onn--he can be annoyingly frisky, way too exuberant, and get into trouble like *that* but J'onn's got a soft spot for him same as he does for the rest of his DEO kids, because he knows Mon doesn't mean to cause trouble. And Mon-El might think J'onn's a little too intense at times, but he looks up to the man all the same.*

*I'm sorry for the clicheness (I may have groaned myself while writing it), but in my opinion, there's no freaking way Kara didn't accidentally walk in on Mon-El at some point. Because the girl doesn't knock, he has to change SOMEWHERE, and I just don't think J'onn would let him do it anywhere but his room.*

*The idea for this has been rolling around in my mind since last fall, when I was trying to decide how much time had passed between 2x05 and 2x06 (they seem VERY comfortable with one another), and when Drunk Kara says "Mon-El took me to Happy Hour." I was deeply saddened by the fact that we hadn't been allowed to see exactly how that happened, and I figured they had to have bumped into each other at the DEO*
or something.
*I firmly believe that Mon-El starts to realize he's falling/has fallen for Kara in "Changing." And in all seriousness, I think a solid part of him falls in love the instant he sees her chug that drink.
*Mon-El's drinking Zakkarian ale because that's literally the only alien drink besides the Aldebaaran (sp.???) rum I recall being mentioned. Kara's drink is unnamed for the same reason.
*This update is later than usual because the last half of my week got crazy (allergies, good friend went into labor, I got asked to babysit, some other friends came by for a visit, trying to figure out who done it on Riverdale ate up a lot of time, etc.). Barring craziness, I should have another chapter posted by Monday afternoon (sooner if things go great, but with my luck, I wouldn't count on it).
*If you see a glaring typo in this chapter, tell me. I BEG of you. I just saw that I accidentally backspaced the closing quotation mark on the chapter before this and it bugged me so much that now I have to go back and fix it.
*As always, thanks for reading/commenting! This extremely wordy gal appreciates it and you guys so, so much! :D
So Sotally Tober

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x06 and kind of plays with what Kara and Mon-El are doing in the background while J'onn talks to M'gann. It's still in Mon-El's POV because most of this was originally attached to Ch. 9, and picks up where that left off. Some dialogue is taken from the show. If you don't know immediately know which dialogue that is, definitely go watch the entire drunk scene on youtube. Because the drunk scene should always be watched!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

By the time M'gann brought over Round Three of donated drinks, Mon-El was having trouble speaking in non-slurred sentences. Round Two had been some pretty strong stuff, and since Kara had refused to even taste hers after one sniff, Mon-El had drunk up both glasses. Then, because she said she might not even finish her first drink and he hated to see good alcohol go to waste, he drank the first one she'd been sent, too. Now, with five drinks and counting in him, he was warm and relaxed to the point that it was starting to concern him. Usually, when he got drunk, it was great. The world slowed down, he forgot any and all problems, and he knew nothing except for the fact that he loved everything and everybody. But for some reason, he couldn’t seem to do that tonight. And it was kind of frustrating.

He didn’t understand the whys behind it, but he was also beginning to hazily suspect that he didn’t want to. Because it all seemed somehow tangled up with Kara—how she waved her arms around when she talked, how her whole face lit up when she got excited about something, how she couldn’t seem to sit still for more than five seconds without wiggling, or trying to push a piece of hair out of her face, or pulling the sleeves of her sweater down over her hands until they disappeared. Even when she scolded him for peeking over at J’onn and M’gann—and flat-out denied doing it herself, despite the fact that he could see her—he didn’t feel any kind of urge to get up and head over to the busiest section of the bar to talk to other people like he normally did. It made no sense, but instead of just dismissing the situation, Mon-El’s foggy brain kept right on trying to focus on it until he had to start looking everywhere but at her so that he didn’t end up frown-staring. Except, every time he did start looking somewhere else, she said something funny, dragged his attention right back to her, and the whole thing started all over again. It was enough to drive a person crazy.

Only…Mon-El didn’t mind. At all. And he wasn’t really sure what to do with that realization, so he decided to just try and ignore it. Which meant he spent a lot of time gazing at his empty glasses (until M’gann came and took most of them away) and around the room.

Which, coincidentally, resulted in him smiling at something Kara had said while looking at other tables and led to M’gann’s appearance at their booth again.

“Aldebaran rum,” the woman announced, setting two glasses down in front of them. “Deadly to humans, but a refreshing cocktail for the two of you.”

Across the table, Kara frowned. “Did—did you order this thing?” she asked Mon-El, pointing.
Like he knew anything at this point. “Did I order this thing?” he inquired, tilting his head to look up at M’gann for confirmation.

She smiled, shaking her head. “No. It’s from Giggles.”

Mon-El followed her point to a table farther back in the bar where a smiley alien sat with a group of friends. “Oh,” he said, giving her a wave of thanks while Kara struggled to turn around and peer over the back of the seat. “She’s blue.” That was interesting. Most of the aliens he’d seen on Earth tended to try to blend in.

“This is unbelievable!”

He blinked at Kara’s exclamation, wondering why blueness was so shocking. But her next words cleared it up before he could ask.

“That’s the fourth round of drinks some girl has sent over.”

Mon-El shrugged. He thought he heard M’gann chuckle as she walked away, but he couldn’t be sure. “Yeah. So?”

“So, how is that possible? You haven’t even talked to them!”

Kara’s outraged tone made him laugh.

“I don’t know.” He held a hand out lazily, palm up. “Maybe it’s you.”

She scoffed, folding her arms. “Hah. They can’t even see me. Well, except the back of my head. Are you sending signals or something?”

“Not on purpose,” he answered. Clearly, smiling was a tricky business on Earth. “I think. This is what I’m doing.”

He demonstrated the nod-and-smile thing, glass in hand, changing his angle slightly when the small, dark-haired woman at the pool table gave him a strange, are-you-drunk-out-of-your-mind look. He’d seen her at the bar before and she seemed nice, always keeping an eye on the smaller patrons to make sure none of the larger ones tried to intimidate them when M’gann or the other bartenders weren’t looking. He didn’t want her thinking she had to make sure no one stole his money when he passed out on top of the table, because he wasn’t anywhere close to passing out. Not yet, anyway.

Kara grimaced when he finished. “Yeah. I think that’s flirting?”

That was flirting? Mon-El frowned. “No, it can’t be. Flirting’s like…way more oblivious. I mean, obvious. Look, I’ll show you.”

“No, no! That’s okay, you don’t—oh.” Kara’s voice trailed off as he caught Giggles’ eye again, raising his glass. “You meant…right. Never mind.”

“See?” Mon-El said as he smiled across the room, the word emerging as a slurred shee? “Obvious. And there’s usually winking. Well. Maybe not usually. But there can be. And I didn’t wink.”

He resumed the demonstration until Kara’s face suddenly leaned in front of him, blocking his line of vision.
“Hey, hello?” she said, her fingers fluttering in a little wave. “Can you, can you stop…flirt-drinking for one second?”

“Okay.” Mon-El sat back, trying to focus on her without focusing too much. Because that would be bad.

“You have been dodging me for days,” she began.

He shook his head, studying his shiny glass. What did they use to make it look like that? Wax? And why had that question never occurred to him?

“You promised me we would talk about a job.”

She punctuated the words with determined hand-waves, and almost automatically, Mon-El groaned. The word job was so jumbled up with bad things in his mind that it took a second for him to remember that he didn’t have to worry about that anymore. And by then his head was already resting atop his arms. He made an effort to lift it, though, using a hand to prop it up until he heard her mention how he needed to work.

“I found work,” he told her, pleased with how momentarily sober he sounded.

Kara brightened. “That’s great! What is it?” she asked eagerly.

“Um…” What was it? Mon-El tried to recall as he fiddled with a little pretzel, his chin inches from the table. He’d done…something. Something with powers. And money. And there might have been running. It was hard to remember just now, and harder still to come up with the correct terms, so he gave up. “It’s…various things in odds…odds and ends,” he mumbled, the words running together.

“At least let me train you,” Kara urged, leaning forward until Mon-El thought he’d probably better back up. Sometimes being close to Kara felt like being too close to a sun. A sun that might have been either red or yellow; he could never decide. “You have all these powers, and you’re not learning how to control them.”

Well, that was just mean. “I can control things,” Mon-El informed her, lifting his glass of rum to prove it.

“That’s dangerous!” Kara insisted. “You have to know how to con—on!” Her voice broke off in a gasp as the glass suddenly exploded in Mon-El’s hand, the pieces flying everywhere.

Oops. He inspected the damage with mild interest. “This was not the prime example of that,” he remarked after a moment, just so she knew he was aware of the poor support this offered his argument.

Kara heaved a deep sigh, her head tilting to the side as she gave him the kind of exasperated look that meant she was closer to smiling than she wanted to be.

An idea struck Mon-El as he watched her wavering between decorum and humor. “I’ll make a trade with you,” he announced. “You drink this drink….and I will train with you.”

The little space between her eyebrows wrinkled. “I don’t—I don’t think so.”

He leveled a stare at her. “You scared?”

It was a dare. Not a challenge, a dare, and from the narrow-eyed glower he was getting back, he
knew she knew it, too. Just like he already knew what she was going to do. For all her talk about being careful and cautious, and knowing your limits and all that stuff, Kara was really bad at walking away from any kind of fight.

Sure enough, her face got stubborn, she shoved her sleeves up her arms, and grabbed the glass. That wasn’t surprising. But when she gulped the stuff down in about three seconds flat, Mon-El was so shocked (and impressed) that, even as he laughed, he gasped out an Oh, my God! For someone who didn’t drink very often, she was pretty skilled.

“That was very quick,” he commented, seeing her face twist into a grimace at the drink’s kick. “How do you feel?”

Kara stared down at the tabletop for a bit, her expression uncertain. When she looked up, the move was slow and deliberate.

“Floaty,” she said after a slight hesitation, her mouth working funnily around the corners.

“Yeah.” Mon-El grinned, holding a hand aloft for her to high-five. Were you supposed to feel this proud of someone for speed-drinking? He wasn’t sure.

“But I’m not floating,” Kara whispered as though confessing a secret, bringing her palm up to rest against his and leaning forward.

“No, you’re sitting,” he agreed, and when she burst into silent cackles, he lost it too, falling back against his seat as he laughed. Yes, he thought. Or he might’ve said it; he was too drunk on alcohol, laughter, and maybe a tiny bit of blonde, superpowered Kryptonians with save-the-day instincts and gorgeous smiles to be sure.

“And ha, ha-ha-ha-ha!” Kara shouted, pointing at him. “You have to train with me now!” She raised her arms in triumph before her energy faded as suddenly as it had appeared, a groan sneaking out as she slumped over a little. “Tomorrow.”

“Anything you say,” Mon-El told her, pointing back.

“Whoa, was that too fast,” Kara murmured, breathing out slowly. Maybe she wasn’t as skilled a novice as he’d thought. But you could only get better with practice, right?

“I’m gonna get us two more drinks,” he announced, pushing himself up as she began scraping at the bits of broken glass.

“I’m gonna clean up while you’re gone,” she answered, her voice muddled.

“Okay.”

It didn’t take him long to get the drinks, even though J’onn stopped him to make sure he understood that if either of them threw up between the bar and the DEO, it would be Mon-El’s responsibility to clean up the mess. Still, when he returned, giving a nod to Alex who inclined her head toward Kara as she passed him and rolled her eyes, he found Kara talking to what was either herself, the glass shards, or the pretzels.

“Hello!” she greeted him brightly when he plopped a drink in front of her, her smile close-lipped but huge. “What’s this?”

“Can’t remember. It’s got a lot of syllables. From Starhaven, I think.” He slid into the booth across from her, laughing again when she bent over to smell the liquid. “What are you smelling
“I don’t know.” Kara giggled, too. “But I smell food, so…”

He had no idea whether or not that made sense, but he guessed it didn’t much matter one way or another since he’d have no hope of sorting it out in his current state, so he just bobbed his head.

“I’m gonna drink this,” Kara declared, picking up her glass. When it was halfway to her lips, however, she paused, frowning at him. “I need a straw.”

“What?” Mon-El started chortling all over again when she glared at the straw-less glass.

She tapped a fingernail lightly against the glass, her eyes wide enough to make him blink uncomfortably. “There’s no straw. Straws are fun.”

Mon-El shrugged. “So’s this.” Bending over, he bit down carefully on the rim of his glass. Holding it in his teeth, he slowly raised his head and wiggled his eyebrows at Kara, sending her into a fit of snorting giggles. Then he tilted his head back, drank the whole thing, and set it back down on the table, arms extended the whole time. “See? No hands, no straws, and more fun.”

“How’d you do that?” Kara demanded, pointing at the empty glass.

Highly gratified by her interest, Mon-El smirked. “You know how to save people. I know how to drink drinks.”

“Show me.” Kara set her glass down, opening and closing her mouth so that it looked like she was gnashing her teeth or something. “I wanna show Alex.”

“You can show Alex later,” Alex announced, snagging the glass right before Kara could bite the rim. “We have to get back to the DEO now.” She ignored both of their groans, but let Kara grab the glass back and drain it the usual way while she pointed at Mon-El. “Do not ever teach her tricks like that, okay? Her drinkware and probably mine can’t survive it. And that’s shotglass only territory, anyway.”

“I’ll make sure he can walk when he leaves, don’t worry,” M’gann said while Alex tried to pull a very talkative Kara out of the booth. “I do it at least a dozen times a night. You guys get going. Mon-El, you can help me get these last few pieces, okay?”

“Okay. And thank you,” Mon-El told her. He tried to bow with a flourish because it seemed like the thing to do, but he forgot about the table and whacked his elbow on it, making the booth rattle. “Oops.”

“Okay.” Alex, struggling to hold up Kara who was pointing and laughing at Mon-El, beckoned to J’onn. “Time for you to take over. She’s killing my shoulder.”

J’onn nodded. “Very well. Thank you, M’gann,” he added, sliding an arm under Kara and steering her toward the door. “I appreciate it.”
Kara twisted halfway around in J’onn’s grip to wave at Mon-El. “Training!” she called loudly, making J’onn increase his efforts to get her out of the bar. “Bye! See you tomorrow!”

“Bye, Kara.” Mon-El waved back, doubling over in laughter as Kara started trying to sing something to M’gann and J’onn practically carried her out the door.

Oh, yeah. Tomorrow was definitely going to be interesting.

Chapter End Notes

*Confession: because I am a boring control freak I have never actually been drunk. (Except for maybe that time I ate all the Jack Daniels' chocolate liquor bottles, but I really think getting drunk off those things is a myth. It HAD to be the sugar hyping me up.) I discovered while writing this a sad lack of firsthand experience, so if you read this and are like, "That is NOTHING like how being drunk feels!" I'm sorry. I'm the un-fun designated driver. That's just how my drunk friends look/act: lucid one second, childish and weird the next. Blame them.

*This is still one of my favorite Kara/Mon-El scenes. (I remember just sort of slumping on my couch and saying something like "UGH. Why are you so CUTE?") I really enjoy how Mon-El is willing to sign up for a butt-kicking just to get Kara to do something young, dumb, and fun, and Kara is willing to drink a presumably nasty drink to get Mon-El to try out the very serious responsibility of superheroing. It's like they're clumsily trying to invite the other person into their world, but they don't even realize it, and I <3 it so much.

*I always wondered what they did with Mon-El when they took off for the DEO. M'gann is so awesome (seriously, can Sharon Leal please come back?); she seems like the universal den-mother type who's always taking care of everyone, so I thought that if they were wondering what to do with him, she would totally offer to keep an eye on him and point him in the general direction of the DEO.

*They take a cab because I tried to picture J’onn trying to carry both Alex and Drunk Kara, and it was just too ridiculous of an idea. Kara would probably squirm, fall, and knock a hole in a building or something.

*I really think that Maggie and Mon-El kind of know each by sight from the bar long before Alex officially makes the big announcement to the group, so I mentioned that here.

*Just FYI if you've never done it...it is possible to pick up a glass the size of the ones Kara and Mon-El drink out of in the show with your teeth. Also FYI: don't try it without bibs and towels. You'll regret it.

*I'm not crazy about how this turned out. I think it needs more thoughts, if that makes sense? Mon-El strikes me as the kind of person who tells it all when they're sober, and goes all introverted/emo when they're drunk. (Kara, of course, is kind of the opposite.)

*This should have been up on Monday, but time, tide, and bills wait for no woman. :( I'm going to try to get back into the swing of daily postings, though. Or at least every other day.

**Because I'm running out of creative ways of saying this: Gracias, Danke, Merci, Thank you, etc. for reading/commenting! Hope you all have a SUPER (pun totally intended) day! <3
Out Last Night

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x06 before the training scene ("I slipped.") from Kara's POV. In essence, Kara goes to the DEO feeling the lovely effects of being an alien liquor lightweight.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

She was dying. That was all there was to it. Kara Zor-El, aka Kara Danvers, aka the Last Daughter of Krypton, the Girl of Steel, the Maid of Might, was dying. Maybe kryptonite was involved; maybe it wasn’t. At this point, Kara didn’t care. All she knew was that it was barely dawn, her mouth was dry as a desert, her phone was ringing, and her poor head was ringing louder. And wait, was she wearing the same outfit she’d worn to the bar last…?

Oh.

Kara sat straight up and whined in protest as the room dipped and whirled around her. The bar. The stupid, gross drink Mon-El had somehow talked her into drinking. And the one—or was it two? Possibly three—drinks that had followed and that were undoubtedly the cause of her current agony. As for what followed those drinks...she had no idea. Well, not much of one, anyway. She had a blurry recollection of laughing her head off with Mon-El, of talking to Alex, of waving at M’gann, and she was pretty sure she remembered J’onn threatening to pick her up and haul her off somewhere. Oh, and she definitely remembered staring at a little spot of grease on a DEO computer screen, but that was about it.

Clutching her head in her hands, she moaned as her phone beeped again, the sound positively earsplitting in the still of her apartment.

“I’m coming, I’m coming,” she grumbled, slapping her hand onto her bedside table with a force that made the little piece of furniture’s joints rattle. “Where are you?” Because she refused to open her eyes, it was a few more beeps before she located it. Every movement, every limb felt slow and heavy, and what good was having superpowers anyway if they didn’t protect you from hangovers? “What?” she muttered into the phone when she picked up.

A hearty laugh on the other end of the line made her cringe.

“Good morning to you, too, you party animal you,” Winn’s voice said, sounding almost gleeful. “Have you slept off your night of alien debauchery yet?”

Kara gritted her teeth. “Winn, if this isn’t about some dire, Supergirl-needing emergency, I’m hanging up,” she threatened. “And how do you even know about that?”

“Uh, because I was there?”

“No, you weren’t.” Surely she hadn’t just wiped Winn from her memory. She could have sworn she at least recalled the blend of faces from the bar. God, why was she drawing such a blank? Was
“This what happened when you got totally drunk? ‘Were you?’”

He snorted. “Oh, how I remember and do not miss *that* feeling. Nooo, I wasn’t at the bar.”

Kara sagged with relief. “Well, you didn’t miss out on anything.”

Winn coughed. “*I was* at the DEO when J’onn and Alex brought you in, though.”

Okay, scratch the relief. “What—what did you see me doing?” Kara asked carefully, trying to keep her voice neutral. The knowledge that someone else knew more about her actions than she did was beyond unnerving. And frustrating.

“Ha, well. You weren’t doing a whole lot except telling everyone you were fine. Then, you passed out on the desk.”

The grease spot. She groaned.

“Hey, it could’ve been worse. Alex said when J’onn dragged you out of the bar, you kept trying to sing *Sound of Music* to M’gann. You know—*so long, farewell?’”

Kara covered her face. There was a routine the bar probably didn’t see very often. “I did?”

“Yep. Apparently, you were quite the vocalist on the cab ride over, too. Even attempted the Cowardly Lion’s song before Alex shut you down.”

“Oh.” She could only imagine *that* debacle. Or maybe ‘cacophony’ was a better word, because Kara didn’t sound good singing that song when she attempted it dead sober. Though in her defense, pretty much nobody sounded good singing that song. “Great. You know what, stop telling me what I did. I don’t want to know. Just…what’s the emergency?”

“Umm…” She heard what sounded like pages rustling as Winn hummed *Somewhere Over The Rainbow* under his breath.

“*Winn,*” she snapped.

“Sorry. It’s in my head now.”

“Well, get it out.” The last thing she needed was a reminder of last night in musical form. Oh, Rao. She hadn’t tried to serenade Mon-El or anything, had she? For some reason, the idea horrified her.

“Oh! Here we go. Uh, o-*key,* there was an incident at a lab in Norway last night, and while you were three sheets to the wind, so to speak, J’onn and Alex went up there to take a look and brought back a male package.”

“A what now?” Kara’s eyebrows shot up. Surely he didn’t mean what it sounded like he meant, because if he did…well, they were dealing with some very cruel people.

“Huh?” Winn sounded confused. “Oh. Oh! Whoa, no. No, not a—not a ‘male package’ male package. I mean like, just a package, of the human variety—no, that doesn’t sound better. Um, a metaphorical package? Eh, you know what? It’s a dude. They brought back a science dude, quarantined him, and you’re supposed to come in for a briefing.”

A briefing. She was being dragged from bed for a *briefing?* Under normal circumstances, it wouldn’t be a problem—she would already be on her way, and she would be cheerful. She might
even consider bringing people coffee. But in her current condition, even the thought of touching a
toe to the floor made her queasy, and she wondered how much trouble could really happen if she
gave herself a few more hours of beautiful, wonderful sleep. But no, that would be ridiculously
irresponsible, and anyway, she was supposed to get to train Mon-El. The whole reason she was
even in this mess was because she’d wanted the chance to show him how great hero work could be.
Calling in sick on her superhero duties and rolling over and going back to sleep wouldn’t be smart
advertising.

“All right,” she sighed into the phone. “I’ll be there. It’s just going to take me a little longer
than usual because I kind of feel like a walking nightmare. And uh, don’t let anybody wake Mon-
El up, okay? I may want to kick his door in.”

“You got it.”

Kara ended the call and groaned one more time, just because she couldn’t help it. Oh, she was
so never drinking alien alcohol ever again. Ever. Not if this was the result. How could Mon-El
possibly like feeling like this? It was horrible!

A minute or two went by while she stared at the wall and tried to motivate herself to actually
move. If you can fly faster than a speeding bullet, you can get out of bed. If you can bend those
really thick metal planks at construction sites—the ones that you can never remember the names of
—into modern art, you can get out of bed. If you can survive seventh grade on Planet Earth, you
can get out of bed.

If you can go out drinking at a bar with a Daxamite and live to tell the tale, you can get out of
bed.

“Nothing to it but to do it,” she sighed. Throwing back the covers, she hopped out of bed and
closed her eyes, taking deep breaths as the swirl of color and light from the early morning sun
slowly settled around her. “And now we google hangover remedies,” she muttered, practically
tiptoeing into the kitchen.

*****

One extra-greasy meal later (even she was surprised that suggestion had worked), Kara arrived
at the DEO feeling much, much better. The headache wasn’t completely gone, but it had at least
dissipated some, and her stomach was definitely a lot happier with piles of food in it. Bacon, eggs,
nine sausage patties and a couple of cheeseburgers might have sounded weird—or yeah, okay,
disgusting even, and that poor grossed-out kid at the fast food place who took her order would
probably never be the same—but her super-tough belly adored it, and now she was ready for some
superhero action. Especially since superhero paperwork and lectures weren’t her favorite, and she
had to take care of those before J’onn would let her head off to roust her trainee.

Fortunately, however, the briefing didn’t take long. It was mostly just a here’s what happened,
we intend to monitor the situation, make sure you’re on call kind of deal, and in less than ten
minutes, Kara was hurrying down the hall to go find Mr. Paint-the-town. It occurred to her along
the way that she had yet to run into her sister, and the thought both reassured and concerned her.
After all, if Alex was going to tease her about whatever she’d done last night—and as far as she
could tell, Alex had been there to help J’onn dump her in bed and make sure her phone was near—
Kara wanted to just get it over with. She already had a feeling that Mon-El was going to remember
everything in detail, because he had an irritating habit of noticing and recalling exactly the kinds of
things Kara would rather he forget, and one person giving her a hard time about her drunk
personality was more than enough.
Reaching the now-familiar door, Kara paused outside. She hadn’t really been kidding earlier about kicking the thing in, but now that she was here, it seemed a lot harder to go through with the idea. Yesterday’s awkward moment lingered in her mind, and she couldn’t help wondering exactly how clothed a hungover Mon-El would be. And was half-naked Mon-El really something she wanted to see this early in the morning?

She nearly choked even as she thought it, the back of her neck and ears heating. No. No, it was not. Not even a little bit. For Rao’s sake, he wasn’t even that good-looking. Or nice. Or—nope. She wasn’t even going to think the word ‘sexy’ in relation to him. He was very extremely not-sexy, and even if she could maybe see how someone might think he was, sexiness was so overrated these days. What mattered was personality, and heart, and kindness. Which, okay, yes, Mon-El had surprised her by having all of those. But that wasn’t the point. The point was that he was just…well, he was just Mon-El. And Mon-El was her friend, and she was being ridiculous, because she wouldn’t hesitate like this outside any of her other friends’ doors.

So, before she could talk herself out of it, Kara slammed the door open.

“Hey, hey!” she barked, putting two fingers in her mouth and whistling shrilly. “Rise and shine, sleepyhead! Day’s a wasting.”

The Mon-El-shaped lump on the cot groaned and rolled over. “Five more minutes,” a gravelly voice mumbled from somewhere beneath the blankets. “Actually, like…five thousand more minutes.”

“No chance, pal.” Kara strode over to the cot where her quarry lay sprawled on his stomach and clapped her hands near his ears, eliciting another groan. “It’s Training Day, and you are late.”

Mon-El raised his head about two inches off the pillow, his eyes sleepy slits as he tried to focus on her, his hair standing up all over the place.

“And you are very brisk.”

“Thank you.” Kara poked the top of his head when he let it sag back into the depths of the pillow. Boy, he was a talented sleeper. “Hey. No more beddy-bye. It’s sparring time.”

He grunted. “Couldn’t it be sparring time later?”

Kara shrugged, holding back a laugh at the gloom in his tone. “It could. But it’s not.”

“Of course it’s not.” He heaved a gusty sigh and cracked one eyelid open, staring up at her blearily as he tucked his arms underneath the pillow and rested his chin atop them both. “You know, I’ve been conducting a survey of DEO agents, and apparently, it is not natural to have this much energy in the morning. Especially if uh, coffee is not playing a very large role in the get-up-and-go-ness of it all.”

Resisting the urge to smile at his drowsy sarcasm, Kara lifted an eyebrow and stared back, arms folded. “Is that your way of saying ‘I look forward to training with you, Kara,’ or do I need to flip the mattress with you on it?”

The other eyelid popped open and he gave her a crooked smirk. “I look forward to training with you, Kara,” he said, his voice sliding into that teasing, slightly-deeper register that always managed to rattle her inner composure. “Please don’t flip my bed over.”

“Well, that’s…ah.” Breathing out a quick laugh, Kara took a step away from the cot as Mon-El finally sat up and started stretching. “That’s more like it.”
“Mmm.” He yawned, arms reaching high above his head as he sent her a tired grin. “Yeah it is.”

Kara shook her head at him, wondering how he could seem so unaffected by the events of the night before. He’d had longer to sleep than her, true, but he’d also had more to drink. The way she felt after what she’d had…how was he even moving, let alone cracking jokes? And quite frankly, it was totally unfair that the ‘Just Woke Up’ look worked a whole lot better on him than it did on her—her own reflection had scared her when she stumbled into the bathroom to brush her teeth earlier. For Rao’s sake, even his severe case of bedhead was better than hers.

She’d wear kryptonite jewelry before she’d admit it to him, though. His ego just didn’t need the kind of boost that information would give it.

“So are you gonna get up, or what?” she inquired, propping her fists on her hips.

Mon-El pursed his lips, head cocked to the side. “Yeah. Quick question, though—does uh, does this training session involve those round bread things with holes in the middle of them?”

Kara blinked. Not quite the sort of question she’d anticipated, but a very valid one all the same. “You mean bagels?” she asked. “Or doughnuts?”

“Yes,” said Mon-El, standing up. “And I do not mean ‘or.’”

“Okay,” Kara chuckled, rolling her eyes as she motioned for him to follow her. “You can have ten minutes to get and eat bagels and doughnuts. And then we train.”

“Yep.” Mon-El was silent for about fifteen seconds as they headed down the hall. Then he cleared his throat. “So, um…last night.”

“Yeah, we don’t have time for that just now,” she interrupted, speeding up her pace. Or…ever.

“Breakfast is the most important meal of the day. You definitely don’t want to miss it.”

“Right, okay.”

Out of the corner of her eye, she could see his wide, too-smug smile, and sighed.

“You know what?” she said, halting abruptly. “On second thought…training starts now.”

Grabbing him by the arm, Kara whisked them both through the halls and into the training room, where she spun him away from her, making him stagger.

“Training lesson number one: sometimes you have to fight on an empty stomach. It sucks, but it’s true.” She held her fists up, gesturing for him to do the same. “This is your guard. Keep it up at all times, keep your elbows tucked in, and try not to swing wild. Basically, do what you did when you escaped the DEO, not what you did when—”

“When you swooped in on me and uh, kicked my tail?” He grinned, seeming not at all thrown by the sudden change of venue. (Or the postponement of his breakfast, which Kara didn’t understand at all. Personally, that would put her in a fighting mood. An ugly fighting mood.) Dancing on the balls of his feet as he faced her, Mon-El brought his hands up and curled them into fists. “Bring it on, Supergirl.”

“Okay.” Kara didn’t bother to restrain her smile as he shadowboxed around the room, waiting for her to make the first move. “You asked for it.”
*I will never not be disappointed by the fact that we didn't get to see Kara waking up after her night out. I kind of want to rewrite this scene where J'onn and Alex just stuff her into an extra room at the DEO to sleep it off, but I didn't think of that 'til after I started uploading this, so...that'll have to wait 'til summer or something.
*I'm convinced that Mon-El is that uber-annoying person who can drink half the bar and show up to work next morning ready to roll.
*I had Winn be the one to call because I feel like he would get a kick out of the fact that for all her superpowers, Kara got just as drunk going out with Mon-El as he did. It disappointed me that we never got to see him teasing her about it.
*This episode is really interesting to me in terms of how Kara's behavior is influenced by her emotions. I like how the training scene shows her reluctance to even talk about the night before, and when Mon-El asks, "What if that's not me?" she dismisses the suggestion really quickly ("Sure it is."). I think she's feeling a little out-of-control, and she's attempting to regain some, which is why the rest of the episode, she seems so intense.
*Finally, thanks for reading/commenting! I love hearing about everyone's personal headcanons, and feedback's always welcome :)

To Hero Or Not To Hero

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x06 from Mon-El's POV after Kara and J'onn are attacked by Parasite and have their powers drained. (It's kind of a big jump from the last chapter, but every time I tried to write the argument scene, it didn't come out right, so I've added it to the list of scenes I'm going to fight with over the summer.) Sorry that I jinxed everything again by saying I should be back to a more regular writing/uploading schedule! I'll try to reverse-jinx now by saying I SHOULDN'T have 2-3 chapter updates a week even during bad weeks. ;)

**Also: Lots of notes again at the end of this chapter. I'm sorry. I always try to not be wordy, and then it happens anyway. The important takeaways are:

*Thanks for reading/commenting!

*Have a great Monday!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The longer Mon-El lurked in the doorway, staring at the shriveled forms lying in the hospital beds, the more his earlier argument with Kara echoed through his head. He still wasn’t sure how the whole thing had happened; all he knew was that it had, and now Kara and J’onn were both hurt, and maybe even dying. J’onn he’d at least said something relatively nice to the last time they’d spoken.

But Kara.

If Kara died, the last thing she’d have ever heard Mon-El say would be an insult. And maybe that insult had had some truth in it, but it was cruel thing to say all the same, and the only reason he’d even said it was because…because…oh, he didn’t even know why he’d said it. Because she’d been about to call him a Daxamite, which, technically, he was and couldn’t ever change, so wasn’t that pretty pointless? Because finding out that underneath all her kindness and friendliness, she was still waiting for him to be the ‘worst of the worst’ had stung? Had hurt his feelings? He didn’t even have feelings, for Rao’s sake! Not the kind that could be hurt, anyway, and certainly not by her. She was easily the most frustrating being he’d ever met in his entire life—why would he possibly care what she thought of him? She was just so…so…so overbearing. That was it! She was overbearing. And self-righteous. And snobbish, and stubborn, and, and vainglorious.

And compassionate, and good, and generous, and why, why, why did she always have to run straight toward trouble without considering whether or not she might get hurt? She wasn’t completely indestructible; she’d told him about how they’d tested the kryptonite on him when he’d first been brought to the DEO—told him how it was her one weakness. Why, if she knew something like that existed in the universe and could make her vulnerable, was she not more careful? Why did she insist on just rushing in? Hadn’t she learned anything from that first fight with Draaga way back when? She was always so worried about everyone else on the entire planet. Not once did she stop to think that maybe, just maybe she ought to keep an eye on herself. Sure, Alex said the yellow sun lamp things would help her, and that she would probably be all right, but…what if she wasn’t? He’d regretted what he’d said the instant the words left his mouth, but
she didn’t know that. If she didn’t get better, she’d never know that.

Rao, he was an idiot. An ungrateful, bigmouthed idiot who couldn’t do anything right.

Jaw tightening, he dropped his gaze to the floor when his annoying superhearing picked up Alex and Winn talking in low voices about the dangers for both Kara and J’onn, and something about the DEO. Maybe, if he stared at something else for a while, he wouldn’t feel so sick to his stomach.

“Any updates?”

Mon-El turned to see James behind him, the man’s worried face looking exactly how Mon-El felt. And suddenly, it all just became too much for a stupid former prince who apparently had zero talents except for partying and screwing up. Or maybe it was around. Winn had explained which one meant making mistakes and which one meant having sex and stuff like that, but Mon-El was too numb to care anymore about right or wrong earth slang. Why was he even still standing there? Whatever was needed to fix J’onn he certainly couldn’t provide, and he was nothing but useless to Kara, even when she wasn’t hurt and unconscious in a hospital bed. Winn didn’t need his less-than-worthless help, Alex didn’t need his less-than-worthless help—actually, Alex probably didn’t even need Winn’s help, but that was neither here nor there. Mon-El was just in the way, and besides that, something in him twisted painfully every time he looked over at Kara. J’onn too, but…mainly Kara, and he was tired of it.

“Sorry,” he said sort of blankly to James. “I have—I have to go.”

Without waiting for a reply, he ducked out into the hallway and used every scrap of superspeed he had to blast out of the DEO and run straight to the bar. He was done thinking about everything. Done. About how J’onn had survived the destruction of his family and his people only to probably die here on Earth, a planet that didn’t seem to care one bit for a man who worked insanely hard every single day to protect it. He wasn’t going to think about how unjust it was that someone like Kara, who was kind enough and foolish enough to risk her life in order to save others, was now hurt. He was definitely not going to think about her face when she saw him in that alley, about how hurt and sad her eyes had looked right before she’d taken off, about the way she hadn’t moved since Alex and the other agents had brought her in—no he was going to ignore everything. It was stupid. He couldn’t fix any of it, and why was it even still bothering him?

Shoving open the door, he pretended not to notice the jumps and stares of the few customers when the flimsy thing slammed against the wall. He didn’t care if they starred at him ‘til their eyeballs dropped out. He was there for one reason and one reason only, and of course no one was behind the counter just now. He closed his eyes, jaw clamping shut. Well, he’d find a seat and wait for whoever was on duty to come back, then.

A seat at the bar. Not a booth. He wasn’t going to sit anywhere he could so much as see a booth from.

“I just need a drink,” he mumbled. “One drink.” Making his way over the bar, he dropped onto a stool and rested his forehead on the heels of his hands, breathing out carefully through his nose. It wasn’t his problem. He didn’t care. He didn’t.

“Mon-El?”

He looked up sharply to see M’gann moving toward him, a box of bottles in her arms. Halfheartedly, he lifted a hand in greeting.
“Hey, barkeep.”

It was kind of a running joke between them, ever since he’d watched that movie with those guys in boots and funny hats riding horses in dusty desert-like places. He’d asked M’gann if the place was supposed to be Mars, and she’d laughed and explained about Earth’s obsession with ‘Westerns.’ Then she’d said something about how all bars everywhere were exactly the same, whether you called yourself a ‘mixologist’ or a ‘barkeep.’

M’gann smiled, setting the box down on the counter. “What can I get for you today?” she asked, wiping her hands off on a cloth. “More Aldebaran rum?”

Mon-El flinched. “No.” Good Rao. He didn’t care if he never saw Aldebaran rum again. “Just…” he scrubbed a hand over his face, something like gloom setting in. “Give me something that’ll get me drunk fast that isn’t that. Please.”

He was enormously thankful during moments like this that she couldn’t read his mind, but he didn’t dare look up just yet for fear he’d find her studying him. Because M’gann was a great bartender. Probably the best he’d ever met. She didn’t need to be able to read someone’s thoughts to figure out what they were thinking.

“You all right?” he heard her ask after a few seconds, her voice gentle.

Mon-El almost laughed. Oh, he was all right. He was always all right. It was everyone else who ended up sticking their necks out, and getting hurt and dying. Cowards like him—they lived a long time.

“Yeah, I’m great,” he said, raising his head with what he was pretty sure was a decent smirk. “But I’ll be even better once I can’t see straight. Or, you know…think anymore.”

“Uh-huh.” She poured something out of a bottle into a small shotglass and slid it over toward him, her smile sympathetic. “Well, I’m in the middle of restocking just now, so I’ll let you get started on that—”

He picked up the thing and drained it in a single gulp.

M’gann’s eyebrows lifted. “—but,” she added, pouring him another, “if you feel the need to tell someone about it, we can talk when I get done, okay?”

He nodded, reaching for the little glass.

“Whoa.” She pulled it slightly out of his reach and pointed at him sternly in a move that reminded him horribly of J’onn. “Take this one a little slower. I don’t want to have to throw you out or cut you off in fifteen minutes.”

Nodding again, Mon-El accepted the drink (and the warning), taking small sips while M’gann left to go bring in another box. He didn’t know how long he sat there, staring at tiny cracks and gouges in the counter, at his glass, at the rows of bottles lining the back walls, but it felt like a while. He kept wondering whether or not he should tell M’gann about J’onn, but he didn’t know whether or not that fell under the heading of DEO things he wasn’t supposed to talk about, and he’d upset more than enough people for one lifetime. Plus…he wasn’t positive he could stand telling her while he was still sober. So when she paused her restocking to ask if he wanted anything else, he ordered a few more shots, begged her to let him have just one very tall beer from somewhere or other, and kept quiet.

Like the weak-willed ass he was.
Next thing he knew, he became aware of Alex’s voice nearby, telling M’gann something about J’onn and needing help, and the worry in both women’s voices made his stomach lurch. He tried to tune it out, but clearly, that wasn’t to be. Because the second M’gann hurried past behind the counter, Alex was striding toward him, disgust written all over her face.

“Thirsty?” she inquired, her tone biting, and he didn’t blame her. If he were her, he’d despise him too.

In fact, he already kind of did.

“Not particularly,” he responded, matching Alex’s sarcasm. “I’ve just found that drinking is the fastest way to get drunk, so…” he raised a shot in salute and drained it, wishing she’d either throw something at him and get it over with, or go away and let him get drunk and forget about everything in peace.

“You know, the city could really use a hero right about now.”

Yes, it could. And the only heroes it had were currently lying in the DEO, on the verge of dying. He was about the farthest thing in the world from a hero. Her far-more optimistic sister had figured that out. Why hadn’t she?

He smirked, fingers tightening around his glass of beer. “Fighting rampaging creatures isn’t on my resume.”

As usual, Alex didn’t miss a beat.

“Oh, that’s right,” she snapped. “Kara told me—uh, beating people up for money is though, right?”

*Kara.* Mon-El picked up another shot.

“Hey, here’s an idea,” he said in his most infuriating I-don’t-care voice. “Why don’t you go believe in somebody else, Alex? Thanks.”

But of course, the voice that had worked on hundreds of beings all across the galaxy, chasing off the nice ones and making the more evil ones throw punches, didn’t faze this one small, forceful human for so much as a second.

“I don’t believe in you Mon-El.”

Alex’s voice, low and serious in a way he’d never heard from her before, was like a bucket of ice water dumped over the head. He kept his eyes trained on the row of empty and partially-filled glasses in front of him, not wanting to meet her gaze as she advanced on him.

“I suspect you’re a coward. And that you would run at the first sign of danger.”

That was true. He nodded, once, memories of his last moments on Daxam flashing unbidden through his mind. Alex was smart. He’d have wagered any amount of currency on the fact that she’d be the first one to figure out that running away was one of the few things he was good at.

“My sister? She’s the one who believes in you. That’s why she’s so upset with you all the time.”

*Oh, Rao. Please stop mentioning Kara.* Mon-El toyed with his glass, wishing he could make himself stop listening. He’d done it all his life on Daxam. Why couldn’t he manage it here? Kara
couldn’t possibly believe in him. Not anymore. After the argument they’d had, she knew better.

Alex still hadn’t moved from just beyond his elbow. “She thinks you have potential,” she told him. Was he imagining it, or had some of the edge dropped off her tone? “To make a difference, like she does. To be a hero.”

A hero. Yeah. That was a good one. If he didn’t feel so old and just kind of dead, he might’ve laughed at the suggestion.

He shifted uncomfortably, trying to figure out what to say. But as usual, his big mouth decided for him and the truth came tumbling out as he turned toward Alex. “I don’t know how.”

She leaned in, her voice hardening. “You can start by standing up. Like the rest of us.”

And then M’gann was there, and Alex was leaving, and all Mon-El could think about as he stared after them was the fact that Kara would never sit by and let disaster unfold the way he was doing. Again. Not when there was a chance she could do something to help.

But Mon-El wasn’t Kara. He couldn’t do half the stuff she did on a regular basis, and even if he could figure out what to do, none of it made any sense to him. If Alex was right, and Kara believed—or had at one time—that he had ‘potential,’ she would be the first and only one to ever think that. Mon-El was confident that he’d never once in his life let anyone down, because he knew for a fact that no one had ever really expected anything of him. His parents, his guards, the palace servants, even diplomats and visiting royalty—they all knew that the crown prince of Daxam was just sort of there. He did what he wanted when he wanted, as long as it wasn’t something his mother expressly forbade lest it bring humiliation on the Great Ruling House of Daxam. And even then, he’d done a few things that would have landed him in serious trouble with his parents if they’d ever found out that their son was fraternizing with those they considered undesirable. But they’d never found out, so they couldn’t be disappointed.

Others still could, though.

*I’m training you. So that one day, if you are so inclined, you can make a difference.*

He swallowed hard. That wasn’t him. He’d tried to warn her. He just didn’t see the sense in charging straight into a fight you knew you didn't stand the ghost of a chance in.

*And you are no hero. I thought you could be, but I was wrong.*

Yes, she was. He wasn’t good, or self-sacrificing, or brave, or any of the things Kara and J’onn, and Alex were. Winn, James, M’gann—they all had those, those hero instincts, too. Mon-El was just a guy from another planet who happened to have a lot more strength and speed than most of the beings around him. That didn’t make someone a hero. It made them an alien with superpowers.

*My sister? She’s the one who believes in you. She thinks you have potential.*

He didn’t, though. He was literally just difficult to injure. He had no idea how to even…oh, right.

Standing up.

Mon-El cursed under his breath. Yep, he was officially a moron.

Snatching up the last shot in front of him, he tossed it back and slid off the stool, grabbing his jacket before he could change his mind. If he stopped to think any of this foolishness through, he
wouldn’t have the courage to do it. Hurrying out the door—he did at least remember to not use superspeed until he was outside—he rushed after Alex and M’gann and caught up to them just as they reached the DEO.

“Alex!” he yelled, skidding to a stop that turned up a few pieces of sidewalk. “Where do I go?”

Seeming surprisingly un-startled to see him, Alex huffed out a laugh as she ushered M’gann indoors. “Give me about five seconds, and I guarantee we’ll have an address.”

He nodded, trying very hard not to think as she ran inside. “Okay.” *No big deal. Just hanging out outside. Nothing special going on* at all.

In less than a minute, Alex was back, looking tenser than ever.

“Mon-El!” she called, jogging over to him. “He’s headed downtown. I don’t know what to tell you except…” she held her hands out and dropped them at her sides. “Just be careful about touching him, and try to keep him from hurting anyone. Including you.”

“Right.” He took a deep breath. “Do what you can, don’t die. Good thing I have a couple hours’ worth of training, right?”

“Hey.” Alex caught his arm, stopping him as he turned to take off.

“Yeah?” He tried his best to look not-panicked, but he didn’t think it was working.

She bumped her fist lightly—or maybe it was hard; it was always impossible to tell—against his shoulder. “You got this, all right?”

This time he did laugh. Because *that* was genuinely funny. “Doubtful,” he told her breezily, grinning a little. “But thanks.”

She nodded, her smile small but understanding. “Good luck.”

“You too.”

He sped off, racing in the general direction of downtown and following the screams to where a gigantic and hideous purple thing was tearing a car apart.

Holy Rao, this was for sure going to be how he died.

Chapter End Notes

*The title's Hamlet inspired, because there's a nice little parallel between Mon-El's story and Hamlet's (though I'm definitely hoping that the Shakespearean play Kara/Mon-El will most resemble in the end is Much Ado About Nothing, because they're already very Beatrice/Benedick).*

*This is one of my favorite scenes from S2, but it was surprisingly difficult to write. Upset Mon-El makes me sadder than I thought it would, which doesn't bode well for me when I make it to 2x10, etc. :'(

*Based on how M'gann clearly knew what Kara’s issue was in 2x11 when she was sitting around all depressed at the bar, I'm pretty sure she had to have noticed Mon-El being very gloomy at the bar in 2x06. I really enjoy how circumstances in the show
suggest that both J'onn and M'gann had ample opportunity to observe K&M around each other (and if Mon-El talked a lot to Eve about Kara, you can bet he did the same while working with M'gann), so I decided to pave the way for that here. Plus, it had to be weird for Mon-El going right back to the place he'd been with Kara and J'onn not that long before.

*I love Mon-El's VERY reluctant hero-ness in contrast with Kara's eager hero-ness. Like Kara, I doubted him a lot when issues like this would come up, because cowardice really doesn't sit well with me (I'm a Gryffindor; what can I say?). But courage isn't the absence of fear, etc. etc., and in my opinion, there's nothing braver than heading into battle when you're savvy enough to recognize that the odds aren't in your favor (there's also nothing stupider/crazier, but hey, hero work kind of demands stupid and crazy, so...). He brings realism to Kara's idealism, and I appreciate that. Unlike Kara, who says "because it's The Right Thing" and glories in the good she's doing, Mon-El needs a more concrete reason to bring out his heroic side (he's the city's best option/someone he personally knows is counting on him/a little kid is about to get squished by a car, etc.).

*This took so much longer to write than I thought it would. (I also woke up sick on Saturday, so that slowed the process down a lot because for me sore throat= zero motivation + bitter outlook on life.) Sorry to make everyone wait for a non-funny/non-happy chapter...I'm going to try to squeeze in a Kara/Mon-El after the fight and on the way back to the DEO cuteish scene, because I can't stand writing a captured-by-CADMUS scene right after this one.

*In related news, I have discovered that I'm already following a couple of you awesome commentors on tumblr. Yay! I'm new and freakishly bad at it (no, really), that's why it took me so long to realize that there was a reason some of your usernames seemed familiar *cough cough jeymien and emarasmoak*. Sorry! If I recognize anyone else, I'll definitely follow you. Just...like I said, I'm basically a tumblr toddler. The willingness to proceed is there. The skillz...not so much.

*Thanks for reading and commenting! I love hearing from you guys. <3 It's scary how many times I'll be going, "should I maybe write a scene about____?" and then someone says something like, "Hey, a scene about ____ would be fun." Plus, you can never tell what random comment is going to spark an idea.

IMPORTANT: It's Monday, so stay awesome and remind yourself that a new episode of Supergirl is coming if/when you feel the desire to yank your hair out. :D
Change: A Verb

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x06 after the big fight scene and before the episode's end from Kara's POV. It's a little disjointed because I decided to combine several ideas since none of them turned out to be enough to make a whole story. (Somewhere, my creative writing professor weeps/shakes her fist at me for trying to cram three scenes into one chapter.) Basically, I just wanted to write something less-serious and cute before getting to the CADMUS stuff, and I've always wanted to know what Kara was thinking directly after the fight with Parasite went down.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The instant the motorcycle roared off into the foggy distance, Kara turned toward the abnormally-quiet alien beside her. When Alex had told her that he was out trying to take on Rudy all by himself, her stomach had dropped. Yes, she'd been mad at him earlier, and yes, she'd talked an awful lot about being a hero and making a difference, but this wasn't exactly the kind of scenario she'd had in mind for his first venture into hero work. Fighting a giant, power-draining creature wasn’t saving a plane.

“You okay?” she asked, propping her fists on her hips. On her way to retrieve the plutonium, she’d used her high-powered vision to check on the scene of disaster. The other fighter—the one in the lead-lined suit—had avoided the worst blows using actual fighting techniques. But Mon-El had made all the mistakes she had in the beginning, trying to rely on strength to win the day. She’d seen him get thrown a couple of times, and she knew it couldn’t have felt good.

He shrugged. “Well, I didn’t die. So that’s good.”

His face split into one of those self-deprecating smiles that didn’t quite reach his eyes, and Kara suspected he was a lot more shaken than he was trying to let on. She’d started noticing that recently—how whenever a situation got tense, he started making sillier-than-usual comments. It was kind of annoying, but there was something a little sad about it too, because it meant he was feeling uncomfortable.

“It is, actually,” Kara said. “Not dying is always good. But, uh—you sure you’re not hurt? He was working with a lot of power there. And I saw him throw you.”

Mon-El chuckled. “Yeah, well.” He rubbed a hand along the back of his neck, glancing down at the ground before looking back up at her, his grin wry. “He was a superstrength amateur. I’ve been tossed around by the professional, so…could’ve been worse, right?”

Yes, it could’ve.

“Still.” She exhaled, the breath forming a small cloud around her face. For a second, she worried that she’d accidentally used her freeze breath, but when Mon-El wasn’t instantly encased in ice she relaxed. “Um, we should probably get out of here,” she added, seeing the flashing red and blue lights nearing them and a crowd beginning to gather. “Your face is kind of…”
“Uncovered?” he guessed. “Eyeglass-naked, so to speak?”

Kara sighed. But her lips twitched in spite of herself. “Yeah, that,” she agreed, giving him a light whack on the arm as she turned to walk away. “Come on. We need to get back.”

He nodded. “Right behind you, Kar—I mean, Supergirl.”

They reached the DEO in record time, where they found J’onn already up and issuing orders, ignoring the dire warnings of Alex and almost the entire DEO control room. Reporting everything and filling out paperwork took a while (she really didn’t see why Supergirl had to fill out a medical release form seeing how Alex was technically the doctor—what, was she going to sue her sister for letting her go out and fight crime too soon?) so Kara was surprised to find Mon-El sitting on the floor near the exit when she finished.

“Thought you’d be asleep by now,” she called, hiding a smile when he jumped.

“Wha—? Oh.” He grinned sheepishly, scrambling to his feet. “Not yet. I uh, I wanted to talk to you before you left.”

She frowned. He did? “O…kay. What about?”

“About—you know. What I said. In the, in the alley? You know…earlier?”

Oh, yeah. She remembered that, all right.

“Mhmm,” she said, folding her arms with significantly less attitude than she’d done when telling him off. Now that she’d had plenty of time to cool down, it had occurred to her that part of the reason she had been so angry with him was because he’d had a point. Of course, the main reason was because he was using his superpowers to beat people up for money instead of using them to help like she knew he could if he would just try! But Alex had warned her before about getting cocky, and deep in her heart of hearts, Kara knew that she liked getting applause more than a strictly-altruistic superhero should. You are not selfless had smarted because there was truth in it.

“Yeah.” He took a deep breath. “I should never have said all that stuff. I got—mad, I guess, and I just…I’m sorry.”

Kara looked down for a second or two, trying to keep her astonishment from showing. He was so confusing. So confusing! One minute, she thought she had him pegged—he was a happy-go-lucky, irresponsible guy who meant well but didn’t want to exert himself. The next, he did something like go around pummeling people for bookies, making her wonder why she’d ever thought he could become someone who helped others. And then, after basically saying he thought superhero work was for dummies, he went out, tried to fight a humongous, out-of-control creature on his own, and now he was apologizing? Alex had mentioned that she’d talked to him or something, but Mon-El could be pretty stubborn. None of this was the kind of thing you could just talk someone into.

Which meant this was all him, and what did that signify?

“It’s fine,” she said, a little haltingly as her mind struggled to wrap itself around this turn of events. “I got upset and said some…some things, too. Things I also shouldn’t have.”

“Yeah, but…” He stuck his hands in his pockets, shrugging. “I had it coming.” A small furrow appeared in his forehead. “Although…actually, Brian kind of did too. ‘Cause you know, I wasn’t even his first last warning? Apparently, he does this like a lot, which seems pretty dumb to me, because you’d think he’d get scared after one visit and stop doing this, wouldn’t you? I mean, he
just, he just saw me and started running even though we’d never even seen each other. It was—”

“Mon-El.” Kara tilted her head to the side, raising her eyebrows. As entertaining as his rambling was, she didn’t want to laugh in case he thought she was okaying that particular method of debt-collection. “We have superstrength. It’s not right to use it on people weaker than us like that. Even if they should know better than to gamble and try to cheat their…their vengeful bookies, or whatever.”

“Yes! Yes. I know. I see that. Well, now I do, anyway.” He gave her the little cheesy smile-slash-grimace that made it very hard to keep a straight face. “At the time it just seemed like something I could—actually, that’s not, not important.” He rocked back from his heels to his toes, blowing out a breath. “What I’m trying to say is, I uh—I’m going to quit.”

Kara blinked, taken aback all over again. “Really?” she asked.

“Yeah.” He stopped staring at the floor between them and looked her in the eye, his expression serious. “I’m supposed to get an assignment tomorrow evening. I’ll tell him I’m done then.” A smile played at the corners of his mouth. “I was gonna try to track him down tonight, but uh—it’s kind of late, and I think I might actually have some bruises, so—”

This time, Kara did laugh. “You don’t have to fix everything tonight, Mon-El,” she told him. She knew she was smiling like an idiot, but she couldn’t help it. It had been a long, exhausting couple of days full of roller-coaster emotions, and for something to finally, finally go right—it made her feel light and happy. “You’re allowed to get some sleep. Some,” she added teasingly. “Cause you know, there’s no law that says you have to stay in bed until the afternoon.”

His face lit up in a relieved grin. “No law that says you can’t, though, right?”

She chuckled, rubbing a hand across her forehead. “Okay. On that note, I think I’ll get going. I have to call my mother. My adoptive mother,” she clarified, seeing his brow wrinkle. “Alex called her earlier and told her about the power-drainage thing. She knows I’m all right, but I have to give the details.”

“Ah.” He clicked his tongue. “Status report.”

“Basically.”

Mon-El nodded, lifting a hand. “Well. I will…see you soon, then. Tomorrow, probably? Because chaos apparently doesn’t take breaks.”

“Yep.” She smiled, shaking her head as she returned his wave. “You should, though. Get some sleep, okay?”

“Okay.”

She was about ten steps toward the exit when he spoke again, his voice tentative.

“Kara?”

Frowning, she swiveled around. “Uh-huh?”

He gave her a small, almost self-conscious smile. “I’m really glad you’re not hurt.”

Kara’s lips curved up in response even as her face warmed.
“Thanks,” she said, wrapping her arms around her body in a protective sort of way. “Me too.” Okay, and now she looked like she was giving herself an awkward hug. Great. “Um, but about you, I mean,” she added, dropping her arms so that they hung limply at her sides. “And I guess, about me. I don’t...like being hurt, either.”

“Yeah, pain’s not very cool,” Mon-El agreed. He dipped his head at her in what was part apology, part mocking bow. “Sorry to hold you up. I’ll uh, stop stalling you now so you can go reassure your mother.”

Kara nodded. “Thanks. And, uh...goodnight, Mon-El.”

His face broke into one of those full-fledged grins that made her feel suddenly all-thumbs. “Goodnight, Kara.”

The impulse to grin back like a Cheshire cat was terrible, but somehow she managed to channel the urge into a relatively normal smile. Until he swung around to head back to his room, and she turned to take off, anyway. Then she let herself smile all the way home, because why not? She was relieved. J’onn was okay, Alex didn’t blame her for anything, and although she knew the method she’d had to use to stop Rudy would always sadden her, the city was safe now. Besides, she wasn’t smiling because of Mon-El or anything. And even if she was, there was nothing wrong with that. She was just...proud of him for trying to make the right choices, even if it had taken him a little while to come around. Even if he might never want to become a hero, at least he wasn’t going to be a charming, pleasant thug.

And hey, she was excited he’d showed up! He’d had essentially no idea what he was doing, but he’d actually showed up and tried. It was no guarantee of future heroics, but...boy, was it ever encouraging.

Slipping into her apartment through her window, Kara changed into a comfortable pair of pajamas before grabbing her phone and a box of little bite-size apple strudels she somehow hadn’t consumed yet. Flopping haphazardly on the couch, she slung a leg over the back of it as she tapped Eliza’s contact info and waited for her to pick up.

As she’d expected, it didn’t take long.

“Hello? Kara, sweetie? Are you all right?”

“I’m fine,” Kara answered, popping a pastry into her mouth and closing her eyes as the sweet, spicy apple flavor flooded her taste buds. “I’m home now, safe and sound. And Alex is fine, and so is J’onn. Everything’s all good in National City.”

“I’m sure it is, honey,” Eliza said, her voice warm. “But I know all that already. What I want to hear is how you are doing. From what your sister’s told me, I gather you’ve had an interesting last few days?”

That was putting it mildly. Kara paused mid-chew, trying to decide how best to start. Anything related to Alex wasn’t hers to share, and the rest of it was just so crazy that it defied reasonable explanation.

“Well,” she said, swallowing one strudel and reaching for another, “yeah, ‘interesting’ is a pretty good word for it.”

She could hear Eliza’s smile through the phone. “Why don’t you start at the beginning?”

“A very good place to start,” Kara sang automatically, spewing crumbs all over herself. “Oh,
and speaking of the *Sound of Music*—I got drunk.”

“What?”

And now she could hear Eliza’s eyebrows shooting up. She sighed. “So, I don’t know if Alex
told you or not, but I have this friend.”

Was Mon-El a friend, though? He wasn’t not a friend, but he wasn’t like Winn, or Barry, or
Lena, or James, or anyone else she had ever considered a friend. For one thing, he bickered with
her more than any of her other friends did, and for another, he was the only one she got that kind of
funny, bouncy feeling around. She enjoyed spending time with him, though, and they did have fun
together. That fell under the friendship umbrella, right?

“Well, I guess you’d call him a sort-of friend,” she amended. “Because sometimes we don’t get
along that great. He can be really frustrating. Uh, you remember the guy from the pod that crashed
when you were here?”

“Yes, I recall you and Alex both mentioning someone,” Eliza answered, sounding a little
bewildered. “But what does this have to do with you getting drunk? I thought that was impossible?”

“Yeah, so did I.” Kara wrinkled her nose. “But Mon-El—that’s my friend—he’s from Daxam.
And Daxam is—was—big on partying. It’s one of the many, many reasons our planets didn’t get
along.”

“Your planets didn’t get along?”

Kara shook her head vehemently, forgetting for a moment that Eliza couldn’t see her. “Uh-huh-
huh, no. It was kind of a mess at first. Mon-El and I—we didn’t like each other. He was just...ugh,
just such a jerk, and it made me mad so I acted like a jerk, too.”

“I see.” There was a pause on the other end of the line. “But that’s no longer the case, I take it?”

“Oh, no; he still makes me mad, and I still get a little—I don’t know.” Kara waved a hand. “He
just doesn’t do it on purpose anymore. At least, I don’t think he does? Sometimes it seems like he
says stuff just to tease me, but I’m not always sure because Earth slang mixes him up. That’s one of
the things we’ve been working on. He’s been trying really hard to learn how Earth works, and I’m
helping him. It’s slow going a lot, but we’re getting there. And it’s, it’s nice, too, because he
remembers a lot of the same worlds and foods and games that I do. Oh!” She brightened, thinking
of another positive. “And I can hit him and not hurt him! Not in a mean way, but like, when I get
excited I don’t have to be careful with him?” She paused to swallow, realizing that she hadn’t let
her adoptive mother answer. “You know, I’ve been meaning to call and tell you all this? I just keep
forgetting to do it.”

“Well, no time like the present,” Eliza suggested. Kara thought she detected another smile in the
woman’s voice, but she couldn’t be sure. And anyway, why would Eliza find any of this funny?

“Tell me about your friend. What’s he like?”

“Okay, let’s not make this personal,” Kara giggled, licking a piece of sugar off her thumb as she
nestled back against the cushions. “So,” she said, resting the box of strudels on her chest within
easy reach. “Mon-El’s like totally infuriating at times. But...he’s very different than I thought he’d
"Really," Eliza said, her tone difficult to read.

Kara's mind flashed back to the way he smiled at her every once in a while, and the squirmy feeling in her stomach began again.

So very different.

"Uh-huh," she said.

Chapter End Notes

*This is another one of those where I have multiple explanations for what happened. I actually think Mon-El's showing up to fight Parasite was his apology to Kara, and I think Kara understood that, but because I wanted to do a scene of them talking at the DEO, it didn't make sense for them to not officially apologize...that's just the kind of thing they do. And I also think they're both the kind of people who won't apologize for WHAT they said if they know it's true...they'll just be sorry they hurt someone with HOW they said it, so they'll apologize for that.
*I'll be honest. I love the argument in the alley because it was the thing that convinced me that Kara and Mon could actually work as a couple. (Up 'til then, they were just cute.) Kara calling Mon out was needed, but when he stood his ground and called her out on something I'd been noticing since S1, I was so excited, because it was the first time I'd seen someone who wasn't afraid to get into an argument with her.
***Also: the more this series wears on, the more I'm inclined to think that maybe Kara should've let Mon-El finish intimidating Brian. Brian's kind of an idiot.
*I had Kara call Eliza because I figure this is the kind of emergency situation Eliza would be called for. Plus, I think 2x06 is where Kara's closeness with Mon-El starts becoming apparent, and when Eliza comes for Thanksgiving, it's so obvious that she's heard quite a few things about Mon ("Is this your Daxamite friend you were telling me about?").
*I think Kara's bitterness in 2x07 about Mon-El possibly staying with some other girl instead of hanging out at the bar with everyone else is related to how she sees him behave in 2x06--it seems like she kind of gets her hopes up about him changing, and then when he disappears, she just kind of assumes, "Oh, great. He's doing it again." But also, I think it's a tiny bit of jealousy...Kara just doesn't realize that it's jealousy, or she wouldn't say it so bitterly ("What's the word for a male floozy?").
*I'm not thrilled with this chapter plot-wise, I just felt the need for some cuteness. So, I'm really sorry about the randomness (and seriously, my creative writing prof would kill me for the scene-changing. I feel like I should be checking over my shoulder for her.)
*I'm updating in a hurry, so excuse typos! I'll come back and check everything later; I just wanted to get this up before I forgot :
*Thanks for reading/commenting! I love you guys :)
From One Who Has Been Long In Lockup Pent

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x07 from Mon-El's POV and covers from when he got captured by CADMUS to when Kara is brought in. Mostly thoughts and reflections, not a lot of dialogue, because I've always wondered what was going through Mon-El's head to lead up to him almost telling Kara about Daxam. Even before I knew the answer for sure, this scene confirmed my belief that he was the prince and very much ashamed of his life/whatever he'd done, so I wanted to write something from his perspective that plays with that idea.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The last thing Mon-El remembered, he’d been on a dark, dirty street, asking if he could help someone he thought had needed help. He’d been so close to just walking on by, but that small, wormy feeling he got in the pit of his stomach whenever he was about to do something that some part of him just knew wasn’t quite right had flared up, and he’d stopped.

Which had turned out to be a huge mistake.

There was a flash of pain, a bunch of noise, and now, he was sitting in a tiny little box-like cell with bars that were definitely made out of nth metal (he knew because he’d almost ripped his own arms out of their sockets trying to break out). He had no idea how long he’d been there. A couple of grumpy guards made the rounds every so often, but no matter how much he badgered them, they refused to even acknowledge his presence, much less answer any of his questions.

And that was beginning to concern Mon-El. As someone who usually forgot to wonder whether or not he should do something before he did it, he’d been in his share of sticky situations. Sometimes it had been idle curiosity and sometimes it had been just plain stupidity that had done it, but either way, his actions had landed him in all kinds of trouble that he had only gotten out of because of his royal status. He hadn’t told anyone—not Kara, not even Winn who had recommended it—but the real reason he’d liked that cartoon movie about the lion named Simba so much was because he felt a certain kinship with the little guy. (Except, Mon-El had never been all that excited about the prospect of being king. Telling others what to do, how to do it, and when to do it had never been his strongest suit, and since both his parents said that giving orders was a necessary trait for all rulers, he’d been glad that it had looked like he wouldn’t have to be king for a very long time.) He realized now how much his guards back on Daxam must have loathed the job of keeping him safe—he’d made a habit of ditching them whenever he could, hating how their presence immediately marked him as someone noteworthy, and his parents had always been furious. At the time, he’d thought everyone was just irritated because he was ‘making himself common’ (he’d heard that lecture quite a lot). But after an incident on War World where he’d snuck away from his guards to go tour the regular bars and a bounty hunter attempted to hold him for ransom, Mon-El finally understood the dangers being prince of Daxam entailed. Or, at least, he thought he had. Apparently, even just being a regular guy on Earth was pretty dangerous.

“Hello?” he called for what had to be the thousandth time, his voice echoing in the stillness.
“Anyone feeling chatty just yet? The prisoner is still very confused. I can’t break out or anything. What would it hurt to tell me why I’m here?”

No answer, even though he could see a guard in the distance. Mon-El rolled his eyes. Now they were just being stubborn. (Which, incidentally, he was good at too.)

When he was younger, being confined to his room had been a regular punishment, and he’d figured out early on that escape was a lot easier if he annoyed the sentries into dropping their guard. This wouldn’t be as easy as sneaking away from people who weren’t allowed to harm you out of a place you knew like the back of your hand, but Mon-El thought that with a little luck, it could be done. He just had to keep talking to them, to figure out which one was most likely to get mad first. That was a thing he’d learned from Winn’s Netflix, too. All the humans who worked in Earthen law enforcement did it when they wanted to get a reaction from someone so that they could get information. He’d asked Alex if that was what she and J’onn did in interrogations when J’onn couldn’t read someone’s thoughts, and she’d said yes, more or less. That was good enough for him.

So when the guard who’d seemed the most annoyed with Mon-El’s constant questions came around again, Mon-El quit asking questions. Instead, he began rambling about whatever popped into his head, making sure to pretend to get things wrong. Basketball, not baseball was the name of the game with the tall guys with hoops—baseball was the one that used sticks and gloves and was either really exciting, or really, really boring. But Winn had said that a lot of Earth males were very sensitive on the subject of sports and that you had to be very careful about getting those mixed-up. Mon-El figured that if that were true, maybe the guy who’d given him nasty looks every time he passed might be pushed into the inexplicable rage Winn had described if Mon-El goofed up the descriptions of his beloved sports.

But that didn’t seem to work either. So, catching sight of a shiny metal band on the fourth finger of the man’s left hand, Mon-El gave it another go.

“Oh, a courtship ring,” he remarked, remembering how at the bar last night M’gann had explained about the catchy song that had been following him everywhere.

If it was last night. At this point, he’d been sitting in the cage for so long that he wasn’t sure anymore. Maybe it had been a week since he’d quit his job and stopped by the bar before heading down that dark street.

“You know, I’ve just learned that there’s a longstanding mating ritual here, where if you like it, you should have put a ring on it. Clearly, you’ve been successful in this arena, so…”

He tapped his fingers against the icy metal of the bars, trying to come up with something particularly irksome.

“But from the looks of you, she can’t be that pretty,” he jibed, laughing as though he thought it were funny.

Which it kind of was, because the man was no great beauty, and he seemed mean enough that you had to wonder who was unlucky enough to be latched to him. Although he might’ve messed up with the she. Maybe it was a he, and the man was internally laughing at him and not mad at all. He hadn’t done anything but scowl since Mon-El had come to in the cell, so maybe he just wasn’t capable of smiling?

Ah, well, Mon-El thought. No help for it now. He was committed to insulting the man’s luckless partner, and he’d just have to hope that they were a she, and that the man had enough
“What do you call ugly women on this planet?” he asked, pretending to rack his brains. “Is it cats? No… dogs.”

This one he knew for sure, because he’d heard it in a movie and been so horribly confused that he’d asked Kara about it later and learned that it was definitely considered an insult. He’d seen dogs. They were fun, and cute, and made almost everyone smile. And he’d heard people at the bar refer to each other as ‘Dog,’ and nobody seemed to mind it. Why, then, was it considered an insult in this context?

It made no sense to Mon-El. But that didn’t much matter, because finally, the man reacted.

“Don’t think you’re so important I won’t shoot you,” he bit out, shoving his gun through the bars.

Mon-El couldn’t believe his luck. “Well, that would be a relief,” he responded, readying himself to make a move, “from staring at your ugly face.”

In a flash he was at the front of the cage, shoving the man’s arm down and snatching the little card he’d seen used for entry. Heart pounding, he burst out of the cell the second it unlocked and raced toward the area the guards had all left by, footsteps slapping against the hard floor. He had no idea where he was going; he only knew he had to run, to get out, to make it somewhere other than this. Sprinting down a shadowy corridor, he slid to a stop by a door made from more metal bars, where he fumbled with the card, hoping desperately that he could get it to work before they found him. But then they were there, and they had J’onn, and J’onn was telling him to run, but that woman with the smile that sent chills down his back was telling him that they’d hurt J’onn if he did, and Mon-El couldn’t just let someone else die in his place. Not again. And certainly not J’onn, who had probably never done one bad thing in his whole entire life except for maybe yell at Winn about little plastic dolls.

Okay, okay! he heard himself shouting almost before he knew it. And then they were grabbing him and hauling him right back where he’d come from, and J’onn was lying motionless on the ground, and oh Rao, if they’d gotten to J’onn, did that mean they’d infiltrated the DEO? Kara, Winn, Alex—were they in danger, too? What about all the other people who worked at the DEO? Were they going to be brought in, one by one, and used for who knew what purpose?

The fear rose in his throat, almost choking him, making him want to run faster than he’d ever run in his life. But the guards and that woman were still there and he was not going to give them the satisfaction of seeing his terror, so he pasted a blank expression on his face and made some crack about the cheap accommodations when they shoved him back inside and slammed the door. They were up to something; that was for sure. When they retreated to a far corner of the room and began speaking in low voices, he tried eavesdropping. But all he could catch were snippets about ‘hacking,’ and ‘tornado’ and ‘cyborg,’ and none of that made any sense, so he leaned back against the bars and tried to pretend that he was hanging out at the DEO, or at the bar, talking to everyone and feeling a lot safer than he felt just now.

And it worked. Kind of. Or at least, it did until a few hours later when the woman with the evil smile showed up again, wearing one of those communications headsets Mon-El saw all the time at the DEO. He was in the process of trying to figure out what kind of nefarious plan a headset could accomplish, when he heard the word Kryptonian and froze. No, she couldn’t possibly be stupid enough to think that she could trick Kara into getting herself captured.

Could she?
Holding his breath, he strained to hear, until he realized that the woman wasn’t making any effort to be quiet. That she didn’t care whether or not he heard her using his life as a threat to Supergirl.

“You do know that I don’t even know Supergirl, don’t you?” he tried when the woman finally clicked off the communications. “I mean, other than by sight, like every other citizen of National City, because it’s hard to miss all the red and blue.”

And the beauty. He still had no idea how something as flimsy as glasses kept Kara Danvers from being recognized as Supergirl, because how anyone could forget or overlook that face or that smile was beyond Mon-El. Plus—there was the crinkle and the kindness. All of them were difficult to mistake.

The woman just smirked at him. “Excellent try. But we do our homework.” Sliding her hands into her pockets, she strolled toward the exit. “A few months ago, an alien fitting your exact description went around the city wreaking all kinds of interesting havoc. Then he disappeared, but only after a rumored altercation with none other than Supergirl, whom you were spotted talking with after that nasty attack downtown a few nights ago. If I were to hazard a guess, I’d say that you two have worked out your little tiff. Am I correct?”

Mon-El’s grip tightened on the bar. Kara had been right; standing there in the open was a terrible idea. “No,” he said.

Glancing back at him over her shoulder, the woman chuckled as she reached the door. “Don’t worry, your little friend will be here soon. Softheartedness, not kryptonite, is the true weakness of the Supers.”

She was right, Mon-El thought, rubbing a hand along the back of his neck in frustration as she exited. He hoped Kara wouldn’t play this woman’s game, but deep down, he knew there was no way she would let anyone she’d taken under her wing go unprotected. Not even him. Which meant at this very moment, Kara was walking into a trap that she knew had been set, and she was doing it because he’d been stupid enough to get nabbed in the first place. Ugh, why had he decided to try being helpful the one time being selfish and oblivious to the suffering of others would have actually done some good?

On Daxam, he’d had no problem walking away. No problem running away. Even when the entire planet was crashing down around his ears, even when dying hands clutched at him from all sides, when countless voices begged for his help, he’d gone on. He’d left them. Left them all. The girl in his bed, the guard who had saved his life—neither of whose names Mon-El could even remember—he hadn’t done a thing to help. What kind of person did that? Not anyone of worth, that was for sure. So why had he even bothered to try acting like one?

He buried his head in his hands, elbows propped up on his knees. How long he sat there trying to think about nothing he wasn’t sure. Maybe it was five minutes, maybe it was an hour. He only knew that when he looked up, it was to see two guards approaching. Between them they half-carried, half-dragged a limp, unmoving Supergirl, and Mon-El’s stomach lurched at the sight.

He feigned indifference though, yawning as they threw Kara into the cage next to him and pretending he didn’t hear the name one of the guards called her. It was one of those taboo Earth words that no translation existed for on Daxam, but just knowing that an insult that heavy had been aimed Kara’s way when she was unable to defend herself from it was enough to make Mon-El angry. He could understand why someone might not like him. But what had Supergirl done besides save people?
Leaning his head back against the cage, he acted like he was falling asleep as the guards left. But the second the door closed behind them, he sat up, scooting over to the wall closest to her.

“Kara?” he whispered, lowering his voice to a pitch only she could hear. “Kara, can you hear me?”

There was no reply, and Mon-El swallowed hard. What, he wondered, could they possibly have used to knock her out? If it weren’t for the fact that he could hear her breathing, see the bits of hair around her face fluttering, he would be close to panicking. This was all wrong. She shouldn’t even be here. Why had she listened to that woman and come?

He rested his head against the bars, closing his eyes for a moment as he took a deep breath. He was being ridiculous. She was going to be okay. She was. She had to be. Whatever they’d done to her, she would recover. She would. She was Kara, and Kara, like she always liked to remind him, was the Girl of Steel. Any minute now, he told himself firmly. Any minute now, she’s going to wake up and—

She stirred.

And she’s going to see you staring at her from a foot away like a creepy fool.

Instantly, Mon-El scrambled back to the opposite side of the cell, his back slamming against the bars with teeth-rattling impact. It occurred to him as he winced and Kara sat up gasping, that she probably wouldn’t have cared if he had been right there when she woke up. But by then it was too late, so he just sat and gave her the best smile he could manage under the circumstances when she turned and saw him.

It wasn’t like he had anything else to offer, right?

Chapter End Notes

*Title is adapted from a Keats poem (“To One Who Has Been Long In City Pent”). I hate poetry as a rule and have a beef with Keats in particular (yes, life as an English major was difficult), but his poems do have some fun titles.
*I think 2x07 is where Mon-El really turns the corner. He begins a character shift in 2x06 (“Changing” definitely refers to him as well as to Alex, Kara, and James' lives), but it isn't until he's given the time to really sit there and think about dying that he realizes how much he wants to be different than he was on Daxam. He's not fully committed to heroism just yet, but that desire to live a better life is there.
*In my opinion, Mon-El officially falls for Kara in this episode. He's not blind, so he definitely would've noticed that she was cute right off the bat and I think the attraction between them is clear from the beginning, but while Mon-El may have always been a sucker for "a pretty face" as Rhea says later on, I think Kara's heart is what finally does him in. He's something of a cynic (aka, a disappointed idealist), so when he sees Kara put her life on the line for his, it makes him realize that she's serious about her ideals, and he admires that because it's something he struggles with (consider the fact that he's willing to help when he sees a concrete way he can make a difference--he tells Kara to blame him, not Winn in 2x04, tries to stop the gunmen in 2x05, surrenders to CADMUS to save J'onn in 2x07, runs into the bar to help the aliens in 2x08, follows Kara even though he thinks it's a bad idea in 2x09--but isn't crazy about
the idea of marching directly into trouble because a bunch of nameless, faceless people *might* need his help). He also sees her drop the Invincible Supergirl persona and admit she's scared, and I think that resonates with him because Kara up until that point was always trying to maintain her perfect facade. Letting him know she's afraid too, shows him that even when she's terrified, she does what she can to help others, and I think Mon-El just can't help falling in love with that.

*The Lion King is mentioned because I'm positive that Kara and Winn would suggest all the Disney movies to Mon-El. And there are a lot of similarities between Mon-El and Simba, although I will go to my grave insisting that Mon-El and Kara are basically Naveen and Tiana. Seriously. It's scary how side-by-side pics of them line up.

*Confession: I'm not even a little bothered by Mon-El's "Dogs" comment. To me, it's obvious that he's saying everything he can to annoy the guard, and quite frankly, if I'd been kidnapped and thrown into a cell with no explanation, I'd insult small children and my own grandmother if I thought it might help me escape. And my grandma would applaud me.

*I had Lillian mention seeing K&M talking after fighting Parasite, because I've been trying to figure out how CADMUS knew about Mon-El's connection to Supergirl for a while, and I still don't get how Jeremiah knew. Maybe it'll all be explained? If anyone knows/has a theory, please tell me. It's been bugging me for forever.

**I'm going to try to squeeze in 3 updates this week, but I have a lot of family and friends graduating which means that may or may not happen since writing is hard when people you haven't seen in forever keep rolling into town!

*Thanks for reading/commenting! You guys are awesome, and I hope every single one of you has a fantastic week! Here's hoping Supergirl won't kill us all :D
Whatever It Takes

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x07 right after where Ch. 14 left off (from Kara's POV). This is another one of those installments that I'm not crazy about. It started getting really long so I cut it off at the point that made the most sense, and now it just feels sort of blah to me (I wanted to show Kara's thoughts, but there isn't a lot of lag time between dialogue in the show).

The next part may be even longer (sorry), because I want to do it from both K&M’s POV, and the goal is to have the happy part (the conversation on The Couch) up around late Monday night/early Tuesday morning, because I have a feeling we're all going to need a dose of happiness.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Cold. Pain. Darkness. Where was she?

Groaning, Kara reached out, her palms sliding over a cool surface that felt an awful lot like cement. Vision blurrier than usual, she struggled to move; her body felt slow and heavy, and it seemed difficult to just raise her head. What was she was even looking at—bars? No, not just bars. A cage. A prison?

In a flash, it all came back to her.

_Cadmus._

Immediately, she stiffened. Feet scrabbling against the ground, she half-rolled, half-pushed herself upright, gasping as the blood pounded in her ears and she took in her surroundings. Shadows, bright lights, more bars, were those feet? Yep, the feet of another prisoner—

_Holy Rao._ He was there.

For a moment, Kara could only stare. From the instant that woman had said the words _your Daxamite friend_, Kara had been afraid to even think about what might be left of him by the time she got there. Now, here he was, looking pale and rumpled, but otherwise okay if the small smile he wore was any indication.

“Oh, Mon-El,” she gasped, sagging with relief. They weren’t out of trouble—not by a long shot—but seeing him not dead or wounded was a good sign. A _great_ sign, even.

“You okay?” he asked.

_No_, Kara thought. But he seemed so calm and relaxed about everything that Kara made an effort to seem fine, too. Two worried aliens wouldn’t do anyone any good.

“Now I know how bad guys feel when I pummel them,” she joked weakly.

It wasn’t the funniest thing she’d ever said, but Mon-El chuckled anyway, and that made Kara
feel a little better. At least they could both still act like things were all right.

“Yeah, I’m okay,” she added, standing. Maybe there was a way out, if she just looked hard enough?

“They captured J’onn, too,” Mon-El said from behind her as her eyes roamed over the tiny little cell.

“That wasn’t J’onn.” Kara paced the inside perimeter, scanning the bars for any sign of weakness. “Remember I once told you J’onn assumed the identity of a human?”

It had been maybe a day or so after she’d officially introduced herself to him. They’d run into each other—literally—at the DEO when she was on her way to work, and Mon-El had asked her point-blank why she pretended to be human. Unsure how to answer because everything she came up with fell along the lines of ’cause I need to seem normal, Kara had told him about how being Hank Henshaw allowed J’onn to do some good in the world. Boy, she’d give just about anything to go back to that day so she could make lots of different choices that wouldn’t lead to the two of them hanging out in Cadmus custody.

*There has got to be a way out of here.* “That’s the human,” she said, resting her hands atop one of the bars. “Hank Henshaw. Only…they enhanced him, somehow.”

Mon-El was silent for a second or so. “They tricked me.”

*That they did.* Not that she blamed him for falling for whatever he’d fallen for. She’d do just about anything to protect someone she cared about, and Mon-El had always seemed to get along well with J’onn. Which, come to think of it, was kind of interesting, but not important just now. Escape, not intriguing observations, was the goal.

A hasty inspection of the big room revealed that she couldn’t see through any of the room’s walls, but that wasn’t too surprising. If the woman from Cadmus had truly been expecting Supergirl, she would have protected her stupid prison room from things like x-ray vision. Which probably meant that they’d taken care to uber-reinforce the bars, but maybe if Kara pulled hard enough…

“The bars are made from nth metal,” Mon-El said in the voice of someone who had already tried as she grunted and struggled vainly to so much as bend anything. “Thanagar. They’re unbreakable.”

*Of course they are,* Kara thought, releasing her hold on the bars and stepping away. *Ugh,* she hated when the bad guys were smart and did their research.

“So what is this place? And who are these people?”

“It’s called Cadmus,” Kara answered. God, they had to get out of there. She had to get them out of there. Whatever was going on couldn’t be good. “It’s run by scientists who want to wipe aliens off the face of the planet.”

“News just keeps getting better by the second,” Mon-El commented, still sounding astonishingly calm considering their situation. “So, what?” he asked lightly. “I’m the uh, the lucky first contestant?”

Was he?

“No.” The instant Kara said it, she knew it was true. They hadn’t just randomly selected him.
“No, they kidnapped you to get to me.”

Behind her, Mon-El snorted. “Well, that seems rather dumb of them. How could they be sure you’d even show up?”

Kara frowned. “What?” she said, turning around to see him sitting in the exact same spot, eyes trained casually on the ceiling. “Why wouldn’t I show up?”

“Um…” He glanced at her and shrugged, one of his it’s-no-big-deal smiles spreading over his face. “I don’t know, just…you might not, that’s all.”

Squinting at him, Kara wondered, not for the first time, what was going on in that head of his. She’d never really envied J’onn his abilities until she met Mon-El; since then, she couldn’t count the number of times she’d wished there were some way she could read the mind of the quippy, perplexing alien now camped out in the cell next to her. Ninety-nine percent of the time, he seemed…well, for lack of a better word, durable. Resilient. The Unsinkable Mon-El. Literally nothing could bring him down. But every once in a while, he got a funny look on his face, or else a weird, dejected tone that he buried under about a thousand pounds of sarcasm crept into his voice, and it kind of twisted Kara’s heart.

“Mon-El,” she said, walking over to the wall their cages shared and plopping unceremoniously down on the ground facing him. “You’re my friend. I’m not just going to leave you in trouble.”

He nodded slowly, his fingers tracing invisible shapes on the bar he was using as an armrest. Nothing else about him moved.

“You know that, don’t you?” Kara pressed, tilting her head to intercept his gaze. Surely he wasn’t concerned about that argument they’d had a few days ago? Because they’d settled that. And even if she were furious with him, she still wouldn’t leave him to just die alone. He had to know that. “I mean, I can seem pretty persnickety, and Alex has told me so many times that I overreact when I get mad, but I would never do something like that. It’s not right.”

She watched him closely for any sign of response, so when his jaw clenched, it puzzled her. What was she saying that he wasn’t getting?

“I, uh…yeah,” he said finally, lifting his eyes from the floor to meet hers. “I do know that. You’d never run off and leave someone. And, yeah, definitely not if you thought they were um… going to die.”

Kara frowned. Something about the way he was acting was off, and she still couldn’t figure out why. Maybe he’d been worried and alone for too long? But if that was what was bothering him, why had he seemed so jokey when she woke up?

There wasn’t time to keep wondering, though. Already her ears had picked up the sound of feet headed their way. Glancing at Mon-El, she could see in his face that he heard it, too.

“It’s her,” he said, confirming Kara’s suspicions. “Evil Lady is on her way.”

“Yep,” she muttered, jumping to her feet. “I’m gonna stand. Like—pronto.”

Mon-El huffed out a laugh. “I’m gonna sit. For now, anyway. I think it annoys her when people don’t cower.”

“Every little bit helps.” Kara leaned on the bars, taking a deep breath. “Here we go,” she murmured, though whether it was to herself or Mon-El she wasn’t sure.
“Supergirl.”

With difficulty, Kara kept her lip from curling at the woman’s tone. Don’t give her the satisfaction, she ordered herself fiercely. Just because she was a prisoner didn’t mean she had to let this woman think she was beaten. And it certainly didn’t mean she had to show fear.

Except… wait. Kara recognized that face. And the last place she’d seen it…

“I don’t believe we’ve been introduced,” the woman said as casually as if it were a business meeting.

Kara’s fingers tightened on the bars. “I’ve seen you before. In Lena Luthor’s office. What were you doing there?”

The woman’s eyes fairly glittered. “I might ask you the same. I don’t like the idea of you around my daughter.”

*Daughter.* Kara’s blood didn’t exactly run cold, but it came very close.

“You’re Lillian Luthor,” she breathed out, her voice shakier than she would have liked. “Lex and Lena’s mother.”

All the old fears she’d had regarding Luthors reared their ugly heads as the woman blathered on about motherhood and patriotism. Even as she responded, Kara’s brain reeled so that she barely heard her own words. She’d been mistaken about Lena when she’d first met her, but this woman was everything she had been wary of. The anger she felt over her son—that Kara could understand. She could sympathize. Losing the people you cared about was the most awful thing in the universe. But the way Lillian spoke lovingly of Lex, acting as though he were some misunderstood genius? As though Clark were something from a nightmare? That hinted at the kind of comprehensive, deep-seated hate that rattled Kara. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw that Mon-El was standing now, too, and the memory of Krypton and Daxam flashed unbidden into her mind.

No. She couldn’t let something like that happen here on Earth.

“So what am I doing here?” she demanded, focusing her attention on Lillian.

“I need something from you” came the answer, sending a shiver down Kara’s spine. “I need you to be human for a little while.”

The woman beckoned toward one of the guards who’d entered with her, and Kara tensed when she saw the weird, goggles-looking thing the man held.

“I know from your fight with Red Tornado when you expel enough of your heat vision you deplete the solar radiation in your cells, leaving you as helpless as any mere mortal,” Lillian continued, gesturing toward the guard. “I’ve designed this helmet to absorb the radiation.”

A knot began forming in the pit of Kara’s stomach. “You want me to solar flare?” she asked, her voice little better than a whisper. At the woman’s smirk, she moved her hand away from the bars, fists clenching at her sides. “That’s never gonna happen.”

Lillian didn’t seem surprised, making Kara even more uneasy. “I can’t hurt you,” she said coolly, walking around behind the guard. “But, I can hurt him.”

Before Kara could so much as wonder what she meant, a shot echoed through the room, followed closely by Mon-El’s cry of pain, and Kara’s heart flew straight into her throat.
“No! Mon-El!”

She started to run to him, but she’d forgotten the bars and could only stand there uselessly as he collapsed onto the ground and scuttled back as far away from Lillian as the cage would allow, clutching his knee. God, what was wrong with that woman? Kara was at least related to the alien Lillian held responsible for her son’s fall from glory. Mon-El had next to no idea who Lex Luthor even was…he hadn’t done anything!

“Now, we’ve been studying your friend.”

Seething with the kind of rage that left her speechless and ready to hit the first thing she saw, Kara turned to see Lillian smiling down at Mon-El. Oh, if there were only some way she could bust through those bars, she didn’t think she’d have any problem creating a human-shaped hole in the wall. How could anyone be that unfeeling?

“He’s powerful, but has a very bad lead allergy.”

Lead poisoning. That was her game. Oh, good Rao, she was going to keep Mon-El in agony if Kara didn’t do what exactly what she wanted, wasn’t she?

Kara exhaled, placing a hand on the bars to steady herself. She couldn’t do it. She couldn’t.

If Cadmus needed her to be human, then Kara had to be the most alien she’d ever been in her entire life. It was the sensible thing to do.

“Say you’ll do it, and I’ll let him live.”

Kara hated her. Officially. That was all there was to it. She was so smiley, and pitiless, and cruel, and so convinced that she was in the right that she was prepared to use someone’s life as a bargaining chip. But if Kara agreed…

She hesitated, and Lillian’s face hardened.

“No, no! Okay!” Kara yelled, halted again by the bars as she instinctively tried to leap in front of the barrel pointed Mon-El’s way. “Okay, I’ll do it! Stop.”

“Please.”

Kara looked down to find Mon-El staring up at her, eyes wide and pain-filled.

“Don’t,” he begged.

He was panting, still holding onto his leg, and so obviously hurting that Kara immediately knew she’d made the right decision. If she refused Lillian, she’d retain her powers but be rendered effectually powerless. Agreeing put her in jeopardy, yes, but at least she could still save a life.

A life that was currently at risk because of associating with her.

If she hadn’t made such a big deal out of being a hero…if Mon-El had kept his distance from Supergirl…if Lillian and Cadmus had had no idea that Mon-El mattered in any way, shape, or form to Supergirl…

“I’m not going to let you die,” she told him, turning away and stepping back toward the door so she didn’t have to see the look on his face. What, did he honestly think she was just going to stand
there and let that woman shoot him?

Over my dead body.

And yes, maybe that fear was very close to being realized just now, but that didn’t change her mind. Not at all. Mon-El was not going to die in a dank Cadmus cage if Kara had anything to say about it. Mustering every scrap of courage she possessed and channeling her inner Alex Danvers, Kara glared straight into Lillian’s smug, satisfied expression.

“Give me the helmet,” she ground out.

Chapter End Notes

*Lots of dialogue is taken from the episode. (I say this Because Plagiarism. But seriously...I'm pretty sure dialogue that involves K&M is common knowledge among every Karamel fan. Does anyone *not* have all their conversations memorized?)*

*One of the things I love about this scene in the show is how we see Kara panicking more than we usually do. I think she's already pretty shaken when she wakes up, but she and Mon-El both try to joke around to make the other feel better. I think that in a way, it kind of sets the tone for their later "Don't tell her I was scared" convo...they're not being totally honest while they still think there might be a way out; but, once they realize they're basically doomed, the masks come off.*

*I don't have as many scene-related things to say as usual. The looming specter of the season finale has distracted me. I've seen the "Waking Up Together" clip in the trailer, and I'm positive that what I've been 100% expecting since I saw 2x09 and recognized the movie Kara's watching when Mon-El turns up at the door is going to happen. (I over-analyze background details. She's watching "The Big Sleep" with Bogie and Bacall. THE BIG SLEEP. And since Kevin Smith tends to like to make little references like that, I, like every person in Star Wars ever, had a bad feeling about it the second I saw it.) But it's okay. TV has toughened me. I'll wait 10 seasons for my babes if I need to.*

*So, anyways...grr. Stupid season finales. *shakes fist*

*Also: there was an explanation for where Kara thought Mon was all this time. I just put it in a section that didn't make this chapter's cut and then forgot about it until I was posting, so I just...left it. Like a slacker. (Sorry.)*

*Thanks as always for reading and/or commenting! To paraphrase/misquote Monny: "I know I'm beginning to sound like a broken record, but I really love you guys." :D I will do my best to provide happy Falling In Love scenes around Monday/Tuesday. To, you know, interrupt our mourning?"
See Beneath Your Beautiful

Chapter Summary

Last chapter before the first couch scene! (I swear.) Takes place in 2x07 starting at Cadmus, and goes up to Kara and Mon-El's arrival at the DEO. It's told from both K&M's POV because I wanted to do Mon's thoughts while talking to Kara in lockup, and Kara's thoughts when she's dealing with Jeremiah showing up and Mon being injured. Once again, there's a lot of dialogue taken from the episode.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Huddled against the cage door, Mon-El kept his eyes shut tight. He was terrified. He was alone (something he'd never handled very well). He was alternating between shivers and sweats. His leg throbbed, the pain dull and searing at the same time. And none of that mattered one single bit, because Kara was gone—powerless, thanks to him—and he had no idea what they were doing to her. Ever since they'd dragged her away, he'd been sitting there, gritting his teeth in an attempt to ignore the pain, straining to hear any sound that indicated she was at least still alive. If she died sacrificing herself for him...

He buried his head in the crook of his arm. Please, Rao, let her live. Please. No matter how hard he'd tried to banish the sight of her collapsing, of that woman slapping her across the face, he couldn't. It kept replaying in his mind and the lump in his throat kept growing until he thought it might actually choke him. Kara couldn't die. Especially not because of something she'd done for him. He wasn't worth it. And the worst of it was, she didn't even know that. She'd just stepped up and handed herself over to them, and why would she do that? He'd never met anyone like her. Not in any of the galaxies and planets and stars he'd visited. Certainly not on Daxam. She was just so beautiful. And he didn't mean physically, although she was definitely that as well. She was a beautiful person, full of joy, and kindness, and light, and a million other wonderful things that he couldn't put names to, and the idea of her dying to protect someone like him was unbearable.

A door slammed somewhere in the distance, and he raised his head, eyes popping open. Were those footsteps heading his way? At this point, it was hard to be sure. The room was so quiet that he'd mistaken the blood thundering in his ears for footsteps multiple times, and he didn't have the energy to keep turning around to see if any of the guards who'd taken Kara were returning. Not that they'd answer his questions anyway, but at least he could try to find out what they'd done with her. Holding his breath, he tightened his grip on his leg and listened. No, he wasn't imagining it. Those were the same boots he'd heard tromping away earlier. And they were for sure coming this way now.

Sitting very still, Mon-El tried not to flinch as the door opened. If they were coming to haul him off to some testing area, he didn't want to have to watch them approach. Welcoming executioners wasn't something he was too crazy about. But when they stopped close to his cell and he heard the door swing open, he turned.

Just in time to see her flung toward the back of the cage.

“Kara!” Grife, he'd forgotten and used her name. Kicking himself, he checked over his
shoulder, but neither guard broke stride. Either they hadn’t heard or they just didn’t care, but Mon-El was too worried to bother wondering which it was, because Kara was still sprawled on the ground. “Hey, what did they do to you?” he asked, lowering his voice so it didn’t shake.

She pushed herself up onto her hands and knees. “They took my blood.”

Her blood? They’d made her vulnerable as a human just to take her blood? “And?”

Kara crawled slowly—painfully, he was sure—over to the door of her cage, propping her back against it so that except for the bars, they were sitting side by side.

“And,” she said, sighing out the word, “that was it.”

“Are you okay?” Mon-El asked, noticing an unfamiliar look on her face.

She sighed again. “I’m scared,” she whispered.

That would be the look, then. He dropped his gaze to the floor right away so she wouldn’t be embarrassed. In the five months or so since he’d met Kara, he’d spent a lot of time with her. He’d seen her happy, sad, angry, disappointed, concerned—he’d never once seen her afraid. If anything, she was brave to the point of recklessness. Hearing her admit that she was scared was…something. Scary? Sad? He didn’t know exactly what, but it was very not-good, and he hated it.

“Mon-El.”

When she didn’t say anything else right away, he risked a glance and saw her staring straight ahead, her face tense.

“If something happens, if—” She broke off, her voice uneven. “If I don’t get out of here…”

No. That wasn’t going to happen. Not to her. Mon-El turned away again, focusing on breathing through the pain. Kara was going to be fine.

“I need you to tell Alex something for me.”

Kara please, please stop saying stuff like this. He exhaled slowly, trying to come up with some way to lighten the mood, to keep her from sounding like….well, like him.

“I need you to tell her just…keep living her life on her own terms.” She paused, drawing in a shuddery breath that might as well have been a shout, it echoed so loudly in his ears. “Tell her I wasn’t scared, okay?”

Mon-El’s head swiveled around, his eyes landing on her just as she laughed. It wasn’t much of a laugh, but she was clearly doing her best to stay optimistic, and the realization warmed him. This was the Kara he knew.

“Well, if I don’t make it and you do, you’re welcome to tell everyone I was scared out of my mind,” he joked.

She joined in his laughter and for a few seconds, even though they were prisoners, even though they were in pain and at the mercy of an alien-hating organization, everything was all right. It was as if they were back at the DEO and he’d just said something she deemed socially-inappropriate and reproved him for—like that time he’d observed that Snapper always looked like he smelled something stinky—even while she had her hand over her mouth and was snorting with giggles. But then they calmed down, and reality set back in with a jarring thud.
“I have to think why me?” he said suddenly, the words just sort of bursting out. “I mean, why am I the only one that survived Daxam?”

In an instant he was reliving it again—smelling the smoke, hearing the screams, seeing the death all around him, everywhere he looked. Daxam hadn’t been the greatest place. Living on Earth had showed him that in just a few weeks. But those people—they hadn’t deserved to die. Or fine, maybe some of them had, but if that were the case, shouldn’t he have been among them? All those children. All those people who didn’t have someone else there to tell them what to do—to save them. They had died, and he had had lived, all because he was the prince.

It nauseated him. “If I die in this cell, maybe I deserve to,” he said quietly.

“You don’t deserve to die!”

Kara’s vehemence made his stomach sink. Of course she would say that. She had no idea. If she knew what a despicable being he really was, she wouldn’t be defending him.

“You deserve to survive. That prince on Daxam sacrificed himself because he saw you were worth it,” she insisted, her voice brimming with a kind of emotion he’d never heard her use toward him before.

And it was too much. When he turned to face her and saw her right there, her eyes big and blue and so sympathetic as she stared through the bars, he gave up. He was most likely about to die for Rao’s sake, and here he was sitting around letting the woman who’d just traded her own safety to give him a chance think that he was some kind of loyal, dutiful guard, when the truth was that he was everything she hated.

“Kara,” he whispered before he lost his nerve (or passed out), “about Daxam, there’s…there’s something I have to tell you.”

A tiny crease appeared in her forehead, but before either of them could say anything, a beeping noise came from somewhere behind Kara, making them both jump. Someone had snuck up on them.

“Come with me,” a man’s voice said, and as Mon-El struggled to his feet, unsure what was going on, he saw Kara stiffen.

“Who are you?” she demanded.

The man threw back his hood to reveal a face Mon-El hadn’t seen before. “Kara, it’s me.”

“Jeremiah?” Kara breathed. “I can’t believe it!”

Mon-El clutched one of the bars on the door, leaning on it as Kara rushed out of the cage and flung her arms around the man’s neck. Okay, so it seemed this was good. Yay, he thought, inhaling sharply through his nose. There was a funny roaring sound in his ears, and he wondered if his hearing was going. And maybe his vision too, because he was sure things hadn’t been this fuzzy just a little while ago. He wanted to ask Kara if she’d noticed it as well, but before he could make his mouth shape the words, the whole world suddenly went black.

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“Oh, my God. Mon-El!”

Kara’s heart pounded as she knelt beside him on the floor. Instinct said to just pick him up and
carry him, but reason reminded her that she no longer had that ability.

“Help me get him,” she said desperately, looking up at Jeremiah. The miraculousness of her foster father’s sudden appearance in conjunction with her panic about Mon-El was doing terrible things to her adrenaline levels, and it was all she could do to keep from hyperventilating. “Please. She shot him, he, he’s allergic to lead—he needs help, I can’t do anything, a-and he’s going to die if I don’t get him back to the DEO, and it’s my fault he even ended up—”

“He won’t make it there,” Jeremiah interrupted, stooping to help heft Mon-El upright. “Unconsciousness means he’s in an advanced stage. We need to get him to a table. Can you steady him?”

Kara nodded, sliding under Mon-El’s limp arm and wrapping her own around his waist. Up close, even in the horrible lighting, she could see how pale he’d become. “Will he be all right?” she asked, grunting as Jeremiah got in position on Mon-El’s other side and shifted a lot of his weight onto her.

“Only one way to find out,” her foster father answered, and together they hauled Mon-El over to the nearest table and got him up on it with difficulty. “Keep an eye on him,” Jeremiah ordered, rushing to the back where there was a table full of equipment. “We don’t need him waking up and rolling off.”

Kara nodded again, stepping closer to the table, her mind reeling as she tried to process everything that was happening. Jeremiah was here, not dead. He was trying to help them escape. Mon-El was hurt. She was powerless and couldn’t do one solitary thing to help him.

Please be okay, she chanted silently. Please be okay, please be okay, please be okay…

And then, almost on cue, Mon-El stirred. A low groan rumbled in his throat as his whole face scrunched in pain.

Kara gasped, relief washing over her. “Mon-El?” she said softly. She meant only to touch his shoulder, but ended up laying the back of her hand against his forehead, her fingers brushing back the little pieces of hair that got in the way. “Mon-El, can you hear me?”

His eyelids fluttered open. “Yeah,” he rasped. In typical Mon-El fashion, he offered her a weak grin. “Sorry. I guess I wasn’t…” A muscle in his cheek twitched and he closed his eyes, exhaling slowly. “I wasn’t listening to you again, huh?”

“You passed out,” Kara explained, glancing over her shoulder to see Jeremiah hurrying toward them, pushing a table full of instruments. “Jeremiah’s going to help you, and then we’re going to get out of here. I need you to just hold on for a little while, okay?”

“Easy. Peasy,” Mon-El answered through gritted teeth. “And…something about lemons. I don’t remember the rest.”

What? Caught off guard, a nasal giggle burst out of her. “Lemon squeezy,” she told him as Jeremiah arrived, panting with the effort of pushing a table across the room at a dead sprint. “And I really don’t think it’s gonna be like that, so hang tough.”

“Yep,” he mumbled, sucking in a breath. The muscles in his neck spasmed as he squirmed, the tiniest of whimper escaping him. “Definitely not lemon squeezy. Just…very un-fun. Right.”

Kara grabbed his hand when his eyes shut again. “Speaking of squeezy,” she said, wrapping her free hand around his forearm, “if it hurts, squeeze my hand, okay?”
“Yeah, okay.” The smile he gave her was closer to a grimace, but at this point, she’d take anything. “Thanks, Supergirl.”

“Hey. Shh,” she scolded, shaking her head at him. “Save your breath.”

Wincing, Mon-El gripped her hand. “Is that code for *shut up, Mon-El*?” he puffed.

This was serious. They were in danger and severely in a time crunch. How could she possibly be this close to laughing—again?

“No,” she responded, rubbing his arm when his hand tightened around hers again. “It’s code for *I don’t want you passing out on me again. What are you doing?*” she added, seeing Jeremiah rooting through the different tools.

“Trying to find a—a, here we go.” He held up a particularly sharp-looking piece of equipment. “The lead poison is spreading. I need to take the bullet out now.”

Tears welled in Kara’s eyes as she watched the man who’d welcomed her into his family so many years ago work. “We should have found you sooner.”

“Doesn’t matter now,” he answered, glancing up from Mon-El’s leg to give her the same reassuring look Alex always did. “You were off saving the world. I am so proud of who you’ve become.”

Oh, God, she couldn’t break down. Now wasn’t the time for crying. “But—but Alex,” she choked out, sniffling hard. “When she sees you, she’s—she’s had to be so strong. She took over everything.”

Jeremiah smiled at her. “She’s always been too strong for her own good.”

Mon-El groaned, his grip nearly crushing Kara’s hand.

“Almost got it,” Jeremiah told him.

A few agonizing seconds later the bullet was out and Jeremiah held it up for them to see.

“Thank you,” Mon-El panted, his hand loosening around Kara’s just as a warning siren began to blare.

“Okay. We’re out of time.” Throwing the pincers and bloody bullet away, Jeremiah darted to the door and looked out. “Mon-El, right?” he said. “You’re going to have to make it down some stairs. Can you do that?”

“Yes,” Kara and Mon-El answered together.

“Good. Follow me.”

Draping Mon-El’s arm over her shoulders, Kara looked up to make sure that he wasn’t about to collapse again. “Lean on me all you need to, all right?” she told him, steering them toward the doorway.

“Yep.” He was breathing hard now, face drawn. “If I fall, roll me down the stairs.”

“You’re not going to fall,” she insisted as they limped into the hall after Jeremiah, who was jogging ahead of them and opening doors. “I’ve got you.”
She hoped she did, anyway. He was a lot heavier than she’d expected, and she got the feeling that if he blacked out again it would be pretty hard for her to hold him up. Rao, what was she going to do once they got out of here? She couldn’t fly anyone anywhere.

“This way,” Jeremiah called, pointing to the left with an arm. “The stairs are here.”

One step at a time, Kara reminded herself when they reached the flight of steps in the dark, narrow passage. She staggered a little when Mon-El stumbled and fell into her. One step at a time. She could do this. He could do this. They were almost there.

“Go down this hallway,” Jeremiah instructed as they neared the bottom. “There’s an escape at the end.”

What? Kara went cold. “No. I’m not leaving you,” she protested. He couldn’t be serious. She’d just found him! “I’m not losing you again.”

“Kara. I’ll be fine.” He swiped the card in front of the final lock. “Please. Just go,” he urged, pushing them through the door. “I’ll slow them down. I’ve been here fifteen years. I’ll survive a little longer.”

The ache in Kara’s chest was horrible. “If I leave you here, Alex will never forgive me.”

She could see in his eyes what mentioning her sister—his daughter—did to him, but he still refused to budge. “Kara,” he said, his voice gentle, “if you die here, there’ll be no one to forgive.”

He was right. She knew it, but the knowledge didn’t make it any easier. Once again, she had to say goodbye to someone she cared about and trust that they would be all right.

“I love you,” she told him, stepping forward to give him the fiercest hug she’d ever given anyone without cracking their bones.

“I love you, too,” Jeremiah whispered back. “Now go. Go.”

Releasing him, Kara backed slowly toward the door. She felt rather than saw Mon-El’s arm, a sort of numbness taking over as she held onto him and helped him limp over toward the rickety ladder at the end of the hall. By the time she risked turning back around, Jeremiah was already gone. Then the guards were firing at them, and she was helping Mon-El climb, and climbing faster than she’d ever thought she could, and they were out in the fresh air thank Rao, and she was yelling into her comms about needing help and realizing that they were totally fried, and then it was just running, running, and more running at a frighteningly slow pace until they finally made it back to the DEO.

“Can I pass out now?” Mon-El asked weakly the second they were inside, sagging against the closest wall.

“Anytime you want,” Kara assured him, squeezing his arm.

His face was grayish, and a pang of guilt struck her when she remembered how just a few nights ago she’d been so sure that he’d gone right back to sleeping around and not bothering about anything. The thought that he was in any kind of danger had never even occurred to her, and the whole time, he’d been cooped up by Cadmus.

“You know Mon-El, you did—oh.” She stopped, seeing his entire body slump. Just in the nick of time, she leaped forward to keep him from falling and eased him to the ground. “You weren’t kidding. Okay. Let’s just…sit here for a minute.”
Squatting down beside him, she rested a hand against his temple, testing for signs of fever. As far as she knew, lead poisoning didn’t come with a fever, but he had lost kind of a lot of blood, and the Cadmus hallways were basically glorified sewers. He could’ve gotten any kind of infection while he was vulnerable.

“I’m gonna go get you help, okay?” she said softly, even though he couldn’t hear her.

Standing up, she turned to find about half the control room staring at her. Okay, that explained why a lot of the distant, background DEO noise had died down. It didn’t, however, explain the funny looks they were all giving her. For some reason, she felt like she’d been caught doing something wrong.

“Uh…” She pointed jerkily behind her. “Can someone help him down to the infirmary, please?”

Good Rao. She needed a place to pass out, too.

Chapter End Notes

*Title's taken from "Beneath Your Beautiful" by Labrinth, because that song has always reminded me of Kara and Mon-El. It was a mistake listening to it after the finale last night, but oh well.
*I think seeing Mon-El hurt like that helps Kara start to realize how much she cares about him. The first time I watched this episode and saw her (1) holding his hand while Jeremiah operated and (2) fussing over him when he's on the couch later, it made me think that this was relationship really stood a chance beyond the whole "literal star-crossed lovers" thing because it felt so sweet and natural.
*No one can convince me that Mon-El didn't try to joke around while he was on that table. That's his M.O.
*Obviously, I'm not a doctor. Neither do I watch Grey's Anatomy. Therefore, I have only hazy ideas what tools Jeremiah used, and I had to research lead poisoning to see if fever accompanied it (apparently it doesn't, so it's a good thing I checked). But it looked in the show like Mon-El was shivering, so I went with that.
*I'm sure there's something I'm forgetting. But my head is stuck on the finale and the very sad but very beautiful juxtaposition of K&M each flying away in tears but trying to be brave, and I'm really glad I gave this show a second chance.
*Thanks again to everyone reading/commenting! Also, big hugs to all. Like Gloria Gaynor, we will survive.
*BIG shout out to Karamel_fangirl_eunaramsoak, akane171, Sarah, and jeymien! You guys and your comments are like my affordable TV therapy sessions :D
Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x07 the evening after Kara and Mon-El escape from Cadmus custody (Mon-El's POV). Starts at the DEO and goes to Kara's apartment.

**HUGE apologies for how late and messy this is! The length kind of killed my intent to post last week...everything up until they arrive at Kara's apartment was unplanned when I sat down to write and I couldn't figure out how to make it stop. But because I really wanted to get to the first couch scene, I kept going. This was originally supposed to continue up until everyone left, but it was almost 5000 words, and I had to stop somewhere.**

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

When Mon-El came to, the DEO was in chaos. People scurried around all over the place asking questions, telling him to drink things, ordering him to sit still and not move until it was okayed by someone else, and there was lots of talk about Cadmus and staging a strike on the base he and Kara had been held at. At least, he thought that was what they were talking about. He was still pretty out of everything, his body in a state of exhaustion he hadn’t felt on Earth since Kara chunked him into that big round thing at the warehouse. And anyway, he was sure that they were giving him drinks with something in them that made him feel slow and fuzzy, so it wasn’t until about a half a day later that he felt good enough to start trying to hobble around the DEO.

And even that turned out to be a lot harder than it sounded.

If it wasn’t J’onn telling him to sit still and behave it was Alex, and if it wasn’t Alex it was Winn, and if it wasn’t Winn, it was one of what seemed to be a million different agents who apparently had nothing better to do than materialize out of thin air just when he tried to sneak down to the vending machines for a snack. It was all extremely annoying, and Mon-El got very tired of staring at boring gray DEO tiles, and boring gray DEO walls, and having to press a button and call someone every time he got hungry or thirsty. Which, when he thought about it, struck him as kind of ironic considering that that was how he’d grown up. Earth had definitely done something to him. Although it wasn’t *just* Earth, he admitted to himself, hearing a certain pair of footsteps drawing closer. Any change for the better he was going through probably had less to do with a change of planets and more to do with a kindhearted, occasionally-caped Kryptonian who made it her mission in life to protect everyone (excepting herself, of course).

“Hi!” Kara said cheerfully, her braid flopping over her shoulder as she poked her head around the corner.

Mon-El grinned. It was impossible not to when she beamed like that, and besides, he hadn’t seen her since last night, when they were both in the infirmary. He’d been in a stupor, and she’d been under the yellow lamps for the second time in a week or so, and none of that had been reassuring. Plus, she had been worried about her Earth father.

“Hey!” he answered. “No more lamps?”
“Nope. It’s all good, now. Mind if I come in?” she asked, hesitating in the doorway.

“What, you didn’t use your newly-returned x-ray vision first to see if it was okay?” he teased, sitting up.

She pointed to the wall nearest her. “Lead. It’s built into the walls so I can’t see through them.”

“Oh, right.” He vaguely remembered Alex mentioning something like that once. “Remind me to never get angry and punch a wall.”

“That would be funnier if you weren’t still laid up,” she said bluntly, linking her hands together in front of her as she stepped inside. She was wearing regular clothes, not her Supergirl costume, so she had to be getting ready to leave. “And from what I hear, you’re supposed to be on crutches?”

“Yeah.” He bit his lip, trying not to smile, but the grin escaped anyway. “It’s kind of funny.”

She folded her arms across her chest, obviously trying to look stern. “No. It’s really not. Seriously, Mon-El. How are you feeling?”

“Bored,” Mon-El answered, making a face. “They won’t let me go anywhere.” He pointed to his knee. “I have to stay in bed and put ice on that. I mean, it hurts, but it doesn’t hurt that bad. It’s like being back at Cadmus, except…better chances of not-dying and lots more light. And people aren’t as terrifying. Well, except for J’onn and Alex.”

Kara’s forehead wrinkled. “Bed? When did you get a bed?”

Oh, right. The last time she’d visited his room, the bed hadn’t been there. He hadn’t minded the cot he’d used when he first arrived at the DEO, but about a week ago—probably the day after they’d argued in the alley—J’onn had had a real bed brought in, saying that if Mon-El was going to call the DEO home, he ought to at least have a decent mattress. And then he’d gotten mad when he came in later and found Mon-El and Winn testing out the bed’s springiness by jumping on it. (Which wasn’t very fair, seeing as how J’onn had said it was specially-reinforced, and anyway, Mon-El had been careful with the jumping and hadn’t punched a hole in the roof or the mattress, or sent Winn through the ceiling.) On the upside, though, it had led to Alex giving Mon-El a funny book apparently intended for children about little furry animals in clothes called monkeys who also liked to jump on beds. He still didn’t know how she’d found out about it—she’d just showed up the morning after the big attack downtown with a flat, square package and handed it to him with a smirk. And then he’d gotten nabbed by Cadmus a few hours later, and forgotten all about monkeys, beds, and bumped heads.

“Maybe a day after you woke me up for training,” he said, deciding to leave out the part about the bed-jumping. If that kind of thing was really as childish as J’onn and Alex said it was (Winn insisted there was nothing wrong with it), he didn’t want to broadcast it to Kara. She thought him fool enough already. He didn’t need to add to that.

Especially since he still hadn’t told her about Daxam. About who he’d been. He’d come so close to it when they were at Cadmus, but now—now he found he couldn’t. That he’d lost all will to do so. Maybe it made him the biggest coward in the world, but something deep within him shrank from the idea of Kara seeing him as anything other than just plain Mon-El, the annoying, embarrassing Daxamite she’d found in a Kryptonian pod, so once again, he decided to keep quiet about it. After all, both their planets were dead. What good would dredging up old hostilities do? He couldn’t fix the idiot he’d been—he could only fix the idiot he was now, and the best way he could think of to do that was to live a better Earth life.
“Oh, that explains it, then.” Kara nodded. “So, um…how bored are you, exactly?”

He frowned. Was that a real question? “Well…” he began.

“Because I talked to J’onn and Alex earlier,” she blurted, “and they said that as long as you feel up to it and you know, actually use your crutches, you’re clear to go out. And I was thinking that since you didn’t get to hang out with us at the bar the other night because, well, because of Cadmus…maybe you’d like to come over? I mean, I don’t want to twist your arm or anything,” she added hastily. “But Winn’s going to be there, and Alex, and James even said he’d stop by after work, and it’ll be a lot of fun. Or, it should be. There’ll be food, so…”

Mon-El studied her for a few seconds, trying to wrap his head around everything. He was allowed to leave the DEO? Kara was inviting him to hang out with her and her friends? Like she maybe didn’t think he was completely embarrassing after all?

She laughed nervously, twisting her hands. “If you don’t want to, you don’t have to. I just wanted—I mean, I just thought I’d at least check and see, but—”

“No! No,” Mon-El interjected, shaking his head almost frantically. “I’d love to come over, Kara. Uh, thank you. Thank you for inviting me.”

Her face broke into that nose-scrunching smile of hers, and all of a sudden, Mon-El’s insides started feeling like they were made up of that wiggly, colorful clear stuff—Jell-O, that was its name. His insides felt like Jell-O, and he really hoped Kara couldn’t tell.

Thankfully, she didn’t seem to notice.

“Do you want to go over now?” she queried, tugging at the end of her braid. “The others will be there in a little while, but with the leg and all…”

“I might need a head start?” Mon-El guessed, laughing when her expression turned apologetic. “Sure. Hey, maybe I can speed-limp through the streets,” he suggested, the mental image of him stumping quickly along on the crutch-things making him chuckle as he swung his feet carefully off the bed.

“Oh,” Kara said.

She sounded a little funny, and Mon-El looked over as he stood to see her chewing her lip in thought.

“What?” he said, tucking the annoying sticks under his arms the way no fewer than ten people had shown him and starting toward the door.

She moved back, letting him maneuver through the door and out into the empty hall. “I figured…um, well…I have all my powers back. Not just the x-ray vision. I thought I could fly us over?”

“Oh, yeah. Hey, that’s great!” Mon-El grinned, balancing precariously on one crutch so he could hold up a hand for her to high-five. “Yay for powers.”

“Yeah. But, um, are you okay with that?” Kara questioned, slapping her palm across his. “Cause if you’re not, we can—we can just walk. Or call a cab, I guess?”

“Well, sometimes…” Kara grimaced. “Uh, sometimes people don’t like it.”

“Oh, because they get dizzy, or what’s-it-called—height-sick?” he inquired.

“No.” She shook her head, reaching a hand up to push her glasses back. “They uh, they don’t like me carrying them? It…bothers some people. Well, guys mostly.”

Mon-El tried to imagine disliking the idea of Kara carrying him places.

He failed.

He failed so much, in fact, that he wondered if he should even still say yes, because it seemed a little wrong to be as enthusiastic about being flown through National City in Kara’s arms as he was just now. She was only offering because he was injured. And slow. And probably because she didn’t like lateness.

“Would it bother you?” Kara asked, frowning.

“No.” Mon-El shuddered inwardly. Wow, that had come out really fast. “I mean, hey, how many people get to fly? And with Supergirl,” he added, laughing and hoping the whole thing would seem like a dumb joke instead of a near slipup and—wait. Why was he even thinking of it as a slipup? He’d just said a word too quickly. Was it that big a deal?

“Okay! Well, um…do you want to…” She motioned jerkily in the general direction of the exit.

“Alex said she and James have the food covered, and Winn’s getting the drinks.”

“Yeah, sure,” he answered. “Hey, quick question, though: what ab—”

Before he could complete the sentence, he found himself standing on the balcony Kara and J’onn always took off from, swaying dangerously and missing one of the crutches.

“Hold on,” Kara told him, picking him up quickly. “We’ll be there in a jiff.”

“But Kara, can the crutch—okay.”

She flew straight up into the darkened sky before Mon-El finished asking his question, so he went ahead and released the other crutch while they were still close enough for it to land on the DEO balcony (he didn’t have a good grip on it and figured if he dropped it during the flight it might kill a random citizen). The wind whipping around and past them stole his breath momentarily, and he knew his mouth was hanging open as he peered down at the millions of twinkling little lights in the city below. From up here, everything looked small, and perfect, and fragile, and very, very human. Was this what Kara saw all the time? Was this why she felt that urge to protect everyone down below?

“Wow,” he muttered.

“What did you say?” Kara called above a sudden gust of wind.

“I said, ‘wow,’” he called back.

“No—earlier,” she clarified. “At the DEO.”

“Oh, that,” he laughed, twisting his head some to grin at her.

Which was a huge mistake. He had for sure only ever been that close to her when they were sparring—and flying through the night with her voice buzzing in his ear was a far cry from
bobbing and weaving and hoping her next punch wouldn’t knock him out—so when he saw her right there, his breath hitched. And then a tiny object hit the back of his throat with unbelievable force and he was coughing and gagging practically in Kara’s face.

“Oh, my God! What is it? Is it your leg? Here, one sec, we’re almost there!”

Mon-El tried to explain that he was fine, but Kara had him inside her apartment and deposited on the couch before he could choke out anything other than a garbled combination of noises that sounded like *arrfffgghh*.

“What happened?” she demanded, grabbing a colorful little cube thing made out of fabric and sliding it under his foot. “Was the wind velocity too much? Did it reopen the wound?” She sat down beside him and bent over his leg, tucking a couple strands of hair that had blown loose from her braid behind her ears. “Let me see.”

“No…Kara,” he wheezed, waving a hand. Now it was even harder to breathe, because he was starting to laugh, too. “Not leg. Bug.”

Her brow furrowed. “What?”

Coughing out a laugh, Mon-El pointed to his mouth. “I ate a bug.”

“You…oh, no!” She clapped her hands to her face, eyes wide. “I’m so sorry! I completely forgot to warn you about that! It used to happen to me all the time. Do you, I don’t know, do you want something so you can rinse your mouth out?”

“Nope.” He held out a hand to stop her as she moved to stand. “It’s okay, ‘cause I already swallowed it. Well, the wings might still be left. Or maybe they’re legs?”

“Eww, Mon-El.” Kara made a face. “That’s so gross! Let me get you some water, at least.”

“No, you just flew us here,” Mon-El argued. “And I’m pretty sure you had a worse day yesterday. If you want me to drink water, I can get up and get it myself.”

“Ha,” she snorted. “Not without your crutches you don’t! Hey, wait a minute—what happened to…oh.” She tapped a finger against her chin. “That was what you were talking about back at the DEO, wasn’t it?”

He tried to keep a straight face, but she looked so sheepish and cute that he couldn’t help it. He grinned.

“Ugh.” She pursed her lips. “Okay. Here,” she said, flipping on the TV. “You can watch the news, and I’ll be right back.”

“I don’t think I actually need—”

“Yes, you do,” she interrupted. “Just in case. I don’t want to take any chances. So do not move.” She pointed at him sternly as she backed toward the window. “I mean it. You’d better be sitting in this exact spot when I get back.”

Mon-El stuck his lower lip out in an exaggerated pout. “I thought you were going to take me away from lockup.”

“What? Hello?” She extended her arms, pretending to be offended. “Is this not the cushiest lockup yet? Am I not the nicest jailor ever?” Poking her fingers into her cheeks, Kara gave him a
wide, silly smile. “See? Niceness. Betcha none of your Cadmus guards thought to do that, huh?”

“No, I guess they didn’t,” Mon-El responded. And even if they had, he doubted it would have the same effect on him. Rao, how was a smile messing with him this much? “They were too busy being scary. And also hairy.”

Kara paused, one foot on the windowsill. “Hairy?”

“Yes.” He doffed an imaginary hat at her. “You, Kara Zor-El, are significantly less hairy than most of them.”

Her eyebrows rose. “Most of them?” she said. “I’m significantly less hairy than...most of them?”

“Well…” He held out his hands in faux apology. “One of them did appear to have an excellent razor.”

She laughed, shaking her head. “Okay, you goofball.”

Goofball. There was another one of those words the pod’s translator was unhelpful on. But from the way she said it, he was pretty sure it wasn’t a bad thing to be called.

“That means I think you’re being silly,” Kara informed him, apparently sensing his confusion. “But, oh! Don’t uh…don’t call J’onn that.” She wrinkled her nose. “It’s more of a—a thing you call friends or, or people that you’re closer to. As long as they have a sense of humor. You know, if they’re funny. Which uh,” she winced. “J’onn kind of okay, this sounds really mean, but J’onn kind of isn’t. That term probably wouldn’t go over well with him.”

Mon-El chuckled at the idea of J’onn being described as—hold on. Had she just indirectly said….?

He cleared his throat. “So, uh,” he said, raising his eyebrows. “What I’m hearing is...you think I’m funny?”

“Whoa, nuh-uh.” Kara pointed at him again, her mouth open in that I want to laugh but I’m not going to way she had. “You did not hear me say that, mister.”

“Mmm…” He squinted teasingly at her. “You kinda did, though.”

“Nope, no, uh-uh. I did not.”

Mon-El lifted his brows as far as they could go, tilting his chin down as he stared at her.

She rolled her eyes. “Although,” she said grudgingly, planting her hands on her hips, “I will concede that sometimes—sometimes—you can be a little funny. Maybe.”

He grinned.

“Ugh, you know what?” Kara made an impatient movement. “I’m gonna go get your crutches. Don’t you dare move.”

Mon-El burst out laughing as she leapt through the window. The more he got to know Kara, the more amazed he became by her. When she first marched into the room he was locked up in at the DEO, everything about her screamed ‘Kryptonian.’ And not in a friendly Hi, I’m from Krypton, where are you from? kind of way—no, her whole demeanor had suggested that there was a reason
he’d only ever heard about Krypton’s arrogant, sanctimonious, and hypocritically snobbish ways. But when she’d returned and asked if they could start over, everything had changed. She’d never seemed shy to him—which wasn’t that surprising considering how their first conversation had gone—but he had noticed a lot of reserve in her that didn’t make sense until she explained why she’d been avoiding him. Then it was like a dam had burst or something, and suddenly, he was seeing so many different sides to her—Kara Zor-El, Kara Danvers, Supergirl, Kara the reporter, Kara the sister, Kara the daughter, Kara the friend—that he wondered how he could ever have thought she might be exactly like the stuffy, boring Kryptonians he’d always heard about. She was kind, smart, funny, lively, generous, bossy, and just about the best friend anyone could ask for.

Except—Mon-El had noticed that being with his friend sometimes made him really nervous, and he wasn’t sure what to do about that. It was like getting scared or running out of breath. Only instead of wanting to avoid her and that hazy, I-just-ran-for-half-of-forever-under-a-red-sun feeling he got when he was with her, he just wanted to be around her even more.

He was still mulling over this interesting phenomenon when Kara returned, holding the crutches in front of her like a spear.

“Mission accomplished,” she informed him proudly, leaning the things against the arm of the sofa. “Ta da! Now, how’s the leg?”

“Good,” Mon-El answered, even though that wasn’t strictly true. His wound was starting to feel hot and ache-y again, but since it wasn’t anywhere close to the pain he’d had last night, he didn’t see much point in bothering about it.

“Uh-huh.” She gave him a look that said he wasn’t fooling her. “Well, J’onn says to tell you that you’d better not try to get up without the crutches—and also not to leave your things all over the DEO like that again, but I told him that was kind of my fault. And oh yeah, I brought your icepack with me, so you have to use that now, too.” Holding the funnily-shaped object aloft, she inspected it with a frown. “It’s a little melted, but...there.” She bent it into an arc and blew on it. “Good and frosty.”

He laughed at her pleased smirk. “Oh, hey, the freeze-breath works again too! Just out of curiosity, do you even have ice in your freezer?”

“Actually, yes,” said Kara, bending carefully over his propped-up foot. “Which is weird, come to think of it. Huh. Rao, hold still!” she added, chasing his leg with the icepack when he twitched away from the coolness. “Mon-El! You’re not two.”

“Sorry.” He squeezed an eye shut as she tried to make the thing drape over his wound. “Reflex. And uh, Kara—you know I can do that too, right?”

She shrugged. “Yeah. But I’m already doing it, so—eh.” She glanced up, those blue eyes of hers sparkling with fun as she held the icepack suspended a few inches above his leg. “Brace yourself.”

Mon-El swallowed hard, giving her his widest grin so she hopefully wouldn’t notice that he was kind of staring at her. Although maybe he wanted her to notice? He wasn’t sure. It was difficult to concentrate on anything except Kara at the moment; even the TV noise seemed to fade into the background as she hovered above him, smiling.

Then the front door opened.

“Who’s hungry?” Alex’s voice trilled.
Mon-El started. He thought Kara might have too, because all of a sudden the icepack was in painful contact with his leg, and he was ow-owing while she apologized for smoothing it down a little too forcefully. Half-grinning, half-grimacing at the new arrivals—wow, his leg hurt now—he reached down to adjust the icepack as Kara hurried toward the kitchen. But he smiled along with everyone else when she heated up the potstickers and Winn celebrated the return of her powers, because it was nice seeing everyone happy and relaxed again. Plus, Winn was quick to hand Mon-El a weak but tasty Earthen beer, and that just made everything feel even more back to normal.

He didn’t have a lot of time to think about how his definition of normal had changed, however, because Kara was soon back at the couch, holding out the little black box of potstickers as she plopped down beside him.

“Oh, yes,” he said, trying to rein in a smirk as the memory of the last time he’d seen her eating these things resurfaced. If you ignored the evil, gun-toting party-crashers, that had been a fun night. “Thank you.”

She nodded. “It’s good to be home,” she remarked after a second or two.

Mon-El glanced at her and saw her eyes drifting over the room, the contented expression on her face reflecting his thoughts.

“What?” he teased, laughing even as he said it. “You didn’t find our adjoining cells cozy?”

“Well…” she said sarcastically.

He chuckled, taking a small, experimental bite of potsticker. They were pretty good, he decided, but he wasn’t sure he was as enthralled with them as Kara. Which was probably because he had snacked out of the DEO vending machines too many times, but still.

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw her head turn toward him. “You were really brave, Mon-El.”

He was? Mon-El laughed again, narrowly escaping the embarrassment of spraying food all over her apartment. “I told you I was scared,” he reminded her.

“Yeah, well, you can still be scared while being brave,” she replied.

Was that true? He hoped so, because that was the only way he’d ever amount to anything other than the coward he felt like. Though to be honest, he wasn’t sure he wanted any more chances to be scared but brave. What was that thing Alex was always saying about mission-planning? Discretion is the better part of valor? Mon-El was pretty sure he agreed with that.

“Maybe there’s a hero in you after all,” Kara said, whacking him playfully on the shoulder.

She huffed out a little laugh at the end of the sentence, and Mon-El dropped his gaze to a spot on the carpet when he saw her funny, wrinkly smile. He felt it again—the giddy anxiousness in the pit of his stomach—but he couldn’t not say something. Not after everything she’d done and what that meant to him. Even if deep down, he was sure she was mistaken.

“Yeah, well,” he said quietly. “Any, uh…any courage I do have, I learned it from you.”

He forced himself to look up at her and oh, he hoped she wasn’t listening for any heartbeats at the moment, because if she was, there was no way she would miss how his was pounding. Why hadn’t he realized how close they were? She was practically on his cushion! And why was it almost as hard to think now as it had been yesterday when he had a bullet lodged in his leg? He
stayed very still, trying to come up with something—anything—to say, but the only thing he was really conscious of was her. There she sat, staring right back at him—eyes soft, lips curving upward, and Rao he needed someone to intervene quickly, because he could feel himself getting ready to blurt out something stupid.

“Kara.”

Mon-El had never been so glad to see Winn Schott as he was in that moment. Kara’s head turning toward Winn meant that Mon-El had a chance to release the breath he’d been holding while her attention was elsewhere, and he took full advantage of that opportunity.

“Hey, uh—Alex said the oven’s taking too long. She needs your” Winn pointed toward his eyes “help heating up the—under the pizza?”

“Yes.” Kara nodded, handing the box of potstickers to Mon-El. “A superhero’s work is never done,” she joked, pushing herself up off the couch.

Mon-El smiled, his gaze involuntarily following her as she hurried over to join Alex by the stove. Within a few seconds, she was laughing and giggling away with her older sister, and he was having a difficult time focusing on anything else as Winn and James joined him around the TV.

“Is uh—is Kara mated to someone?” he asked suddenly.

He had no idea how long the question had been lurking in the back of his mind, but based on the way Kara’s laughter was currently mesmerizing him, he suspected it had been a while. And since it was the kind of thing he would never dare ask Alex, who would see through him in one of those New Yorkian minutes people were always talking about, it was probably a good thing that he hadn’t realized it before now.

“Say what?” James answered, chuckling.

“Well, on, on Daxam we…have arranged marriages chosen for you at birth,” Mon-El explained. “And, and you reach a certain age, and boom—you’re latched to that person. Is that how it works here on Earth, or…”

“Uh,” Winn said, “well, here on Earth, we call it getting hitched, not latched, and uh…” He frowned. “No, nowadays, you pretty much choose your own mate.”

Mon-El nodded slowly, his eyes flicking back over to Kara. “Has Kara chosen?” he asked, trying his best to sound like he didn’t care one way or another about the answer.

“No, she has not.”

It was James who spoke, and Mon-El knew immediately from the speculative tone in the man’s voice that he hadn’t come off even remotely casual, so he nodded again and attempted to make his face go blank.

“Why do you ask?”

Yep, James was definitely onto him. But even knowing that, it was still all Mon-El could do to take his eyes off Kara long enough to glance at Winn and James.

“Just…studying Earthly customs,” he said vaguely.

His gaze slid back to her like a piece of metal drawn toward a magnet, and when she looked...
over at him and smiled, there was a second or two where he was sure he was going to pass out again. The way she affected him—it didn’t make sense. He didn’t understand it. Couldn’t even begin to. He only knew that Kara’s smile was the most beautiful thing he’d ever seen, and that if he were to die right now, he wouldn’t even care. Nope—he would consider himself lucky. Because one time, after crash-landing on a strange planet, he’d met her.

So he smiled. Like an idiot.

And prayed to Rao that he wouldn’t ruin everything.

Chapter End Notes

*Title taken from what I now refer to as my Mon-El song: "Parachute" by James Durbin. (Probably everything will have song lyric titles now. I’ve reached that stage.)
*I'm SO sorry I let a week go by without updating! I'm even sorrier that this is the result. This is officially my Problem Child chapter: I loved writing some parts of it, but there was a lot of writing a paragraph, hating said paragraph, and then deleting said paragraph to get to the finished product, so now I'm frustrated with the whole thing. (Also, I'm bitter about the fact that I didn't get to where I wanted.) Basically, it's my offspring, so it makes me want to tear my hair out and apologize for its messiness.
*I have always wondered how Mon-El got to Kara's. My two theories are that she (1) flew him there (2) they took a cab. But for some weird reason, it seems less likely that they would take a cab from the DEO. So even though I don't fully BELIEVE that's what happened, I decided to go with the Kara-flying-them approach, because I like to PRETEND that's what happened.
*In my head, J'onn's the one who thinks to get Mon-El a bed, because he's the responsible parent. Everyone else is in the kid stage, where they'll be like, "Eh, no big deal. I'll just sleep on the cot/couch/floor/wherever." I also think he'd be the "take your medicine!" "Eat your vegetables!" "Don't leave your toys out!" kind of dad, so that's reflected in here a bit, too.
*I took a lot of imaginative liberties with K&M's interactions in this one, because they seem way closer during the scene at her apartment than they have at any point thus far in the show (she shares food, sits really close to his side of the couch, hits him on the shoulder, etc.). I think the Cadmus lockup is their official turning point, and based on how they act in 2x08, I have to assume that they've been getting very obvious. So yeah, I made them joke around some, especially since they always seem at their most flirty when they're alone (until they become a couple.)
*Random note: I love watching Chris Wood "eat" that potsticker in this scene. I don't know if it's him or Mon-El who's not a fan of the potstickers (or maybe CW wasn't hungry and that's why he took that minuscule bite and pretended his mouth was full?), but in my head, Mon-El doesn't actually like potstickers all that much...he just notices that Kara does and gets them for her because that's her food. <3
*Random note #2: we've officially made it a week without the babies! Pat yourself on the back. Go watch some happy Karamel videos on youtube. Celebrate your strength with Karamel-themed snacks. (Also, is it just me, or does doing without K&M feel like when you're trying to eat right/get in shape...you do everything you're supposed to do for three days, and then you're like, "Ugh, this is taking FOREVER. I'm ready for this to be over"?)
**Thank you for reading/commenting! You guys are the best :)
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

For a good portion of the evening, Kara felt as though she were being split in half. After Maggie stopped by—and no, Kara had zero regrets about eavesdropping when Alex went out to talk to her—Kara divided her attention between her sister and Mon-El. Both of them were doing terrific jobs of acting cheerful and okay, but Kara wasn’t totally convinced. Not finding Jeremiah had been a blow to Alex on top of everything she’d been dealing with as of late, and Kara didn’t want her sister going home alone and having a private meltdown. Still, Alex had said she was going to be all right, and she had been wearing her truth face when she said it, so Kara decided to let it go.

As for Mon-El—Kara had been watching him like a hawk for any sign of pain or fatigue, but so far, other than when she’d smashed that icepack down on his poor leg, he’d seemed fine. In fact, almost every single time she glanced his way (stealthily, of course), she found him smiling at her like he knew exactly what she was doing, and it was starting to get a little embarrassing. If she wasn’t careful, it was going to look an awful lot like she was…well, maybe a little too interested in Mon-El. Which she wasn’t. She was just concerned. In a friendly way. After all, he’d been scarily close to death, or at the very least, serious injury yesterday.

“Kara. You’re up.”

And while he was very good at making light of things, she got the feeling that he was more shaken by the Cadmus incident than he was letting on. The way he’d looked and sounded when they were sitting on the couch—earlier, not at the moment—made her think that something was going on inside his head, and since Mon-El was usually so frank about everything, Kara had to wonder what that something was.

“Kara, you do realize it’s your turn, don’t you?”

Maybe he was reliving that fear? Maybe that was why he kept trying to downplay his injury? Because he didn’t want to think about any of it? Not long after Mon-El had first come to her—them, after Mon-El had come to them—Kara had talked to Alex about him, and Alex had suggested that maybe Mon-El was stuffing down a lot of sadness about Daxam. Was he doing that again?

“Yo, Kara, I’m growing a beard. And not just your regular, run-of-the-mill beard—I’m talking like a Gandalf beard. No, a Dumbledore beard. It’s your turn.”

And what was with that smile he’d given her earlier when she was standing by the pizza with Alex? She hadn’t done anything weird, had she? Not that that mattered. But if she had done
anything stupid and awkward, it would be nice to know. Just so she didn’t have to live in suspense, because why else would Mon-El be watching her?

“Hey, Earth to Supergirl.” A hand waved in front of her face. “It’s your turn.”

“What?” Kara blinked, straightening up so fast that she popped a tendon in her neck. “Oh, Mon-El. Sorry,” she said, looking around the room a little wildly. “What did you say?”

Winn and Alex groaned in chorus while James shook his head and Mon-El laughed.

“He said, *it’s your turn*,” Winn informed her, heaving a gusty sigh. “After *I* said ‘it’s your turn,’ after *James* said ‘it’s your turn,’ after Alex said—”

“Yeah, yeah, okay. I get it,” Kara interrupted, wrinkling her nose at her friend. “Umm…shoot.”

She snatched up her cards from her lap and studied them. “What was the last thing somebody asked for?”

“Oh, no you don’t,” Alex said loudly, snapping her fingers and pointing at everyone in the room who didn’t have the last name Danvers. “Nobody help her.”

“What?” Kara yelped, outraged. “Yeah, that’s real sisterly, Alexandra. Thank you.”

Alex fake-yawned, tapping a hand gracefully against her mouth. “You’re very welcome, Ms. I-Have-Superhearing.”

“Yes, but I wasn’t—oh, never mind,” Kara muttered, scowling across at where her sister sat, cross-legged and smug, on the floor. And to think she’d been worried about how that jerk was doing! Jeremiah was right—Alex had always been too strong for her own good. Too smart, too. And definitely too competitive.

“Come on, Alex,” James interposed, chuckling. “She obviously wasn’t paying attention…”

“Tell her anything and I’ll end you, Olsen,” Alex said calmly. “And that goes for the rest of you,” she added, narrowing her eyes first at Winn, then Mon-El. “Don’t you let her sneak a peek at that hand, Daxam.”

Kara’s head whipped toward Mon-El automatically, just in time to see him frown down at his left hand.

“What, this one?” he asked, holding it up and examining the back of it with interest. At the same time, the cards in his other hand tilted just enough for Kara to catch a glimpse of the assorted red and black symbols as he set them face-down on the couch between them.

“No, Mon-El—she means your cards,” Winn told him. “We went over this, remember?”

“Oh, right.” She saw him nod out of the corner of her eye. “You know, for a simple game, this is kind of confusing. All these, these…strange terms. These cinnamons? Is that what they’re called?”

“Synonyms,” Kara corrected automatically. “And I think you actually mean *homonyms*.”

“Yes. Homonyms. Those are the ones that are uh, spelled the same, right?”

“Yep.” She glanced up and the unmistakable twinkle in his eyes nearly made her burst into laughter. She’d wondered if he’d really gotten that mixed up after having the rules explained less
than an hour ago; now she had her answer. “Okay. Mon-El,” she said, chewing on the tip of a finger as though she’d just thought to ask him, “do you have any…queens?”

He dropped an eyelid in a wink so quick that even she could barely distinguish it from a blink. “Maybe.”

She stuck out a hand, wiggling her fingers at him. “Gimme. Now.”

“Aw.” He pulled two cards out of his pile and slapped them into her hand, pouting ostentatiously. “I liked those queens. They have nice faces.”

Kara’s laugh broke free. “Too bad,” she said airily, stacking the Queens of Hearts and Diamonds with the Queens of Clubs and Spades and struggling to neither smirk nor look at Alex. If her sister was noticing anything amiss, Kara didn’t want to feed into the suspicion by acting guilty. “You’ll have to kiss them goodbye.”

“But we’ve only just met,” Mon-El said in a shocked voice, making Kara snort.

“Well,” Winn commented dryly. “They were tragically taken from you all too soon, so…”

“True.” Mon-El waved a hand. “Farewell, your majesties. Our acquaintance was far too brief.”

“Oh, brother.” Alex rolled her eyes, harrumphing. “Kara, get on with it, will you? Some of us have to go to work at seven tomorrow.”

“Hey, Supergirl might get called in early, too,” Kara reminded her sister, shuffling through her cards with deliberate slowness.

“Let me rephrase that: some of us for sure have to go in at seven tomorrow,” Alex responded. “And J’onn says Mon-El has to be back by one. Hurry, so I can win and wrap this thing up.”

“Oh!”

“Say what, now?”

“Ex-cuuuse me?”

“Well, that’s bold.”

Alex ignored all the indignant outbursts. “Any day now, sis. Are you sure you got all your powers back? You’re not—missing superspeed or anything, are you?”

“Ha. Ha.” Kara put her nose in the air. “You know what, Alex Danvers? Prepare to be annihilated.” She squinted at each of her friends individually. Forget worrying about everyone else. She was going to concentrate and win this game, and no cutthroat-competitive sister was going to stop her.

Beside her, Mon-El leaned his head back against the sofa. “Winn. Fives,” she distinctly heard him whisper, his voice so soft that no one except herself could possibly catch it.

“Thanks,” she murmured back, pretending to scratch an itch around her mouth. “Uh, Winn.” She squeezed her eyes shut. “Got any…fives?”

Winn groaned, making James laugh.

“Oh, no, no, no,” Alex declared. “Don’t give her those cards, Winn. Mon-El, I saw that.”
“What?” Mon-El’s voice was impossibly innocent.

“You know exactly what, you cheater.” She glared at him. “Kara, I am very disappointed in you.”

Mon-El laughed. “Oh, come on, Alex.” He grinned wickedly. “You’ve been looking at Winn’s cards in the TV for the last five rounds.”

“What, like you haven’t?” Alex retorted, raising her eyebrows.

“What?” Winn’s jaw dropped, his wide eyes going from his hand, to Alex, to the TV, to Mon-El, back down to his hand. “How? Wait, is—is that why I keep losing? Badly?”

“Hey, I only peeked at them. I didn’t take advantage of you,” Mon-El told Winn. “She did.”

Winn turned to stare at Alex. “Is that true?”

She scoffed. “It’s called ‘being observant.’”

Oh, Kara had heard that one a few times over the years. She rolled her eyes at Mon-El who grinned again.

“It’s not against the rules,” Alex insisted. “And hey, if you’re going to blame me, blame James. He was doing it, too.”

“Wha—are you seri—oh, my God.” Winn covered his face with his hands. “I’m surrounded. I’m surrounded by cheaters. All these people who talk about saving the world, and they cheat at cards. This is so unfair. How dare you people? Slash aliens,” he added, glowering at Mon-El and Kara. “It’s freaking Go-Fish, not Monopoly!”

“Sorry, buddy.” James reached over and clapped Winn on the shoulder, shaking with poorly-suppressed laughter. “You do what you got to.”

Kara sunk back into the cushions, giggling while the three seated on the floor argued. Every game she and Alex had ever played with Winn, something like this happened. Alex played to win, using a tough, no-holds-barred kind of strategy, no matter what the game. James had adapted quickly; clearly Mon-El had, too, but somehow Winn was always surprised.

“Hey, Kara, what’s Monopoly?” Mon-El asked under his breath, leaning slightly toward her.

Kara stared at him for a moment. Holy Rao. Here before her stood—or, well, sat—someone who had gone their entire life without knowing the joy (and pain) that was playing Monopoly.

“It’s a game,” she told him, seeing the discussion start to die down. “A board game. The board game, actually. When we’re done with this, I’ll teach it to you, okay?”

“Okay.”

“Hey! No talking over there,” Alex’s voice interrupted. “I have less than thirty minutes before I have to leave if I want to get a decent night’s sleep.”

Kara lifted a shoulder. “Still plenty of time to get your butt kicked.”

“Oh, you wish.” Alex pointed two fingers at her eyes and then at Kara. “You’re going down, Supergirl.”
“Ha.” Kara raised her cards up to her nose, peering at Alex over the top of them. “You wish.”

“Wow.” James took a sip of his beer. “The caliber of the smack talk around here is really—impressive.”

“Not,” coughed Mon-El and Winn simultaneously. Then they high-fived.

“Everyone shut up,” Alex commanded. “Kara, shake a leg, will you? Time’s a-ticking. And Mon-El, if I see you so much as twitch, you are going to be woken up at an ungodly hour every morning for the next month in a way that may or may not involve the worst noisemakers National City has to offer, got it?”

“Can I nod?” Mon-El asked politely.

“No.” Alex folded her arms. “I don’t want you giving her numbers in your nod or something.”

James’ eyebrows shot up. “Okay. Is anyone else a little disturbed that she thought that might happen?”

Winn raised his hand. “Yes.”

“Wow.” Mon-El wiggled his eyebrows. “You’re very thorough in your cheating, aren’t you, Agent Danvers?”

“Yeah.” She set the box down on the coffee table and removed the lid. “Wars have been waged over these little guys.”
He laughed. “Really?”

“Well, no,” Kara admitted. “Not actual wars. Although…” she pursed her lips. “These two usually cause a lot of conflict, so it’s kinda true.” She indicated the car and the dog. “Which one do you want?”

“I don’t know.” He glanced at her. “Which one do you want?”

“Nope. Not how it works.” She jingled the handful of pieces under his nose. “You’ve never played, so you get to pick first. It’s—I don’t know, a Monopoly rite of passage.”

“Oh, is that a fact?” He grinned, his eyes crinkling up at the corners. “Well, see, I’ve never been like—that big on tradition, so…”

She tilted her head, biting the insides of her cheeks to keep from laughing. “Just pick one, okay?” Rao, he was so ridiculous.

“Hmm, let’s see…” Mon-El moved her hand away from his face. “That’s better. Hey, now they’re not all blurry,” he joked, poking through the pile with a forefinger. “Ooh, a hat. And—wait, what’s this? A cake?”

“Um…nope,” Kara answered, leaning in to get a look at the object. “That’s a battleship.”

“Oh.” Mon-El tossed it aside. “I thought it was a cake. Never mind.”

Kara chuckled, his instant indifference tickling her. “Would a cake be better?”

He shrugged. “Wouldn’t be worse. Okay, you know what? The dog is cute. I want to be the little dog.”

“Cool.” Kara grabbed her piece. “I’ll be the hat.” She pretended to tip it at Mon-El. “Reminds me of Fred and Ginger.”

“Who?”

She gasped involuntarily. “Wow, okay. Yeah, we’re going to have to have a talk about movies again soon.”

“Oh, are they movie people?” He shifted slightly so that he was facing her, his elbow resting on the back of the couch.

Kara nodded. “Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers. They are—well, were—this amazing duo. I mean, ah-mazing.” She clutched her heart, sighing as she flopped back against the sofa pillows. “They were in these movies with lots of dancing and singing called musicals, and they didn’t always like each other at first because one or both of them would do something that would make the other one mad. But then they’d banter, and dance together, and they’d fall in love, and then of course they’d almost mess everything up by getting proud and stubborn at the wrong time or not telling the other person something important at the right time. In the end, though, they always figured it out.”


“Well, obviously,” Kara laughed. “Nobody would be that dumb in real life.”

She pulled out the board, explaining the rules to him as she arranged everything. He didn’t have
the best grasp of Earth currency yet and it took some time to clear that up, but before long, they were deep into the game, jabbering away as they played. Mon-El was easy to talk to, and Kara got so wrapped up in the talking and the game that it wasn’t until after she’d landed on one of Mon-El’s railroads for the third straight turn and grumpily handed over two-hundred dollars that she suddenly realized how light the sky outside was getting.

“Oh my God!” Kara gasped, grabbing Mon-El’s arm. No. There was no way she’d gotten that distracted. No way!

“What is it?” he said, his hands still cupping the dice.

She pointed at the window. “Look.”

“Whoa.” He blinked. “Wait, what time is it?”

Kara zipped over to the counter and grabbed her phone. “Six fifty-three,” she said, staring at him, eyes wide. “Mon-El, we’ve got to get you back to the DEO like—now! J’onn’s going to adult ground you for forever!”

“What?”

“Never mind! Just here, take these.” Kara snatched up his crutches and pressed them horizontally into his chest. “Hold them like this and do not drop them!” She paused in the middle of her apartment floor, staring at the window. Dawn. Daylight. So—visibility. Great. “Be right back,” she muttered.

Speeding to the bedroom, she changed into her Supergirl costume in less than a second and burst back into the room, sweeping Mon-El up so fast that he yelped.

“Sorry,” she told him, heading to the window. “Supergirl carrying you looks less suspicious than Kara carrying you if anybody spots us. Which they can now do, because…morning.”

“True,” Mon-El agreed, bracing the crutches across his body. He leaned over to peer down into the street. “So, do I need to scream? Make it look like a dramatic rescue?”

“No,” Kara answered. She laughed out the word, the urgency dissipating for a moment at the mental image of Mon-El shrieking in pretended fright in her arms. With her luck, the papers would all be running a story on how Supergirl had apparently kidnapped an innocent civilian. “But I am going to break some of my previous getting-to-the-DEO records, so make sure you hang on.”

“Yeah, I’ve got the crutches.” Mon-El shook them in demonstration. “National City is safe from crutch-related impalings on my watch.”

Kara shook her head. “No, I mean to me. Here.” She patted the arm closest to her. “Put this around my neck, okay?”

“Uh…okay.” Mon-El complied, tucking his arm over her carefully. “Like this?” he asked, clearing his throat.

“Yeah.” Kara’s skin prickled as his forearm brushed over the area left unprotected by her suit, his warmth sending a shiver through her. “Like um, like that.”

Oh, Rao. What was wrong with her? She flew people to safety all the time—and not just people she knew, but complete strangers! Why was she feeling funny about this? All she was doing was holding Mon-El. Which she had done last night. In the dark, and everyone knew that darkness was
way more rom—uh, way different than light. And yeah, maybe he hadn’t had an arm around her and maybe she’d been a little distracted because she’d accidentally fed him that stupid bug, but she hadn’t been nervous. Why was she nervous? It was an arm. Everyone had them. Humans, aliens, octopuses—octopi—everyone.

_Honestly, Kara_, she thought, blasting off before she had time to overthink herself into paralysis. *You’ve touched him before.* Which sounded creepy, but now was not the time to start critiquing her own thoughts. *You’ve held his hand. You’ve held plenty of boys’ hands. You’ve crushed plenty of boys’ hands.* _What is your problem? Mon-El is your friend. F-R-I-E-N-D, friend. Get that through your head. This is not a big deal._

“Kara, isn’t the DEO that way?”

Great, and now she was just being careless. Mentally kicking herself, Kara about-faced in the air and landed them on the DEO balcony in almost no time. Plenty of agents in the control room looked up at their sudden entrance, but thankfully, neither J’onn nor Alex was anywhere in sight, and Kara hoped to keep it that way.

“So far so good,” she whispered out of the side of her mouth, smiling self-consciously around at the curious faces watching them while Mon-El lifted a hand in greeting. “Let’s hurry before—”

“Ah, Supergirl. Mon-El.” J’onn stood up from the chair he’d been sitting in, hidden behind a monitor. “I assume there’s a reasonable explanation for this?”

Kara dropped Mon-El’s legs, making him grunt. “J’onn, we didn’t mean to…honest!”

“We lost track of time,” Mon-El put in, steadying himself on the crutches and giving J’onn a wide smile. “Kara and I were playing a game.”

J’onn’s arms remained folded. “Really.”

“Yes!” Oh, this had to be the lamest reason for missing curfew ever. And for that matter, the fact that she was currently on the carpet for returning an adult past his curfew was just ludicrous. “J’onn, he’d never even heard of it, and I just wanted to teach him!” she pleaded. “I didn’t mean for it to go this far, but I mean, come on—it’s not a game, it’s an, an experience. An Earth experience, and I wanted his first time to be fun. And it was, wasn’t it?” she asked, appealing to Mon-El.

He beamed. “Very fun. Thank you, Kara.”

“Well?” Kara pointed to him. “And you're welcome.”

J’onn’s brows knitted together. “I’m not…sure… I follow,” he said haltingly.

“I’m not sure I want to,” Alex commented, striding toward them. “What exactly is going on here? Are you guys just now getting in?”

Kara covered her face, exhaling loudly. Why did she suddenly feel as though she were back in high school? “Alex…”

“We were a little late,” Mon-El supplied.

“Five hours and fifty-eight minutes late, to be precise,” said J’onn dryly.

Mon-El shrugged. “Like I said.”
Alex’s mouth fell open. “Six hours?” she sputtered, pointing vaguely between Kara and Mon-El. “You—six hours? What were you doing for almost six hours? You don’t think…” She glanced questioningly at J’onn.

J’onn rubbed two fingers across the spot between his eyebrows. “I wouldn’t know, Alex,” he said.

“That isn’t possible, is it?” Alex hissed in a whisper, her face puckered. “I mean, wouldn’t they have…broken something? Like—the city?”

“We’re not discussing this here,” J’onn murmured back.

“We didn’t mean to, okay?” Kara said, exasperated at how they kept talking in low voices as though two beings with above-average hearing weren’t standing right there. “It just happened, and once we got started, we couldn’t stop—"

Alex shuddered. “Oh, God. No. Actually, I changed my mind. Don’t tell me. Please don’t tell me. This isn’t something I need to hear. I mean, I’m glad you had fun, I’m so glad, but this is—oh, I don’t need the details.”

“What?” Kara stared at Alex. Maybe it was the fact that she’d gotten no sleep last night, but none of this was making any sense. “Alex, what are you talking about?”

“I don’t know.” Her sister’s eyes narrowed. “W-what are you talking about?”

“Monopoly,” Kara said slowly. “We were late because we got started playing Monopoly after you guys left.”

“I was the dog,” Mon-El informed Alex. “And I was winning.”

“You were not,” Kara shot back. “Just because I had to make a few street repairs on my hotels—"

“A few?” He crossed his arms, smirking at her. “Nine properties is a few, Kara?”

“Hey.” She whacked him in the shoulder. “I still had money.”

He grinned. “Yeah, but didn’t you say that forty-three dollars isn’t that much?”

Kara gave a disgusted huff. “One, I owned Boardwalk. Two—do you want me to yank those crutches out from under you?”

“Okay, time,” Alex interrupted, making a T-shape with her hands. “You’re telling me you two were really playing Monopoly?”

“Yes,” Kara said, exchanging a puzzled frown with Mon-El.

Her sister folded her arms. “All night long?”

“Yes!” Kara’s impatience skyrocketed. “Isn’t that what I just said?”

“Oh, you’ve got to be kidding me,” Alex muttered. She pinched the bridge of her nose, exhaling. Then, all at once, she snorted. A full-on, completely unprofessional snort that rapidly turned into a bunch of even more unprofessional hoots of laughter.

“Want to tell me what’s so funny?” Kara demanded, pressing her lips together into a thin line.
“Not even a little bit,” her sister wheezed, wrapping her arms around her stomach as she laughed. “Oh, geez, this is great!”

“Agent Danvers,” J’onn interrupted, emphasizing the word agent ever so slightly.

“Yes, sir.” Alex straightened up, clearly biting her lips to keep quiet.

J’onn inclined his head toward the computers. “I’d appreciate it if you’d take a look at the data we’ve been compiling on Cadmus.”

“Yes, sir,” Alex said again. “But—”

“Now, Agent Danvers.” J’onn raised his eyebrows.

For a few seconds it looked like Alex was going to argue. But then she glanced at Kara, glanced at Mon-El, smiled smugly, and turned on her heel with only a nod, leaving as suddenly as she’d appeared.

“As for you two,” J’onn said, his face impassive as he eyed them, “I won’t make you fill out any reports this time.”

Kara felt a glow of gratitude toward J’onn. “Thanks,” she said, tugging on Mon-El’s sleeve. “We’ll get out of—”

“Although.” J’onn held up a hand in warning, stopping her. “If it happens again, I’ll have you both writing full reports on activities. In triplicate. Understood?”

“Understood,” Mon-El agreed, bobbing his head.

J’onn looked at Kara, his expression stern. But his eyes danced, and she realized with a burst of annoyance that he wanted to laugh, too.

_Humph_, she thought.

The temptation to remind him that she was Supergirl, that Mon-El was an adult—that hey, they were both adults!—was strong, but just as she opened her mouth to do it, she had a flashback to some of Alex’s teenaged conversations with Eliza, and decided against it. Getting upset and exclaiming _I’m not a child!_ was never the best way to get yourself taken seriously.

And anyway, she was starting to realize exactly how many people around them were overhearing everything. It was way past time to end the DEO entertainment.

“Understood,” she said.

Rao, she was so never going to play Monopoly with Mon-El ever again.

Chapter End Notes

*I got kind of carried away with this one. I honestly don't know where half the ideas came from, and it was like being a squirrel running in a bunch of different directions all at once. I'm not very happy with the final result because it was so good in my head, and then all my ideas turned into way more words than I was expecting, and I had to*
*Part of me wanted to write this where Mon-El just spends the night on the couch (because I kind of like to think he did), but the more practical side of me can't help noticing that that couch is TINY. I've slept on couches like that before. I'm only a couple inches shorter than Mon-El, and that was uncomfortable for me. After I kind of made a thing of his leg being hurt in the chapter before, I decided it made no sense for Kara to be like, "Hey, scrunch up on the couch!" so I scrapped that plan. But since I firmly believe that K&M had played Monopoly prior to the Medusa scene, I decided to introduce that here. In my mind, they spent the whole night talking about random aliens-on-earth things.

*As honest/heroic/kind as the SG main characters are, I really do believe they'd play games like this--Kara doesn't like to lose, she grew up with Alex who you just KNOW is the person who knows the rulebook so well that they can exploit all the loopholes, and James and Mon-El strike me as the sort to figure out which way the wind blows very quickly. Winn's always so gullible that I think he'd be the obvious victim. Also, I wonder what it says about me/my family that everyone from my grandparents to my little cousins (except for maybe my mom) does this when we play games?

*I feel like I kind of shortchanged James in the game part--he mostly just laughs. But I now kind of get where the SG writers are coming from, in that it's hard to make him stand out because he's a calmer, quieter personality than all the others.

*The DEO scene happened because I've always wondered what kind of Kara/Mon interactions all those agents witnessed to make them barely bat an eye when they're squabbling about Mxyzptlk. Everyone's "Ho-hum, just another day at the office" attitude suggests to me that K&M were that couple that everyone sort of assumed was together long before they actually got together. I just feel like there was maybe an office pool?

*Mon-El overhearing Alex talking to Maggie was an unfortunate casualty of Ch. 17 getting too long...I tried to fit it in at the beginning of this chapter, but 5-10 lines of Mon's POV and then the rest in Kara's didn't work, so I gave it up. But in my head, he accidentally listens in and that's why he doesn't seem majorly surprised when Alex calls him over to tell him the news in 2x12.

*I didn't realize until I had Kara pick the top hat monopoly token (and needed a plausible reason for why she would do that) how much a loose summary of K&M's relationship resembles an Astaire-Rogers movie.

*Confession: this is not as polished as I could have made it with 2 more days or so. I know that. But I kind of shamelessly want to keep plodding on ;D

**Thanks to everyone for reading/commenting! I appreciate it so much, and I hope every last one of you has a Fantastic Friday! (Or whatever day of the week it is that you're reading this.) :D
Expectation V. Reality

Chapter Summary

Takes place before 2x08 (a day or two before Thanksgiving) from Mon-El's POV. This is another really random one, because an idea about Kara inviting Mon spun out of control and turned into its own chapter. Also: apologies for the cliched-ness. I kind of hate myself for it, but the longer I'm forced to go without the space puppies, the more I find myself embracing predictable cuteness.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A day or so after the game night at Kara’s, Mon-El’s leg was back to normal. He’d known it right away, but since J’onn and Alex were both still a little skeptical about the idea of letting him ‘run around’—Alex’s words—only a couple days after he’d been laid up, he’d had to convince them. It had taken some doing, but after he’d spent about five solid minutes hopping around the control room on one leg (and after the smallish dent he’d accidently put in the second floor railing with his head when he got carried away and jumped a little too high), they’d had to believe him. Plus, Agent Demos, one of the grumpier agents, had complained to J’onn that working was impossible with aliens bouncing all over the place. So now, with the Be-Careful period officially over, Mon-El was free to roam again.

Well, not totally free. He’d found that out the hard way when he was looking for J’onn late in the afternoon and stumbled across him in one of the DEO’s cell-room things, talking to none other than M’gann, who had apparently been locked up while Mon-El was woozy from all the medicine and Cadmus stuff. He had no idea what she’d done to get in so much trouble with the DEO, but when he’d started to ask, J’onn had made it very clear that Mon-El was to keep out of the room at all times no matter what, and since he’d never seen J’onn that angry ever, Mon-El was now avoiding the whole general area. It puzzled him, and he knew from talking to Alex that she wasn’t happy about it either, but since she was already keeping an eye on the situation and could definitely do that a million times better than he ever could, he decided to let it be and concentrate on trying to find another job.

Because he’d been ambushed by Cadmus on the way back from quitting, he hadn’t had a chance to really look for anything else in the way of actual employment, and the money he had left over from his short stint as a forceful bill-collector was starting to dwindle. Finding a job was a must, but given how he’d struggled the last time he’d looked, the prospect was very depressing. Still, it had to be done if he had any intentions of ever visiting the bar again. Or of being able to live somewhere besides the DEO, and he was for sure going to need lots of food which would be expensive, too. So on his way to the training room with the exercise equipment that he could actually exercise with, he got hold of one of those newspapers, and, after a good half-hour of weightlifting (boring) and punching (fun), he sat down against a wall and started looking through the jobs section again.

But this time, the only things he seemed qualified for wanted him to have driving experience (and he was pretty sure they meant cars, not ships). Even if he were able to get a driver’s license quickly, he didn’t think that driving big trucks all over the place would be the greatest option for
him. The lots of aloneness would mess with him, and anyway, driving required plenty of focus. Even when he wasn’t getting distracted by some new Earth thing, Mon-El wasn’t the best focuser the planet—or the galaxy for that matter—had ever known. What if his mind wandered, and then the truck wandered too? He could end up crashing and killing a bunch of nice humans, and that would be terrible, because he would probably be just fine and they would be dead. No, he guessed he’d have to keep looking.

Thoroughly discouraged, he tossed the paper down on the weight bench and went back to punching. It wouldn’t give him any new ideas, but at least it would help burn off some of that excess energy he’d built up during bedrest. And hey, if Cadmus attacked again, he could at least be a little more prepared. Mon-El wasn’t too excited about the prospect of ever falling back into that scary Luthor woman’s clutches. She reminded him of too many of the important visitors who used to come to Daxam’s palace from all over the universe to talk to his parents—cold, proud, and very, very mean. They had all had that same look of evil happiness in their eye when they talked about doing awful things, and it had terrified him when he was small.

Quite frankly, it did the exact same thing to him now that he was older. The way that woman had smiled at him—ugh.

Shrugging the creepy feeling off, Mon-El punched away. But after he somehow punched the bag off its hook and spent ten minutes frantically trying to fix it so that he didn’t have to call Winn in (again) and tell him that he’d broken another one, he decided that he’d probably done enough active things for the day. Especially if he wanted to get to the bar smelling like something other than what he currently did, which was very sweaty sock-ish.

Yep, he thought, raising his eyebrows as he cautiously sniffed an armpit. It is definitely Shower Time.

It didn’t take long to gather up the bath stuff—a large towel that he was pretty sure could double as a small blanket if necessary, a bottle of body wash, and something called shampoo that looked exactly like body wash but which (according to Winn and Alex) was completely different—and make his way down to the showers. Nor did it take long to shower. The problem came when he hopped out of the warm, bubbly, relaxing atmosphere, and realized that he’d forgotten to bring a clean change of clothes with him.

Again.

It was a recurring problem of his heightened by force of habit, because on Daxam, he’d never bothered to bring clothes with him into the bathing room. For that matter, he’d never bothered with towels. He’d just sort of wandered from his bedroom, to the baths, then back to his bedroom, and gotten dressed whenever he felt like it. Towels weren’t a problem, because the DEO provided those, so if Mon-El happened to forget his special one, it didn’t much matter. But clothes—yeah, that was an issue. The first couple times it had happened, he had just re-dressed in the outfit he’d worn to the showers and headed back to his room. The last time he’d done it though, the clothes had been cold and damp from his sparring session with Kara, and it was a very gross feeling. Maybe if he hurried and didn’t run into J’onn…

Mon-El pulled back the plastic curtain, peeping out into the quiet room.

“Hello?” he called, listening intently. If anyone replied or sounded like they were close, he would have to rethink this. But everything stayed silent, so he quickly hopped out, inching across the slick floor. “Anybody home?” he shouted, his voice echoing off the walls as he wrapped the towel around his waist and snatched the stinky pile of clothes off the floor. “Okay, that’s good.”
Tiptoeing to the doorway, he poked his head out, checking to make sure the coast was clear before superspeeding his way through the halls toward his room. Other than the fact that his towel almost blew away in the breeze he created and his wet feet slid him right past his door, his plan worked perfectly—he didn’t have to put on sweaty clothes, and no one saw him. But just as he was congratulating himself on his brilliance and reaching for his slightly-ajar door, he heard a familiar voice chattering away inside.

Kara.

Yeah, that figures Mon-El thought, scooting away from the door and resting his head against the wall. Now what? If he walked in like this, she would...see him. In his towel.

Which was fine. Maybe even more than fine. Okay, in all honesty, he’d have less than no problem being seen in a towel by Kara. Actually, he’d have less than no problem being seen naked by Kara—and no, no, no, that was not a place he needed to visit right now if he wanted to do anything besides stand in one spot forever looking like an idiot.

Focus, Mon, focus, he told himself furiously.

Could he hide somewhere until she went away? Nope, that was dumb. He lived in a corridor. There was literally no place to hide. If he ran somewhere else, the rest of the DEO would see him, and then J’onn would get mad again. The only thing to do was walk in, politely ask her to excuse his appearance, and then get his clothes.

Except—what if she thought he’d done it on purpose or something? He was pretty sure she thought he was at least kind of sex-obsessed (which he wasn’t; he just enjoyed it a lot the same way most beings did) after what had happened with Eve, and he didn’t want to give the wrong impression or anything. After the other night, when they’d spent almost one quarter of an Earth day playing a game and just talking, Mon-El desperately wanted the chance to show Kara that he wasn’t the guy he’d been when he first arrived. He wasn’t anywhere close to what she kept saying he could be, true, and he was pretty positive he’d never get there, but he could at least show her that he wasn’t the chronic flirt she thought him. Not that he objected to flirting with Kara. Wow, would he ever not object to that.

Not helping.

He took a deep, shaky breath, concerning himself still more in the process. Why was he getting all wobbly-legged again? This was silly. He had to go in, right?

“No,” Kara said.

Mon-El jumped, wondering if she’d somehow heard him thinking.

“No pies,” she stated, her voice firm. “I can do those. And Alex has the drinks covered. Just bring the carrots. Oh, and roll-makings if you want to. I have everything else covered, I swear.”

Mon-El frowned, realizing she was probably in the middle of a phone conversation. Back when she was teaching him about phones at Catco, one of the first things she’d emphasized was how rude it was to interrupt someone when they were talking on the phone. Apparently, it was only okay if there was a serious emergency, and while wearing a towel in a DEO hallway was problematic, it wasn’t an emergency. So he waited, tapping his fingers together nervously while he tried to not listen in but still keep an ear out for the bye! that would let him know it was okay to enter. If he was going to enter. He still thought that he could maybe run and hide—just for a few seconds—when she exited. But then he picked up the sound of a brisk pair of footsteps heading his
Alex was coming. Toward him. And Alex Danvers was too good at seeing what people were trying to hide. If she arrived and found him standing outside his own door in nothing but a towel, she was going to have a lot of questions, and Kara would undoubtedly hear those questions and come outside to investigate, and if Kara walked outside, Alex would figure everything out in about two seconds, and Mon-El didn’t think he was ready for that. Plus Kara would probably think he was trying to eavesdrop on her, and he didn’t want that to happen either.

_Grife, grife, grife, grife, GRIFE!_

Quickly, he weighed his options. Risk Kara thinking he was clumsily trying to ‘put the moves’ (as Winn called it) on her, or have Alex find out that he was too nervous around her little sister to just walk in and say ‘Hey, don’t mind me, just getting dressed?’ Or…

He scowled at the pile of clothes still in his arms. Of course. There was always option three. Stinky, sweaty, gross option three, and—and holy Rao, Alex was going to be here any second, so there was no time for sulking; he didn’t want to barge in on Kara and he didn’t want Alex to see him, so he had to get dressed. But in his haste, he only managed to get one foot through the pants before dropping both the bottle of body wash and the bottle of shampoo, and at that point, Alex was so close that he didn’t have any other choice. He gathered up the bottles, opened the door, and practically leaped inside, shutting it behind him with a noiselessness that was nothing short of miraculous.

It was so noiseless, in fact, that even Kara didn’t seem to have heard it. He turned around fearfully, expecting to see her giving him that _what do you think you’re doing?_ look. Instead, he saw her lying on his bed, hair and cape draped over the edge of the mattress, feet up on the wall as her heels drummed out a little rhythm while she talked and waved the hand that wasn’t holding her phone to her ear.

_Crap,_ Mon-El thought, closing his eyes. That was one of those words he’d learned from Kara and Winn, and he found it very helpful and expressive at times like this. Because all of his clothes were stored in boxes under that bed, and how exactly was he supposed to not look like he was up to something when he was dressed—or rather, _not_ dressed—like this and she was right where he needed to be? Ugh, why couldn’t he just remember to bring his own clothes?

“It is,” Kara was saying, sucking in a sharp breath when she bounced her foot a little too hard and a small chip of plaster fell off. “Oops. Uh, nothing. Um, just—yeah, that should be good. Six. Well, I think. I still have to ask Mon-El.”

Mon-El frowned. “Ask me what?” he said, figuring it was best to just go ahead and announce his presence.

“What?”

Kara’s feet kicked off the wall so quickly that she nearly fell backward off the bed. Twisting onto her side, her neck cocked at an odd angle, she gasped.

“Mon-El! Oh. Um.” She pointed to the mattress, the move stiff and jerky. “I’m sorry. I didn’t mean to just take your—well, I couldn’t find you, and I got tired of standing, so I just thought I’d —”

He could see the exact moment she realized he was in a towel, because her voice faded, her eyes widened, and her fair skin suddenly went very pink.
Please, please don’t let her think I planned this.

Smiling sheepishly, he lifted a hand to wave, but the gesture dislodged the shampoo bottle and it fell to the ground with a loud, plastic-y clatter. Sorry, he mouthed. As he bent to pick it up, he noticed how the pants were wadded around his ankle, and nearly fell trying to pull them loose. Oh yes, this was just getting better and better. It wasn’t enough that he was probably already creeping her out—no, he had to go and look like a fool on top of it.

“I-I thought I—whoa-kay, ah…Eliza, can I call you later?” Kara said, her voice going squeaky on the last few words. “Mon-El just got bath. Back! Uh, yeah, love you, gotta go, bye!”

A deep silence fell between them and Mon-El reached up to rub at the back of his neck, only to discover that he was still clutching the stupid shampoo bottle. Okay, maybe he needed to just stop moving for a while.

“Hey,” he said at length, not sure what else to do. “How are you?”

“Hi,” Kara answered slowly. “And—I’m good. Thanks.”

“That’s good.” He realized there was nothing to be done except act like nothing was wrong, so he tacked a smile on his face. “I uh, didn’t mean to listen in or anything, but…you wanted to ask me something?”

“Huh? Oh! Yeah. Yeah, I did, I wanted to ask—but, um, Mon-El?” She cleared her throat, her eyes darting all over the room. “You—you um…” She pointed at him, still not quite looking. “You’re really…wet.”

“Yes.” He nodded. “I am, actually. I showered.” And now he was being stupidly obvious.

She propped her chin in a hand. “I ah, thought you might’ve.”

“Yeah.” He laughed, hoping to erase some of the awkwardness. “Sorry, I uh…I kind of forgot my clothes.”

She glanced at him for a fraction of a second before looking down again. “No, no, it’s fine,” she assured him, smiling a little. “You’re fine.”

“Oh, thanks,” he sighed, relieved. “That’s always good to hear.”

Kara’s head flew up. “I-I mean fine like ‘okay,’ not fine like, like…”

He frowned. “Like what?”

“Like—never mind.” She tapped a corner of the phone against her forehead, grimacing when a small piece broke off. “Yikes. Okay, um—yeesh.” She shook her head and pushed herself up into a sitting position. “I’m just going to start over.”

“Okay.” Mon-El crossed his arms over his chest. "That works."

Kara cleared her throat again—louder this time. “So, um, that was Eliza. My Earth mother, you know?” she explained, her eyes fixed on a spot somewhere behind him.

He nodded, remembering the stuff Kara had told him about her adoptive family while they were playing Monopoly. Dr. Eliza Danvers, as he recalled, was a scientist. “Yeah, Alura’s from Krypton, and Eliza’s from Earth, right?” he said.
“Yeah, exactly. Well, she was calling to talk about Thanksgiving plans,” Kara told him, clasping and unclasping her fingers around her phone. “That’s the, the holiday that’s coming up. Did Winn or Alex or anybody tell you about that?”

“Hmm.” Mon-El thought hard, but as was happening more and more frequently in Kara’s presence, his brain refused to function at normal brain speeds. “I don’t know. Something about… penguins and boats?”

“Pilgrims, yes. And boats are involved, too. Kind of.” She waved a hand. “But that’s not a big deal right now. I can explain it better later on. Thanksgiving is basically a time when you get together with all your family and friends and celebrate all the things you’re thankful for with a lot of food.”

“So—a feast?” he guessed.

“Yes.” She bobbed her head up and down. “A feast. And well, Eliza, she always comes to celebrate with Alex and me. Or we go to see her, but this year she’s coming to National City. Because you know, she’s our family?”

Mon-El nodded, trying to figure out where she was going with all this. “Family is good.” Rao, he needed to stop commenting on the goodness of everything. It was getting repetitive. And he wasn’t exactly the best judge of family.

“Yeah, definitely.” Her foot jittered against the metal bedframe. “And friends. Friends are really important, too.”

Okay, now that he could agree with.

“Yes, they are,” he said, smiling broadly.

Kara breathed out a laugh, her fingers brushing a few curls back behind her ear. “Anyway, the reason I was looking for you, Mon-El, is because we’re doing Thanksgiving at my place with Alex, Eliza, Winn, and James—J’onn has to work, though—and I wanted to invite you, because you know, you’re family now, too.”

“Me?” He grinned. Well, this was all going very differently than he’d expected.

“Yes, you,” she responded, a throaty little chuckle escaping. “So, what do you say? I mean, party, food…” she held her hands out, palms up. “You kind of owe it to yourself to come.”

“What?” he laughed. “You really think I have to be talked into attending a party?”

“Yeah, true.” She wrinkled her nose at him. “I’d probably make you go get your brain scanned if you said no.”

“That would make sense.” He grinned again at her. “Thank you, Kara. I’ll be there. Oh! But uh, what do I wear?” he added, glancing down at himself. “Not this, I’m guessing.”

“No, not that,” Kara agreed, her eyes settling on his chest for a few seconds before she suddenly jumped up. “I know! Why don’t I help you pick something out? I’m already here, and it’s easier to show you what everybody’ll be wearing than it is to tell you.”

“Okay, cool.” Mon-El tossed the dirty clothes into a corner as far away as possible—he’d put them in the hamper later—and squatted down to get the biggest box. “Here we go,” he said, setting it down atop the mattress. “These are the shirts. What kind am I looking for?”
“Remember the ones you wore to Catco and to Lena’s benefit?” Kara asked, stooping over the box. “That kind’ll be perfect.”

“Oh, yeah.” Mon-El dug through the haphazard pile of fabric. “Hey, I can just wear one of those, right?” he said, pulling out a bright plaid shirt. “Problem solved!”

“No, not that one,” Kara said decisively, plucking it from his hands.

He frowned. “Why not? It’s pretty comfortable.”

“Oh, well. I don’t know.” She tossed it toward the far corner of the bed and dusted her hands off, the crinkle in her brow again. “I just…don’t think that’s really your color, Mon-El.”

“Yeah, but didn’t you pick it out?” he inquired, squinting as he tried to remember. Yes, he was sure she had, because he distinctly remembered thinking that it was going to look like he was wearing that cotton candy stuff Winn had introduced him to.

“That’s not important,” she answered quickly, “and besides, you don’t want to wear something you’ve worn already, do you?”

Mon-El raised an eyebrow. “Are you asking, or…?”

“No, not really.”

“Yeah, that’s what I thought.” He laughed when she whacked him on the arm with a different shirt. “What?”

“Come on, it’s Thanksgiving! You have to wear something new. Please?” She tilted her head to one side, her lower lip thrust out. “See, I can do the pouty face, too,” she told him, blinking up at him in faux sadness.

That she could. It was, Mon-El thought as he barely held in a really dumb-sounding sigh, the cutest pout he’d ever seen in his entire life. He was okay right now because she was just trying to get him to wear an uncomfortable shirt, but he got the feeling that that look could make him do just about anything, and he kind of hoped that she wouldn’t figure that out. Not just yet. After all, this woman was fast becoming the best friend he’d ever had. He didn’t want to make her uncomfortable, and he really didn't want to lose her or her friendship.

“And here I thought you said you never use your powers for evil,” he joked, matching her head-tilt.

“Well…” She grinned, her eyes alight with mischief. “When my opponent’s formidable, I sometimes make an exception.”

“Ooh, I’m formidable?” He ran a dramatic hand through his hair. “Thank you.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “You look like you got electrocuted,” she told him, snickering as she reached up to smooth everything back down. “It’s cute, but the bedhead look kinda went out a decade or so ago.”

Mon-El’s eyebrows climbed to what felt like the top of his head. “My hair’s cute?”

“What?” Her hand came to a stop in his hair before she yanked it away. “No, it’s just—well, I mean, I guess as hair goes, it’s not bad,” she amended, her tone reluctant.
He grinned. “Really?”

Exhaling, she flicked her exasperated gaze upward for a moment before giving him an annoyed little squint. “Mon-El…”

“Hey.” He shrugged, winking at her almost reflexively. “If it helps, I think your hair is cute too, Kara.”

A funny expression crossed her face. “Really?” she said.

“Really,” he answered, thinking that that was possibly the biggest understatement ever as he returned her smile. Kara’s hair was beautiful. Though it wasn’t so much the hair itself as it was how she always shoved it out of the way when she was fighting or getting impatient, or tugged on it while she thought, or used it like a little face shield when she wanted to smile but was feeling shy about it for some reason. And the fact that he even knew all that told him he’d been spending far more time memorizing Kara’s habits than he’d thought, which was frightening. Rao, he was in so far over his head.

“Kara—Mon-El?”

Mon-El whirled around, an exclamation of surprise caught in his throat. Once again, J’onn had somehow managed to sneak up without Mon-El hearing. “J’onn, hi!” he said brightly, resting an arm on the edge of the box. “How’s it going?”

“Interestingly, thus far,” the man replied, his voice devoid of any emotion. “Yourself?”

Mon-El squirmed inwardly under the Martian’s intense gaze. “It’s been good.”

“I was just helping him pick out something to wear to Thanksgiving,” Kara interjected. “He um, he wasn’t sure what would work.”

“I see.” J’onn nodded, his expression unreadable. “And were you successful?”

“No,” Mon-El said at the exact same time that Kara said, “Kind of.”

They exchanged glances, Kara lifting her eyebrows and widening her eyes at him in a way that made him think he was supposed to make something up. Clearly, neither one of them wanted to give J’onn the chance to address the towel thing.

“What do you think about this one?” he said on an impulse, reaching into the box and grabbing the first shirt his hand came into contact with. He held it up. What color was that—purple? Pink? Maybe kind of orange-ish? Oh, who cared? It was a shirt. “Kara’s Earth mother is going to be there. I don’t want to offend her with…with ugly shirt choices,” he finished lamely as his invention ran out.

“I think it’s great,” Kara told him, nodding vigorously. “And, and hey, you could wear that tie you wore to the benefit!”

Tie? Mon-El frowned. “Which tie?”

“The purple one,” she muttered out of the side of her mouth. “Remember?”

“No,” Mon-El muttered back.

“Sure, you do.”
“Sure, I don’t.”

“What, seriously?” Kara regarded him with astonishment, hands propped on her hips. “How do you not remember which tie you wore to an event attacked by alien-haters?”

He snorted. “Uh, because it’s a tie, and the alien-haters were kind of distracting?”

J’onn coughed pointedly. “Kara, if you can leave the clothing selection, you’re needed downtown. Nothing major, just another cat up a tree.”

“Oh, good.” Kara nodded, grabbing her phone off the bed. “Not for the cat, I mean. I just need to pick up some pie supplies, so this works out nicely.”

“Excellent.” J’onn turned toward the door. “And Mon-El, don’t wear a purple tie with that shirt. The color’s all wrong.”

“Thanks,” Mon-El called, waving as they left. “Good to know,” he mumbled to himself, grabbing one of the other boxes out from under the bed and pulling out a clean pair of pants to go with one of his stretchy shirts. “Now I just have to figure out what colors are all right.”

“Hey, Mon-El?”

He glanced back to see Kara in the doorway.

“Yeah?” he said.

She pointed toward the first box. “I saw a red tie in there that’ll go good with the shirt.”

Well, there was that question answered.

“Wow. You really are Supergirl, aren’t you?” he teased, a grin breaking free.

She lifted a shoulder. “That’s what they tell me. Bye.” Then, with a flash of that sunbeam smile and an unnecessarily theatrical flourish of her cape, she was gone.

And so was he, he realized, looking down to find that he was smiling like a dunce and absentmindedly trying to stick his foot through a shirtsleeve instead of a pant leg. Yeah, he was so far gone now that there was no point in pretending otherwise. The way he felt when she was around; the way his thoughts drifted to her when she wasn’t—Mon-El wasn’t just maybe falling for Kara. There was no more ‘maybe,’ and there was definitely no more ‘falling’. He’d fallen. Hard. For a woman who thought more about other people in one day than he’d thought about others in an entire lifetime. And he had no idea what to do.

Sitting down with a thump that would’ve cracked an ordinary bedframe, he stared forlornly at the door.

“Oh boy,” he muttered.

Yep. He was about to have to get really good at pretending.

Chapter End Notes
*Ok. The show has given me no good reason to think that a fresh-out-of-the-shower Mon-El ever ran into Kara. But there's so much time that passes in between episodes that it's possible it could have happened at some point--Mon's forgetful, and Kara appears to have no boundaries where he's concerned. Plus, I'm REEEAALLLY missing the babies, y'all. I'm so guilty of wishful thinking on this one. I admit it. I needed some awkward cuteness.

*This was originally supposed to go all the way up to Mon-El knocking on the door Thanksgiving Day, but like the last few chapters, it kind of blew up into something I wasn't expecting. So, fair warning, the next chapter may switch POV more than once, because I'm hoping to reach the Mon at the bar scene so that I can get started on the DEO Monopoly scene. :D

*I firmly believe that Mon-El has turned up when Kara was on the phone with Eliza at some point. Eliza just seems so interested in watching him watch Kara that I wanted to play with how her interest got started.

*The plaid shirt is supposed to be the one Mon-El wore during the Eve Incident. We never really see him wear it again on the show, and in my head, it's because of Kara. I just get the feeling she low-key wants to burn that sucker.

*Kara didn't ask Mon-El to bring stuffing in this chapter because she's going to do it in the next one. I wrestled with that for a while, and I finally decided to go with the "she calls him the night before/the morning of and asks him to bring some" approach, because it seems like she'd have to be kind of distracted to not explain what stuffing is in detail. :)

*One of my favorite things about watching Kara and Mon-El start to like each other in the show is the frustrating way they're so obvious about it that the only ones who don't pick up on the signals are them. Mon, I think, notices more than Kara, but like he tells her in 2x12, he's not great at earthly social cues, so while he sees all the telltale signs, he's not sure how to assemble the puzzle. I kind of want to play with that idea, so K&M's POVs may get really irritating later (sorry).

*In 2x08, J'onn seems very aware of Mon-El's importance to Kara. I decided to have him be the one to interrupt them again, because the smirks he and Alex have in 2x14 when Mon announces The News tell me that those two more than anyone else had a really good idea of what was going on.

*This update is late because of NCAA Baseball. I'm sorry. My school's in the tourney, my dad's school's in the tourney, one of my best friend's school's in the tourney, and there were so many weather delays this weekend that I stayed up way late and squeaked in editing on the commercials. Typos/words repeated too close together are the result of uber-late hours.

*Thank you for reading/commenting! I love hearing what everyone likes/dislikes, agrees with/totally pictures a different way. You guys are the best :) Hope everyone has a wonderful day!

**Random Tip: If you need a quick Karamel pick-me-up, I HIGHLY recommend the Kara and Mon-El "Somebody to You" edit by Gia C on YouTube if you haven't seen it. Or if you have. It's adorable and makes me so happy (even if it doesn't have the couch kiss). It practically drags the smiles out of you <3
Earth Mother Knows Best?

Chapter Summary

Starts about two days or so after Ch. 19 and takes place in 2x08 (starts just before the beginning of the episode and leads up to just after the portal) from Kara's POV. I'm SO sorry it took so long to get this stupid chapter up...it was another of those ones that kept growing until I had to ditch the original multi-POV plan and figure out an ending (needless to say, I gave it my McKayla Maroney Unimpressed Face quite frequently). I'm a little sick of the sight of it, so apologies for any omitted words/typos that appear...I stared at it and rearranged things so much that I got annoyed and decided to just go ahead and upload it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Ah-ha.”

Hands on hips, Kara stood back, proudly surveying the makings of a great Thanksgiving. Sunshine practically poured into the room, lighting up everything from her happy, festive table, to the assortment of mouthwatering foods spread out across her counters and island in various stages of preparation. The pies and little tarts she’d picked up at the store looked every bit as golden brown and appetizing as the homemade ones she’d never quite mastered the knack of creating. The potatoes burbled away on the stove, close to delicious doneness. The green beans no one ever wanted but Eliza always insisted on had been cooked to a goopy, unappealing pulp, but that was fine since all anyone ever did was ladle them onto their plates, mush them around, and then scrape them off into the trash in the end. The rolls reposed on a baking sheet, finishing their final rise and waiting for backup to arrive (Kara had been banned from heat-vision roll baking since the year she’d gotten impatient and burned the surprisingly-flammable lumps of dough all to a crisp, and baking by oven was problematic since sometimes Supergirl had to rush off for unknown amounts of time). Eliza had the glazed carrots and cranberry sauce, and Alex was bringing the wine. All she had to do now was get dressed.

Which, she thought wryly, speeding into her bedroom, was slightly harder than it sounded. She’d had an outfit all planned out for the last week, but this morning, running around all over her apartment in her pajamas, she had looked down and been suddenly struck by the realization that she wore an awful lot of pink and blue. In fact, the last time M—some people had seen her really truly dressed up, she’d been wearing blue. And hadn’t she worn a pink top just yesterday? Wearing one of those colors again would be overkill. But gray was a depressing shade for Thanksgiving, black was totally inappropriate for the afternoon, white was just asking for trouble when red wine and cranberry sauce were going to be around, and most of her green stuff looked just like what she wore to Catco every single day of the week.

But then, digging through her clothing rack, she came across a dress she’d bought the year before and all but forgotten about—a soft, flowy thing with bright flowers on a blue-gray background that was exactly what she was looking for.

“And we have a winner,” she announced to the empty room, grinning at her reflection as she
held the dress against her body. “Boy, it pays to forget what you own sometimes.”

A second later and she was twirling around in it, trying belt after belt against the light fabric until she settled at length on a brown woven one. Hair came next, but right in the middle of struggling to pin up a rather sad braid, an image flashed into her mind. Dessert, potatoes, green beans, rolls, carrots, cranberry sauce, stuffing. Oh, Rao.

“How did I forget the stuffing?”

Dashing into the kitchen, she dug through the refrigerator, trying to remember what even went into stuffing. Not that she’d know how to make it, she realized, standing up in disgust. Watching Eliza mix it up year after year didn’t count for much. That’s why she had been going to buy it in the first place.

Frowning, she chewed a nail. She could call Eliza and ask her to pick some up. But she’d made such a big deal about having everything under control, and Eliza had already had to somehow figure out how to cook carrots on a hotel stove, plus she’d been by the store once for the cranberry sauce…no, Kara didn’t want to ask her to make another trip. Eliza had been the lone wolf in charge of Thanksgiving for years and deserved a break from the planning now that her daughters were old enough to take it over.

And besides, there was Alex. She could call Alex.

But when her older sister answered the phone midsentence, babbling about how she’d put her sweater on inside out, brushed her teeth twice, tried to put her phone in the refrigerator, and still couldn’t find her left shoe, Kara scrapped that plan. Alex didn’t need one more solitary bit of stress added to her life just now.

“It’s not a big deal,” she said when asked why she’d called. “I was—”

“No, no. You called for a reason,” Alex answered, her voice abnormally high-pitched and tense. “What is it? Do you need help? Is there something I can do? Is it the pies? Did you burn the—oh, God. You didn’t burn the rolls again, did you? Because it’s not the end of the world, I can—”

“Alex, no,” Kara interrupted, caught somewhere between laughter and indignation. “I didn’t burn anything, okay?”

“Oh. Oh, that’s good. So, so what do you need, then?”

She waved a hand, forgetting that her sister couldn’t see. “Nothing. It’s fine.”

“No, really. What is it?”

Kara rolled her eyes. “Alex, it is okay. I just forgot to get stuffing, but I don’t want you worrying about that right now, all right? I’ll call Mon-El.”

Wait, why had she said that? Kara slapped a hand to her forehead and glared up at the ceiling. It was his first Thanksgiving ever, and he was supposed to be a guest. Why would she ask him to bring something? And anyway, what if he’d already left the DEO?

“Just ah—take deep breaths, and come on over whenever you feel ready,” she said, hearing her sister mumble something that sounded a lot like what am I doing? “You’re a DEO agent. More than that, you’re a Danvers. You can do this. And hey, if you change your mind and decide you
don’t want to say anything today, that’s fine, too. Okay?”

“Yeah. I know.” Alex heaved a sigh. “Thanks. I just…I don’t know why—”

A sudden crash of glass on the other end of the line made Kara jump. “You all right?”

“Yeah, fine,” came the answer in a thoroughly disgusted tone. “Mug just broke. I gotta go, okay? I’ll see you in a little while.”

“’Kay,” Kara answered, the utter silence telling her that Alex had hung up without waiting for a reply. “Right. Sorry, J’onn,” she muttered, clicking on his name in her contacts. “You’re about to get interrupted.”

Yep, she decided, impatiently willing him to pick up, they were going to have to get Mon-El a phone of his own soon. This middleman business was just such a waste of time (and probably DEO resources) in cases like this.

“J’onn! Hey,” she said, pleased at how quickly he answered. “Happy Thanksgiving! Has Mon-El left yet?”

“Happy Thanksgiving to you, too,” he responded. “And no, he hasn’t. Why?”

“Oh, good. Can I talk to him?” Kara asked, straightening plates and silverware as she moved around the table.

“Yes. But give me a minute. I believe he’s in his room.”

She waited, tapping her foot as she listened to J’onn head through the DEO halls, occasionally giving instructions to random people. She knew he wasn’t taking forever on purpose, but it seemed like an awful long time before she heard a knock, and then J’onn saying Kara. Bring it back when you’re done.

Finally, Mon-El’s cheerful voice spoke in her ear. “Hello, this is Catco. How may I help you?”

Kara rolled her eyes, a snort escaping despite her best efforts to restrain it. “Ha, ha, ha,” she said.

“Listen, Mon-El. I kind of need a favor. What are you doing right now?”

“At the moment?” he grunted “I’m trying. To get. My shirt. Buttoned.”

Great. In a flash, the image of a wet and shirtless Mon-El from two days ago was right back in her mind, and wow, she so did not need to start thinking about that all over again. She’d spent three hours longer at the grocery store than she’d meant to thanks to him, meandering distractedly through the aisles trying to remember what she’d come for, and now that she thought about it, probably the whole reason she’d forgotten the stuffing in the first place was because of actively trying not to think about her goofy, annoying friend wandering around in a towel. Because Rao, when she’d looked up to find him standing there looking so, so…

So clean. He looked clean, Kara. Squeaky-clean. Sparkling-clean. Maybe even a little shiny and glistening-clean…

“Um, y-yeah,” she said, stumbling a little over the words. “That’s—wait, what? Did you break the buttons again?”

He sighed loudly. “No. It just won’t button. Or, well, it will, but it’s taking a really long time to get it done one-handed.”
Ah, that explained it. “Put it on speaker,” Kara told him, inhaling slowly so that it didn’t seem like she was flustered or anything. Not that she was—she was just antsy about the stuffing. What Mon-El was or was not wearing had nothing to do with her current state of non-calmness. For all she cared, he could be a nudist.

“Okay.” There was a moment of utter silence. “Uh yeah, I don’t think there are any speakers in here, and how exactly would that help?”

“No, no.” Kara twisted around, hearing a knock at her door. A quick x-ray peek revealed Eliza standing on the other side, holding a big bowl and several cans, so she hurried over.

“Speakerphone,” she clarified. “It’s a thing you can use so that you can talk hands-free. Remember how you tried to answer the phone at Catco?”

“Oh, yeah.” He chuckled, the sound making her smile. “Okay, so how do I do the speakerphone thing, then? Am I going to break it and make J’onn mad?”

“No, but do be gentle with it,” Kara answered, swinging open the door and giving Eliza a huge smile. Happy Thanksgiving! she mouthed, taking no fewer than six cans of cranberry sauce from the woman’s arms and heading over to the counter. “If you look at the screen, there should be a little icon you can press that’ll let you hear me, and you can set it down on the bed.”

“Little icon…” His voice faded, and she assumed he was now studying the screen. “Okay, I think I found—"

The line went dead, and Kara groaned.

“Something wrong?” Eliza asked, setting the tub down.

“Oh, no.” Kara gave her adoptive mother a quick hug, laughing as she rolled her eyes. “He just pressed the end-call icon instead of the speakerphone icon. One second; I need to call him back real quick. He’s probably talking to nothing as we speak.”

“And he is…?” Eliza asked, bending down to sniff the pies.

“Mon-El.” She tapped J’onn’s contact again, biting her lips to halt her chuckles. “We’re really going to have to get him a phone soon so I can teach him how to use it.”

“Mon-El.” Opening the oven door, Eliza slid the tray of rolls inside. “He’s the infuriating sort-of-friend from Daxam, correct? The one from the pod who tells all the jokes?”

“That’s the one,” Kara responded, putting the phone to her ear and frowning a little, because hadn’t she talked to Eliza about him only two days ago? Surely she hadn’t already forgotten. “But please don’t mention that to him when he gets here. He already thinks I think he’s funny. He doesn’t need any more encouragement.”

“I see.” Eliza drew a small cross over her heart. “I won’t say a word.”

“Thanks. Hey, Mon-El!” She shook her head, grinning at his opening cry of Sorry! “It’s fine. I should’ve said the icon that looks like it has soundwaves.”

“Soundwaves…” Again, his voice went distant. “Oh, hey! Is it the square-triangle shaped thing with the little curved lines?”

Kara squinted, trying to picture it in her head. Square-triangle thing. “Uh…yeah. Yeah, I think that’s it.”
“Okay. I pushed it. Did it work?”

“I don’t know,” she answered. “Can you hear my voice? Does it sound like I’m talking in there?”

“Oh, yes. Yes it does.” He sounded extremely impressed. “Cool. Hey, so uh, what do you need me to do? Because now you can tell me, and I can finish getting dressed. Which is really good, because I think I buttoned some wrong buttons, and it is not a pretty sight. It kinda looks a lot like the DEO shower curtains.”

“Right, yeah.” Kara resolutely pushed the words finish getting dressed and shower from her mind. So he wasn’t completely clothed. So what? It wasn’t like she was in the room. There was no reason whatsoever for her to be feeling awkward about talking to him right now. She blew out a breath, fingers drumming on the countertop. “Buttons.”

Out of the corner of her eye, she saw Eliza’s eyebrows rise and instantly cringed. Ugh, that had sounded weird, hadn’t it?

“Yeah,” he agreed. Then he cleared his throat. “Um…what about buttons, Kara?”

“Yeah, not buttons. Stuffing, actually,” Kara answered, angling her body slightly away from Eliza as her cheeks warmed. It was so embarrassing how random things seemed to sort of just pop out of her mouth whenever she was talking to him. “I called about stuffing.”

“Uh-huh,” he said, obviously not following.

“It’s kind of a tradition at Thanksgiving,” she explained, composure returning now that she had something solid to discuss. “And I sort of forgot to get some at the store the other night…”

“Oh, you need me to bring some?”

“Yes! Yes, that would be great.” She glanced back over her shoulder to smile at Eliza, who was now leaning against the kitchen counter and watching her. Kara couldn’t identify the expression on her adoptive mother’s face, but it made her vaguely self-conscious all the same. Did she have flour on her nose or something? But no, that couldn’t be it, because she’d looked in the mirror not too long ago, and she’d been fine. “What?” she said, brows furrowing.

Eliza’s lips twitched, reminding Kara eerily of Alex when Alex was privy to some bit of information that Kara wasn’t. “Nothing, sweetie.”

“Really?” Her frown deepened. “You sure?”

“Huh?”

“No, not you, Mon-El,” she said quickly. “But uh, you do know what stuffing is, right?”

“Oh, yeah. You told me,” he answered. “Remember?”

Quite frankly, no, she didn’t. It must have been one of those times when she was concentrating so hard on getting actual words out in the correct order that she wasn’t bothering to remember what she’d said. A phenomenon that had been occurring at scary frequencies around Mon-El as of late, which was odd. Because it wasn’t like she found him hard to talk to.

“Well, to be honest—not really,” she replied, tugging on a loose piece of hair, “but it’s a good thing I did! Okay, so….” Seriously. Why did Eliza keep looking at her like that? “So you can bring
“Oh, yeah. Sure. Do you uh, do you need anything else?”

“No, just stuffing.” Kara drifted over to the table, fiddling with one of the berry-covered sprigs in the arrangement. “And you’re sure it’s not a problem?”

“Nope,” he said brightly. “Not a problem.”

“Okay, great. Thanks.” A smile spread over her face at the cheer in his tone. It was nice to hear him being all chipper again—she hadn’t realized how used to it she’d grown until it had disappeared when they were at Cadmus. “I’ll see you in a little bit, then?” she asked.

“Uh-huh. I will be there with bells on. I mean, not actual bells,” he added quickly. “Just figurative bells. Because apparently that’s just an expression?”

“Yeah,” Kara said, reining in a laugh at the thought of Mon-El jingling his way through the streets of National City. “Definitely don’t wear bells. Oh, and make sure you turn off the speakerphone! J’onn probably won’t want everyone overhearing his calls.”

“Got it. Bye, Kara.”

She smiled, catching herself just before she waved (because yikes, would that have looked funny). “Bye, Mon-El.” Waiting until she heard the call disconnect, Kara spun around to face Eliza, beaming. “Ha! Look at that—everything’s taken care of. He’s going to bring stuffing.”

“Mhmm.” Eliza’s smile was warm. “That’s very nice of him, isn’t it?”

“Yeah,” Kara agreed, tilting her head as she thought it over. “I guess it is.” She wound some hair around a finger absently, leaning her hip against the island. “I shouldn’t have called him, though. He can be really clueless sometimes.”

“Can he?”

Kara snorted out a laugh. “Uh, yeah. He has this habit of just saying whatever he’s thinking, and it can make things so awkward. And then other times he doesn’t say what he’s thinking, but he gets this look and it’s like you know he’s thinking something, but you don’t know what it is, and it can be kind of confusing.” Like when they’d been on the couch eating the other night, or when they were playing Monopoly, or when he’d teased her about liking his hair. (Which she didn’t. Not really. She just thought that sometimes it looked good. That was totally different than liking it.)

“I see.” Eliza nodded slowly. “Jokester, clueless about Earth things, very direct, and occasionally confusing. Anything else I should be aware of?”

“Talkative.” Laughing again, Kara shook her head. “He’s always talking. I mean, if he’d gone to an Earth school, he would’ve been that kid who gets in trouble all the time for whispering. And also, he sometimes forgets and chews with his mouth open, which is pretty gross. You uh, might want to look away come mealtime.”
“Oh, that’s all right,” Eliza answered, eyes twinkling. “I have one adult daughter who still tries to carry on entire conversations with her mouth full. I’m sure I can manage.”

“Hey!” Indignant, Kara tossed a dishtowel at the woman. “I don’t do that all the time, thank you very much!”

Eliza laughed, ducking under the flying cloth. “Please. You should see some of the pictures your sister’s sent me.”

“Ugh,” Kara groaned, remembering several highly unflattering shots Alex had smugly exhibited. “I have. Fine, fine. Point taken. I forget manners sometimes, too.”

Her adoptive mother chuckled. “I don’t think manners are the only things you sometimes forget.”

“Huh?” Kara said, frowning. “What, do you mean the stuffing?”

“No.” Eliza flipped a long wave over her shoulder. “Is that a new look you’re going for?”

“Oh! Right. The hair.” Grabbing the braid, Kara immediately began feeling around for the pin attached to the end. “I was trying to fix it when I remembered the stuffing,” she explained, biting her lip in concentration as she worked. “Did I get it?” she asked, turning toward Eliza hopefully.

“Not quite, no.” The older woman shook her head, chuckling again. “Here, sweetie. Let me. I’m just going to start all over, okay?”

“Okay,” Kara responded, undoing her pathetic braid while Eliza pulled up a barstool. “Can you do a little one at the front and wrap it over?” she asked, plopping onto the seat. “I tried, but it didn’t come out right.”

“Of course I can.” Eliza waved her hands like a magician about to perform a trick. “Just you watch.”

A smile tugged at Kara’s lips as her adoptive mother's nimble fingers flew, speedily weaving her hair into soft braids. The whole thing reminded her so much of her teenage years that she couldn’t help it. As much as she loved being on her own, being an adult, being Supergirl, she couldn’t help missing the old warmth and safety that went along with being a child. She’d lost a good portion of that the day she’d left Krypton, sure, but her Earth family had done their level best to give it back to her, and it was at times like these that she remembered that and appreciated it the most.

“Thank you,” she said as the first braid was pinned securely to her head, twisting just enough to send a smile up at the older woman. “Pinterest really makes things look deceptively easy.”

“What are mothers for?” Eliza answered, leaning down to press a quick kiss to Kara’s cheek. “Now, hold still. You’re almost done.”

***

By the time Winn, James, and a very tense Alex arrived, Kara was beginning to seriously wonder where Mon-El had got to. Sneaking bites of potato while Eliza mashed them and cooking the turkey helped distract her for a minute or so, but there was only so much putting around a food-filled kitchen a girl could do before her brain started coming up with possible scenarios for what might be taking her easily-distracted friend so long to arrive. The trouble was, the answer could be anything from Cadmus, to motorcycles, to cute animals, and not-knowing bothered her.
She wasn’t worried per se, but in a weird way, she felt like she couldn’t fully relax until he turned up. So after checking her phone a few times (and laughing at the selfie Clark sent of him smiling while Lois, mouth wide open, pretended to take a gigantic bite out of the turkey) she wandered over to the sitting area where Alex, Winn, and James were all talking in hushed voices.

“Can’t wait for what?” she asked, catching the last part of Winn’s sentence. Did they all look a little guilty, or was that just her overactive imagination?

“Eliza’s…glazed carrots?” Winn answered, his voice sliding into a singsong rhythm.

“Oh, yeah,” Kara agreed. That made sense. And reminded her of the other reason she really needed Mon-El to hurry up and get here. She was so beyond ready to eat.

“Yeah, I mean—Winn was gushing about those ever since last Thanksgiving,” James told her, laughing.

“Family tradition,” Winn added as a knock sounded at the door.

“Oh, I’ll get it,” she said, jumping up, her heels thumping briskly across the floor.

It was impossible to keep from smiling when she opened the door to find one very spick-and-span Daxamite standing there in the hallway, holding…flowers? And some kind of fat, misshapen bag? Well, he was nothing if not surprising.

“Jolly Thanksgiving!” he announced, arms extended.

“Thanks.” Laughing, Kara accepted the mysterious bag from him as he entered. “Thank you. And it’s Happy Thanksgiving.”

“Oh, right.” Without missing a beat, he held up a hand toward the others across the room. “Happy.”

Noticing the lightness of the thing in her hand that turned out to be a pillowcase, Kara frowned. “What’s this?” she asked, shutting the door behind them.

“Oh, that. You asked for stuffing, so I ripped open my mattress and uh, pulled some out.”

Oh, dear. She knew her mouth had fallen open, but the effort required to close it was just a bit too much at the moment. “Oh,” she said, suddenly remembering a long-ago discussion with Mon-El about the meaning behind the phrase beat the stuffings out of, and how ’stuffing’ referred to things like scarecrows, and pillows, and mattresses. “Uh…w-well, that’s not quite what I meant.”

He looked confused. “I thought—”

“Kara,” Eliza interrupted all of a sudden, walking over to join them. “Is this your friend from Daxam you were telling me about?”

“Yes, um…” Pushing the inedible stuffing back into the pillowcase, Kara pointed toward Eliza. “This is my adoptive moth—”

“Dr. Danvers.” Before Kara could even complete the introduction, Mon-El was already holding out a hand, his smile practically blinding. “It is an honor and a privilege.”

What? Kara thought. Hold on, was he—?

“Please, call me Eliza.” Returning Mon-El’s smile with a lot more warmth than seemed
“Eliza,” Mon-El repeated. His attention squarely on her, he held out the little bouquet of sunflowers. “Well, Kara tells me that you’re a brilliant scientist. That must be riveting. Tell me about this… science. What is science?”

Okay. She wasn’t imagining it. He was definitely up to something. He had that—that I’m-So-Cute smile, and he was using that schmooze-y little voice that could probably talk a person who lived in the tropics into buying snowshoes, and for the love of Rao, was he actually hitting on her adoptive mother right in front of her?

And worst of all—oh gosh, was Eliza actually falling for it?

Kara didn’t know. She stayed silent as Mon-El and Eliza strolled off, talking about something that didn’t make any sense to her because she’d kind of stopped listening. A strange heaviness infected her as she watched them standing together by the island, gabbing away like old friends instead of the brand-new acquaintances they actually were.

“Are you okay?” Alex asked, coming to stand beside her, beer in hand.

“Yeah,” she answered automatically. But the frown refused to leave, and when she sneaked a glance over at the island again, the weird feeling worsened. Eliza was smiling way more than usual, and Mon-El seemed really attentive. The temptation to listen in on the conversation was huge, but beyond the fact that that would be a gross violation of her adoptive mother’s privacy—and okay, Mon-El’s too—the less-noble part of her that whispered Do it anyway resisted out of pure cowardice. If he was flirting with Eliza, she didn’t want to hear it. At all.

“What?” Alex questioned, looking around the room in bewilderment.

“Yeah,” Kara said again, turning away and heading into the kitchen. “I think Mon-El is hitting on Eliza.”

“No way,” her sister protested, head swiveling toward the island.

“Mmm.”

Kara doubted Alex would be so certain if she’d heard his opinion of her birth mother once upon a time. Of course, that had been a while ago, and he hadn’t meant to offend, but it was still a little disconcerting to know that a guy you were friends with seemed to think that both your mothers were beautiful. Which, okay, they were—Kara would forcibly correct anyone who dared to imply that they weren’t—but really? Could he honestly not find someone else to flirt with? Was there really no one around closer to his age? For Rao’s sake, he knew tons of women—from the bar, from the DEO, and there were still a few people at Catco who asked about him from time to time! What was it about Eliza that was making him act so absorbed?

To disrupt her thoughts, she opened the pillowcase and pulled out a handful of the fluffy contents, displaying it for Alex. “And, uh…he brought stuffing.”

“Oh, boy.”

Turning around from tossing the bag into a corner where hopefully no one would find it, Kara saw Alex raise the beer to her lips and immediately confiscated it, ignoring Alex’s pleas as she stuck the bottle in the freezer. The last thing her sister needed right now was more alcohol; Kara wasn’t positive who among them had drunk most of the first bottle of wine, but she had her suspicions.
And speaking of suspicions...seeing that Mon-El had moved over by the TV to talk with Winn and James, Kara felt safer about approaching the island. Because now at least, she wouldn’t have to witness him pouring on the charm for her adoptive mother’s benefit.

“So,” she remarked casually, smiling and trying to act like this wasn’t one of the most uncomfortable conversations she’d ever started as she watched Eliza untangling the bouquet. “You really hit it off with Mon-El.”

Eliza’s head lifted, her eyes positively twinkling. “Oh, Kara,” she sighed, laughing out the words. “He’s chatting me up because I’m your mother.”

“What?” Startled, Kara’s fingers froze atop the bases of the wineglasses she’d been tracing patterns on. Did she mean that he was doing it on purpose? Like to bedevil her?

“He likes you,” Eliza stated matter-of-factly.

Oh. Not to bedevil her, then. But...huh?

For a moment all Kara could do was stand there with her mouth open, trying to form syllables. Mon-El? Like her? As in—like like? As in—her?

“Oh, no,” she managed, laughing into her hand because the idea was just too ludicrous. “No.”

“Yes!” Eliza contradicted, only making her laugh harder. “He’s trying to score points with me to impress you.”

Kara shook her head, adamant. “There’s no way,” she insisted, dropping her voice to a whisper just in case the conversation over by the couch wasn’t loud enough to drown out this one.

But Eliza didn’t seem to share her conviction.

“Believe me,” she said gently, her smile soft. “A mother knows.”

No, Kara thought again, her gaze darting involuntarily over to the far corner of the couch where the alien in question sat. There is no. Way.

Whatever type Mon-El had, Kara was a hundred percent sure she wasn’t it. No, two hundred percent. Guys like him didn’t suddenly start crushing on girls like her, and that wasn’t pessimism or low self-esteem or anything of that ilk talking—it was just a fact. It was. Whatever Eliza thought she saw, it had to be a mistake. National City was a pretty big place. Mon-El had never yet lacked for attention, and quite frankly, he had a lot of options, given the sheer number of species and genders that apparently found him attractive. He couldn’t possibly be interested in her.

But when he glanced her way, his easy grin replaced by an expression that fell somewhere between serious and smiling, her face heated and the tiniest smidgeon of doubt assailed her. Averting her eyes and refusing to raise her head until she was positive he’d gone back to the conversation was instinctive, a defense mechanism of sorts, because something about the way he looked at her made her feel like she was going to fall over her own feet at any second.

“He’s just being friendly,” she told herself sternly as the dorkiest giggle ever giggled somehow burst out of her. That’s all it is. It doesn’t mean anything.

And even though she had to remind herself of that several times—when everyone went to carry the plates to the table and she reached for the rolls a split second after he did and their hands touched; when he stood up and thanked her for finding him in the pod and she had to pretend she
didn’t see Eliza sitting there and smiling her head off; when they were all running around frantically trying to figure out what to do about the weird portal that materialized right in front of them and he yanked the mashed potatoes out of the way right before she plunged her whole hand into the serving bowl—even then, she believed it.

Or at any rate—she told herself she did. Which was pretty much the same thing, wasn’t it?

Chapter End Notes

*First: apologies for the overuse of the words "up," "weird," and "twinkling." I made the unfortunate discovery in this chapter that there aren’t a lot of words that work as well as those.
*This was originally supposed to include Mon-El's POV and continue all the way to the DEO monopoly scene, but around the point it hit 4800 words, I realized that wasn't going to happen. So, while I don't want to promise where the next chapter will end up, since CLEARLY this one didn't go where I thought it would, I can safely say (because I have part of it already written) that the next chapter will begin a little after where this one leaves off and include some Mon-El talking to Eliza, because I have lots of ideas involving those two based on the brief interaction in “Homecoming.” :)
*Confession: I spent an embarrassing amount of time trying to figure out what all was on that Thanksgiving table after remembering that I needed to check because apparently not everyone in the country does Thanksgiving right (seriously, if you don't have mashed potatoes, pecan pie, and sweet potato casserole on the menu, what are you doing with your life?), and I'm still not sure it's correct.
*Every time I watch this scene in the show, I love watching Eliza. She's just so "Uh-huh. I see how it is," that it cracks me up. It's very Cat That Ate The Canary--Mom Edition.
*It has been my opinion since the very first time I watched this episode that Kara did not do her own hair. I know we're supposed to suspend disbelief in the hair and makeup departments a lot, and yes, she is Supergirl, but...no. No way did homegirl do her own hair and get it to come out looking THAT good. And given Alex's understandable nervousness, I doubt Alex helped her either, so I went with Eliza.
**I'm pretty sure I forgot to specify this in the chapter, but Mon-El is late because he stopped for flowers.
*I cannot stress enough how much I love this episode, because so much is hinted at through behavior...for example, I find it very telling how quickly Kara jumps up to answer the door--everyone else expected had already arrived, there's no one it could've been besides Mon-El, and she speed-walks over there like nobody's business. Neither Mon-El nor Kara comes right out and SAYS that they like each other, but it's obvious from how they react to the IDEA that one of them might like the other that they're both at least a little into the idea. And Kara's reaction to Mon-El and Eliza is the best, because you can SEE her struggling to sort out the logic and feelings--she loves Eliza, and it makes no sense to be jealous of someone she loves getting attention from someone she has no feelings for, so...why is she not crazy about the idea of Mon-El hitting on Eliza?
*The next chapter should *knocks on [Chris?] wood* be up by next Wednesday, but my team made it to the College World Series, so that may slow things down a bit. Still, I live in hope.
***Thank you for reading/commenting! You guys are the unequivocal best, and I love
hearing from you! (Remember: I love hearing other people's headcanons even if they don't agree with mine.) Hope you all have a wonderful day/weekend :)

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x08 (Mon-El's POV): starts after the Thanksgiving scene and goes up to right before the Monopoly scene.

This is the chapter that *should* have been posted about five days ago, but I forgot to do it before I went out of town so I had no ability to post but plenty of time to keep writing, which led to everything snowballing once again. I'm sorry. Really, this one should be two chapters, but it's already so disjointed that I can't bring myself to do it, so instead I present: the longest and messiest chapter yet! Yaaayyy. *Mutters darkly under breath*

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“I’m so stupid. This was the worst. Possible. Time. Can I do it? Yes. Will I do it? I don’t know. I just don’t know.” Hanging her head over the edge of the sofa, Alex stared blearily at Mon-El. “Liquid courage. Ha! Whoever named it that deserves to be shot for false advertising.”

Mon-El fidgeted in his chair, nodding as Alex, for the ninth time in five minutes, complained about the ‘genius timing’ of ‘that stupid portal.’ James had left an hour or so ago after getting a call from Snapper, the grumpy little man who’d yelled at Mon-El about the snack crumbs that one time. Winn had been summoned to the DEO to run some search things maybe twenty minutes later. Kara kept hopping up every few minutes to call J’onn and demand to know what he’d found out until Eliza followed her into the kitchen and threatened to pry the phone from her hands, so currently, the only one left to listen to Alex’s sporadic airing of grievances was Mon-El.

Which, he was pretty sure, wasn’t a great plan. Saying the right thing at the right time wasn’t his forte, and he got the impression that Alex needed plenty of right things said to her.

He didn’t know what it was she’d been trying to tell everyone at the table earlier(and he was beginning to think that no one was going to find out anytime soon given the way her words were all running together), but it had clearly been something important, and she was obviously feeling pretty low about the whole thing. After J’onn and the DEO had been notified and everything had calmed down, they’d all gone back to eating, but Alex had claimed she’d forgotten what she was going to say and waved off all encouragement to finish her speech. It wasn’t ‘til James left and everyone headed into the sitting area again that he realized she was the only one who hadn’t been wildly speculating about the twisty portal thing that had showed up right above Kara’s dining table. During a lull where he accidentally ended up staring at Kara (the fading sunlight beaming in from outside made a sort of golden glow over her head that was both really pretty and really distracting), he got nervous and turned to Alex, asking her about her thankful speech to distract himself.

But it had turned out to be a more involved question than he’d thought, because right away, Alex had started insisting that the moment was gone, that maybe that was the universe’s way of telling her to stop, and all sorts of similar things that ended with a declaration along the lines of God, I need more alcohol, until he finally decided to just leave it be. He’d been in that mood a few
times himself, and no one knew better than he that any outside commentary went in one ear and out
the other. So he just sat on the little low chair near the couch, listening to her ramble about past
Thanksgivings and portals while she downed the rest of the wine she’d brought straight from the
bottle. She’d reached the sad stage now, though, and it was beginning to concern him.

“So cute,” she mumbled, her cheek smashed against the sofa arm. “So, so cute.”

Without thinking, Mon-El glanced toward the kitchen, where Kara was reluctantly dropping her
phone into Eliza’s outstretched hand.

“Uh, who is, Alex?” he asked, hastily turning away before anyone could notice his slipup.

She hiccupped, rolling her eyes sloppily. “Duh, Ma—uh, my mom. Mom is. My mother is cute.
Didn’t you know that? She’s like, so hot. For a mother. I think.”

“Uh huh. I mean, if you say so.”

Mon-El frowned, a little uneasy. He’d overheard some bits and pieces of Kara and Eliza’s
conversation earlier, and it worried him to think that Alex might suspect him of having designs on
her mother, too. He’d done his best to remove that suspicion from everyone’s minds as soon as
he’d become aware of it, thanking Kara as sincerely as he dared (if not quite as thoroughly as he’d
wanted), but if that hadn’t worked, then he was definitely going to have to explain.

“I do say so.” Groaning, Alex propped her chin on the sofa, eyes fixed gloomily on the floor.
“Mon-El, can you do me a favor?” she mumbled after a moment or two, her voice so low that he
had to lean forward to catch the words. “Like—now?”

“Yeah, of course. Are you okay, though?” he answered, seeing her cover her face.

She nodded, slowly. “I’m just really drunk. And I’m about to start saying things I don’t want to
say right now, and I need to get out of here before that happens. Can you call Kara? If I yell, I’m
gonna die. Or puke.”

“Sure.” He stood up quickly, tugging Kara’s flimsy little wastebasket over and setting it by the
couch under Alex’s view.

She gave him a thumbs-up without moving her head. “Good move, Daxam.”

“Thanks,” he said, wincing sympathetically when she shivered. “I’ve uh, had some practice.”
Heading toward the kitchen, he waved at the two women talking, trying to interrupt their
conversation politely. “Hey, Kara?”

“Yeah?” She turned, one hand still in the air from whatever point she’d been making. “What is
it?”

He inclined his head toward the couch. “Um, I think Alex wants you to take her home.”

Frowning, Kara followed his indication and her eyebrows shot up. “Whoa. Yeah, I’d say she
does. Eep. Okay, I will be right back.”

“Kara,” Eliza called as Kara rushed to the couch. “Here. Take a bag with you, just in case.”

“Oh. Good idea! Thanks.” Zipping back over, Kara snatched the bag from her mother, pointing
at her sternly. “I am coming back in less than ten minutes. Do not do the dishes, got it?”
Eliza rolled her eyes, making Mon-El chuckle, because apparently *that* trait ran in the Danvers family. “Kara, I’m not your sister.”

“I know that.” Folding her arms, Kara tilted her chin down. “Well?”

“Yes, I’ve got it.” Eliza held up her hands in surrender, laughing. “I won’t do any dishes.”

“Okay, good. Mon-El, make sure she doesn’t clean anything, will you please?” Kara added, shaking the little plastic bag at him as she passed.

“I…will do my best,” he promised, glancing at Eliza, whose broad smile assured him that Kara wasn’t going to return to find the result she wanted.

“Great. All right.” Helping Alex to her feet, Kara waved at them. “See you guys in a little bit.”

Then she was gone, and so was Alex, and Mon-El knew that if he had any hope of trying to repair whatever damage he’d done earlier, he’d better get started. But as he turned back from staring at the window, he realized that Eliza was already scraping food into containers, humming casually.

“Well, that was quick,” he remarked. “I’m guessing you didn’t intend to listen to Kara at all?”

“Oh, absolutely. Be my guest.” She chuckled, pushing a lid down on another tub of leftovers. “I used to do this alone all the time when the girls were younger. Then they got older and started to feel guilty about it, so they’d fight over whose turn it was to help until they had to flip a coin to settle it. They thought I couldn’t hear, but…” She raised her eyebrows. “Kryptonians and Daxamites aren’t the only ones with advanced hearing. Mothers have good ears, too.”

He laughed, moving the serving plates Eliza had emptied over to the sink. “Wow. Kara and Alex used to argue over who had to help you?”

“They were teenagers.” She shook her head, a faraway look coming over her face. “Thoughtlessness happens to the best of us at that stage. I’m sure you remember how it was.”

Mon-El shuddered inwardly, thinking of his teenage years back on Daxam. A lot of it was a blur of things that had seemed fun at the time—parties, drinks, dancing, sneaking away from guards to do whatever he’d been told to stay away from just because he wanted to know what he was missing—but that he hated to think of now.

“I don’t know,” he said slowly, mulling it over. “I uh, wasn’t the best teenager. I’m pretty sure Kara and Alex were both a lot better than me.”

“Maybe,” said Eliza.

“No, definitely,” Mon-El answered, laughing because he didn’t know what else to do. Rao, he had to get going with this explanation before he lost his nerve. “Uh, Dr. Dan—I mean, Eliza?” he began, squeezing the rag between his hands as he took a deep breath, because how exactly did one start a conversation like this? “I-I kind of need to tell you something.”
“Yes?” she said encouragingly.

“Well, uh…” He cleared his throat. “I couldn’t help overhearing earlier. Before the meal, I mean. I wasn’t uh, wasn’t spying on you or anything, but…”

The woman smiled. “But?”

He gulped in some air, an awkward laugh escaping. “But I kind of heard that you and Kara maybe thought I—well, see, I’m pretty bad at Earth stuff? I’ve been trying, but I don’t always get things right. Actually, I mostly get things wrong. Like—so wrong.”

She nodded, her expression kind. “It takes time, Mon-El. You know Kara as an adult who’s acclimated to this planet, but when she first came to us, she was just as confused about Earth as you are now.”

Despite his nervousness, Mon-El had to smile at the thought of little Kara trying to figure Earth out. Had it been easier than what he was dealing with, or harder? And yikes, he was getting sidetracked again.

“Yes,” he said quickly, seeing an opening. “Yes, um, so. Speaking of Kara…yeah, she told me a while back—and I was actually very drunk then, but I do remember this—that I uh…” He closed his eyes, grimacing. “I sometimes get things wrong in ways that make people think that I’m trying to flirt with them when I’m really not?”

When she didn’t respond immediately, he plowed on, determined to get this out of the way before what courage he had dissolved.

“Anyway, I—I didn’t intend to insult you at all. I wasn’t trying to flirt, I thought I was being polite, and if I gave you the wrong impression and offended you, I apologize. That’s—that’s not something I was meaning to do. At all.”

“Oh, sweetie.”

To Mon-El’s astonishment, the woman laughed, resting a hand over her heart as though he’d said something so hilarious that she just couldn’t help herself.

“Yes?” he said, rather blankly. “Uh, what—what is it?”

Shaking her head, she reached out and patted him on the shoulder. “I appreciate the compliment, but you don’t need to worry about me taking anything the wrong way. I didn’t think for one second that those flowers were for me.”

Reassurance washed over Mon-El before her words sunk in, making him frown. “But they were,” he said, halting mid-scrub. “That’s why I gave them to you. Kara said her Earth mother was coming to visit, and since I’d never met you, I wanted to bring you something. To—to be polite.” Oh, Rao. His eyes widened, a new idea occurring to him. “Or…is that not something you do here?”

She smiled. “No, we have gift-giving here, too. But it’s not a thing you have to do. It’s more like a nice gesture you can choose to make or not.”

“Okay, good.” He relaxed, chuckling with relief. The stuffing had been some kind of misunderstanding he still didn’t quite get, but at least the flowers hadn’t completely failed. “I wanted to, though.”

“I know.” Giving him another shoulder-pat, she took a pile of serving utensils over to the sink.
“And I do appreciate it. I think Kara does, too.”

Mon-El’s face suddenly felt hot. “Oh, really?” he said, hoping he sounded normal. “Huh.”

“Yes.” Rinsing her hands off under the faucet, Eliza gave him a look so knowing that he had to fight the urge to cover his eyes, like a child playing hide-and-seek. “She’s very careful, Mon-El. And she sometimes misses the obvious.”

He nodded, feigning interest in a spot of turkey grease on the counter. Where was she going with this?

“I don’t want to presume too much,” Eliza went on, her voice soft. “But if I can give you some advice—be sure.”

Be sure? Mon-El’s brows knitted together, and he looked up to find her watching him, her smile understanding in a way that him wonder whether he should laugh or cry.

“You two are friends. That might change, or it might not ever. But every change worth having requires some element of risk. You need to be sure it’s worth it before you take the risk.”

He smiled back, rubbing a hand across the back of his neck. “So don’t go jump in the ocean if you only want to soak your feet?”

Eliza chuckled. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard that expression before, but yes. Exactly.”

“Exactly what?” Kara’s voice demanded, making both Mon-El and Eliza start. “And hey! Thank you, but I thought I told you to leave those dishes!”

“No,” Eliza said innocently, extending a hand around the room in a grand gesture as her irate foster daughter approached. “I just put away food. You told me to not do dishes or clean.”

“Then who—” Kara broke off and planted her hands on her hips as she swung around to face him. “Mon-El!”

“What?” He held the cloth up in front of his face like those bandits in the cowboy movies—partially to be funny, but mostly because a lot of her hair had blown loose during her flight and was wisping distractingly around her face. “You said to not let her clean.”

She narrowed her eyes. “Jerk,” she said unconvincingly, yanking the rag out of his hands and whacking him with it across the chest. “But thank you.”

He laughed, looking down at the counter when he caught Eliza’s smile. “Yeah, no, uh…no problem. Look, I should probably get going, so…”

“Oh. You have to leave now?” Kara asked, frowning.

“Well, not have to,” he answered, forcing himself to move toward the door before he did something dumb like allow himself to be talked into staying. “There might be a little bit of a mess in my room that I need to fix before J’onn sees it. And uh, he also said to see him when I got back about a phone. Apparently I hit the speaker button thingy twice or something and he says that’s enough of that, so…” Smiling widely (and inanely; he was pretty sure that was happening too), he waved a hand. “Good to meet you, Dr. Danvers. I mean, Eliza.”

She smiled. “Good to meet you too, Mon-El. Happy Thanksgiving.”
“Happy Thanksgiving,” he responded, nearly jumping out of his skin when Kara’s hand settled on his arm, tugging him away from the screen he was backing toward instead of the door. “And uh, goodnight, Kara,” he added. “Thank you for having me. I’m very sorry about the stuffing.”

“Eh.” She laughed and waved it off, nose wrinkling. “Nobody missed it anyway. And thank you for being willing to bring it.”

“Yeah, it’s not—it’s really isn’t a big deal,” Mon-El pointed out, scratching a sudden itch on the side of his face. Okay, the room was definitely warm. He couldn’t just be imagining it.

“Oh, come on,” she joked, folding her arms. “How many people would just rip open their new mattresses for me?”

“A lot.” He hadn’t meant to say it, but it slipped out anyway, making him want to sink through the floor. Covering quickly with a laugh, he gave her a mock salute. “Always happy to help Supergirl!”

She smiled, her brows furrowed. “Well. Thank you.”

“Yeah.” Giving her one last, quick grin, he reached for the doorknob, more than ready to close the door on his idiocy. “Goodnight again.”

“Goodnight, Mon-El,” she answered, returning the salute as she shut the door. “And hey! Jolly Thanksgiving.”

“Jolly Thanksgiving.”

***

The next morning—or afternoon, rather—Mon-El realized that he was going to have to get away from the DEO for a bit if he wanted to sort anything out. He’d woken up to Winn pounding on the door, wanting to know if J’onn had remembered to give him the nth metal case with the phone last night or not, and most of the afternoon had been spent in learning how to use the thing. He’d been doing just fine, but then Kara had wandered in and wanted to see what he’d learned so far, and concentrating on things like ‘apps’ and ‘ringtones’ was all but impossible with her sitting less than a foot away, her cheek nearly brushing his shoulder, her hair falling over the screen when she got too excited and pointed something out. So eventually, after she left to sneakily interview Lena Luthor, he made some limping excuse to Winn about wanting to go get some food, and set out for a head-clearing walk that ended up lasting a lot longer than he’d thought it would.

In fact, he didn’t notice much of his surroundings until he looked up and saw that his feet had taken him straight to the bar, the realization making him half-laugh, half-sigh as he pushed open the heavy door and stepped inside. This was one of those things that made him terrified of Kara ever finding out that he had maybe started caring about her. She wasn’t the kind of person who ended up at a bar when they needed to think things through. He was. Plus, talking stuff out wasn’t a thing he was good at and that didn’t seem likely to change. Not considering that the one being on Earth he felt most comfortable talking to was the one who was making him all confused and scared and tongue-tied in the first place. For Rao’s sake, he couldn’t very well show up on Kara’s doorstep and ask her advice about—well, her, could he? Ugh, even the suggestion made him shiver and want to crawl into a hole. And maybe feel a little sick to his stomach. Nope, that wouldn’t do at all. Mon-El had heard the phrase die of embarrassment before, but he’d never really understood it until the thought of himself telling Kara how he’d been feeling lately popped into his head.

Zeroing in on his usual place at the counter, he nodded to the bartender. The place might not be
as fancy as most of the bars he’d killed time in on Daxam, but the drinks were good and the bartenders were fantastic. By the time he’d reached his seat, his usual ale was sliding over the slick surface of the counter, coming to a stop right in his hand. Dropping onto the lumpy old barstool, he picked up the drink and took a sip, savoring both the sour tang and the way it instantly pushed his scattered thoughts to the back of his mind.

“Wow,” a voice said on his left, and he turned to see one of the aliens he’d passed on his way in take a seat on the stool next to him, her smile teasing. “You must be a regular here.”

Mon-El caught himself just before he joked back like usual. Even if Eliza assured him that she hadn’t taken his friendliness yesterday the wrong way, he didn’t want to risk a repeat performance. Or, well, an actual performance. He didn’t want to make anyone think he was flirting anymore, except for maybe Kara. But the idea of actually, deliberately flirting with Kara made him so nervous that he quickly shoved it away and gave the woman a polite smile instead.

“So, you looking for some company?” she asked, leaning toward him enough to make her meaning unmistakable as she lowered her voice. “I’m very good company.”

He couldn’t help grinning a little at that one. Now, there was a line he’d used and had used on him a few times! But for once, he found himself wondering if the joke-camouflaged question had always sounded so sad. Because that wasn’t something you said to a person you wanted to get to know—it was the means to an end, and the end goal was to just not be alone if only for one night, and that was kind of depressing.

“I’m—I’m sure you are,” he said. “And I actually am looking for company. But…with someone else.”

He knew somehow that she’d understand what lay behind his answer. There was a sameness all across the universe about bars and the beings who frequented them, and in a strange way, talking to this woman was like looking in a mirror. He’d been her more times than he could count—more times than he could remember even—and he didn’t want to do that stringing-along thing Winn was always complaining about in the Earthen shows they’d watched. Maybe he’d never get up the courage to tell Kara how he felt about her, or maybe the feeling would fade after a few weeks (although he personally doubted that one a whole lot, because he’d already tried to not think about her and discovered that it was pretty much impossible). But until that feeling was either gone or he knew for absolute certain that there was no chance she could ever feel even a little bit the same about him, he didn’t want to make anyone think he was interested when he wasn’t. It wasn’t fair to them.

“Ah.”

She swung her head to the side, her mild disappointment familiar as well. He hoped he hadn’t been too blunt or anything, but all at once, a dark shape seated farther down the counter caught his attention and he stood, a shiver of apprehension running down his spine. He couldn’t see a face, but oh, that looked an awful lot like…no, it couldn’t be. Could it?

“I’m sorry, excuse me,” he said, standing up quickly as the figure got up and moved toward the exit. Without waiting for a reply, he hurried outside, that nasty feeling in the pit of his stomach growing stronger with every step. J’onnt was at the DEO researching things. He hadn’t let work slide for Earth Thanksgiving; there was no way he’d do it to go hang out at the bar. Unless…maybe it had something to do with M’gann? He didn’t know, but he intended to find out. He needed to.

“J’onn?” he called, curiosity getting the better of him.
The figure stopped, and he relaxed a little. Okay, so had he been mistaken after all? Had J’onn, for reasons unknown, ventured down to the bar to—

Oh, no.

Mon-El barely had time to recognize the silver eyepatch before he was suddenly embroiled in an intense, pain-inducing fight the likes of which hadn’t happened since he first met Kara. He tried to remember what she’d showed him that one time, tried to remember everything he’d seen her do, but it was useless. After Mon-El landed a couple decent blows that made the evil guy grunt, Henshaw somehow picked him up and flung him into a dumpster, disappearing before Mon-El could catching his breath and climb out of the huge dent he’d made in the twisted metal.

A crowd pouring out of the bar and into the street drove all thoughts of Henshaw from his mind, however, and he broke into a jog, confusion and concern warring within him as he left a street full of panicked humans and burst back into the ominously silent bar.

“What happened?” he demanded, halting just in time to keep from running full tilt into the waitress, who was on her way out with several terrified customers.

“They’re dead!” she blurted out, her expression a mixture of shock and fear as she barely slowed long enough to answer. “All the aliens are dead!”

What?

Moving deeper into the room, Mon-El realized that it wasn’t just darkness making it difficult to see—there was a weird, yellowish haze hanging in the air that had definitely not been there when he left, and—oh, Rao. The noise from the street blurred into the background as his horrified gaze took in the grisly sight of body after body sprawled out across the shadowy floor. Some were clutching throats, some still cradled bottles, some sat slumped in their chairs…but none of them moved, and Mon-El had to grab onto the counter for support.

Right away, he clamped his eyes shut, nausea washing over him in cold, miserable waves as he reached mechanically into his pocket with his free hand and pulled out the new phone. It was just another nightmare. It had to be. He couldn’t possibly be the only one left alive. Not again.

But no, even he couldn’t make himself believe that. Everywhere he turned the dead, staring faces confronted him, and there was nothing he could do about it. He couldn’t help any of them. He’d even come back this time, and all that had happened was that he’d survived. Like he always seemed to. They were dead and he was alive, and the only thing he could think of now was to call Kara. She’d know what to do. And if she didn’t, then J’onn would, or Alex would, or Winn would, or somebody who wasn’t him would, and maybe then he could stop thinking about how everyone had gone from living to dead in less than two minutes. All they’d wanted to do was have a drink, maybe forget some of their troubles. They hadn’t showed up expecting to die, and—no. No, he was not going to think about any of that. He was going to call for help, because that was the only thing that might do any good just now.

Closing his eyes again, he forced his hands to steady and pushed Kara’s name, waiting for the little faraway humming sound to be interrupted.

Finally, there was a click.

“Hi!”

Under other circumstances, her breezy greeting would have made him grin like an idiot. But now, the best he could manage was a slight twitch of the lips.
“Hey,” he got out after a moment, the word faint and shaky. “Listen, I—” He broke off as his eyes landed on the mirror, dozens of bodies reflected back to him.

“Mon-El?” she said after he let a few more seconds go by. “What is it? Is something wrong?”

“Yeah.” He spotted the woman who’d approached him at the counter earlier on the floor and he shivered. She had been smiling. Just looking for some fun, and now she was gone, every bit of life drained right out of her in the blink of an eye. “Yeah, you could say that,” he muttered.

“What happened?” The question was quick; sharp, even, and he knew immediately that she was on guard. “Where are you? What’s going on?”

“I’m at the bar,” he answered, clenching his jaw to keep his voice from wobbling. “Henshaw was here.”

“What? Henshaw? Hank Hensh—Mon-El, get out of there, okay? As fast as you can! Get out of there right this—”

“Mon-El.” J’onn’s voice broke in, drowning out the last part of Kara’s sentence. “Are you in immediate danger?”

“No.” Mon-El took a deep breath, running a nervous hand through his hair, eyes darting around the room even though he wanted nothing more than to just stop seeing. “No, I’m fine. He’s gone; he beat me and he got away. But the others—the other aliens, they’re all dead. Every single one of them.”

“All of them?” Now it was Alex talking, sounding all tense and focused. “Mon-El, are you sure?”

“Yes.” He squeezed the hand that wasn’t holding the phone into a fist. “Very. Henshaw, he, he did something. I don’t know what it was. There was a lot of smoke when I came back—like this cloud all right, this cloud of smoke—whatever it was, it made all the humans come running out. The aliens…” He shook his head, a tight, choky sensation building in his throat. “Yeah, it’s not good. The thing he used, it killed them. In…maybe thirty seconds.”

“Are you outside?” That was Kara again, her voice pitched unnaturally high.

“No, I’m still—” he began.

“Mon-El!” she snapped, cutting him off. “Okay, that’s it. I’m on my way.”

“Hold on, Supergirl,” J’onn put in. “We don’t need you exposed to whatever was in that bar. But Mon-El, she’s right. You do need to get out of there, and the sooner the better. We’ve got a team headed your way, all right? I want you to go outside and wait in the alley where you can’t be seen. Agent Danvers will be bringing a biohazard unit with her, and they’ll get you to the DEO as quickly as possible where you’ll be taken down to the containment units. Understood?”

Containment units. As in those awful cells he’d spent time in back when they thought he was going around attacking important Earth rulers? Where there was nothing to do except sit around and think about all the things you really wished you could forget with no distractions whatsoever?

“Yeah. Understood,” he mumbled. “I’m going.”

Focusing on the door rather than his surroundings, he made his way outside and sat down near the dumpster, tracing different shapes on the ground as he waited. It didn’t take long for Alex to
arrive, accompanied by a ton of agents who swarmed all over the bar looking for answers as he was loaded into a thing that looked like a big plastic cube, but even so, he'd already replayed everything in his head so much that he wanted to just knock himself out so he didn't have to think about it anymore.

It wasn't to be, though. By the time he and the prison cube arrived back at the DEO and he was transferred into what he was fairly certain was the same clear cell he'd been in a few months ago, he'd already told his story five times, including two repetitions for J'onn, who wanted to know every single detail since he couldn't be there in person to examine anything. The strain of trying to stay calm while he answered questions was starting to take its toll on him, and the instant the door sealed around him and Alex shooed the rest of the agents out of the room, he started pacing.

“How are you?” she asked, stepping back to wave toward the room’s doorway where Kara and J’onn were waiting for the all-clear. “Your vitals are all fine, but does anything feel off to you?”

“No, I’m fine,” he told her. Leaning a hand against the door, he inhaled slowly, frustration mounting as Kara and J’onn filed in, their faces tense and frowny. “Is this really necessary?” he asked, appealing more to J’onn than anyone else, since J’onn seemed to be the one who thought the lockup thing was a good idea. “I feel fine. I could do...one thousand pushups one-handed.”

“While that’s...very impressive,” J’onn answered, his voice not exactly unsympathetic, but not very promising either, “we can’t risk you transmitting whatever you were exposed to in the bar to the rest of us.”

Grife.

Mon-El spun around, trying to breathe calmly as he faced the same mind-numbing little white tiled walls again. He’d never really had a problem with close spaces before, but after this experience, he suspected he just might.

“Which begs the question,” Alex said quietly, bringing his attention back to the group assembled outside his cell. “What the hell was he exposed to?”

“Tell us...what happened, again?” Kara said as he sat down, her forehead wrinkled.

“I already—I told you guys!”

Mon-El took a big gulp of air, his raised voice worrying him. He didn’t want to yell at anyone. Alex and J’onn weren’t too likely to ask him what was wrong, but Kara definitely would. And he just couldn’t relive that awfulness again. He was going to forget it, to pretend he hadn’t seen it if it were at all possible, and talking about it wasn’t going to make that any easier.

“I saw you,” he continued in a steadier tone, facing J’onn with all the determination he could muster. By now, he’d told the story so often that it had become almost a speech. A flat, monotone speech, but a speech nonetheless. “But not, not you—the real you. The original Hank Henshaw. I followed him outside, we fought…and I lost. And then I heard the screams.” The screams that he never wanted to hear again. The screams he could have maybe prevented. “If I hadn’t followed him outside, I could’ve stopped this,” he muttered.

“The only reason you’re still alive is because you chased Hank Henshaw outside,” Kara told him quietly, taking a step forward.

Her eyes, half-hidden behind a swoop of blonde hair, locked onto his and Mon-El stared up at her through the glass, wondering if she knew how hard it suddenly was for him to breathe
normally. Or if the room felt blazing hot to her, too. In a way, it was almost a relief when she turned around to listen to her sister, who was saying something about alien physiology.

“And that thing killed everything in that bar. Except human beings,” Alex went on, her dissatisfaction with not-knowing evident. “I would like to bring my mother in to help analyze the crime scenes. She specializes in astrobiology; I think she could really help.”

J’onn nodded. “That’s a good idea.”

Mon-El nodded too, putting his head down. As far as he was concerned, Dr. Eliza Danvers’ presence could only improve most situations.

“Great,” Kara said, boots clacking on the floor. “Let’s get going.”

“No, no, no, no, no,” J’onn interrupted, holding out a hand. “You and I will remain quarantined here at the DEO until we can figure out exactly what sort of toxin we’re dealing with.”

“J’onn, this is Cadmus,” Kara argued, lowering her voice to a whisper. “I know it—they’re planning something.”

“My alien sister is not leaving here until we figure out how Cadmus was able to target only aliens,” Alex put in. “It’s better safe than sorry.”

Giving Kara’s shoulder a squeeze, she followed J’onn out into the hallway, the door swinging shut behind them.

“Wow.” Hands on hips, Kara turned from the doorway to stare at him. “They just locked me up, too, didn’t they?”

He nodded, her comical outrage fractionally lightening his mood. “Yes, I believe they did. But, at least you have a larger cage.”

“Humph.” She folded her arms, scowling as she slumped against the wall. “It’s still a cage. Alex is way overprotective sometimes.”

He huffed out a laugh, stretching out gloomily on the thin little mattress. “And you’re not overprotective of Alex?”

“That’s different,” Kara said with assurance.

In spite of the weariness that seemed embedded in his entire body—probably Henshaw’s punches—Mon-El smiled up at the ceiling.

“Is it?” he questioned, twisting his head onto the side so that he could see her.

She wrinkled her nose at him. “Just let me complain about my bossy older sister in peace, okay?”

“Well, she is a nice bossy older sister,” he responded, shrugging. “Just saying.”

“Yeah, I know.” Leaving her spot against the wall, Kara moved over to the cell and sat down, propping her back against the glass. “You know it’s not your fault, right?” she said abruptly, turning around to look at him. “You did what you could.”

Mon-El stifled a sigh. He disagreed, but he couldn’t say he didn’t appreciate the consolation attempt anyway. “Thanks,” he said.
“I mean it,” she insisted, resting a hand on the glass. “You should be glad you’re alive.”

He smiled, warmed by her earnest kindness. She was so determinedly optimistic that you couldn’t help but cheer up in her presence. “I know. And I guess I am.”

“Okay, then.” She nodded once, briskly. “Just checking to make sure.”

“Really?” Great, now his smile was verging on dumbness.

“Mhmm.”

“Nice.” Shifting onto his side, he propped his head up on his hand. “Kara, you know you don’t have to worry about me, right?”

“Oh, I know.” She folded her arms, resting them atop her knees as she twisted her head at a funny angle to see him. “But see, you make it so easy…”

The silly smile she awarded him surprised him into a laugh. That was one of the things he enjoyed about Kara—she was so passionate and serious and worried over everything sometimes, and then she’d turn around and tease you exactly when you were least expecting it.

“Uh, thank you?” he joked, holding his hands out in a miniature shrug. “I think?”

“You’re welcome.” Leaning her temple against the glass, she giggled. “Wow.”

“What?”

“Us.” She laughed, lifting her gaze to his. “Talking.”

_Talking?_ Mon-El pursed his lips. “Um…don’t we always talk?”

“Yeah, but I mean here.” She gestured back and forth between them. “On different sides again.” She tapped a finger against her chin reflectively. “I can’t figure out if we’ve made so much progress that we’ve come full circle, or if we’ve made no progress at all. What do you think?”

“Let’s go with full circle,” he responded, chuckling as he recalled her angry intensity. “I like that. It’s less discouraging than _no progress at all_.

“Agreed.”

The door opened then, and Mon-El looked up to see Winn enter.

“Hey gang,” he said, giving them both an apologetic grin. “Sorry about the cooping-up business.”

“Yeah, me too,” Mon-El agreed, while Kara nodded fervently. “But, oh well. It happens.”

“It does?” Winn blinked. “Okay…that’s a strange way of looking at it, but sure. _So_, anyway—I just talked to J’onn, and he says you’re stuck here ‘til otherwise noted?” After Mon-El and Kara nodded simultaneously, Winn grimaced. “Ugh. Bummer. Well, I’m actually heading home for the night, so since I’m technically not on the clock, is there anything I can get you guys before I leave?”

Mon-El leaned back, stretching. “A key to get out of here, maybe?”

“Ha. Yeah. I don’t want to lose a limb, buddy,” Winn responded, snorting at the idea. “J’onn
would flay me alive. Anything else?”

“Yes, actually,” Kara said, pointing at Winn, her face brightening. “There is something you can bring us.”

“Okay, cool.” Winn nodded, pointing back at her. “What is it? Food? Because I warn you, we humans of average strength can only carry so much.”

“Oh. Well, food’s always good,” Kara answered. “But actually, we’re going to probably here a while so…” She glanced over at Mon-El, a smile quirking up the corners of her mouth.

“So…” Winn prompted.

“My question exactly,” said Mon-El, raising his eyebrows. “Kara?”

Kara smirked at him. “You, my friend, are going down this time.”

Going down. This time? He squinted at her for a few seconds before he got it.

“Ohh.” Then he laughed, swinging his feet back onto the floor as he sat up, matching her smirk. “Ha. Do your worst, Supergirl. I mean, you’ll have to do it for both of us, but I trust you.”

“O-kay,” Winn said, sounding very confused. “Yeah. Um, what are we talking about here? Did you two develop telepathic powers and forget to clue me in on it?”

“Yes,” said Mon-El while Kara answered “No.”

“Anyways…” Rolling his eyes, Winn spun a hand in a circle. “Continue, please. What are you wanting?”

Kara grinned. “Any chance you could bring us Monopoly?”

Chapter End Notes

*Title taken from one of my favorite Elvis Presley songs ("All Shook Up," aka, the song my grandma taught be to jitterbug to once upon a time). I chose it because it just seemed to fit Mon-El somehow.
*Okay. This one is...not great on the organization, guys. I'm sorry. I want to come back and check for typos/formatting errors, but the reality is that I probably won't have a lot of time this week, and since I'm trying to keep plugging along on this fic and I have a couple Riverdale ones that I've only been able to work on in snippets...it's probably not going to happen anytime soon. So please forgive me. I tried to edit, but coffee can only do so much.
*I really need to stop saying I'm going to post on certain days, because every time I do, I jinx it. So I'm just going to say that I shall endeavor to never let this many days go by between updates again. We'll see how that works out for me.
*Eliza and Mon-El's conversation is basically the result of me enjoying their interactions in 2x08, and seeing how he greets her in 2x14. To me, it seemed obvious that Mon-El liked her and vice versa, and when I first saw 2x08 back in November, my headcanon was that he saw Eliza as the mother figure he never had, considering he'd told Kara in 2x04 that his parents "weren't exactly role models." Then we met Rhea,
and my headcanon became stronger than ever.
*Just like I wanted to see Hungover Kara in 2x06, I also wanted to see Hungover Alex in 2x08. Honestly, watching her sneak that bottle out of the freezer is still one of my favorite parts of the episode.
*Confession: the first time I watched this episode, I noticed the part where Kara and Mon-El have the stare-down ("The only reason you're still alive is because...") right off the bat. I even sarcastically woo-hooed, to my brothers' amusement and annoyance. This is one of the reasons I love K with M. In a matter of five seconds, they go from cute n' sweet to "HO-LY [insert exclamation/expletive of your choice here], somebody get me a fan, please" and they're not even touching. I haven't seen a TV couple manage that in a while (I think Veronica Mars was the last time) and I LOVE it.
*I thought of a lot of things to say while I was writing this, but I'm running low on coffee now and I've forgotten them. So if you think of anything random to say about the episode/show/Karamel/whatever, tell me! I love speculating :D
**Random note: if you have a song that reminds you of Kara/Mon-El or Karamel, let me know! I love music/writing to music. (The posting of this chapter was actually delayed from when I started updating because I had to go look up a song akane171 recommended and I started rabbit trailing.)
*Thanks as always for reading/commenting! Hope y'all all have a wonderful day :D
Sparks Fly

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x08 from the Monopoly scene to right before Kara and J'onn take off to go fight Lillian and Henshaw. POV is unevenly split between Kara and Mon-El (the lion's share of it is Kara's because that's just how it fell out). Also, because so many things happen in this stretch, it took me a while to figure out what to include where, and in the end I had to summarize a lot. The transitions between scenes are not very smooth, so prepare yourself! It ain't pretty.

*Note that there could be some hilarious errors in this chapter. I edited as best I could, but I averaged about 3 hours of sleep a night this week, and it's kind of catching up with me.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

After quite a few hours of watching Kara shuffle deeds, money, and game pieces around the board, Mon-El decided that this whole situation really could have been a lot worse. Yes, if he looked to either his left or his right the walls threatened to close in on him, and yes, it would've been nice to move the little dog around the board and collect the rent himself, but all things considered, he was having fun. Kara had a way of making dismal things seem lots better than they were, and he couldn’t help being a little glad that if he had to be locked up, at least he was locked up with her. She shared his frustration at being confined to the DEO, and in grumbling with her about their circumstances and the boringness of the room, he’d sort of forgotten to be nervous around her. It was comfortable between them again, and Mon-El really liked comfortable. It wasn’t as hard to figure out as uncomfortable.

“Oh, crap,” Kara groaned as the dice clattered to a stop on the board.

“Aww, sucks for you,” Mon-El said with more glee than sympathy, seeing that she was about to have to turn in her Passing-Go money.

He wasn’t a big fan of that little Income Tax space for himself, but it had turned out to be very useful in this game since Kara kept landing on it and she had better properties than he did. And she was very serious about beating him this time, he’d noticed. Hopefully that fix-the-streets card would come up soon before he ran out of money.

“My turn. I mean, please,” he added, gesturing toward her as he remembered that oh, right, he was behind a clear wall and his turn was more of a relatively-speaking kind of thing.

Kara threw the dice. “Annddd, you’re in jail,” she announced, a little smugly as she saw the result.

Of course he was. “That feels appropriate,” he remarked.

He meant to make a joke, but even he could tell it was coming off more gloomy than humorous. Which okay, was probably because that’s how he was feeling. He was just so, so tired of being
shut into places that he wasn’t allowed to leave. In the months since he’d arrived on Earth, he’d spent more time under close observation in various prisons than the whole rest of his life combined, and it was beginning to feel like no matter what he did, he was just going to end up in a cage again.

“You’ll be out of here soon enough,” Kara reminded him, a smile in her voice as she ticked off spaces with her hat. “Both of us will. So don’t pout.”

Mon-El stuck his lip out automatically, enjoying her laugh. Well, if nothing else, at least she still found him kind of funny. That was something, right?

“Hey, you don’t uh…you don’t like me, do you?”

The question was so abrupt that Mon-El blinked a little, surprised both that she’d asked, and that she’d felt the need to ask.

“Of course I like you,” he answered, trying to figure out what he’d done to make he think otherwise. Had she taken the pout the wrong way after all? He wasn’t mad or grumpy with her or anything—he was just cranky about the situation.

“No,” she said slowly. “I mean like you don’t…like me, like me?”

Mon-El’s confusion grew. He had a vague idea that he’d heard something like this before in one of the shows he’d watched with Winn, but he couldn’t be sure. Was there another context to like that he didn’t know about? The way she was saying it, it sounded like she expected him to know what she meant, but he was completely adrift.

“Like you, like you?” he repeated, searching her face for any sign of a hint. “Sorry,” he confessed finally, stammering a little over the words as a laugh at his own ineptitude almost snuck out. Earth ignorance had struck again. “English is my second language.”

“My mom, Eliza…”

Mon-El tensed, bringing a hand up to scratch along the side of his jaw. Had Eliza said something to Kara about their conversation in the kitchen? Did Kara know, and was she upset, or repulsed, or something else in that vein and trying to soften the blow before things got out of hand? It would be just like her to try and spare his feelings or whatever.

“She, she thought you were being extra-nice to her on Thanksgiving?”

Well, not anymore she didn’t. Eliza was a very smart person and Mon-El had it on pretty good authority that Kara’s Earth mother did not think that he’d been being extra-nice because he was interested in her.

“That’s like a thing that boys on this planet do,” Kara went on, toying with the little silver game piece in her hand. “They’re nice to the moms of, of girls they have crushes on, s-sometimes.”

“Crush?” Mon-El said blankly, his frown deepening as she looked up from the board, head tilted to the side. Crush. Crush, crush, crush. No—that word wasn’t returning any results either, save for the action he knew meant dropping heavy things on something else until it was squashed flat, and some kind of fizzy drink Winn liked to rave about that apparently came in both purple and orange. “Sorry,” he said again, deciding he might as well just go ahead and admit how confused he was. “Sorry I’m, I’m not—I’m not following.”

“You don’t want to mate with me, do you?”
Mate with…? Did he want to mate with Kara?

Completely taken aback, Mon-El nearly swallowed his own tongue. It was like all sound had suddenly been sucked from the room, leaving only a dull roaring in his ears. For a second or two he stared at her, panic rising. Okay she suspected, too. If she knew—if he told her—Rao, it would make everything uncomfortable. It would mess up any possible chance they had of ever remaining friendly, because how could it not be distasteful for Kara to be around him knowing that he felt a way about her that she didn’t feel about him? They’d just end up avoiding each other, or being all stiff and polite or something, and Mon-El didn’t think he could stand having Kara become a stranger. But what could he say? What could he do? His head felt thick and foggy, and almost before he knew it, he was laughing. Hard.

“Um,” he began, coughing a little on the end of the laugh. Wait, had it always been this hard to draw a breath? He wasn’t sure. Maybe it was a side-effect of being on the spot in front of Kara. “I mean, have you seen the, the women that I’ve been attracting…Earthlings and otherwise, since I’ve…been on this planet?”

Oh, great, why had he said that? What was he thinking? What was he doing? And really, what was happening to him all of a sudden? If he didn’t know better, he would swear that there was a cloud forming around her head. She was in a bleak old room at the DEO not flying through the sky, but he was positive that it was there. A bright, misty cloud that made her hair seem to glow, and the room glow, and…no, wait. The room wasn’t glowing, it was getting darker. There weren’t windows anywhere nearby, were there? He couldn’t remember, and he almost felt like he should maybe wonder why he didn’t remember, but it was hard to care when everything around him seemed so soft and dark and dull. Maybe it was an eclipse or something.

“Uh-huh,” he heard Kara say, her voice sounding miles away as she looked down to organize the different stacks of deeds. “Thank you, for the clarification.”

And then from out of nowhere, he couldn’t breathe at all. He couldn’t. He was either choking or strangling; he didn’t know which, and it terrified him. His lungs were on fire, or maybe they were being stabbed, and as hard as he tried, he couldn’t tell Kara. He must have fallen because he could feel the cool floor beneath him, and he could hear her calling him in the background, but the loud, callous-sounding voice intoning Containment breach drowned out most everything else. The last thing he saw before everything went black was Kara’s worried face hovering over him, her lips shaping words he couldn’t quite decipher.

But that was okay, he thought wearily. If it was anything important, she’d let him know. For now, he just needed to sleep.

***

When Mon-El collapsed, it was as though time ground to a halt. Mouth dry, Kara stared at him through the glass, his name repeating over and over again on a loop inside her head. No. This wasn’t right. He’d been laughing at her just seconds ago.

“Mon-El?”

Scrambling to her feet, she dashed over to the door release and slapped it open, her breath coming in short, frantic bursts that mirrored his. No, no, no, he wasn’t dying. He wasn’t. She couldn’t be about to lose someone else that mattered to her, and please, please Rao, not like this. Not now. She’d only just gotten to know him, and they’d just become friends, and oh, if this was that thing that had killed all the aliens at the bar, she was going to get Cadmus if it was the last thing she ever did.
“Oh, Mon-El,” she whispered, yanking open the door the second the seal broke and rushing inside. “Hey—hey.” In an instant she was on her knees beside him, heart pounding.

“Hey. Hey!” she repeated, louder this time. God, why wasn’t he answering her?

Gathering his unresponsive form in her arms, she silently willed him to open his eyes, to laugh, to give her that annoying little smirk of his and tell her he’d put one over on her—to do something, anything that indicated this was all a really horrible joke instead of a reality she’d give anything to not be facing.

But of course nothing happened. If anything, he seemed to go limp.

“Stay with me. Stay with me,” she murmured, fear knifing through her stomach like a kryptonite-laced blade as she looked down at him and realized that he couldn’t hear her. He was too far away. The urge to give into tears was strong—almost overwhelming even, because once again, someone she cared about was hurting, and she couldn’t do one solitary thing to protect him, but what good were tears at a time like this?

Gulping in air, she yelled for help with all her might, hugging him close. Someone had to be monitoring the cell door. They would hear her. In fact, they were probably already on their way. He was going to be all right. He had to be.

“You’re going to be all right,” she whispered, resting her forehead on his shoulder as she closed her eyes, silently pleading with Rao to make it true. “I promise. You’re going to be all right. I know you can’t hear me, but just hang on, okay? Please, Mon-El, just hang on.”

“Kara?”

The door to the room crashed open, and Kara looked up in time to see Alex burst in, followed shortly by Eliza and a few DEO agents.

“He’s hurt,” she said in response to her sister’s unasked question, voice cracking. “I don’t know what happened. One minute he was fine, he was laughing, and then he just—you have to help him.”

“We will, sweetie,” Eliza answered while Alex signaled to the agents. “But you need to let him go and get out of there until we know for sure what we’re dealing with, okay?”

Kara shook her head, grip tightening on instinct. “I can get him to the infirmary faster,” she said, hating herself for not thinking of it sooner. What was wrong with her?

“All right,” Eliza said evenly. “But as soon as you get him there, you go wait outside. No prolonged exposure. We don’t need anyone else contracting whatever this is.”

Nodding, Kara lifted Mon-El carefully, speeding past everyone in the room. But even though she knew Eliza was right, she couldn’t help lingering a few seconds after depositing him in one of the empty beds. He was just so still that it hurt to look at him, and yet she couldn’t look away. Not even when she moved out into the hallway and stood at the window. Her brain whorled and she really had no idea how long she stood there waiting; she only knew that seemed to take ages for Eliza to get there and go to work, and she had a vague idea that Alex’s hand was on her shoulder the whole time she was answering J’onn’s questions when he showed up wanting to know what was going on. But nothing felt very clear.

By the time Eliza exited and explained her findings, Kara’s nerves were worn to a frazzle. A solid part of her felt almost numb as her foster mother told her of the virus’ origin, and with a
growing sense of dread, she flew straight to the Fortress of Solitude. Hearing from her father’s hologram that Krypton had developed a weapon to obliterate every other alien species in the galaxy and having to destroy Kelex seemed like the final stamp on a terrible day, and with a heart so heavy she half-expected to be unable to fly, she returned to National City to deliver the bad news.

Where of course, everything only got worse, the rest of the day going by in one massive, exhausting blur.

One minute she was sitting beside Mon-El’s bed in the infirmary, willing him to wake up and be okay. The next, she was rushing off to L-Corp to stop Henshaw and Cadmus only to end up getting Maggie shot and herself nearly killed because she was too unfocused to give the fight her all. Really, that should have been more than enough awful for one month, let alone one day, but then she ended up at L-Corp again, fruitlessly trying to make Lena understand the danger her mother posed when Lena didn’t want to believe it.

Not that Kara blamed her. Today, she thoroughly understood not wanting to accept that you were connected to people who did cruel things. It was nice of J’onn to say that she was her parents’ legacy, but that still didn’t change the fact that the mother and father she’d loved so much had done all these horrible things to others, and that their blood flowed through her veins. All she wanted to do was save people, but that’s what they had wanted, too. What if she ended up like them? What if getting people hurt turned out to be what she was best at and she didn't realize it until it was too late?

At last, physically and emotionally drained, she wandered back to the infirmary. Everywhere she’d gone he’d been there in the back of her thoughts, and she was tired of trying to pretend like he wasn’t. She was worried about him. Hugely. Eliza had told her—by now she couldn’t remember exactly when—that without a cure, he would die. No solution, no way out, nothing anyone could do. Kara could barely stand thinking about that possibility, but not knowing how he was at any given moment was becoming too much to deal with. The only solution, as far as she could see, was to just go and camp out in his room. Who knew? It didn't do any harm, and it might do some good.

When she arrived he was still asleep, so she pulled up the all-too-familiar stool and sat down beside the bed. If she weren’t so miserable, she thought, running a weary hand through her hair, she might’ve enjoyed the irony of the situation. Because she’d been in this exact spot before when he’d first arrived, sitting by his bedside, wanting him to wake up so she could talk to him. Except this time, it was worse. So much worse, because now she wasn’t waiting for him to get better. And now she actually knew him.

“You doing okay?”

Kara glanced back to see her sister watching her, arms folded as she leaned against the doorframe.

“Yeah. I’m fine,” she answered, checking the monitor automatically when she thought she heard an out-of-the-ordinary beep. “It’s just been a long day.”

“I know. I’m sorry,” Alex said softly. “Do you want to be alone?”

No, Kara thought, her gaze sliding back to Mon-El’s pale face. No, she really, really didn’t. But she knew her sister didn’t mean in it in that way so she nodded, mustering up a smile. “If you don’t mind. Today’s been…a lot to take in. But call me if you need me?”

Alex nodded. Crossing over to the stool, she gave Kara a quick hug. “Same to you, okay?”
“Okay.” Reaching up, Kara squeezed her sister’s hand gently. “Thanks.”

“No problem,” Alex responded, smiling back as she headed for the door. “Oh, and by the way,” she added. “I just wanted to let you know…I told Mom.”

“Really? And?”

Alex’s smile turned sheepish. “It’s Mom. She kinda already knew. Or guessed, anyway.”

Despite her unhappiness, Kara had to smile. “I told you.”

“I know.” Alex smiled again, awkwardly, before motioning toward the bed. “By the way….just so you know, Mom gave him some painkillers not too long ago when he was semi-lucid. We’re not sure how effective they are on him—I mean, he says they help, but…” she shrugged. “They do at least make him sleepy, so you may be in for a long wait.”

Kara nodded again. That was okay, she thought as Alex left to go help Eliza again. It wasn’t like she could do anything this time but wait. There was no one she could chase down to fix this, no way to stop it from happening. The one and only thing she could do was the thing she’d promised him while he was asleep all those months ago: stay with him.

So she did.

She had no idea how long she sat there, eyes alternating between him, the monitors, the ceiling, and the floor—maybe it was one hour, maybe it was two—but long before she dared expect it, his eyelids fluttered open and a tiny, irrational sliver of hope speared through her.

“Hey,” he croaked groggily. His attempted smirk was feeble at best, but it made her smile anyway.

“Hey,” she answered, straightening up to work some of the kinks from her back.

He squinted at her, and even before he opened his mouth, she knew it was going to be a joke. “Did you learn a new power where you can duplicate yourself?” he inquired, his voice still tired but teasing. “’Cause I’m seeing two of you.”

“No—”

The little wannabe-smirk widened. “It’s really cool.”

“No, sorry,” Kara answered, his ridiculousness dragging a laugh from her as usual. “No new powers. Just…I think the double vision’s all you.”

“Oh, so I have a new power,” he mumbled without missing a beat.

“Yeah,” she agreed.

Playing along with him was habit now. Ever since she’d met him, he’d been doing that—goofing around, saying nonsense, making jokes in situations that had nothing funny about them. It had irritated her so much at the start that she was surprised to realize now how used to it she’d grown. In fact on some level, maybe she even counted on it. It was his way of trying to help, she thought, a lump rising in her throat. When she didn’t know what else to do, she busied herself with whatever she could, whenever she could. He made jokes. But even his levity was disappearing now, and that more than anything else saddened her. All those times she’d told him to be serious, and now that it was actually happening, she hated it.
“Your Earth mother Eliza…she thinks I’m dying,” he said, and Kara wondered—vaguely and irrelevantly—if that’s who Eliza was in his head because of all the times Kara had referred to her as ‘My Earth mother Eliza.’ “I might not have your hearing, but…mine’s pretty good.”

Kara’s heart sank like a stone at the acceptance in his voice. “She’s gonna find a cure,” she began, but he was already shaking his head, seeing right through that pathetic attempt at comfort.

“It’s okay,” he said. “I’ve uh…” He pulled himself upright with what looked like a considerable amount of difficulty, slumping over when he made it to a sitting position. “I’ve cheated death more times than anyone.”

“God. It’s not okay,” she insisted, her mind flashing back to the Fortress. “You shouldn’t be dying. The only reason you are dying is because of my family.” Her supposedly-good family, who hugged her, and loved her, and who devised ways to punish and kill others in order to protect Krypton. How was any of that remotely okay?

A small squiggle appeared in his brow. “Eliza did her best.”

“No, not her.”

Kara took a deep breath, trying hard to both steady her voice and force herself to make eye contact. It seemed cowardly, or dishonest somehow to not at least look him in the eye while she confessed her family’s role in this mess.

“My birth father,” she explained. “He created Medusa.” Oh, why did he have to take it so calmly—why did he have to look sympathetic instead of angry? She dropped her gaze, unable to take it anymore. “He’s the reason you are in so much pain, and he’s the reason I can’t do anything about it.”

It wasn’t quite the calm report she’d hoped to give, so she kept on staring down after she finished telling him. A horrible fear that if she looked up and saw him she was going to start crying possessed her, and since she wasn’t the one dying, that kind of response just seemed stupid and insensitive. He was the one who needed help and comfort, not her, and it was just so wrong that she couldn’t seem to manage to pull it together long enough to offer it to him.

Like now—now he was brushing a chunk of hair off her face, and the gesture was just so unexpected and so very Mon-El that it made her eyes fill even as it sent shivers she couldn’t explain spiraling through her. It wasn’t fair. He’d only been trying to help. Like she’d encouraged him to. Now he was going to die because he’d tried to help, and if the virus doing its part to end his life was the work of her father, his contraction of the virus linked back to her. It was almost darkly poetic—Krypton, finally obliterating Daxam after all those years of trying, but doing it by accident and threatening another world in the process. Rao, if she could only just fix this!

“You know, you look…beautiful.”

The words, or maybe his voice, startled her into lifting her head. He was fuzzy, because even extra-powerful vision had trouble seeing through tears, but she could tell that he was smiling a little and it nearly broke her. She didn’t like him, not in that way, but oh, sometimes, when he looked at her like that, a tiny piece of her way down deep inside wondered if maybe someday in the distant future, or maybe in a different life, that could change. The dull ache in her chest that had been present since the moment he’d collapsed in the cell resurfaced in full force, accompanied by more of those strange, fluttery shivers as she scanned his face for any indication of a joke. You know, you look beautiful? Had she heard him right?
“With the weight of all these worlds on your shoulders,” he murmured huskily, and she realized that she’d fallen for it again.

He was just trying to ease the tension like always, and he was doing it clumsily because he wasn’t thinking straight. What had Alex told her? He was on pain meds that probably weren’t even working properly? Rao, she was such an idiot. Her friend was sick and dying right in front of her, and here she was getting butterflies because she thought he might be flirting. Which didn’t make sense anyway since she didn’t like him like that and the last time they’d talked, he’d made it very clear that he had no interest in her whatsoever.

“You don’t have to make me feel better,” she whispered, hating herself for how aware she was of his palm resting against her cheek. He didn’t mean anything by it. He was just being Mon-El. And he was probably high.

But then his eyelids lowered (like he was maybe looking at her lips?) and Kara’s pulse started to race. He wasn’t—was he? No. Yes? Possibly. She couldn’t be sure, but he was leaning in and it really did look like he was going to…oh God, what if he wasn’t? Had she guessed wrong? He’d never seemed particularly bothered by personal space issues. What if it only seemed like he was going to and she’d misunderstood again?

But then he drew so close that there was no mistaking it. Breath hitching, Kara’s eyes slipped shut and she leaned in, too.

The second he kissed her, it was as if the world faded into nothingness. A flurry of warmth pervaded her whole entire being, electrifying her down to her toes in a way that made it impossible to think of anything beyond how his lips molded around and tugged gently on hers. Head spinning, blood pounding, senses ablaze, she gave up trying to understand everything and just lost herself in the feel of the kiss, reveling in his scent, his taste, his closeness, the way his hand cradled her face. It was, it was, it was…well, it was. She didn’t know what it was and at the moment she didn’t care, because she’d never in her life experienced anything like the breathless, exhilarating something searing through her, and the only thing she was sure of was that she didn’t want it to stop. Any of it. Maybe ever. When she sensed him beginning to pull away, she couldn’t help herself—angling the slightest bit forward, she held onto his lips with hers, extending the kiss until finally (but also far too soon), they both withdrew.

Although Kara wasn’t sure withdrew was the right word. Opening her eyes, she discovered Mon-El’s face still located inches from hers and her breath, already shaky and erratic, stuck in her throat as he gave her the barest of smiles.

“Yeah,” he murmured almost dreamily, eyes closing as he slumped back against the pillow. “Absolutely beautiful.”

And then he was out again.

Frozen atop her perch, lips tingling, every particle reeling, Kara stared down at him. Mon-El had just kissed her. She had just kissed Mon-El. She and Mon-El had just kissed. For a while. And, and…she’d liked it. Maybe a lot. Maybe even a lot a lot.

Sneaking a quick glance around the room, she was relieved to find no one anywhere close enough to have seen or heard anything, although the nearness of discovery came home to her when a man she didn’t recognize passed by. She exhaled slowly, mind racing as a hand stole up to touch her lips. Holy Rao, she’d felt that kiss in her very bones, and not just because his was the first kiss she could actually feel (although that had been nice). No, it had…it had mattered to her.
But what did that even mean, and why had he done it in the first place? He’d made his point back in lockup—he didn’t like her. Not in that way. The idea had been laughable to him. And yet…well, that kiss had felt an awful lot like maybe he wasn’t being completely honest with her. Maybe, for some weird, Mon-El reason, he really did have a crush on her like Eliza had thought and just was afraid to tell her? But no, because he wasn’t shy. She’d seen that evidence with her own eyes. Wouldn’t he just say it straight out like he always did if he really liked her?

Unless…

Kara sat bolt upright, a thought striking her. He’d thought she was someone else, hadn’t he? Eve maybe, or one of those blonde girls she’d seen flirting with him at the bar, or a girlfriend from Daxam? Great. The meds had kicked in and mixed him up, and he’d kissed her because he was seeing someone else. She just knew it.

“Kara?”

Kara jumped so badly that she nearly fell off the stool. How, how did she keep managing to let people slip up on her when she had super hearing? It was getting embarrassing.

“Yeah?” she said quickly, turning to see Winn. “What is it? Cadmus?”

“Not at the moment, no. But J’onn?” He pointed behind him in the direction of the control room. “He wants you on standby. We’ve got the trackers working so it’s a just-in-case kind of thing. Whatever’s going to happen, it’s going to happen fast. Can you come?”

“Yeah. Of course.” She stood, trying not to stare down at Mon-El. This wasn’t going to be the last time she saw him. She refused to think it might be.

“How’s he doing?” Winn asked, coming to stand beside her.

“I don’t really know.” Folding her arms until she could grip her own elbows, Kara released a long, unstable breath. “One minute he’s fine and making jokes, the next…” The next he’s maybe hallucinating and going around telling people they’re beautiful right before he kisses them and passes out again before they can ask him what he means. “I don’t know.”

Winn nodded. “He’ll be okay,” he told her, bumping her arm with his and then wincing. “Ow. Crap. I keep forgetting not to do that. Uh, Eliza—Eliza, she’ll figure it out. He’ll be up and about in no time. Making terrible jokes, eating all the good snacks…hey, you hear that, Mon-El?” he added, cupping a hand around his mouth as he leaned forward. “If you don’t get better soon, I’m going to eat every single pack of Cheetos in the vending machines. And the Twizzlers. You want any, you’re gonna have to wake up.”

“I’m pretty sure he can’t hear you,” Kara told her friend, appreciating his attempted optimism all the same. “Alex said he’s on a lot of pain meds.”

“Oh. Really?” At Kara’s nod, Winn frowned. “Huh. Here, let me see.” He leaned forward again. “Hey, Mon-El. Wanna know who dies in Season Eight of the doctor show?”

No response from the bed. Winn sighed, straightening up.

“Yep, he’s out. He’s been after me to tell him who all dies on Grey’s because he doesn’t want to like them if they’re just going to go away.”

Despite the fact that she cringed every time she heard the word die, Kara had to smile. Of course Mon-El would want to know that.
“Why doesn’t he just google it?” she asked. “I know I taught him how to do that. With a computer and on his phone.”

“Yeah, I don’t know that you did.” Winn clicked his tongue. “He seemed like he maybe wasn’t listening the whole time.”

Yes, there was a good chance that was true. Kara gave her head a tiny shake to dispel the annoying little droplets beginning to collect in her eyes again. *Focus, Kara. Focus.*

“Speaking of listening…” She motioned toward the bed, silently praying that Eliza would be successful. “We’d better go. I don’t think he’d like it very much if he woke up and found out we were watching him sleep.”

“Really?” Winn huffed out a laugh, turning toward the door. “Is that what you think? ‘Cause I think Mon-El of Daxam could wake up and find us two centimeters from his face and it wouldn’t bother him.”

Kara’s cheeks heated at the thought of being that close to Mon-El. *Again.*

“Well,” she commented, twirling a piece of hair between her fingertips as she took one last, long look at him over her shoulder as she followed Winn into the hall. “I think he might mind that a little bit.”

“Nah.”

“What?” She frowned. Was she imagining it, or was Winn eyeing her funny?

“Nah,” he repeated almost thoughtfully, glancing back at the room they’d just left as they headed for the stairs. “I just get the feeling he wouldn’t mind at all.”

Kara’s frown deepened as they descended. The squinting, speculative looks Winn kept sending her suggested that she was missing something really obvious, but instinct warned her to not ask. It had been a long, emotionally-draining day, and in all likelihood it wasn’t over yet. Right now Supergirl was needed, and Supergirl couldn’t afford to worry about all the things Kara couldn’t make sense of. Squaring her shoulders, she strode over to the center of the room.

J’onn looked up from a monitor as she neared, his expression full of a sympathy she wasn’t used to seeing right out in the open like this. “Supergirl.”

Through sheer force of will she smiled at him, doing her best to seem lighter than she felt as she leaned her forearms on the round table beside Winn. “J’onn. What’s the word on Cadmus? Anything?”

He shook his head, walking around the circumference of the table to the side they stood on. “Not yet.” The searching look he gave her let her know that she wasn’t fooling him for a second, but she chose to ignore it. “Are you going to be ready when it happens?”

Kara’s eyes shifted toward the infirmary almost involuntarily. “Yeah,” she said quietly, her stomach tying itself in knots. “Born ready.”

Chapter End Notes
*Title is from one of my favorite Taylor Swift songs, because every time I hear it, it reminds me of these two.
*This would probably have been done sooner, except it takes me forever to write things that are heavy on feelings. You know how Ron Weasley has the emotional range of a teaspoon? Yeah, me too. Also, I kind of got the giggles writing Kara's thoughts because I kept thinking of Into The Woods: "Did a prince really kiss me, and kiss me, and kiss me...and did I kiss him back?" and since I was tired and on lots of caffeine, I kept cracking myself up.
*Speaking of cracking myself up...I've never watched Grey's Anatomy. I just randomly picked a season and then checked to see if there was a major death that season. And then I laughed really hard because apparently I chose well.
*I had Winn start to get suspicious in this chapter because I've been wondering for a while at what point exactly he starts to clue into what's going on with K&M (in 2x10, he seems like he's maybe got an idea) and it hit me that he's around in the background for a lot of the scenes where Kara's looking a little worried about Mon-El. I think J'onn knows for sure at this point, because he's very Space Dad in this episode when Kara's upset, and I feel like Alex is in that sees-all, knows-all area where she doesn't necessarily say anything until 2x11, but she's already evaluated the evidence and made her conclusions.
*I'm not extremely happy with how this came out because it includes two of my favorite scenes from the entire season and I can't do them the justice they deserve, but the awesome part about writing this was that I had an excuse to re-watch the Monopoly and The Kiss scenes multiple times. Seriously, it's amazing how that can cheer you up <3
*I had more explanations to make about confusing things I wrote, but I'm so tired now I can't remember any of them. So if something's unclear/seems out of order, let me know! I'll do my best to clear it up.
*I'm sorry there's been such big gaps between updates. These last few first drafts have ended up so long that it takes me a while to edit them when I'm tired, and my last couple weeks have been packed with unexpected stuff.
*Thanks for reading/commenting! <3 Hope you guys have a wonderful week and continue to survive the hiatus! :D
It Was Only A Kiss

Chapter Summary

Takes place in 2x08 (Mon-El and Kara's POV) and covers from when Mon-El wakes up to when Kara leaves with Barry and Cisco to fight the Dominators.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The first thing Mon-El registered was light. Bright, blistering white light that made him wonder if he was dead, and for a second or two he was a little afraid to really look at anything since he was pretty sure the place he was headed wouldn’t be very pleasant. But then the darkish shapes in front of him came into better focus and confusion set in. Because Kara was there, and so was Dr.—Eliza, and no way were either of those two, let alone both of them, where he’d thought he was. Or maybe he was dreaming?

“Am I dead?” he asked, looking around bewildered. “Is this Heaven?”

“No,” Eliza told him, her voice soothing even as she laughed. “We were able to reverse-engineer a cure from a living sample of the virus.”

“And when my mother says ‘we,’ she really means…she,” Alex put in, hands on hips. “But Winn and I watched enthusiastically.”

Mon-El nodded, intercepting Alex and Winn’s simultaneous grins. It was very nice getting the chance to see everyone’s faces again, he decided. He hadn’t really expected that.

“While this is good news, it gets even better.” Eliza smiled around at all of them. “The Medusa virus was so easily weaponized I was able to turn it against a common enemy—J’onn’s White Martian blood cells.”

“J’onn!” Kara exclaimed, and Mon-El craned his neck around the Danvers women to see the deceptively-grim head of the DEO enter the room in full intimidating-Martian getup. “You look great!”

“I feel great,” the man answered, sounding happier than Mon-El had heard him in a while as he shapeshifted back into human mode. “Thank you Eliza.”

She smiled, giving him a hug. “My pleasure.”

Seeing how everyone was busy surrounding J’onn, Mon-El decided he might as well try sitting up and maybe even getting up while they were too distracted to notice him. But just as his toes contacted the very cold floor, Kara walked over.

“I’m so glad you’re okay,” she said, her smile huge as she came to stand in front of him, crossing her arms.

“Yeah, me too. I don’t know what you would’ve done without me,” he joked.
She laughed, the combination of her happy face and the awkward little hugging-herself hunch making him look down and away before he did anything embarrassing like smile stupidly or ask her flat out if she had any idea how cute she was being. And then out of nowhere, a hazy, patchwork-y image of Kara sitting by his bed surfaced. In less than a second, a series of utterly terrifying-in-their-implications memories went racing through Mon-El’s mind:

Kara, leaning over him.

Kara looking so sad and worried and tired that he wished he could just put his arms around her and say exactly the right thing to make her happy.

Kara’s hair glowing again like the bundles of spun gold from that book he remembered one of his nurses reading to him as a kid.

Kara’s bluer-than-anything blue eyes hovering so close to him that he was half-convinced he could fall into them and drown and he wouldn’t mind a bit, because if he had to die, he couldn’t think of a better way to go except for maybe…

No.

No, that part of the memory couldn’t be right. He couldn’t possibly have kissed her. That had to be a dream. He wasn’t that brave. Or crazy. And anyway, she would’ve never allowed that in a million years. Not from him. And yet looking at her now, he could swear he knew exactly how soft her lips were and how they tasted. How they could set off miniature volcanoes in your brain with just one touch. How could he know that unless…

“So, are—are we gonna…talk about what happened?” she asked, cutting off his frantic line of thought.

Mon-El risked looking up to find that her smile had turned into more of a lip-stretch. He was pretty sure that meant she was nervous, and if she was nervous…oh, boy.

His stomach flipped. There was only one reason he could think of why she might feel uneasy talking to him, and that meant…oh, holy Rao. He’d really done it, hadn’t he? He’d kissed her. He’d thought he was dying and he’d actually kissed her. Why he’d dared to even try, he didn’t know. He for sure remembered thinking it was probably going to be the only chance he got, and her eyes had been so sad and breathtaking, but what kind of an explanation was that? Now that he had somehow not died again and she was standing right here in front of him as caring and beautiful as ever, he had no idea what he was supposed to do.

Do not panic. Do not panic.

“Yes,” he responded, defaulting almost automatically to the pleasant, unobservant demeanor that had been his go-to on Daxam for years when he knew better than to let anyone see what he was thinking. “Yes. I want to hear all about how you chased that missile down.”

Okay, that was convincing, right? He was always interested in listening to her talk about her fights, and she always enjoyed retelling them. He could conceivably be focused on that.

Kara hesitated, mouth working open and closed a few times before she smiled uncertainly again. “No, I-I mean, are we gonna…are we gonna talk about what happened between us?” She pointed jerkily back and forth between them and Mon-El was pretty sure he could feel some cold beads of sweat beginning to form. “While you were…dying.”

Quickly, he pasted on a confused smile. When in doubt, play dumb was a defense strategy that
had served him well over the years and he prayed to Rao that it worked now. He didn’t know whether it was instinct or fear telling him that now was almost the worst possible time for Kara to find out how he had been feeling—how he felt—about her, but whichever it was, he decided to listen to it.

“Why, what—what happened? What did I do?” he asked, relieved to hear that he sounded pretty normal.

Again, Kara hesitated. He could see the struggle on her face but had no idea what to hope she said. He was all but certain she hadn’t wanted this to happen, but the idea of them discussing it—like, face-to-face, where the whole time he would want to run away and hide or at least stick his head under a pillow so she didn’t have to see him being strange and uncomfortable and he didn’t have to see her trying to be nice and apologetic—well, frankly, being publicly humiliated in the stocks on Daxam sounded easier to endure.

Feeling almost sick, he cocked his head to the side, giving her his best clueless look. Please, please, please, he begged silently, unsure what he was even begging for.

Her mouth opened wordlessly for a second or two, then something in her face seemed to change. “You drooled,” she said.

Act surprised, Mon-El told himself fiercely. “I droo—no!”

He opened his eyes as wide as they would go, lifting his eyebrows at the same time. Then he glanced at the floor again just in case he wasn’t being very believable because he suddenly knew what he’d been hoping she’d answer, and that wasn’t it.

“You drooled all over yourself,” she declared, obviously fake-laughing while he faked a sheepish groan.

Chuckling, he held a fist in front of his mouth before grinning again. Nothing he was doing felt anything like what he did when he found something funny for real, but he didn’t think he could do much better at the moment. And anyway, Kara didn’t seem to be noticing.

“You drooled all over yourself,” she declared, obviously fake-laughing while he faked a sheepish groan.

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“That’s bad,” he said, fake-laughing again. “But that, that was…that was it?”

The instant he said it, he nearly bit through his tongue. Why couldn’t he just shut up and let this end? Why did he always, always have to keep talking? He needn’t have worried, though. Kara clearly wanted this conversation over as soon as possible, and she wasn’t taking any chances.

“Yeah, that was it,” she answered quickly, waving a hand.

“Okay.” Don’t say anything, don’t say anything, DON’T say ANYTHING, you dunce.

“Well, get some rest.” She smiled briefly at him before looking down, her fingers toying clumsily with the little belt near her hips before she practically scooted for the door.

Turning his head just enough to watch her leave, Mon-El released a slow, shaky breath as soon as he was sure she was out of sight. Well, at least he’d guessed correctly, he thought, a heaviness washing over him. Kara didn’t want them to have kissed. She probably hadn’t stopped him because she’d thought he was dying, too, or maybe just very, very out of it, and she was way too kindhearted to put a stop to a drugged-up dying person she considered a friend trying to awkwardly kiss her.

Unless maybe she’d just hated it and didn’t want to have to tell him?
Mon-El tried not to frown. He knew the idea of Kara thinking he was a terrible kisser shouldn’t bother him, but it kind of did anyway. There weren’t very many things he could say with confidence he was good at (messing up didn’t count), but kissing—that, he could do. And well. Very well, actually. It rankled a little to think that he might have been so out of it that he’d done a poor job and repulsed or bored her or something. Because whatever he was, he was not a boring kisser.

For one wild second, he considered running after her and explaining that he had been pretty lightheaded from the medicine and that if she’d let him have another shot at it, he could do so, so much better, and maybe even impress her this time. But reason intervened and he flopped back onto his pillow to stare up at the boring ceiling. Which was significantly less boring than usual, because now the blurry images rolling around in his brain seemed to project themselves onto the blank surface until he was essentially reliving the entire foggy-but-wonderful moment when he kissed Kara.

For what was absolutely the first and last time.

Heaving a sigh, he covered his eyes with his hands, unsure whether to groan or start grinning moronically. Or hey, maybe he could throw up? That also seemed like it could happen at any second, and a part of him almost thought he’d feel better if it did. The whole thing was lightyears beyond confusing, and Mon-El found himself wondering if it were maybe possible on Earth to just break into little pieces from feeling too much all at once.

Eventually, because he couldn’t figure out what to do and hiding his uncertainty was getting hard when he was also kind of tired, he closed his eyes and feigned sleep to keep people from coming in to talk to him. Judging by the number of different pairs of footsteps he heard coming up and stopping just inside the doorway before moving on, it was a very good plan. (The only person who didn’t buy it was Eliza—she told him she was leaving and it had been very nice meeting him like she already knew he could hear her, so he made an exception in that case and lifted his head really quickly to say goodbye and thank you.) Or it would’ve been a good plan, if it hadn’t worked so well that he fell asleep and woke with a start to find everything dark and deserted, the only nearby sounds coming from that really annoying beep-y thing by his bed that they’d been using to track his organs or something and his stomach, because it had been awhile since he’d eaten.

“Nice,” he muttered, sitting up and yawning.

The DEO was basically a round-the-clock kind of scary organization he’d discovered, but every now and then they shut down sections of it down for the night. It was kind of cool seeing everything in shadow, but at the moment, he was really craving food, and not just any food—all he could think about was the big, unopened bag of pretzels he had stashed in his room under the bed. If this infirmary stay was going to be anything like his last one, he knew he’d better get moving while there was no one around to order him back.

So, quickly, he hopped out of bed and tiptoed down the stairs, staggering every now and then when he started moving too fast. It was a very smooth mission at the start—he ran into no one, made it to his room in record time, and located his quarry at once. But halfway back to the stairs, a handful of the little salty twists en route to his mouth, he heard his name called.

“Yes?” he said cautiously, turning to see Alex eyeing him from across the room.

The agent folded her arms, brows raised. “There a reason you’re wandering around the building at nine o’clock at night with junk food?”

“Yeah, um…I’m hungry?” Mon-El suggested, offering a grin with more width than humor. “I
uh, well, I kinda thought nobody was left down here and they wouldn’t see me.” He held out the bag. “Pretzel?”

To his relief, her lips twitched. “Sure, why not. I’ll take a few,” she responded, striding over to him. “Not too many, though. I’m heading home, so I’ll eat there. Just…try to keep the crumbs down, okay?”

“Yes! Yes. Absolutely.” Mon-El bobbed his head up and down vigorously. “Hey, so, why are you here so late? If, if you don’t mind my asking,” he added hastily as she stuck her hand into the bag. “I mean, your mother was in town, and you’re usually gone by now, aren’t you?”

“True. And no, I don’t mind your asking.” She inclined her head toward the corridor behind her, a little smirk forming as she tossed a pretzel into her mouth. “I was just catching up on some interesting developments in my weekly TV viewing.”

Oh. Mon-El could understand that. “Really?” he said, his crunching and munching loud in his ears.

“Yeah.” Alex lifted her eyebrows again. “It had some of the most dramatic scenes yet. Even I could hardly believe it.”

“Ooh, that’s always good.” Mon-El motioned for her to go on. “Tell me. I mean, don’t tell me what show it is, because I want to be surprised if I ever watch it, but…come on! Let’s hear some details.”

“O-kay, details. Hmm.” Alex pursed her lips, head tilted to the side. “Let me see. Details without giving spoilers….well.” A very crafty look came over her face and Mon-El wondered briefly if he should worry.

“No spoilers,” he reminded her.

She held up her hands. “Right, sure. No spoilers. Okay. So, this show focuses on a…well, we’ll call it a company. It focuses on a company, and it follows these different people as they do their jobs. I can’t tell you what kinds of jobs specifically, because it might give it away. Just know that they’re not all doctors. Or cops.”

He nodded. “Okay.” This sounded interesting.

She crunched on another pretzel. “The first half of this week’s installment was pretty boring. Mostly just the people running back and forth trying to do their jobs with varying levels of success. But near the end, it picked up bigtime. A couple of the main characters almost died, one of them revealed this huge, life-changing secret, and then…” She trailed off, pressing both hands to her heart dramatically.

“Then what?” Mon-El inquired, laughing a little at her.

Alex sighed. “Then—and oh, my God, it was so cute—this couple I’ve been following for what seems like ages now kissed.”

At the word kissed, Mon-El stiffened.

“Really?” he said again, shoving a quick handful of food into his mouth so that if he sounded funny, he could blame it on that. “That’s…yeah, that’s uh, that’s great!”

“Maybe,” she answered, frowning thoughtfully. “It’s one of those dicey situations where as the
audience, you still can’t really tell what the two of them are thinking. And the thing is, she’s usually bad at hiding things and so is he, but because neither one of them reacts to the situation like normal human beings, I’m going to have to keep wondering.” She rolled her eyes. “It’s so stupid. You can’t just pretend a kiss didn’t happen.”

“Yeah, well, uh…maybe, maybe they have their reasons, you know?” Mon-El suggested, thinking that he didn’t want to have anything to do with a show that was this similar to his life right now. “I mean, everyone’s different. Maybe one of them regretted it, or maybe there were like, what-do-you-call-it…extenuating circumstances?”

“Extenuating,” Alex corrected. “And maybe. But I don’t know. Time will tell.” She grinned at him, a pretzel held between her teeth. “I can’t wait to see J’onn’s face when he finds out, though.”

Mon-El blinked. “Wait, J’onn watches this show, too?”

“Oh, all the time. He’s the one who got me started on it.” Still grinning, Alex bumped her fist lightly against his shoulder. “So, I got to get out of here. Go get some sleep, okay?”

“Yeah, okay. See you around, Alex.” He managed a weak, weird smile, and turned back to the stairs quickly. Wow, that had been close.

Good thing he’d left before she could notice something was wrong.

***

On the fourth attempt, Kara finally succeeded in unlocking her door. She tried to tell herself that the five pizzas she’d balanced in one hand were throwing her off, but when you could lift a car without any trouble whatsoever, you couldn’t really blame unsteady hands on ‘too-heavy’ cardboard boxes full of hot, cheesy deliciousness. Not that her hands were actually unsteady, because that would be ridiculous. Project Medusa was over. Cadmus had been stopped. Lillian Luthor was in custody, and the city was safe. J’onn wasn’t turning into a White Martian, Alex had told Eliza her big news, and Mon-El wasn’t dying anymore. They were all safe.

So why did she feel so weird and lost, now?

Dropping her keys on the counter and the boxes on the table, she zipped into the bedroom to change into the fuzziest pair of pajamas she owned and then took the stack of pizzas with her to the couch. She had intended to watch a movie while she ate to dist—uh, to entertain herself, but every channel she flipped to was playing a movie with way too much unrealistic romance in it for her mood tonight, so she finally clicked the TV off in disgust.

Messily, she crammed half a slice into her mouth and leaned her head back, stretching the cheese into a long string as she chewed. Ugh. Why was this bothering her? She hadn’t had to tell Mon-El she wasn’t interested in starting any kind of relationship—well, that kind of relationship, anyway—anytime soon, and definitely not with him. She’d been dreading it since she got back from fighting Cadmus and found out he was going to be okay. She should be totally relieved that the whole thing had worked out neatly where she didn’t have to. So why, for the love of Rao, did it sting knowing that kissing her hadn’t made enough of an impression for him to remember it?

Two pizzas in, Kara was still contemplating it, scowling at her chandelier the whole time. At one point, she got so frustrated that she rolled over and grabbed up her phone. But with her finger hovering over Mon-El’s contact information, she hesitated. He probably wasn’t close enough to hear his phone. He might be sleeping. And even if he wasn’t, what good would calling him and demanding he explain why he hadn’t remembered kissing her do? She turned red just thinking
about his response to that. Nope. She was not going to go there. For a moment she considered calling either Alex or Clark and asking them what they thought she should do, but something—whether embarrassment or just a desire to solve it herself; she wasn’t sure—held her back. So with a groan, she laid back down.

“No more overthinking it, you dork,” she muttered, grabbing another two slices out of a new box.

Boy, was this one of those times she was thankful for her metabolism. And hey, speaking of high metabolisms…there was her new thought topic. Alex and J’onn hadn’t been convinced when she’d suggested it, but Kara was sure that the crazy portals that had by now been reported bursting open at random points all over the city were because of Barry. When he’d visited that one time and she’d helped him get back home, the thing she’d flung him into had looked an awful like those portals. Was it so hard to believe that he might be trying to visit again? He’d mentioned that he had some friends who would be really excited about traveling to other universes.

For a while, trying to recall the portal’s behavior kept her brain occupied. But then she got up to throw away the boxes and her eyes lighted on her game shelf, where the stupid Monopoly box stood out. In the blink of an eye, everything she’d been working hard to not think about came rushing back, and she was left standing motionless in the middle of her kitchen, hugging four empty pizza boxes (she hadn’t been able to finish the last one) to her chest and frowning. Okay. She needed something to do, and quickly. When she wasn’t busy, she got a little wacky.

“Time to clean,” she decided, crumpling the boxes up into a tight ball.

Grabbing her cleaning supplies out from under the cabinet, she caught herself just before she started to speed through her work like she always did. Contrary to what some people thought, she did not always have to use her superpowers to make the human chores go faster. (Even if they were really frustrating and boring when you couldn’t use superspeed.) The good news was, though, that by the time she finished, she was too tired to think about anything but bed, so she retired gratefully and slept like a log, unaware of anything until her alarm shrilled the next morning and she stumbled into the kitchen in search of breakfast.

And sighed.

The one thing she had avoided during her cleaning spree was a certain vase full of flowers that Eliza had, for whatever reason, not taken with her when she left. The bright sunshine streaming in through her windows illuminated their happy yellow fringe so that they were impossible to ignore, a sea of cheeriness in the middle of her apartment that she couldn’t help but smile at. But they absolutely had to go, she thought, absently rubbing a papery petal between her fingertips as she studied them. Thanksgiving was over, and people could be funny about flowers. If she kept a bouquet that hadn’t actually been given to her smack dab in the center of her counter, people—Alex—might make certain wrongful assumptions about why she might’ve kept them in the first place and then she’d have to answer a lot of awkward questions she really didn’t want to deal with. At the same time, though…

Kara chewed her lip. They were just flowers. If they had been from anyone else, she wouldn’t think twice about keeping them right out there in the open where everyone could see them until they (the flowers, not the people seeing them) died and she was forced to throw them out. Why was she so hung up on the fact that they were from Mon-El?

Maybe, a sneaky little part of her brain whispered, it’s because—

“I’ll just spread them around,” she announced to the empty kitchen, winging the thought away
as quickly as it came. “This place could use some cute autumn décor before I break out the Christmas stuff anyway.”

Without wasting any more time, she scattered the fun little blossoms in inconspicuous places around the apartment—the leftover Thanksgiving arrangements, her bedside table, in front of her bathroom mirror—until she was left holding two final sunflowers, looking from them to the clock that was ticking dangerously close to work time. She’d decorated. She could just toss these. They weren’t necessary, and it wouldn’t be wasting free flowers since she’d already used most of them. Yeah, she was going to just throw them away. That made the most sense.

But staring down into the depths of her trash can, she discovered that she couldn’t bring herself to do it. They were just so pretty. And sure, she could take them to Catco with her and give them to someone who’d enjoy them—she knew for a fact that Eve liked flowers—but a less-than-charitable part of Kara didn’t care much for thought of giving Eve something from Mon-El, even very indirectly. Which also made no sense, because Eve was nice, and Kara liked her. She was smart, worked hard, and in a lot of ways was a far better personal assistant than Kara had ever been. But it bugged her all the same, so she dismissed that idea.

Finally, because she was losing a lot of time twirling flowers and not heading to work, she plopped the two blooms in a glass filled with water and set them on her table. If they got noticed, they got noticed. It was just two flowers, and she was not going to worry about that anymore.

On the way to work, she stopped for coffee and managed to arrive about five seconds before Snapper showed up, already mid-grumble. After that, the day was just a long series of meetings, trying to come up with responses to Snapper’s derogatory remarks about millennials, bad grammar, and general incompetence, and worrying that she might be called in to the DEO at any moment and cross paths with a certain someone she wasn’t yet prepared to see. By the time she headed home, detouring to the store to pick up some really good junk food, she was feeling the need for some solid, Actual Relaxation time.

But that notion disappeared the second she opened her door to find two unexpected visitors standing in the middle of her apartment.

“Barry!” she gasped.

“Hey.” Her whole-boxes-of-doughnuts-eating, string-bean of a friend held up a hand sheepishly.

“I knew it!” Shoving the door closed, Kara hurried to put down her groceries. “I knew it was you in that weird…space portal thing! Hi!” She gave him a hug, remembering just in time that she couldn’t squeeze too hard—the last time he’d been here, he’d had to politely ask her to not ‘slap his ribcage right out of him,’ and she didn’t want to greet him by crushing his bones.

“Yeah, it took a couple tries to get here,” he told her, looking apologetic. “Oh, uh.” He motioned toward the long-haired guy standing next to him. “This is my friend, Cisco.”

“Well. ‘Friend’ is a…loose term. We work together,” Cisco interjected, holding out a hand. “Hi.”

Kara smiled back. “Hi.”

“I have to say it,” he added, eyebrows going up as he looked around the room. “This…is a nice universe you got here.”
“Thank you,” she grinned, dropping her keys on the table.

“Do—okay, do you remember last year?” Barry asked. “When um, I helped you out, and you promised to do the same…for me?”

“What are we up against?” Kara asked immediately, interest piqued. After listening to the brief explanation they gave her, she nodded. “Yep. Your Dominators sound like our Dominators.”

Barry linked his hands together behind his head, looking worried. “Is that…bad?”

“Eh…” Kara answered, pulling her phone out of her pocket. “Short answer, probably. But we can always hope, right?” She hit Alex’s contact info, waiting impatiently for her sister to pick up.

“And what—what’s the long answer?” Cisco inquired, his voice increasing in pitch. “Just for, ah, ha-ha, you know…curiosity’s sake?”

Kara grimaced. “They’re a highly intelligent species who aren’t exactly known across the galaxy for their kindness and tolerance of other species. They may want to take over your planet and enslave everyone on it.”

“Enslave?” Barry yelped.

“Well…more or less,” she explained, wondering why Alex hadn’t yet answered. “They might just be looking for test subjects, willing or unwilling. That happens sometimes. They’re basically geneticists who want to stay on top of everything. They uh, really like dissection.”

“Oh. Yay.” Cisco gave a nervous laugh. “Welp, I don’t know about you, but there go my final ‘We come in peace’ hopes.”

“Ha!” Kara exclaimed, hearing a click on the other end of the line. “Alex! Finally. So, I have kind of a small crisis. Well, not a crisis per se, but, it is important.”

“Well, I wondered when I was going to get this call,” her sister said, sounding way more chipper than usual. “I’m surprised you made it this long. You know, I actually have some news, too.”

“What?” Kara frowned, then shook her head. “Aah! Wait. No. No time. Alex listen, I was right. Barry’s here with one of his—”

“Associates,” Cisco put in sharply, and Kara squinted at him for a second, wondering what was going on there.

“With a—with Cisco,” she amended, “and they need help.”


“Problems on their Earth,” Kara answered, checking over her shoulder to see Barry practically jittering in place. “They’ve got kind of an invasion situation happening over there, and I’m going to go do what I can. I shouldn’t be gone too long.”

“Okay. But Kara, be careful,” her sister ordered. “I don’t have the time to be going to other earths to kill whoever hurts you. And are you going to be all right traveling through a portal? You’ve never—”
Kara rolled her eyes. *Annund,* she was having another high school déjà vu moment. “*Yes,* Alex. I’ll be fine. Barry’s done it like—” she pulled the phone away from her ear and looked over at him. “Barry, how many times have you done the portal travel?”

“Six—no, five times?” He frowned. “Well, at least three. But there was a lot of back and forth, so… I guess that counts as more?”

Kara bit her lip. “Uh, he’s done it a few times,” she told her sister. “With some back and forth.”

“Yes, too bad some of that back and forth resulted in *death,*” Cisco remarked to no one in particular.

“What was that?” Alex’s voice squawked over the line. “Did he say *death*?”

“It’s fine,” Kara assured her, making a throat-slashing gesture to Cisco to warn him not to say anything more along those lines. “Barry’s going to fly us—run us?” She appealed to her friend again, holding out an arm in confusion. “How do you do this, again?”

“Oh, Okay, Alex, Cisco’s going to open a breach,” Kara reported, peeling off her trench coat and tossing it over a chair back. “There’s not even going to be much of a trip.”

“And Cisco is…?”

Kara sighed, yanking off her flats. “Alex. I’m just going to another Earth for a few days. You sound like Eliza trying to vet who I’m riding with.” Flinging first one shoe than the other toward her couch, she winced when Barry superspeeded out of the way of the first one only to get whacked in the stomach with the second. *Sorry,* she mouthed. He nodded, holding up a hand as he wheezed. “Cisco’s a good driver. Or—portal taxi driver. Whatever. I’ll be fine.”

“Well,” Alex didn’t sound convinced. “All right. But I’m not kidding about the being careful. You… *hey!*” Kara winced, backing away from the phone at her sister’s yell. “Winn! Mon-El! Shoot me again and I’ll break both your guns, understand? I don’t care who’s responsible.”

Shoot? Guns? “You let them have guns?” Kara demanded, earning startled looks from both Barry and Cisco. “Al-lex!”

Alex snorted. “Rubber *dart* guns, Kara. Winn’s got some kind of crappy-weapons stockpile at work—did you know that, by the way?—and they’re trying to shoot across the room. I swear to God I’ve never felt more like a mother. Or that teacher everyone ignores.”

Despite the urgency of the moment, Kara chuckled. “Okay. Well. So long as they’re not *real* guns.”

“Yeah, I’m not insane,” Alex grumbled. “And speaking of insane—”

“I know, I know,” Kara interrupted. “I promise I won’t take completely insane risks. Does that work?”

Her sister sighed. “Yes. Thank you. Okay. I love you, all right? Be safe.”

Kara smiled. “I love you, too, Alex. And I will. Oh,” she added, “it’s not *that* important, but
before I forget, can you tell J’onn—”

A dull thwap! interrupted followed by a loud Dammit, Winn! made Kara cringe again.

“Alex?” she said tentatively.

“Yeah, Kara, I’ve got to go destroy a plastic weapon,” Alex said through gritted teeth. “I’m giving Mon-El the phone. Give him the message, okay?”

Kara’s eyes widened. “No! Alex…” she started, but she could already hear her sister’s voice hollering, Mon-El, catch! and then a bunch of Sorry! I didn’t mean it! It wasn’t on purpose, I swear! shouts from Winn.

“Um, hello?”

Kara’s stomach clenched. Was it just her, or did his voice sound remarkably similar to the one he’d used right before he’d ki—yeah, this wasn’t helping.

“Uh, h-hi,” she floundered, not daring to turn around for fear she’d see Barry and Cisco noticing her agitation. “Hey, guys,” she said, pulling the phone away for a second. “Help yourself to some snacks if you want. I need to get changed, so I’ll just…do that while I relay the message, okay?”

“Sure. Thanks,” Barry answered. “We’ll, uh—we’ll wait around the corner. Way around the corner—”

“With our backs turned,” Cisco added.

“—so don’t worry,” Barry finished.

She laughed and nodded, hustling into the bedroom. Technically, all she had to do was get all her regular clothes off and put on her boots. But if she ended up doing anything goofballish, she didn't want any witnesses around. “Mon-El, you still there?” she panted, tripping over a stray pillow that landed her on her bed with a grunt as she tried to struggle out of her shirt.

“Yep. Still here. Winn isn’t, though. Alex is uh, chasing him up the stairs.”

He chuckled, and she sternly wiped her automatic smile off. Now was not the time to get distracted.

“Okay. Well.” She wiggled one leg out of her pants. “J’onn’s going to have to take over the recruit training while I’m gone. Can you tell him that I haven’t gone over flying attacks with them yet, and remind him to call Clark if like, some super-duper big emergency comes up?”

“Of course,” he answered, sounding surprised. “No flying attacks yet and remember to call Clark. But Kara, are you—are you going somewhere?”

“Yeah.” She glared at the stubborn pair of pants and tried a combination of pulling and kicking to finish removing them. “Another Earth, actually. Remember that friend with superspeed I told you about? The one who’s always late? Well, he’s got some alien visitors back at home and he needs some help, so I’m going.”

“Oh, so you’re going to be like a diplomat?”

Kara scrunched up her nose. In a manner of speaking, she thought. But telling Mon-El who Barry had called her in to help fight wasn’t the same as telling Alex. Or, she guessed, even J’onn,
although J’onn would definitely have reservations. Mon-El knew about Dominators, because Daxam had once been pretty close allies with them. And if she remembered correctly, even Daxam had thought the Dominators were a little too intense. They just kept on doing business with them because they figured it was better to keep on their good side.

“That’s the hope, yes,” she answered, stutter-stepping and falling flat as her foot finally shook free. “Crap,” she muttered.

“Kara?” His laugh sounded mystified. “Are you okay? What are you doing?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine,” she answered, scowling at the stupid pants and grabbing her costume. “Just…trying to get undressed and keep talking. I mean, not undressed undressed! I’m just changing into my suit and it’s really hard one-handed.”

“Oh, is it?” She couldn’t tell for sure, but she thought he might be smirking. “You know, why don’t you uh, why don’t you put it on speakerphone? That way you can use both hands.”

Oh, yeah. He was definitely smirking. “Thank you,” she replied with exaggerated politeness. “Hey, is this where I hang up on you looking for the speakerphone button?”

“Well, I suppose that’s only fair.” He chuckled, then fell silent for a few seconds. “So, uh… how long will you be gone?”

“I don’t really know,” Kara answered, tossing her hair out of the way as she sat down to pull on her boots. “A few days? Maybe a week?”

“Wow.”

Did he sound disappointed? She couldn’t tell. Not that it mattered. She was just curious. That was all. Just…curious. “Yeah. Guess Snapper’s going to have to think I’m sick for a while.”


She smiled down at the floor, tucking her hair behind her ears as she gathered up the phone again and clicked it off speaker. “Thanks. I’ll try. You, uh…you don’t go near any alien bars with poisonous clouds or creepy alleys while I’m gone, okay?”

“Got it.”

“Good. Tell Winn I said bye, okay?” she added. “And J’onn and James. And tell Alex to please make sure Eliza knows.”

“All right. Winn, Kara says bye!” he shouted in perfect seriousness. “Winn says bye, too,” he informed her. “Or, well, I think it was ‘bye.’ Alex is disarming him, so he’s kind of in a headlock thing right now. And the gun is definitely doomed.”

Kara rolled her eyes, laughing in spite of herself. “Okay, thanks. Bye, Mon-El. I’ll see you soon.”

“Goodbye, Kara.” His voice was so cheerful she could practically picture him smiling. “I’ll uh…see you when you get back, I guess.”

“Yep.” Kara yanked on a strand of hair, smiling to herself as she waited for the click. When several seconds went by, she frowned. “Mon-El?”
“Oh.” There was another moment of silence. “I thought you were gonna End Call me.”

Kara giggled. “Hang up,” she corrected. “And I can, I just thought—ah, never mind.” She waved like he could see her, then slapped herself in the head with her palm. Why did she keep doing that? “Okay. Bye again. For real, this time.”

“Bye for real, Supergirl.”

Shaking her head, Kara quickly typed a message to James (Out sick at work for next few days. Call Alex for details. SG emergency.) and headed into the kitchen, where she found Barry speed-pacing while consuming the remaining half of the pizza she hadn’t finished last night, and Cisco sitting as far from him as was possible in the small apartment. Yeah, there was definitely something going on there.

“Okay. Sorry that took so long,” she told them, propping her hands on her hips.

“Ah, no. We’re good,” Barry answered, swallowing hurriedly and coughing. “I mean, when I got Oliver, we had to let Dig have some time to recover. I kinda…made him…barf.”

“Ooh.” Kara could sympathize with that. “Too fast?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, don’t feel bad.” Kara patted him on the shoulder, relieved to see that he didn’t flinch this time. “I flew one of my friends here a while back and I forgot to tell him to keep his mouth shut, so he ate a bug.”

Barry’s face wrinkled in disgust. “Been there. Done that. A lot, actually, and it’s really gross. Gnats are the worst.”

Cisco pointed at her, eyes squinty. “Did you say ‘fly’?”

“Yes,” Kara said with Barry, who frowned.

“Didn’t I tell you she could fly?” he asked.

“Yeah, no. Don’t think so,” Cisco answered shortly, pulling the funny little visor thing he was wearing down over his eyes. “Telling everyone everything isn’t your strongest suit, remember? Now, are we going?”

“Yes, we are,” Kara said brightly, seeing a shadow cross Barry’s face. Stepping between them, she grabbed both their shoulders for a minute, squeezing excitedly. “Okay. The Dominators had better watch out. Earth One, here we come!”

Now if she could just stop feeling a little bit like she was running away, it would all be good.

Chapter End Notes

*Title taken from Mr. Brightside by The Killers, because I feel like "It was only a kiss, it was only a kiss" is Kara and Mon-El's mantra around this point ;)
*Fun game I like to play during this scene: Watch Mon-El Watch Kara. He's not as sneaky about it as he thinks he is, and it's adorable.
Did anyone think they were going to try to make J'onn and Eliza a thing the first time they saw this episode, or was that just me? I don't think they are now, but even re-watching it, I kind of feel like they were maybe testing the waters.

I think I've said this a lot now, but the first time I saw 2x08, I had no idea where K&M were at in their relationship. I just thought they were insanely cute, and went straight into watching the rest of the episodes before I went back to 2x03 and caught up. Looking at it now, I think it's fun to speculate on how quickly Kara ran off with Barry and Cisco to go save Earth prime, especially considering the Mon-El thing and her tendency to throw herself into work when she's confused or upset about something else in her life.

I always wondered what Kara told everyone. "Bye guys! Off to save a different earth!" doesn't seem like the kind of thing Alex or J'onn would just accept, and anyway, I feel like Kara would want to make sure her earth was safe, too.

I go back and forth on how much I think Mon-El remembers the kiss when he talks to Kara. Watching the way he looks after she walks off, I think it's obvious he remembers SOMETHING. But I've always felt like he maybe wasn't sure if he dreamed it and kept quiet because really, who's going to confess to their crush that they dreamed about kissing them whilst high on medication? Not moi.

It has always bothered me deeply that the show never mentions the security cameras, because HELLO, it's the DEO. Department stores check their cameras all the time, and they're not heavily populated by secret agent types. SOMEONE, if not EVERYONE at the DEO saw that kiss. Guaranteed. My headcanon is it was Alex, and she almost fell out of her chair.

I'm probably only going to do one or two chapters that actually take place IN the 2x09 timeline (even though it is my favorite episode) because Kara and Mon-El get so much screen time in that one that I feel like there aren't that many gaps, and anyway, I firmly believe that for most of that one, Mon and Kara are both thinking a heckuva lot more about survival than they are about kissing (AS IT SHOULD BE!!!). The biggest gaps seem to take place BETWEEN 2x08 and 2x09, so that's what I'll focus on more in the next few chapters. I'm 99% sure a Christmas one is going to happen, because I'm just really disappointed that the happiest CW superhero show didn't get a Christmas-themed episode. I mean, come on, Christmas eps are so WASTED on Arrow. If you're lucky, everyone survives, which doesn't scream "holiday spirit!" ya know?

This is turning into a slow-burn of tortoise levels, or perhaps even bonsai tree growth. I'm sorry. I just keep getting ideas, and then it kind of...just...happens.

Thanks for reading/commenting, and congrats to the peeps who have been voting in the TCAs! I honestly never thought the babies would do this well against the monster ships they're competing against! (Especially considering how the majority of the fandom seems to be adults, not teens.) Y'all are awe-and-some.
Once Upon A December

Chapter Summary

Takes place between 2x08 and 2x09 after Kara gets back from helping fight the Dominators from her POV.
Fair warning: It jumps around some because of an unfortunate combination of me trying to cover more than just one scene in a chapter and a lot of unexpected company these last few weeks which meant this was written in about four big chunks over several weeks.
Sorry about the gap between updates! I promise, I'm trying to get to where the lengthier updates don't take forever to write and edit.
Hope everyone's having a great day/week/month/summer! :D

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The second Kara burst out of the portal back into—onto?—her Earth, an enormous smile spread over her face. Cisco’s gadget, however he’d done it, had taken her through the portal right back to her apartment (well, technically, to the dumpsters in the alley outside her apartment building which was a little stinky and gross, but still), and everything felt nice and normal and comfortable again.

“‘There’s no place like home,’” she murmured, taking deep gulps of Earth 38 oxygen.

A stealthy glance over her shoulder assured her of the alley’s emptiness, so, grinning even wider, she clicked her heels together three times and did a happy little dance right there in the middle of lots of garbage cans. Then, because adult instinct kicked in—albeit a bit slowly—Kara pulled out her phone and dialed Alex.

“Hello, Auntie Em!” she sang out when her sister answered. “How’re things in Kansas?”

“Kara?” To her surprise, Alex sounded almost angry. “Are you back? Are you all right? Where the hell are you?”

“Um…yeah.” Kara frowned, squinting up at the few remaining streaks of light in the evening sky. “I’m fine. I’m outside my apartment actually, and—”

“Oh, thank God.” Alex’s voice wobbled then grew fierce again. “Kara Danvers, don’t you dare pull a stunt like that ever again!”

“What?” Chuckling a little, Kara frowned. “Alex, what are you talking about?”

“What am I talking about? What am I talking about?”

Kara grimaced at her sister’s rising volume. “Okay, super hearing,” she hissed. “You don’t need to yell.” Sheesh. “Look, are you at home, or are you still at the DEO?”

“Home,” Alex snapped. “And you’d better use every scrap of superspeed in you to get over here, or I’m calling Mom and telling her what you did.”
“What I did?” Kara yelped. “What’d I do? I told you I was leaving, who with, and what I was going to do! And anyway, I’m an adult, Alex! So are you—you can’t just, just tattle on me.”

“Oh, I can and I so will if I have to,” her sister shot back. “Now you get your butt over here, and hurry.”

“Well, fine,” Kara grumbled as her sister hung up with an abrupt click. In less than a minute she was pounding none-too politely on Alex’s door, nobly resisting the urge to just kick the stupid thing down. “All right,” she announced as her sister swung the door open, “I’m here. What—okay.”

She broke off mid-complaint as Alex rushed at her and grabbed her in the kind of hug that would’ve meant death (or at least asphyxiation) for a human.

“Um, Alex?” she questioned curiously, returning the hug with care as her sister dragged her into the apartment and shut the door, somehow managing to not let go at any point. “I’m really happy to see you, too. But ah, what’s going on?”

“Really?” Pulling away, Alex held her at arms’ length, glaring. “Really? Kara, the second I said the word Dominators in front of J’onn and Mon-El, they about flipped out. What. The hell. Happened?”

“Oh. Yeah, that would probably explain her sister’s ferocity.

Kara sighed. “Okay, first off, I’m fine. I mean, well, now. I’m fine now, so you can rest easy there.”

“What do you mean ‘now?’” Alex narrowed her eyes. “Were you not fine at some point during this fun little jaunt to another earth?”

Wrinkling her nose, Kara sucked in a reluctant breath. “I…kind of got a little…mind-controlled. But not for long.” she added hastily, seeing the horrified look on her sister’s face. “And just a little! And then I destroyed the mind control device because Barry tricked me into doing it by making me mad while I was trying to kill him, so it all turned out okay.”

“You tried to kill Barry? As in your friend, Barry?” Alex’s head fell back at Kara’s cautious nod and she took a deep breath before motioning toward her sofa. “Right. Sit. Now. And tell me everything.”

***

By the time Kara finished relating the whole thrilling Earth 1 saga to Alex and Alex filled her in on the thrilling Earth 38 saga involving an unexpected late-night visit from a certain small detective, the sun was starting to come up and Kara was in desperate need of some sleep. So instead of heading home she crashed on her sister’s couch for the next couple hours, only to wake feeling cramped and just sort of generally wrinkled. Alex (of course) seemed unaffected by the late hours, and emerged from the shower brisk, bossy, and ready for work. She insisted that Kara go home and at least get some fresh clothes before heading to either Catco or the DEO.

Which was a great suggestion, but by the time Kara flew home and got showered and changed, it was kind of too late to bother wondering whether or not she should go into work at Catco. It was Friday after all, and since Alex assured her that James had taken care of everyone thinking that she was sick, she figured she might as well skip one more day and just start next week fresh. It was nice to be able to look around and see homey things again, so she killed a good twenty minutes just
sprawling out on her couch and grinning happily up at her ceiling.

But underlying the comfort of home was the knowledge that time was ticking away and she really ought to get down to the DEO and report back to J’onn. Alex had let him know last night that Kara had returned and he’d agreed to wait for the briefing ’til morning, but she didn’t want to take advantage of that. Besides, it had been fun meeting Barry’s friends and hanging out slash getting to fight with them, but she’d missed her friends a lot and was looking forward to seeing them.

All of them. Because they were her friends. And only her friends.

The whole way to the DEO (she walked, but not because she wanted to stall; she was just enjoying seeing her world again), she fought a growing uneasiness deep in the recesses of her mind. It had been almost a week since she’d talked face to face with the person she was concerned about seeing, but the trouble was…well, it had been almost a week since she’d seen him. After what had happened between herself and Mon-El in the infirmary, she had been eager to get away for a time and clear her head, but at random moments throughout her little mission to Barry’s Earth she had caught herself smiling over something funny that someone had said and wanting to tell him about it. The look on John Diggle’s face every time she demonstrated a new power or matter-of-factly named a different species of alien had been hilarious, and she knew Mon-El would have enjoyed seeing how even the idea of aliens freaked out so many different, normally really brave humans.

And yet…she couldn’t think of one single thing to say when she saw him. Other than HI! of course, because there was no need to be rude. Yep, she had the greeting part down pat. She’d just never been in this kind of position before and had no idea how she should react. Because what if, for the rest of both their lives or as long as they knew each other—whichever it was—what if every time she looked at him, all she could think about was that kiss?

Not that she was still thinking about it. Or how it had been nice. Or how some people might even call it good.

Even she might.

But honestly, what did she know? She hadn’t kissed that many guys over the years, and the ones she had had pretty much all made trips to the emergency room right afterward, which effectively drove a sword through the heart of any and all budding romance. It had been awkward seeing them across halls and everything, but she’d never actually had to interact with any of them again because they’d gone out of their way to avoid the freak who’d broken their noses. That wasn’t going to be the case this time; this time, she would have to be able to talk to the guy. Which was, now that she thought about it, theoretically possible. She and James had crossed the social minefield of almost dating with relative ease, and she and Winn had somehow gotten through a maze of awkwardness with their friendship still intact. Surely she could do the same with Mon-El, right?

Surely.

But the second she walked into the busy control room, all of her doubts resurfaced. The goofy alien in question stood sort of hunched over a computer monitor laughing at something Winn was saying, and right away Kara’s mind began reminding her of how weak he’d been the last time she’d seen him, how much that had scared her, and everything that had followed his delirium. And just like that, she was once again stuck on how kissing him felt and wondering how she was ever going to look him in the eye again.

“Okay,” she muttered, leaning her head from side to side to crack her neck. “You know what? You can do this. This is nothing.”
He didn’t remember anything. He wouldn’t have done it under other circumstances. As far as he was concerned, the whole thing had never happened, and if she let it affect her to the point of acting like a weirdo around him, it could ruin every bit of progress they’d made in their friendship. Which was for sure a friendship.

Just a friendship. Not something else.

*Do not make this awkward,* she instructed herself sternly. *Do NOT.*

Tucking her hands into the pocket of her coat, she took a deep breath and strolled toward them—*her friends*—wearing a smile that was thankfully only half-forced, because gosh, when she didn’t stop to second-guess everything, was she ever happy to be back and able to talk to them.

“Hi, guys,” she called out. “Long time no see.”

Their heads whipped over to her simultaneously and she hated herself for the way her stomach flipped at Mon-El’s sudden, huge grin when he saw her.

*It doesn’t mean anything. It doesn’t,* she insisted silently, laughing out loud as Winn whooped and gave her a *Saturday Night Fever*-esque disco point that, as his similarly-dorky best friend, she was kind of obligated to return.

“What’d I miss?” she asked, stopping on the other side of the desk from them. The impulse to glance at Mon-El as she spoke was strong but she fought it hard, afraid that she might do something stupid like turn red right in front of him for absolutely no reason whatsoever.


“Bad aliens,” Mon-El added.

Kara risked a glance his way and saw him watching her, eyebrows raised. A smile that hovered somewhere in the neighborhood of amused played around his mouth, but she got the distinct impression of relief from him and she wasn’t sure whether to be insulted or pleased about that. Because if he’d thought she couldn’t handle that kind of opponent and was going to be killed or something, that was just obnoxious. But if he was glad to see her back because he’d been worried about her…

Well. A traitorous little part of Kara whispered that there was probably a very small number of people Mon-El had ever worried about in his life. And if she was one of them, did that maybe mean…?

“Um, yeah. Well, they weren’t so tough,” she joked. shoving those thoughts away. “And there was a pretty good number of us, so we managed just fine.”

She spotted J’onn beckoning to her from the second floor and halted Winn’s questions with a hand. “Got to go,” she told him, pulling an apologetic face. “I think it’s debrief time. I’ll tell you guys all about it in a little while. Oh! By the way.” She skidded to a stop on the slick floor and turned back before she had a chance to think anything through and maybe change her mind. “I kind of need to decorate for Christmas. Do you guys want to come over and help? We can watch movies or something, too.”

“Yeah, sure,” Winn answered, frowning a little. “But doesn’t Alex usually help you do that?”

“Oh, she’ll be by later,” Kara assured him, stopping herself before she grinned as she recalled
something else she’d learned last night. “She has…plans.”

“Whoa, what? Alex has plans on a Friday night? Alex DANVERS?” Winn’s eyebrows shot up. “You serious right now?”

“Yes!” Stifling a laugh, Kara scanned the area around them, half-expecting her sister to ninja-jump in from out of nowhere and take Winn to task for his insinuations. “Keep your voice down. I don’t know all the details, but she’s got a date. Don’t give her a hard time, or she’ll never tell us anything.”

“Right, right.” Her friend tapped a finger against his lip thoughtfully. “Wow. Who’d have thunk?”

“Yeah.” Kara stole another peek at Mon-El, realizing he’d been quiet for an unnaturally long time. “Mon-El, what’s wrong?” she asked, seeing a deep frown etched in his face.

If possible, the frown deepened. “Sorry,” he said. “I just…uh, what do you do at Christmas? I keep seeing these signs that say ‘sale’ and stuff like that, but I can’t figure it out. Does it have anything to do with that little guy in the red suit I see popping up all over the place? ‘Cause not gonna lie…he’s kind of creepy.”

For a moment, Kara could only stare openmouthed at him along with Winn. Once again, she’d forgotten that Mon-El had no point of reference for Earth holidays. Why did that really obvious fact keep slipping her mind? She should’ve explained all this to him back when they were talking about Thanksgiving, she thought.

“Uh, Winn?” she said, seeing that J’onn had come back out of one of the upper rooms and was beginning to give her that ‘Time is ticking’ look he was so good at. “I have to go report to J’onn real quick. Can you fill him in?”

“Yeah, sure. No problem,” Winn answered, cracking his knuckles. “All right, Daxamite. Let’s have us a little sit-down, okay?”


“Oh, yeah uh, that’s not—I didn’t mean a literal…” Winn began, but Kara shook her head at him.

“Just let it go,” she hissed under her breath, trying to hide her smile. Yeah, she’d definitely missed this. “And make sure he understands that Santa’s just a story, all right?” she added. “It’s going to stick out a lot if he’s going around…”

“Pulling a Miracle On Thirty-Fourth Street. Got it.” He made an O.K. sign with his fingers. “Never fear, Winn Schott is here. For all your…Christmas storytelling needs. Or something like that. Hey, this is gonna be fun.”

“Great.” She giggled at the patient expression on Mon-El’s face as he sat looking back and forth between them, waiting for answers. “So I’ll definitely be seeing you guys tonight, then?” she asked.

“Yep,” Winn responded cheerfully.

“Absolutely.”
Kara flinched at Mon-El’s answer. He hadn’t delivered it in a tone anywhere close to the one that ran through her mind at the worst times, but that sure didn’t stop her brain from reliving the moment over and over again.

Absolutely beautiful.

Rao, she had to get over that. And quickly, if she knew what was good for her.

“Hey, Kara?” Winn pointed behind her. “I think J’onn’s getting impatient.”

“Oh, yeah. Right.” She laughed, a little more breathlessly than she would have preferred. “Okay, see you both later.”

Scolding herself furiously, she hurried off for the stairs. This had to stop. And soon. She’d had basically a whole week to regroup and work at not behaving like an idiot around him; this was just getting ridiculous. He wasn’t the suspicious type, but even he couldn’t help but notice if she started getting twitchy around him. She had to find a solution, she decided. Even if it killed her, she was NOT going to think about what had happened. She couldn’t. It was just too unsettling. And she really, really didn’t want to think about why that was.

It helped that J’onn wanted to hear the whole story in great detail from start to finish, because for the next hour or so, she didn’t have time to think about how she was not going to think about The Incident anymore. Explaining how she’d traveled, what she’d done, and showing off the little gadget Cisco had made for her calmed her crazy nerves considerably, so that when she headed back to the control room and found Winn still explaining the finer points of the holiday season (he’d actually made it all the way to New Year’s, which Kara appreciated since it saved her the difficulty of describing midnight traditions) she was able to bid them goodbye without psychoanalyzing her every move.

Now if she could just do the same thing all evening...

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But of course, it wasn’t to be. For the first hour-and-a-half or so after they arrived on her doorstep bearing gifts (Mon-El carried the pizzas and a giant bag of marshmallows while Winn carried the jugs of eggnog and a larger-than-strictly-necessary tin of hot cocoa mix), things went smoothly. Both of her friends were in good spirits, and badgered her with so many questions about her friends on another Earth that she didn’t get a chance to even start to feel awkward. But once they’d finished the meal and Kara hauled out the boxes of decorations so they could get started, trouble arose.

“What’s this?” Mon-El inquired curiously about four minutes into the decorating. “Kara, did it break off your door-thing?”

“What?” Kara asked, jamming the wreath hook onto her door. How it managed to bend itself while packed in a box, she’d never understand. “No, I don’t think so,” she answered, inspecting the metal before hanging her wreath with all the pinecones, happy fake birds and sprays of red berries on it. “But hold on. Let me see.”

Dusting her hands off briskly, she turned to see him twirling a little plastic sprig of mistletoe between his fingers and almost choked.

Crap. Crap, crap, crap, crap, crap.

“Oh, no. No, that’s not…not important,” she responded swiftly, almost leaping over to where
he stood and snatching the object from his grasp before he had time to even look surprised. “It’s just—yeah, you know what? It’s fine. We don’t ah, need to put this up.”

“Why not?”

Kara gritted her teeth at Winn’s loud question. “Because,” she said in a very flat voice, head spinning as she tried to come up with a good reason. “I’m going to be putting up a lot of stuff. There might not be room for it.”

Winn frowned, his features pinched as he paused in his hanging of lights. “But you always put up the same amount of stuff. And it takes up what—two inches of room?”

Kara studiously avoided looking in Mon-El’s direction as she marched back over the box and dropped the stupid piece of décor inside, pushing it down until its shiny green leaves and white berries disappeared in the colorful mass of tinsel, glittery picks, and greenery.

“Yes,” she agreed. “But this…this year, I was kinda thinking about putting up more lights. And who knows? I might need those extra two inches.”

“More lights?” Winn snorted out a laugh. “Yikes, woman! Have you seen how many lamps you have going in this place already? And with these going around the window plus what you’re planning to put on the tree…what are you trying to do, create your own Land of the Midnight Sun?”

“No,” Kara began defensively. “But—”

“Okay,” a voice interrupted, cutting her off. “Holy Winter Wonderland.”

Kara spun to see her sister in the doorway, surveying the assembled company with raised eyebrows.

“I mean…wow,” Alex commented before anyone could reply, folding her arms as she leaned against the doorjamb. “Really. No offense guys, but it looks like Christmas threw up all over this place. And you three.”

“Gee, thanks,” Kara said sarcastically, although she guessed that was a fair jab considering how they were all currently attired (Winn had about six strands of lights around his neck as he fought with stringing them around the windows, Kara had put on her ‘This Year I’ve Been Nice’ shirt and a Santa hat in honor of the occasion, and Mon-El was wearing tinsel like a scarf and two pairs of reindeer ears Kara had forgotten she had stowed away and that he was now weirdly fascinated with). “How’d it go?” she asked in an undertone as Alex stepped in and closed the door.

Her sister smiled widely, eyes sparkling. “Good,” she murmured back. “I’ll tell you about it tomorrow, all right?”

“Got it.”

“So,” Alex added, louder. “I’m sure I’m going to regret asking this, but—who’s doing what with midnight suns?”

“No, it’s nothing,” Kara tried, but Winn beat her to the punch.

“Kara doesn’t want to hang the mistletoe,” he announced unceremoniously. “Because apparently, it might take up ‘too much room.’” He waggled his fingers in air quotes.
“Oh, really?”

Kara’s eyes narrowed at her sister’s voice, but Alex was busy pulling a mug out of the cabinet and didn’t seem to notice.

“Yeah. She says she wants to hang more lights, but I say she’s already got plenty.” Winn waved a hand at his creation as if to illustrate his point. “Hence, Land of the Midnight Sun. And besides, mistletoe’s a tradition, right?”

“Right,” Alex agreed, stirring a packet of hot cocoa into some water. “Especially in this family. Kara, you mind?” she asked, holding out the mug.

“No,” Kara answered, cooking her sister’s drink with a quick blast of heat vision even as her anxiety rose. Okay, so they were now dancing around the topic of mistletoe. That was fine. It could all stay fine just as long as—

“Uh…why exactly is mistletoe tradition?”

As long as no one said anything more about the traditions surrounding mistletoe.

Kara didn’t technically stiffen at Mon-El’s question, but the majority of the motion in her body ceased, and she sucked in a quick breath while her eyes closed briefly. Great. Here she was again, skating around a topic she would be very content to avoid altogether.

“It’s kind of an old-fashioned Earth thing,” Alex’s crisp voice answered, a loud slurp following the words. “Ow,” she coughed. “Hot. Kara, you know what, I just seriously scalded my tongue. Why don’t you take this one?”

NO.

Kara narrowly escaped shouting the word that was emblazoned on her mind in big, neon block letters. She had no desire whatsoever to explain the tradition of mistletoe to anyone right now, least of all the guy who she had recently…well, done an under-the-mistletoe kind of thing with. And certainly not in front of two of the people who knew her best and would undoubtedly start to pick up on the nervousness she was inevitably going to feel.

But oh, she could already feel Alex’s stare burning into the back of her skull like heat vision through a block of ice. And furthermore, Kara wasn’t insane. She knew not answering would look a lot more suspicious than just providing a weak answer.

You can do this, she reminded herself. Just be calm. You don’t have anything to hide. It’s just a regular old explanation about a boring old custom.

“Kara?”

At her sister’s questioning tone, Kara made a wild grab at her composure. Clearing her throat, she took care to turn her back to everyone as she bent over one of the boxes and began rooting through it, pretending to search for something.

“Mistletoe’s just this plant, Mon-El,” she said finally, hoping to Rao she wasn’t talking too fast. “It grows on trees like a parasite, but it’s a human tradition at Christmastime to decorate with it. Like these people in a historical period called the Victorian Age used it for good luck, I guess you’d say. You hang it up, in doorways usually, and, and when people walk or stand under it, you’re supposed to, uh…kiss them. It’s pretty silly, really,” she finished in a rush, yanking out a box of snowflake window stickers and staring at them for a solid three seconds before
realizing what in the world they were. “Totally dumb. A lot of people don’t even bother with it.”

“Oh.”

Was she imagining it, or did he suddenly sound uncomfortable? She decided to chance a peek over her shoulder. But no, there he was, grinning away like usual, looking ridiculous and cute in his Christmas-y getup.

No. Not cute. She hadn’t meant to think that at all. He didn’t look cute, he looked…childish. Yes, that was it—’childish’ was a much better description. Seriously, what kind of adult donned two pairs of antlers of their own volition? Even she wore no more than one at a time.

“Yeah, it is a pretty dumb tradition,” Alex remarked, dragging Kara’s attention off Mon-El’s headgear. “Except Kara, call me crazy, but…isn’t that my line, not yours?”

“What?” said Kara, understanding perfectly but trying to stall.

Alex pointed toward the box with her mug hand. “You love that piece of crap mistletoe decoration. You have since we were kids, which is why you have it, because even Mom didn’t care. Why the sudden reluctance?”

“It’s not—I’m not—I don’t know; I just think that I could do something else with the space this year, you know?” Shoot. She had to quit while she was only somewhat behind. Do something else with the space? Talk about your feeble excuses. Kara battled away the embarrassed grimace that threatened to break loose.

“What?” Hopping down off the chair he’d been standing on, Winn stared blankly at her. “Seriously? Kara, you didn’t uh, didn’t hit your head recently or anything, did you?”

“No!” Kara waved a hand, painfully conscious of the fact that her laugh sounded high-pitched and very abnormal. “I mean come on guys, what do we need mistletoe for? Except for maybe Alex, we’re all like very, very single! Do we really want a big fat reminder of that hanging where we can see it every time we enter the room?”

“I don’t,” Mon-El volunteered quickly, raising a hand. “Although actually, kissing isn’t even that big a deal. Not where I come from. It’s just…a thing. That happens. Sometimes. A lot of times it can be meaningless, or, or…just like a handshake, you know?”

What?

Kara tensed, resisting the urge to say something sharp. Oh, so that was how he viewed kissing, huh? No big deal. Just a stupid, meaningless handshake. Well. No wonder he hadn’t remembered kissing her. He’d probably shaken hands—or lips, whatever—with hundreds, maybe even thousands of people back on Daxam. For Rao’s sake, he would probably have kissed J’onn if the head of the DEO had been the one sitting by his bed instead of Kara! Obviously the only reason he’d ended up kissing her had been because she was there and convenient, and boy was it good she didn’t care anyway.

Although frankly, it was kind of an inconsiderate thing to do in the first place, because what if she had liked him? What if she had wanted that kiss to mean more than it did? (She didn’t and wouldn’t, not in a gazillion years, but what if she had?)

“Well, there you go,” she said shortly, feeling an odd desire to throw a pillow at him with all her might. “Mistletoe equals kissing, which also equals not that big a deal. Anyone disagree? No? Cool.”
For the rest of the evening, a weird sense of annoyance enveloped her like the galaxy’s heaviest, most uncomfortable blanket. She laughed along with everyone else when someone made a joke, sang along with the carols Winn insisted they put on, and enjoyed hanging her ornaments (many of them terrible, homemade monstrosities that she’d created with Alex once upon a time), but something was missing and she felt it keenly.

A couple of hours later during *Rudolph The Red-Nosed Reindeer*, when she was sitting cramped on the couch in between Mon-El and Alex with Alex’s big, stinky feet in her lap, she was still turning the problem over in her mind. It was, she knew, attached to Mon-El in some way. She was conscious of a general irritation toward him once again, but she also knew that her irritation made no logical sense—he hadn’t actually done anything to annoy her. If anything, he’d gone out of his way to be cheerful and funny all night, and Alex had even had to talk him into sitting on the couch with them instead of on the floor like he’d been going to do at the start of the movie. He’d been clearly trying to keep his questions to a minimum during the show and made sure to whisper whichever ones he just couldn’t contain, and aside from his occasionally too-loud laughter, nothing he’d done could be even remotely construed as annoying.

So why, then, could she not seem to get over it?

It bothered her. Chewing a fingernail, she scrunched down deep into the couch cushions and tried to sort it out. Nothing made much sense, though. The world was too blurry, and warm, and snowy, and red-light filled, and there was this obnoxious little squeaky noise that kept beeping in her brain, and maybe it was the Dominators messing around inside her head again, or maybe it was Eliza telling her to get up and get ready for school because they had to outrun the Abominable Snowman, or it might even have been Mon-El telling her she was beautiful and Winn singing her a song about Holly and Christmas, and if he didn’t stop mentioning mistletoe in the song or threatening to make her visit the dentist, she was going to use her freeze-breath on him. Probably.

Next thing she knew, someone was shaking her by the shoulder and her eyes opened just enough to make out her sister’s face hovering above her.

“Huh?” she said thickly, yawning as she leaned back against her pillow. “Wha’ izzit? Supergrill—no, Supergirl stuff? Tell Winn my computer’s—”

“No.”

Alex shook her head. Kara thought she could just make out a smirk, but another yawn almost split her face in half before she could ask what was so funny.

“Kara,” he sister said loudly. "You fell asleep. The movie’s over and Winn already left. It’s time to go to bed, okay?"

“Oh.” Kara frowned, the dimness of the room finally registering. Without the bright screen of the TV, the only light came from the tree and windows, so it wasn’t that surprising she hadn’t woken sooner. “Well, that’s okay,” she mumbled. “I like it here. I don’t wanna move. I’ll just sleep where I'm at, mmkay? Goodnight.”

“Yeah, you could do that,” Alex agreed, shaking her arm so mercilessly that Kara groaned and swatted at her. “Except Mon-El needs to go home now, and he can’t move until you get off him.”

“What?”

Kara’s eyes flew open—for real, this time. Turning her head, she discovered that sure enough, her ‘pillow’ was none other than Mon-El, who she had somehow fallen against and squashed into
his now-tiny corner of the couch.

“Oh my God! Mon-El! I’m so sorry!” she blurted out, her irritation from earlier evaporating in
the face of one of the more extremely embarrassing moments of her life. “I thought you were a—I
mean, I didn’t realize…” She sat up hastily, swiping the back of her hand over her mouth as a truly
horrifying thought struck her. “I didn’t drool on you or anything, did I?”

“No! No,” he laughed, vigorously rubbing the arm she’d been sleeping on for who knew how
long now. “At least, I-I don’t think so. My arm kinda went numb a while ago, so it’s kinda hard to
tell, but…” He twisted his arm around. “It looks fine.”

Kara covered her face, another groan escaping. “Oh, my God,” she mumbled again, lifting her
head to stare bleakly at him. And good grief, was she still wearing her Santa hat? Utterly mortified,
she snatched the dopey thing off the ear it dangled haphazardly from. “Mon-El, seriously—I am so
sorry. You should’ve woken me up.”

“Oh, come on.” He waved away her concern, his smile flashing in the watery light. “You just
just got back from fighting the Dominators. And you did drink a lot of that egg stuff. I figured you
could use the nap.”

“Well yeah, but…” Trailing off, she flailed an arm in the air. “Still. Alex, why didn’t you stop
me?” she demanded, suddenly remembering that at least one other person in the room knew
enough about her habits to prevent a situation like this. “He was all crowded!”

Alex rolled her eyes. “Kara, all the king’s horses and all the king’s men couldn’t stop you
falling asleep whenever and wherever you want,” she retorted, way more smugly than Kara felt
was necessary. “I’m just grateful you picked someone who wasn’t me this time. Mon-El, you have
no idea how lucky you are that she didn’t snore in your ear the whole time.”

“Hey!” Kara snapped, crossing her arms. What, did Alex think this was somehow not
humiliating enough? “I do not snore, okay?”

“Mhmm. Sure.” Alex covered her mouth with a hand. “She snores,” she murmured in a loud
aside to Mon-El, who was doing a really poor job of trying not to grin.

“That was one time,” Kara informed him before aiming a glare at her sister. “One! And it was
only because I’d been upset and crying about something, so I was all stuffed up. That is totally
different.”

“No, that was the one time you heard yourself snore,” Alex corrected. “Believe me. When you
get going, you can rival a jet engine.”

“Anyway,” Kara said pointedly. “I’m sorry for holding you prisoner, Mon-El.”

“Oh.” He shrugged off her apology as he stood, stretching his arms way up over his head. “It’s
fine. Besides, I’ve been a Cadmus prisoner before, remember?” He shoved his hands into his
pockets and grinned, cocking his head to the side. “You’re not quite that bad.”

“Ha-ha,” she mocked.

Her pride was still pretty ruffled, but even so she couldn’t help matching his smile with one of
her own. All nervousness and grumpy feelings aside, there was something about Mon-El that felt
comfortable and easy, and without quite understanding why, Kara found herself wishing she had
the guts to ask if he wanted to stay and finish that game of monopoly that kept getting interrupted.
But Alex was still there, hovering somewhere in the background and being suspiciously silent, and
Kara didn’t want her older sister doing any detective work that might lead to some awkward (and totally erroneous) conclusions regarding Kara and Mon-El.

“Thank you,” she said instead, taking care to infuse some sarcasm into the words. “I appreciate that.”

“You’re welcome.”

“All right,” Alex called out suddenly. “Let’s wrap this up, party people. Goodnight, Kara. I’ll call you in the morning, okay?”

“Okay,” Kara agreed, hurrying over to give her sister a quick hug. “I expect full details, so know that.”

“No worries there.” Alex’s eyes fairly sparkled. “Hey Mon-El,” she added, “if you want to split a cab with me, you need to hurry. I can only keep my eyes open for so long, and I don’t think you need another Danvers conking out on you tonight.”

“Right! Yes.” Hurrying to the coat rack, Mon-El grabbed his jacket off a hook. “Thank you for inviting me Kara,” he added over his shoulder as he shrugged into the garment, sending her another quick smile. “I had a lot of fun.”

“Oh, no problem. And so did I,” she answered, waving them out into the hall.

It was true, too, she thought, leaning against the door once she’d closed and locked it. Even though she had spent an awful lot of the evening being antsy and stewing, she had enjoyed herself. The storytelling over dinner had been a blast, and in a way, she was grateful that she knew Mon-El’s opinion on kissing now. Not that there had been any actual danger, because he was so not the kind of guy she was looking for and she was way too busy to bother with relationships anyway, but a reminder of how very different they were couldn’t hurt. He obviously viewed kissing the same way he viewed sex—as a fun, lighthearted pastime; a physical connection instead of an emotional one. She didn’t. And sure, maybe it made her the world’s biggest prude or romantic or something, but Kara took kissing pretty seriously. She didn’t expect engagement rings or official boyfriend-girlfriend titles to immediately follow one teensy smooch of course, but she did think the action ought to mean something to both parties involved, and if it didn’t—well, she wasn’t interested. Mon-El could consider kisses akin to handshakes all he wanted. As far as Kara was concerned, there was and always would be, a huge difference between the two things.

A loud barrage of knocks startled her and she leapt up with a frown.

“What in the world?” she muttered, grabbing for the chain when a quick peek over the top of her glasses showed her who was on the other side. “Mon-El?” she said, swinging the door open again. “What is it?”

“This.” He stuck out the two pairs of antlers, looking sheepish. “I uh, kinda forgot I was wearing them? Alex said I should just throw them away, but I thought you might want them back.”

“Oh! Yes.” Kara took them from him, trying to figure out how she’d overlooked his headgear, too. “I do like these, so thank you. Alex hates them because I try to make her wear them every year,” she explained, turning them over in her hands as she talked. “But hey—you can keep a pair if you want.”

“Really?”

She tried not to giggle at the pleased expression on his face, but it was no use. “Yes, really.
Here.” Whacking him lightly in the chest with the red flannel antlers, she handed it back. “Wear ’em in the cab and embarrass Alex. It’ll serve her right for saying I snore.”

“Which you don’t,” he supplied, sticking the corny headband on again. “Allegedly.”

“Um, not allegedly,” Kara corrected, reaching up to straighten everything so he didn’t look like a drunken reindeer. “I don’t snore period. There.” She stood back and beamed up at him, another snorty giggle escaping as she surveyed the result. “Now you can guide the sleigh tonight, Rudolph.”

His eyes crinkled at the corners as he grinned down at her. “Thank you, Santa.”

A shrill whistle split the air around them, and Kara laughed—partly because her sister was a piece of work, but also because that squirmly, discomfiting sensation that got into her arms and legs and made them feel all bulky and awkward had returned under his smile. “I think that’s your cue.”

“Yeah. Well, goodnight.” He gave her one final grin and turned away, but after a few steps he halted. “Kara?” he said, turning around again.

Her fingers tightened on the edge of the door, a nervous little voice in the back of her mind wondering where this was heading. “Yeah?”

His smile softened. “I’m really glad you’re back.”

Then, before she could answer, he sped off down the hall.

Blowing out a huge, gusty breath that might even have exuded some frost, Kara sagged against the door. Her thoughts all a-jumble, she slid down to a sitting position and glared accusingly up at the bare doorway.

“Stupid Victorians,” she muttered.

Chapter End Notes

*Chapter title taken from Anastasia (if you didn't already know this, please educate yourself. For your own sake :D) because the whole "Someone holds me safe and warm" thing is kind of appropriate here. Although I was *this* close to titling it "Oh No, The Mistletoe" since it's late and I'm tired and that's the kind of thing I think is funny under those circumstances.

*Brace yourselves. The next chapter(s) will probably center around Christmas/New Year's and cover a decent time gap because I want to keep marching toward finish. Otherwise I'll still be working on S2 stories while S3 is having its finale, lol.

*Okay. I took some liberties with having Mon-El mention that on Daxam kissing isn't a big deal and having Kara get annoyed, because I think that could explain why they've managed to get back to acting relatively casual around each other by 2x09 at the bar. I'm sure the ACTUAL reason the SG writers had them totally ignore the kiss in that episode is Because Of Plot, but since I want to find a plausible explanation for how they could stay pretty cool around each other in that episode, I think it makes sense for Mon-El to have tried to do some damage control in the vein of "No, you
don't have to freak out. I don't have a crush on you. I kiss everyone. Anytime, anywhere. You don't have to be uncomfortable. I'm not thinking it meant anything, so don't worry." Which would make Kara be like, "Oh, so it didn't mean anything to you? Well, isn't that nice? See, this is why I could never get involved with you. We're definitely just going to be friends."

*I haven't had a chance to look at comments from last chapter yet, but I'll be doing that later today. So if you commented, know I'm not ignoring you...it's just I'm about to fall asleep.

*MOSTIMPORTANTLY: Thank you, thank you, thank you for reading/commenting and for bearing with my sporadic updates! Y'all are the best, and I hope everyone reading this has a spectacular day <3
Chapter Summary

Takes place between 2x08 and 2x09 from Mon-El's POV, and if you've never heard Perry Como's "(There's No Place Like) Home for the Holidays," you might want to look it up before reading this (you don't have to, it just makes everything more fun) ;D

Okay. This is another of those stories that got split into two (it was supposed to cover Christmas AND New Year's) but it jumped around so much that I decided it was better to just do one holiday at a time, so...expect some bumpiness in this chapter and the next one. Basically, this whole story is just a bunch of randomness, and (fair warning) there isn't a TON of present-opening stuff because I have enough trouble figuring out what to buy my friends and family...planning presents for fictional characters was a bit more than I could manage.

Sorry about the enormous gap between updates! Hope everyone is doing well :)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Over the next few weeks, Christmas spirit took over National City and Mon-El's knowledge of Earth things tripled. Then it quadrupled. Then it did whatever you called it when something got five times bigger, thanks to the massive amount of stuff that was being advertised in every store window he saw as well as all the funny-named things mentioned in the Christmas songs that seemed to be playing everywhere.

And speaking of songs, he was pretty ridiculously proud of knowing most of the words to most of them. Though now that he thought about it, it really hadn't been that difficult a feat to accomplish since Earthlings apparently all liked the same ten or fifteen holiday tunes. Like that annoying one about hippopotamuses—he'd been really interested at first in finding out what a hippopotamus was, why the little-kid singer wanted one so badly, and why it seemed like that might be a problem. As the holiday neared however, his enthusiasm plummeted and he had to be careful about not touching anything when that song came on so that he didn't accidentally crush things with his hands. He'd also yelled on reflex at the DEO one day when Winn started humming it, and try as he would, he just couldn't look at Hungry, Hungry Hippos the same anymore, which was a shame because Kara and Winn had just taught him how to play that, and he had liked it a lot.

The primary downside to his new holiday knowledge wasn't, however, repetitive Christmas songs sung in irritating voices. Instead, it was the sheer number of catchy, cheesy little ditties that involved the word mistletoe, and how nearly all the movies on TV now seemed to be very full of kissing. Which was not as okay as it had been just a month or so ago, especially considering how many Christmas-related activities Kara kept inviting him to along with the rest of her friends. After the tree and house decorating party, it had been cookie baking (which involved basically everyone except Kara doing the actual baking, since she was apparently very bad at it and Alex refused to let the ingredients go to waste), and after that, it was something new and different almost every night —another holiday-themed movie with popcorn and hot chocolate, ice skating in the park, this-is-how-you-build-a-snowman training...all kinds of fun events that made him wonder whether or not
he was making any progress whatsoever in trying to forget all those things he’d been feeling about Kara.

He hoped he was. It was much more comfortable if he did; she didn’t feel the way he felt, and sometimes when they were doing things together and he said something dumb that made her throw back her head and burst into laughter, he got a funny little ache inside when he remembered that. And he hated it, because it didn’t make any sense at all—how could someone who made you feel safe, happy, at home, and like you could jump six CatCos or DEOs stacked on top of each other in one go also make you feel scared and a little like you’d been punched in the stomach? How could you both want to be friends and not want to be friends with this person at the same time?

Figuring out what to do with all his feelings was like being a part of the universe’s toughest balancing or juggling act. He thought he’d gotten better at it. He was pretty sure he had—at any rate, some of the scariest parts had changed. His brain didn’t completely shut down the second she turned up anymore (which was helpful), and that really irritating and embarrassing thing where his heart started thumping like it was going to choke him and he started to sweat whenever she stopped joking with him and got serious had, for the most part, disappeared. But he still got a miniature rush of excitement mixed with cheerfulness every time he picked up the sound of her steps heading his way, and he was starting to think that he might be a little addicted to hearing her say his name (even though that didn’t make sense either since it was just a name and everyone else he knew here called him the exact same thing). And those big, show-stopping smiles of hers? Ha. As far as he was concerned, that was her other superpower—the one she didn’t know about but everyone else in the world did, because she couldn’t have hidden the mesmerizing magic in her smiles if she had tried, and holy Rao, did it ever mess him up.

The best solution to his problem he’d found yet was to just do things. And since he wasn’t very particular what kind of things he did to keep from thinking about Kara, he spent a lot of time helping wrap presents (something he turned out to be very skilled at, to the surprise of everyone including himself) for a lot of people at the DEO, since the agents had a habit of stashing gifts in their desks where their snooper family members couldn’t find them. Like for example, Dana, one of the agents he’d helped with wrapping, had two younger sisters—one who worked for the FBI now and one who was an attorney—that would still sneak down in the middle of the night and try to poke clues out of the presents, so she had to change the shape of everything to keep it a secret. After she found out that Mon-El had helped Agent Vasquez with some wrapping, she enlisted his help and it wound up working out pretty well, because a bunch of the busier agents hired him to wrap their gifts, and he only had to check with them every now and then to make sure he’d tagged the gifts correctly.

But even the Distraction By Doing Things method wasn’t foolproof. While he was working with various agents in the breakroom, Kara wandered in several times: once to make sure he knew he was supposed to come over along with everyone else on Christmas Day, and a bunch of other times to ask him random questions that he didn’t quite understand—what was his favorite Earth food (he wasn’t sure), which movie that he’d seen since he arrived did he like the best (he couldn’t pick just one), and what was his favorite color (he didn’t actually care but she seemed disappointed with that answer so he went with blue and then changed it to red when he realized that a certain someone with very blue eyes standing there in their blue superhero costume had more to do with his naming that color than any lifelong preference for it).

Knowing that she could turn up at any second made concentrating on whatever job he was doing at the time a lot harder, and when he found out—from Alex, who was grumpy because she was trying to online shop from an area of the breakroom that didn’t get very good reception—that Kara was trying to figure out what he’d like for Christmas, he realized that he hadn’t even considered how the gift-giving aspects of the Earthen holiday might affect him and came very
close to panicking. Because Kara seemed to get really excited about everything that had to do with this occasion, he had no idea what kind of present she would want, and he couldn’t not give her a present! Plus there was that whole issue with the flowers he’d brought to Thanksgiving that made him suspect that gift-giving etiquette on Earth was probably nothing like gift-giving etiquette on Daxam, which meant he was going to have to do some serious research in a very short amount of time if he wanted to avoid creating another uncomfortable misunderstanding.

Thankfully though, Alex seemed to sense his anxiety—the way he almost yelled That’s what she’s doing? Why didn’t she just say so? after she told him what Kara was up to was probably a solid tip off—and suggested he just get her food, since she always liked that. But of course, that presented another problem, because Kara liked so many different kinds of foods, and he was pretty sure that most of her favorites would either go stale or spoil by the time Christmas Day finally arrived. So in the end, he got her one of those credit card things that only bought stuff at one store—in this case, food from her favorite Chinese restaurant—and a little potsticker-shaped ornament that he thought was kind of funny.

(Then of course, he had to scramble to find presents for everyone else, because giving no one except Kara a present was highly suspicious, so he got Alex, J’onn, and James each a bottle of the liquor he’d seen them drink the most at the bar, Winn a jumbo container of those little puffy cheese balls as payment for taking all the Cheetos out of the DEO vending machine for the last few weeks, and Dr. Danvers a very nice bottle of wine and a Thank You card since he did still owe her for the antidote that had saved his life.)

And when Christmas Day dawned bright and clear and cold, he was prepared. Theoretically, at any rate, he thought wryly as he left the DEO and headed over to Kara’s apartment, gift bags in tow. He’d already caught himself smiling at nothing five times since he’d woken up; even J’onn had commented on how unusually cheery he was, and he had yet to even say hello to the reason for his cheeriness. He had a feeling it was going to be very difficult to get through this day, as fun as it sounded, without giving something away, and the instant Kara opened the door, his premonition proved correct. She was wearing that Santa hat again, he noticed, along with a giant red sweater with a funny-looking, puffball-nosed Rudolph on it, and she had her hair in those braids that reminded him of the time she got drunk with him.

“Merry Christmas!” she exclaimed, her smile so blinding that he had to concentrate really hard on not sighing stupidly. “Look at you, up early for a change!”

“Yeah, I know.” He grinned back, wondering how in Rao’s name he was supposed to make it through a whole day without slipping up when two seconds with her was already making him fall back into that kind-of flirting thing he kept catching himself doing with her. “Am I too early?” he asked suddenly, realizing that except for the happy, jingle bell-y music pouring out into the hall, it was awfully quiet in there. “Should I come back later?”

“What? No, not at all! Come on in.” She beckoned energetically at him, hopping back out of the way. “There’s just a lot of people running a little late. Alex had some stuff to tell Eliza so Eliza went over to her place last night, and she just texted to say that they’re running behind. Eliza, that is, not Alex. And uh, let’s see.” She squinted, counting off on her fingers. “J’onn has to check on something at the DEO…”

“Because of course he does,” Mon-El agreed, nodding as he stepped inside. “Although I could swear he said he was right behind me? What’s he doing?”

“He didn’t specify, so I think it’s probably got something to do with M’gann.” Kara shook her head, lips pursed. “I thought it was better to not ask, because he gets so cranky about it whenever I
do. I know he’s still angry about everything and I guess he has a right to be, but it just seems like holding a grudge is making it harder on him. Hopefully he’ll get that worked out soon before it eats away at him completely.”

“Yeah, or M’gann loses her mind,” Mon-El added. Those cells weren’t any fun at all, and maybe M’gann and her people had been horrible to J’onn and his people once upon a time, but she wasn’t some sinister monster—she was nice. Whatever she had once done or been, that wasn’t her now, and he couldn’t understand why J’onn seemed unable to recognize that when he’d spent more time with her than Mon-El had. “What’s keeping Winn and James?”

“Ugh, who knows?” Kara threw up her hands, making a face. “They were both pretty vague. James has some sort of issue with the layout department to take care of so he doesn’t have to do it later, and Winn left me this crazy garbled message about his neighbor’s cat, a blown fuse and all his lights getting knocked out. Also something about baked beans on the ceiling? I don’t know exactly what happened and I don’t think I want to, but long story short: he’s gonna be late, too.”

“Ah.”

Mon-El smiled and nodded, trying very hard to seem unconcerned as he quietly took stock of his less-than-ideal situation. How exactly was he supposed to distract himself from Kara when Kara was the only other person in the room? The way he kept getting tested at every turn was beginning to really make him wonder if maybe something was conspiring against him.

For lack of a better idea, he held up the bag full of gifts.

“Hey, so…where should I put these?” he inquired.

Then he cringed, remembering that duh, as Winn would say, they went under the tree along with the rest of the clearly visible presents. But thankfully, Kara seemed to not notice anything wrong (probably since he asked obvious questions almost every single second anyway).

“Right there,” she answered, waving a hand toward the tree as she half-skipped over to the kitchen island where a big platter of cookies sat. “What’d you get?”

“I—” Mon-El caught himself just in the nick of time, recalling that in several of Winn’s explanations of how Christmas worked, there had been intense emphasis placed on how the gifts were supposed to be a surprise. “I’m not telling,” he informed her loftily, squatting down to tuck his assorted peppermint-striped packages and bags into a neat little corner. Glancing back over his shoulder at her, he grinned again. “And you’re supposed to be honorable and not x-ray anything this year, Supergirl, so I guess you’ll just have to wait.”

“Oh, pooh.” She wrinkled her nose at him. “Alex told you about that, huh?”

“And Winn. And J’onn.” He laughed, stacking the little brightly-colored boxes near all the other shiny packages. “You know, I thought we could just line some boxes with lead to keep you from seeing through them, but they said—”

“No, Mon-El.”

The sharpness in her voice startled him, and he turned to see her standing over by the island, a deep frown that hadn’t been there just five seconds before etched into her face.

“Nobody’s going to use lead, okay?” she said, pointing a pale yellow, star-shaped cookie with a large bite taken out of it at him. A few crumbs flew out of her mouth as she spoke, but she didn’t seem to notice. “Don’t even kid like that.”
“Oh,” he said, taken aback by her earnestness. “Okay. Well. I guess no uh, no more lead jokes, then.”

“Good.” She bit another point off the star, looking down at her feet suddenly. “’Cause you know, it’s…” She made a sound somewhere between a sigh and a grumpy growl. “It’s really not funny.”

He nodded, biting his lip to keep from smiling at the warmth her comments instilled in him. Yeah, sure, maybe it was dumb of him, but he couldn’t help feeling a little pleased all the same at how unamused she was by his joke. It was nice to know that if she didn’t like him the way he liked her, she did at least care what happened to him. For most of his life, every time someone had expressed some sort of concern over his safety, it was always related to his status rather than any actual concern for him—if he died, Daxam would be without an heir and might have to (Rao forbid) create a new ruler and wait for them to grow up, which would ruin a lot of political marriage bargaining. Which he sometimes suspected was the only reason his parents hadn’t just given up on him and made themselves a new and improved son, who would be less embarrassing to them.

With a bit of an effort, he got his face under control and stood up, brushing off his jeans as he stepped back from the colorful tree area and moved more toward the middle of the room. Now that they’d gotten the greetings out of the way and the presents taken care of, there was nothing to keep him from focusing on how alone they were and he could feel himself getting tongue-tied. Which for him, was never a good thing. When silences like this one got too long, his instinct was to fill them. Every time. Even when he had nothing of any importance whatsoever to add to the conversation, it was like he had to say something just to hear words; no matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t keep his mouth shut. And he spouted enough nonsense around Kara as it was—he really didn’t need to add more garbage to that appalling pile, especially when he might end up saying something extremely incriminating.

Tucking his hands into his jacket pockets, he struggled mightily against the temptation to let his gaze wander back over to the kitchen area, where he could hear her still crunching away on that cookie. But of course, he lost that battle. And of course, he looked over right when she did and got metaphorically doused with one of those extra-cute, chipmunk-cheeked smiles she was always doing when someone caught her with her mouth full of food.

“Oh, hey!” he blurted out desperately, hearing some familiar strains of music and grasping at the first topic of conversation that seemed to present itself. “‘Home For The Holidays! I love this song.”

“Really?” Kara swallowed in a gulp, her eyes lighting up. “Me too! It was one of the first songs I really like, connected to when I first got here because it reminds me—” She stopped suddenly, her face falling. “Oh,” she said, picking up the tray of cookies and moving it over to the table. “Never mind.”

Mon-El recognized that expression. He’d worn it quite a few times himself, although he was pretty sure it didn’t look nearly as sad on him as it did on Kara.

“Be…cause it reminds you of Krypton?” he suggested after a moment, keeping his voice carefully neutral.

She nodded, dropping onto the couch and slumping down in the cushions until her chin disappeared into the depths of her sweater. “On second thought, maybe I really ought to take it off my playlist. I probably shouldn’t make myself sad right before everyone gets here. Ho-ho-HO, Merry Christmas! I’m your host today, Gloomy the Elf!”
Mon-El frowned, biting his lip in thought. He hated seeing sad Kara more than anything, but
was the idea that had just popped into his head a good one or a completely stupid one? He didn’t
know. Considering him and his track record it was most likely terrible, but another glance at
Kara’s downcast expression was enough to make up his mind, and before he could second guess
the impulse, he held out a hand like he’d done the night of the big party Kara’s friend had given.

She looked up sharply, her eyes wide and sort of shimmery enough to make his stupid,
uncooperative heart hammer in his chest. “What?”

Forcing what he dearly hoped was a nonchalant grin, he wiggled his fingers in invitation.
“Wanna make the song less sad?”

A laugh, incredulous but not wholly disinterested burst out of her. “Seriously?” she said, raising
her eyebrows.

He grinned. “No. I never take dancing seriously. Serious dancing is just… the worst.”

“Yeah, uh-huh, I remember.” She started to roll her eyes at him, but about halfway through the
motion, she started laughing and they squeezed shut into little wrinkly slits. “All right,” she said
after a second or two, placing her hand in his and smiling up at him. “How do we make the song
less sad?”

“Well, for starters…” Mon-El tugged her to her feet and gave her a quick twirl, not quite able to
hold back his grin when she yelped. “We can do that.”

“Oh, really?” She laughed again, her fingers digging into his right shoulder as she clutched at it
to steady herself. “Okay. So what do we do next?”

“Hmm.” He stuck his lower lip out and pretended to think. “Well, we don’t stand still,” he
joked, swaying lightly back and forth to the rhythm of the song. “It’s very hard to dance when you
just stand in one place. And also very un-fun.”

“Hmm,” she repeated, mimicking the same tone he’d used, eyes sparkling as she swayed along
with him. “You know, I didn’t know that?”

“No?” He was sure he was grinning like that dumb disappearing cat in that creepy children’s
movie he’d watched that one time, but he didn’t care anymore.

“Oh, no,” she said exaggeratedly, continuing the game. “See, on Krypton, we sometimes glued
our feet to the floor.”

“Oh, is that why you guys were such boring dancers?”

“Hey!” Kara slapped his shoulder lightly, chuckles spilling out. “We danced just fine, all right?
Now, come on.” She jigged in place, wrecking the rhythm of the sways and making them laugh.
“What’s next? First we spin, then we start moving, then we…?”

He waggled his eyebrows at her, enjoying the scoffing giggles he got in response. “Then we
sing, because remember, according to Buddy, ‘The best way to spread Christmas cheer…”

“Oh, my God.” She rested her left elbow on his shoulder so she could cover her face with her
hand while she laughed. “I knew better than to let you watch that! I told Alex it was a terrible idea,
but no…”

“‘Is…” he prompted, cocking his head. “Come on, you totally know this.”
“‘Is singing loud for all to hear,’” she finished in a singsong-ish voice, the words distorted by even more giggles.

“Exactly. If you wanna be HAPPY in a MILLion ways…” he bellowed cheerfully. “For the holiDAYS, you can’t beat home sweet hoooommeeee!”

His loud, slightly off-key singing turned her giggles into a hearty, full-blown cackles, but she joined in nonetheless, and before long they were whirling all over the room, shouting the lyrics at each other and cracking up when they both tried to do the echo at the same time. And when the song ended and they both groaned, the craziness only got worse. Because Kara immediately rushed over to put the song on repeat, and next thing Mon-El knew, they were on round seven or so—he was having way too much fun to keep count—joking, singing, twirling, and doing their best to not dance into or over the top of things. By the time they neared the end of the song, he was so out of breath from laughing that he could barely wheeze out the some pumpkin pie echo, which Kara seemed to find hilarious.

“What, that’s it?” she teased, laughing breathlessly as he gave up on the next line and spun her again. “No second wind and only one kind of fancy step? Come on, I thought Daxamites knew how to dance!”

Mon-El laughed too. “Oh, we do, but I don’t know if I’d better try anything else here.”

She smirked at him giving her eyebrows a quick lift. “What? You scared?” she challenged.

It was the exact same tone he’d used on her at the bar, and from the gleam in her eye, Mon-El knew she expected no less than the same response from him that he’d had from her when he’d first delivered that dare, and he couldn’t help himself.

“Oh, we do, but I don’t know if I’d better try anything else here.”

She smirked at him giving her eyebrows a quick lift. “What? You scared?” she challenged.

It was the exact same tone he’d used on her at the bar, and from the gleam in her eye, Mon-El knew she expected no less than the same response from him that he’d had from her when he’d first delivered that dare, and he couldn’t help himself.

“Okay,” he said, trying to sound sarcastic but ruining it completely with a big grin. “Fine. You asked for it. Fancy Daxamite dance finish coming right up, Supergirl.”

“Okay,” he said, trying to sound sarcastic but ruining it completely with a big grin. “Fine. You asked for it. Fancy Daxamite dance finish coming right up, Supergirl.”

Without waiting for a reply, he twirled her again, hard. But this time, as she completed the rotation, he caught her around the waist and dipped her.

Or—he tried to dip her, anyway.

And it actually went beautifully. Right up until Kara, clearly not expecting it and apparently thinking she was falling, screeched in surprise and grabbed him around the neck with both hands, knocking him off balance and dragging them both to the ground in what was probably the most ungraceful landing in the galaxy, and certainly not the softest (Kara somehow managed to kick him in both shins on the way down, he was pretty sure that he’d stomped on her foot, and their knees collided with close to bruising force), but they lay there in a tangled heap of arms and legs, laughing hysterically anyway.

Until all of a sudden, Kara’s laughter broke off in a little gasp that Mon-El couldn’t decipher. For a second or two, he just frowned confusedly at her wide-eyed expression. She was Supergirl—she couldn’t get hurt just landing on a floor like this, right? But then it hit him—he was lying half on top of her, her hands still locked together behind his head and his arms in tight so close to her body that his elbows were practically touching her waist, and right away, it was like every bit of his strength had just been zapped away.

“Uh,” he said stupidly, forcing a laugh while he tried to not think about how he could feel the heat of her fingers still pressing into the back of his neck. “That was…well, that was a new ending. I mean uh, not quite what I had in mind, but…”
“Yeah.” She kept right on staring at him, her eyes boring into his until he was completely terrified of what dumb thing he might say or do next if he didn’t look away soon. “Are you um… are you okay? Did I hurt you?”

“Oh, no. No. Not at all.” He laughed nervously, his attempt to push himself up off of his forearms and onto his hands and knees foiled by the vice grip around his neck that Kara had yet to loosen. And the trouble with trying to subtly pull away was that it was Kara—breaking the grip of the Girl of Steel wasn’t easily done, and there was no way he could do it without her noticing. “I’m fine,” he said, taking a shaky breath that he hoped she’d think was due to the last fifteen minutes or so of singing and dancing and not the fact that every time she breathed in or out, he felt it. “Are you okay?”

“Yeah. Yeah, I’m good.”

The telltale little ridges that always ruined her bumbling fibs appeared in her forehead again, and another nervous chuckle came tumbling out.

“What?” Now she was fully frowning, and Rao, how was it that she was even cuter when she was frowning? It didn’t seem like it should be possible.

“The crinkle’s back,” he said, making a sympathetic click with his tongue. “Wanna change your answer?”

Immediately her forehead smoothed itself out, and he watched in fascination as a dark pink tinge spread rapidly over her cheeks.

“No,” she said almost defensively. Cupping a hand over her forehead, she glanced up at him for maybe half a second before her eyes darted away, focusing instead on what looked like his shirtsleeve. “I am fine. Really. It’s—not a problem.”

“Oh.” Stop staring. You have got to stop staring. Yeah, he was definitely still staring, wasn’t he? “Just…long as you’re sure.”

She looked up again, her right hand still gripping the back of his neck. “Yep. I-I’m sure.”

Just as the awkwardness neared an almost unbearable peak, a loud knock shattered the silence. In an instant, Mon-El was scrambling to his feet along with Kara, both of them spouting nonsense (at least, he knew he was babbling, and he couldn’t make head nor tail of Kara’s “sorry, I’ll just… hand, door, knock, um, okay” either) as she zipped past him on her way to the door. For a solid couple of minutes, it was all a nice, colorful blur—Kara opened the door to reveal everyone except Winn, who was apparently still picking burnt pieces of beans off his apartment ceiling, everyone was talking, laughing, and wishing each other a merry Christmas at the same time, and Mon-El kept smiling and nodding a lot, hearing everything but registering maybe half of it thanks to his still spinning head. Rao, how did he keep getting himself into situations like this? He’d even given himself some really good pep talks! Now it was just Thanksgiving all over again—there he sat, pretending to follow all the fun conversation, but unable to forget where Kara was at any given second no matter how hard he tried. And he was beginning to get the uncomfortable feeling that Eliza was no longer the only one who suspected that…because after Kara’s really extremely nice Earth mother surprised him by giving him a hug and asking right away how he was feeling, Alex gave him a squint-eyed look on her way to the kitchen to deliver a bunch of giant cookie tins, looked over at Kara, looked over at the music player that was still blaring Home for the Holidays, and then lifted her eyebrows as she headed over to go change the song.

For the rest of the day, he did his best to steer clear of Kara without looking like he was trying
to do just that. But it wasn’t easy, since he kept forgetting that the rest of the people in the room—excluding Kara, who seemed to maybe be avoiding him, too—didn’t have the same agenda, which meant that most of his attempts to stay back only made things harder. Like when he tried to keep at the back of the food line so as not to run into her, and by the time he got his plate filled everyone else had already taken their seats, and the only place left open was the spot between Kara and Winn. Or when he decided that he wasn’t going to risk that again, and watched carefully to see which seat she chose (a dining chair pulled over to provide extra seating) when everyone moved over to the sitting area, and quickly sat himself in the farthest spot he could manage—and then when Kara got up to grab her phone so she could take pictures, Eliza sat down in her spot, not realizing that she was taking anyone’s seat. Which meant that as they started to exchange gifts, he was once again so close to Kara that he was torn between enjoying himself hugely and worrying about the dangers of that enjoyment. Because whenever he started to relax and get into the goings-on, he also came dangerously close to actually flirting with Kara, and right in front of people who weren’t as oblivious to stuff like that as she was. It was both exciting and stressful, and by the time everyone started packing up to leave at the end of the night, he was more exhausted than he’d been since he’d been lying in a hospital bed with that virus slowly killing him. He played calm and cheerful anyway though, joking around with Winn and Alex as he gathered up the interesting things he’d been given—an unbreakable music player slash alarm clock from J’onn, a guide to Earthen sports (James), a gigantic candy-cane shaped plastic tube full of different kinds of candy and a card that could apparently purchase music (Winn), a large bottle of Aldebaran rum (Alex), a scarf, hat, and gloves set to help him blend in more with the humans during especially cold weather (Eliza), and a dark blue jacket that looked almost exactly like his favorite grayish-green one (Kara). And when Eliza smiled at him as they all headed out in a group, telling him that it had been nice to see him again, he was even able to manage a normal-feeling smile and reply in kind.

But then Kara stuck her head out the open door to ask if he could wait a minute, and immediately, all his nerves returned in full force.

“Go ahead,” Alex told him when he hesitated, giving him a shove that didn’t even budge him toward the door. “Mom and I’ll go tell J’onn you’re on your way, huh?”

“Yeah, okay, but—” Mon-El began, pointing haphazardly over his shoulder at the apartment.

“Oh, it’s no trouble.” Alex waved off his protest and linked her arm through her mother’s, the two women smiling (or in Alex’s case, smirking) at him in a way that made him vaguely concerned. “We’re happy to do it. No rush,” she added over her shoulder, half-pulling Eliza down the hall. “Take your time.”

“But—won’t J’onn be mad?” he pointed out, trying and failing to envision a scenario in which the man who gave lectures on the virtues of being orderly and prompt and who had even given him an alarm clock wouldn’t be annoyed at having to delay a trip back to the DEO.

“Not to worry, sweetie,” Eliza called back as the two women reached the corner of the passageway. “He’ll understand when we tell him.”

Mon-El frowned. Neither Alex nor Eliza was laughing. But they both seemed like they could start at any moment, and he wasn’t really sure how to respond to that since he got the distinct impression that they were laughing at him because of a joke he’d somehow made without getting it, which meant it was probably related to all those understanding looks they’d been giving him. But since they were already gone, he decided to ignore the whole thing and just slouched against the doorframe—but not too hard, because he didn’t want to crack Kara’s house—and drummed his fingers against the shiny green bag that held all his stuff while he waited.
It wasn’t long before Kara returned; soon after Alex and Eliza had vanished, she emerged from her bedroom area holding a squarish package and wearing her best It’s not a big deal expression (which meant it was definitely a big deal).

“Here you go,” she announced, nudging the parcel into his hand, her voice overflowing with poorly-suppressed excitement. “Last present of the day. Open it.”

“Okay,” he answered. Taking the present from her, he grinned. “Is this about to make me really embarrassed that I only got you food-themed gifts?”

“What? No, no. Of course not.” She shook her head vehemently. “One, food themed gifts are always great, and that ornament is so cute it’s probably in danger of me trying to eat it at some point. Two, this is your first Christmas! I didn’t have a present for anyone at my first Christmas, let alone multiple presents. Now, come on! Hurry up with that paper.”

It was impossible to help joining in her enthusiasm, he thought, sneaking a quick glance at her while he tore open the Santa-speckled paper. When Kara was enthused about anything, her whole being seemed lit from within, and it was contagious in a way that was useless to fight. Even now, though she stood very still with her hands clasped behind her back, it was obvious that she thought whatever was under all this wrapping was an especially good present.

“Oh, hey!” He grinned, pleasantly surprised when he got down to the actual gift and saw what it was. “Books. Cool! Harry Potter and The Sorcerer’s Stone,” he read, intrigued by the covers featuring a crazy-haired kid with very round glasses. “Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets, Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Az—something. So this is a series?”

“Yeah.” Beaming, Kara bobbed her head up and down. “Well, it’s part of one. I was going to try to get you the whole thing, but…” she winced. “There’re seven books total, and the boxed sets are all kind of expensive, so I thought I’d get you the first three to start you off. That way, if you want, you can borrow the rest of them from me. Because I have all of them. And Winn does too, so if you get to where you just need another one of them right away, you have options. But anyway, it’s a really great series, and I really enjoyed reading them when I first arrived on Earth. I thought you might, too.”

“Yeah? All right. Thanks.” He drummed his fingers along the spines of the books, curiosity prickling as he took another look at the titles. “Wait, so what secrets are in the chamber?” he asked, pointing to the volume in question. “And who is Az…Az-uh-kah-ban, and why are they holding someone prisoner?”

Kara snorted, crossing her arms. “What, you think I’m actually going to tell you?”

“Well, no. Not really,” he returned, her huffiness making him laugh. “But hey—worth a shot, right?”

“Oh, yeah. Uh-huh.” She wrinkled her nose at him with pretended sternness. “You’re just gonna have to read and find out. And no Googling!”

“I won’t,” he assured her, tucking the books into the crook of one arm so he could have a hand free to make a cross-my-heart gesture. “Promise. And really, thank you,” he added. “I mean, not just for the books, but…I had a lot of fun today.”

“Yeah.” She nodded, thankfully understanding without him needing to elaborate. Her cheeks flushed, and he knew she was thinking of the fall same as he was. “You’re welcome. And…I had a lot of fun today, too. I’m glad you could come.”
“Me too.” He took a deep breath, rocking forward onto his toes for a second or two as he tried to come up with something to say that could at least marginally express how much he loved being around her without revealing too much and making things uncomfortable. But nothing presented itself, and when the moment began to stretch out too long between them (again), he cleared his throat. “Well. I uh, probably need to get going before J'onn gets angry, so…thank you. Again.”

Another one of those soft, sunshiny smiles broke over her face and she wiggled her fingers at him in a little wave. “You’re welcome. And Merry Christmas, Mon-El.”

He smiled back so hard his face kind of hurt. “Merry Christmas, Kara.”

Walking down the hall after she closed the door, he heaved a sigh. Yeah, okay. Maybe he wasn’t doing quite as good in the Be Friends category as he’d hoped. But he could get better, couldn’t he? Yeah. Of course he could.

He just needed to try harder.

Chapter End Notes

*I'm SOOOO sorry this took me forever to post! I got hung up on what to do for presents, and then right after I decided what was going to be done, Hurricane Harvey hit my state. About 20 min after I told akane171 that it probably wasn't going to be that bad in my area and that I'd have the update done soon, the tornado warnings went off and I spent the next 2-3 days running in and out of the bathroom and getting woken up in the middle of the night by flash flood warnings and the tree that got waterlogged and blew down outside my window (oh joy). Everything was pretty crazy for the next couple weeks, so I didn't get any writing done. Then my internet went out, I got an idea for another Karamel fic that I had to outline before I forgot it, and long story short, you guys should've had this like three weeks ago (sorrysorrysorrysorrysorry!)
*I am absolutely convinced that Mon-El had read Harry Potter before 2x18 because of how willingly he put the book down. Nobody, and I mean NOBODY puts that book down without a struggle if it's their first time reading it and he did, therefore I conclude that the boy has read it before.
*I don't know why, but I feel sure that Mon-El would love watching Elf. It just seems like his type of movie, ya know?
*Title's taken from the song "Merry Christmas, Darling" by The Carpenters (which is an amazing song sung by an amazing duo, in case you were wondering, which you probably weren't), and the version of "Home for the Holidays" that I had in mind when writing this is, I think, the 1960-something Perry Como version, not the original 1954 version.
*Fun fact: I googled "Rudolph puffball red sweaters" to see if what I was picturing existed in the real world, and apparently, it does. They're hideously cute sweaters, too, so I got a good laugh.
*I had more notes in mind because this chapter is all over the place, but it's late and I've forgotten them. So if something strikes you weird, let me know, and I can do my best to answer it!
*Shout-out to akane171, who suggested "books" as gifts right when I was trying to decide whether or not I should go with the HP gift idea. This would've taken a month longer if I hadn't gotten that second opinion back then.
**As always, thanks for reading/commenting! Virtual hugs to everyone because it feels like it's been forever, and I'll do my best to answer all the comments from last chapter today! <3**

Also, to anyone who might be living in/have friends and/or family from Texas, Florida, or any of the islands getting hammered by storms: BIG hugs to you, and hope you're all doing good!
Happy New Year, Too

Chapter Summary

Picks up a little after where Ch. 25 left off: New Year's Eve. It's from Mon-El's POV again because this was SUPPOSED to be attached to the last chapter...it just got too long, so I had to split them up.

Apologies for the randomness as well as any typos/errors! I was already uber-caffeinated and then I watched the 3x01 promo just before trying to do a final proofread, so I gave up trying. Right now, I'm hyper and my ability to focus is about nil, so...yeah. There's a good chance this chapter reads like a squirrel wrote it.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Less than a week after Christmas, New Year’s Eve arrived in National City. Although it received far less attention from the stores than Christmas had—Winn explained that this was due to a mysterious something known as consumerism—it was apparently another big Earthen holiday, and Mon-El had been invited over to Kara’s again to celebrate the occasion with her, Winn, Alex, James, and J’onn. After everything that had happened at the last gathering, Mon-El was determined to be on his guard; he and Kara had run into each other only a couple times at the DEO over the last few days, and each time she had been in such a big hurry to get somewhere that there had been no chance to gauge whether or not she was reluctant to discuss the awkward fall on Christmas Day that they had so far avoided talking about. They’d parted on good terms, sure, but he didn’t want to cause another incident like that if he could possibly help it.

He was also not sure how to act now that he was positive Alex suspected something—she didn’t accuse him of anything, but whenever he or anyone else mentioned Kara now, her head turned casually around toward him and she did a raised-eyebrow thing that was both smug and intimidating. A whole entire evening spent pretending he wasn’t noticing Kara while Alex watched and smirked at him? He wasn’t too excited about that prospect. It sounded like the kind of scenario he was guaranteed to panic and do something stupid in.

But of course he agreed to go anyway, and when the last afternoon of the year arrived and both Alex and James canceled the original meet-at-Kara’s plans (whoever Alex was not-so-secretly dating had been able to take the night off after all and James had needed to oversee yet another unexpected, can’t-wait kind of CatCo crisis), Mon-El’s nervousness grew. Kara’s Earth mother had left town a couple days ago, J’onn was working on some big stacks of paper that looked very much like they weren’t going to be done before or by evening time, and if Winn canceled, he was going to be in huge trouble.

Not that he minded being alone with Kara or anything. He simply found it was easier to convince himself that he was enjoying hanging out with her as just a friend if someone else was there to make it feel like a group thing. Plus, the part of his brain that could actually be smart when it wanted to reminded him that he wasn’t very good at sticking to any play-it-cool plans he made once he and Kara got to chatting—she was just too easy to talk to, and really, he had no idea how he hadn’t let something embarrassing slip before now.
So he made good and sure that Winn still planned on coming before heading over to Kara’s at nightfall (he timed his arrival with the other man just to be on the safe side). And when the three of them stood around Kara’s table discussing what they should do now that the group had been cut in half, the moment Winn suggested they go out on the town (“like all the other sad single people in the city”), Mon-El heartily seconded the idea. Because surely, in a place stuffed full of distractions, it would be easy to avoid thinking about certain topics, right?

As usual though, his luck wasn’t the greatest.

The instant they set foot in the newly-reopened bar, three very drunk humans burst out of the large crowd with loud midnight-kissing invitations, and in their hurry to get away from all the interested parties who kept popping up and wanting to buy them drinks, Mon-El somehow ended up in the corner of one of the farthest back booths with Winn sitting across from him and Kara sitting next to him. Which, since the seat wasn’t gigantic, meant that every time he shifted he ended up bumping elbows with her. And though he did his level best to not think about how he’d accidentally walked right into another Christmas Day situation, he couldn’t help it. How he’d forgotten that particular Earth tradition, he couldn’t say—he only knew that he had, and that he was running out of random topics to introduce whenever someone stumbled over and asked if any of them had a “midnight buddy” yet.

For all his concerns, however, he still couldn’t make himself stay away from her; even though he volunteered to go get the first round of drinks solely for an excuse to change seats, he couldn’t even go through with that. It was probably very pathetic of him he thought, but when he came back to find Kara in the spot he’d vacated, he just sat down beside her in her old place instead of going to sit with Winn like he should’ve. But on the bright side, he had a new distraction—Rhonda, one of his bartender friends, had offered him a job on the spot when he’d commented on how busy they were tonight, explaining that they’d lost a lot of the staff after the Cadmus attack since some of the aliens had decided it was too risky to work there anymore. He also had an interview coming up next week for a job at a nearby restaurant. He hadn’t told anyone about it, figuring it might be bad luck or something, but now he was wondering whether or not he should even try for it. Because while the restaurant job was more respectable by Earth standards (he’d learned more than he ever wanted to know about how humans viewed certain occupations over the course of his job hunt), he had a strong feeling that he’d be better at a job that involved alcohol and pretty laid-back customers. But would he embarrass everyone who’d helped him so far by taking the job that would probably be easier for him? Or was that the smart thing to do?

By the time it began closing in on midnight, he was on his fifth drink and no closer to deciding, mostly thanks to the number of increasingly intoxicated visitors to their table who kept asking if he (or sometimes Kara or Winn, if he wasn’t interested), wanted to kiss them. Under other circumstances, he probably would’ve laughed at it. But right now, it just wasn’t funny—Winn kept getting up to get more drinks and leaving him and Kara there, which led to a lot of people getting the wrong impression, and every time he politely said no, he wasn’t interested, thanks, he had to watch them look at Kara and make understanding faces that he knew she couldn’t help but see. And there was one woman—a short little human with dark hair and darker eyelids who had to be freezing in that little half-shirt thing she wore—who even asked him straight out if Kara was his girlfriend. Then, after he and Kara both said NO as fast as they could, the woman wanted to know what the problem was, and since he couldn’t very well say that he didn’t want to kiss her since he was interested in the woman sitting beside him (the one who was definitely not his girlfriend), the whole thing got pretty awkward.

For all his nervousness and the minor annoyances that had happened thus far though, the evening seemed more like a night back on Daxam than anything he’d experienced yet on Earth, and in a strange way, he felt comforted. Being in familiar surroundings was a luxury he had all but
forgotten, and it was nice.

But clearly, not everyone agreed with him. Across the way, Winn suddenly slammed his sixth—or was it seventh?—empty glass down on the table.

“Problem?” Mon-El inquired, eyebrows going up.

“Yes. This was a horrible idea,” Winn announced loudly. Propping his chin into his hand, he smashed one cheek up into wrinkles around his eyes. “The literal worst. Awful with a scoop of wretched on the side. Who the hell suggested this, this…Bacchanalian form of so-called merriment?”

Mon-El followed the tech agent’s dark scowl over to where the rowdy partygoers packed the normally-calm center of the bar, everyone either laughing and talking or dancing. “Uh, you?”

Now Winn aimed the grumpy look his way. “That was what we call a rhetorical question, Mon-El. I already know I’m an idiot. I’ve accepted that. I don’t need a reminder.” He blew out a disgusted sigh. “Yeah, so, I’m getting some more shots. Or maybe a bottle of whatever alien brew’ll get me fall-down drunk without killing me. Any recommendations?”

Mon-El chuckled. “Well, not Aldebaran rum, ‘cause it’ll poison you.”

“Good to know,” the other man agreed, nodding solemnly. “Kara?”

“I don’t know.” Kara rested her elbows on the table, head cocked to the side. “I’m just surprised you’re actually up for another round. Didn’t you have an I’m-almost-teetotal policy not too long ago? What happened to that?”

“Pfft.” Winn waved a hand. “Gone with the wind. Or should I say, the old year. Seriously, if I’m not back in five, one of you had better come find me before I go all Bridget Jones and end up on top of the bar sob-singing All By Myself.”

“But you’re not all by yourself,” Mon-El pointed out, catching a glass as Winn’s elbow knocked it off when he attempted to slide out of the booth.

“Oh, ho, I’m not am I?” A muffled snort arose as Winn got to his feet. Raising the final shot from the most recent batch of shots, he held it out toward the other side of the booth in a mocking sort of toast before draining it. “Yeah, well. Time’ll tell. I’m not blind, ya know. I do notice things. I can put two and two together just like other people.”

“Okay?” Kara laughed, shrugging at Mon-El. “What…what does that mean?”

Winn blinked. “Oh. Right. Uh, nothing? That means nothing. Nothing at all! Except I really need more alcohol if I’m going to sit around and watch this, so…yeah. BRB, kids.”

“All right. But Winn, be careful, okay?” Kara called as he cracked his knuckles briskly.

“And maybe don’t get more than three shots,” Mon-El added, surveying the messy collection of small glasses on Winn’s side of the table. “There’s not a lot of room to pass out on the floor tonight.”

“Yup. Got it. Wish me luck.” Winn saluted before extending one arm into the air as though he were celebrating. “Forth, Eorlingas!”

Mon-El watched him go, eyebrows raised as Winn ducked calmly under the flying arms of a
couple trying to do that twist dance to a song that really wasn’t meant for it.

“Eorlingas?” he questioned, turning to Kara. “Does he mean earthlings, or…”

She sighed. “Lord of the Rings. He…sometimes quotes the battle stuff when he gets drunk.”

“Huh.” Mon-El thought back to the night he’d talked Winn into sneaking him out of the DEO. “I guess everybody has their drunk thing.” He bit the inside of his cheeks as another memory struck him. “You like to laugh. And sing, as I recall.”

“Yeah, uh-huh; I think I was pretty clear when I said we should never talk about that. Ever.” Shuddering, Kara massaged her fingertips into her forehead. “And hey, we’re not talking about me,” she added, straightening up. “We’re talking about Winn, who I really hope knows what he’s doing. He wasn’t too excited about that hangover he had the first time you guys went out, and so far, he looks like he’s headed for another one of those.”

“True, but he hasn’t had any of the extremely strong stuff.” Mon-El poked his glass with a finger, trying to see if he could get it to turn in a circle. “And I mean, he’s had a lot, but he still hasn’t had as much as he did that time.”

“He hasn’t?” She turned almost completely around in the booth to stare at him, all agape. “Wow. How much did you guys drink that night?”

“Oh…a lot?” He grimaced a little at the remembrance. He had barely even moved during the arm-wrestling and that poor guy’s arm had just snapped. “Of course, that was before I realized it wasn’t just really, really, really weak alcohol to everyone.”

“Yikes.”

“Yeah.”

Winn suddenly reappeared beside the table, his jaw set in a grim, semi-puckered line that made Mon-El frown. Was it just him, or was the other man looking a little green?

“Hey, that was quick,” Kara commented. “Did you drink them all at the bar?”

“Nope.” Winn rested his hands atop his head, inhaling and exhaling noisily. “But I think I need to go home. Quickly. Can we…call me a cab, please? And maybe go outside? Like…now? Right now? I’m pretty sure my drinks are getting ready to revolt.”

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“So,” Kara said fifteen minutes or so later, as they sat on the curb waiting for the taxi (once they’d helped Winn out into the alley, he’d ordered them to walk away and make the all-important call, claiming he ‘couldn’t hurl in front of an audience’). “I haven’t really had the chance to ask you yet, but…how are you liking Harry so far?”

“Oh!” Mon-El grinned, thinking of the number of times he’d been shushed or glared at by Agent Shum for chuckling over something funny. “It’s great. I like it a lot. I uh, started the third one last night, actually. And I now know Azkaban is a prison, not a person.”

“YES!” She beamed. “Okay, so, so…who’s your favorite character?”

“I like Ron,” he responded promptly, not even needing to think it over. “And Harry.”
Kara laughed, kicking some stray leaves lying in the gutter away from her feet. “Yeah, you know, that…makes a lot of sense, actually.”

He laughed too, her amusement tickling him. “All right, so who’s your favorite character?”

“Hermione,” she answered—unsurprisingly, he thought, trying not to smile. “But I relate a lot to Harry, too. And I just love Hagrid.”

“Oh, definitely,” Mon-El agreed. “Hey, question: does J’onn remind you a little of Professor McGonagall?”

“Yes!” Bouncing excitedly in place, Kara whacked him on the shoulder. “Winn thinks Dumbledore, but that’s what I’ve always said!” She winced and stopped mid-bounce as the distinct crack of concrete sounded beneath her. “Oh, crap.”

Mon-El hid a smile as she scooted out of the way to inspect the damage. “Did it break?” he asked.

“No, not too much,” she answered, holding her hair out of the way as she leaned over to examine the shadowy ground. “It’s just a little cracked. I can still sit here. Oh, and by the way,” she added, moving back to her spot, “you don’t need to tell J’onn I said that. He never seems to think it’s very funny when I compare him to stuffy—I mean, um, to the um, to the…more rules-conscious characters.”

“Ah.” He nodded, chuckling at the idea of J’onn’s dignified expression after hearing himself compared to a very in-charge character like Minerva McGonagall. “Got it.”

Before either of them could continue the conversation however, the happy din from the bar suddenly grew into a loud and unified voice shouting, “Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven! Six!” and Mon-El nearly groaned.

“Five! Four! Three! Two! One…HAPPY NEW YEAR!”

All at once, it was as if the whole city exploded around them. Wild cheers filled the crisp air. Little popping sounds came from all over the place—upper windows, storefronts down the block, shadowy buildings way off in the distance—and a series of loud booms echoed through the streets as far up above them, tons of jagged, sparkly trails of light blazed through the dark sky. Winn had of course mentioned all this when he first explained about the holiday, but even those lavish descriptions hadn’t done the thing justice. It was kind of incredible, and Mon-El smiled up into the fireworks filled atmosphere as that feeling of normalness he’d had earlier swept over him again, making him forget his nervousness. Maybe New Year’s Eve was, like Winn had said, a lonely sort of holiday if you didn’t have anyone. But there was something about its eager, kinda-frantic debauchery that reminded him of Daxam, and for the first time since he’d been on Earth, he found himself thinking about his old home without the heavy, sad feeling that usually accompanied it. Without really knowing why, he glanced over at Kara and saw with a small start that she was looking at him, too.
“What?” he said, his grin taking on some confusion when she smiled at him softly.

“Your first set of holidays on Earth,” she answered, tilting her head as she inspected him. “What do you think?”

Behind them, the bar began half-singing, half-shouting that Old Lane Time song, or whatever it was called, that he’d been hearing everywhere since Christmas. Laughing a little, Mon-El leaned back on his wrists, pursing his lips as he stretched his feet out in front of him.

“I don’t know.” He shot another glance at her, the side of his mouth quirking up in a crooked grin. “I think I like it, but it still feels kind of weird.”

She laughed too, hugging her knees to her chest and resting her chin atop them. “Yeah, but good weird, or bad weird?” she asked, turning her head toward him. “‘Cause, you know—there’s both.”

“Oh, good weird. Definitely.” He chuckled, pausing a second to ooh at a really fancy sequence of fireworks before going on. “Earth New Year actually feels a lot like Everyday Daxam, so…I don’t know, I guess I’m just used to it.”

“Well, at least you have that.”

Something in her voice jerked his attention away from the fireworks, and he looked over to see a shadow on her face that had nothing to do with the poor lighting in their area.

“You don’t?” he asked, curious. “I thought you said Earth is home?”

She raised a shoulder. “It is now. But sometimes…oh, I don’t know.” She yanked on a strand of hair, staring almost gloomily into the sky. “Sometimes I just…really miss Krypton. And the terrible part is I don’t even know if it’s because I’m missing Krypton itself, or if it’s because I just miss feeling like I know where I fit in.”

Mon-El nodded slowly. Yes, he certainly got that. In many ways—most, if not all ways, actually—Earth was better than Daxam. Lots better. Millions of times better. But every once in a while, just when he least expected it, the heavy feeling he got when he thought about his planet would turn into a crippling wave of homesickness and he’d start feeling like he’d give just about anything to return to a world where (even though he was often miserable), he at least understood what was going on and what was expected of him and didn’t have to remember to analyze every single move he made to see whether or not it was the correct one. At least there, when he broke some unwritten social rule, he knew he was doing it.

“You fit in good here, though,” he said. “I mean, if I didn’t know you were Kryptonian, I’d probably think you were a human.”

“Thanks.” Smiling a little, she sighed. “I just get tired of pretending sometimes, you know? Like hey, guess what? I can catch a bullet in my fingertips, I can lift a couple of giant trucks without breaking a sweat, I can see where you broke your ankle and had to get a pin put in, and I can fly! Why can’t I just tell everyone that I’m the alien they keep hearing about and be done with all the secrets?”

Yeah, he’d asked himself that question a few times, too.

“So why don’t you?” he asked carefully, trying to not seem too interested in the answer.

She sighed. “Because. Deep down, I know it’s better to not do it. A lot of times, telling people news like that—it changes how they see you. And in the long run, I don’t want people to love me
or hate me because of Supergirl. I want them to love me or hate me for who I am. Me. Just Kara.”

“Yeah.”

Out of words suddenly, he nodded again. It wasn’t difficult to recall the different looks thrown his way on visits to other planets. Because he’d been in the habit of sneaking away from his guards and wandering into areas he wasn’t supposed to visit since he was a child, he recognized a variety of expressions—open dislike suddenly covered in annoyingly-fawning flattery, friendly interest that morphed into fear, or disgust thinly veiled in polite deference. He remembered that one time when he was five or so, he’d snuck off into the gardens, fallen into a fountain, and then made his way down to the kitchens where a lot of the servants’ children were playing tag. He’d joined in the game without thinking to introduce himself, and no one had bothered to ask because everyone was only interested in playing. It had been fun—probably the most fun he’d had as a prince—until his nurse showed up looking for him, and then there was a lot of yelling, all the other kids suddenly stopped talking to him and started staring and bowing, and then he was dragged back to his quarters to get cleaned up. He never saw any of those kids again, and it hurt knowing that they were all surely dead by now.

Heaving a sigh of his own, Mon-El gazed up into the sky again, sternly pushing those thoughts aside. He couldn’t fix that. It was done. And anyway, hadn’t he just had his first maybe-coming-to-terms-with-that moment like thirty seconds ago?

“You should go back in there,” Kara said, poking him in the shoulder as the shout-singing intensified, no doubt signaling the end of the song. “Take that girl up on her offer. I bet it still stands.”

“Wha—?” More than a little startled, he stared at her. “Why?”

“Uh…” she gestured jerkily with her hands. “Because…midnight? New Year’s? Isn’t it obvious?”

“Yeah, no; I know about all that, but why?” he demanded again, almost squinting at her. “I’m fine right here.”

“Well yes, but…” Kara jiggled her thumb in the direction of the bar. “New Year’s is like the one time of year that everybody does this kind of stuff. Where it’s not only totally acceptable, but kind of encouraged, even. Don’t you want to, I don’t know—go get in some…kissing time or something?”

Unable to restrain himself, Mon-El snorted. “Get in some kissing time?” he repeated, raising his eyebrows and smirking in spite of his best attempts to keep a straight face. “What, is there one of those…respiration date things on it that I should be aware of?”

“Expiration date. And come on, you know what I mean,” she grumbled, slapping his arm and making him laugh. “Hey. I’m serious.” She twisted around and nodded toward the bar. “I can keep an ear out for Winn, and there’s no point in both of us just sitting out here. You should go on in. You know, have some, some…fun.”

He shook his head, still chuckling over kissing time. The idea of a specific time for that interesting activity was just hilarious. “What about you? Don’t you want to have fun?”

“Well…” Kara gave a small shrug. “This is your first New Year’s here, not mine. I’ve kinda done all this before.”
“Really?” Surprised, Mon-El cocked his head, studying her intently. “You’ve done the—the midnight kiss thing?” Rao, why was he not trying to change the subject? It was almost like he wanted to sabotage his own cause. “When?”

A frown carved neat little grooves across her forehead as she bit her lip. “Okay, maybe I haven’t actually done…a-hem.” She cleared her throat. “I haven’t done the, the full midnight kiss thingy. But I almost did a few times, and a lot of other people seem to enjoy it. I mean…well, you probably would.”

She didn’t say it snidely and okay, there was maybe some truth in that statement because he’d never been one to shy away from kissing, but even so, Mon-El couldn’t help feeling a little gloomy. Because there it was again: the you’re from Daxam, I’m from Krypton thing that kept shutting his mouth just when he started to wonder if he ought to tell her that he remembered everything—what had happened in the infirmary, and that he was that horrible prince she’d grown up despising. Most of the time now, the ancient bad blood between their planets was like a joke with them and not an issue at all. But every once in a while, Kara would get this frustrated look on her face or start to say something and then stop suddenly, and he would always know right off that it was about that. That she had been going to say something about him being a Daxamite, and not in a teasing kind of way.

And that wasn’t even the least of it. Although he didn’t think about it as much as he sometimes suspected she did, they were pretty much complete and total opposites. She was kind and thoughtful, and got embarrassed all the time about stuff that made no sense to Mon-El (like once, at the DEO, she came in upset because she’d just figured out that she’d been walking around CatCo all day with a coffee stain on her shirt when it seemed to him that there was no point in getting upset over something that was already over and done with and that she had no control over anyway). She was always running straight toward and into trouble when every other person around her was pointing out that it might be a good idea to wait a minute and see what the danger entailed before getting involved since kryptonite existed and could make her vulnerable, and as kind as she was, she was also really stubborn and good at holding a grudge. He, on the other hand, wasn’t anything like that at all (except for the stubborn part): where she was quiet, he was noisy, and where she was cautious, he was just sort of…not. He was also apparently very embarrassing by Earth standards, still confused about why having superpowers meant you automatically had to run out into a world full of dangerous things and try to fix everything, and didn’t get how anyone could stand to hold a grudge for long—they were uncomfortable things, because to remember to hold it, you pretty much had to spend all your spare time thinking about what had made you mad in the first place, which was not fun.

All the same though, it didn’t feel great when he reminded himself that, considering their differences and how he could annoy her just by the way he chewed his food, she probably wouldn’t be pleased at having to deal with him liking her. Somewhere inside of his dumb self, he guessed he’d hoped for a miracle of some sort to happen—hoped that maybe if he just tried hard enough, he could become someone she might actually like in a more-than-friends way. But that was ridiculous. Even meeting Kara in the first place was the biggest stroke of luck that had ever happened to him; now that they were friends, was he really going to be greedy enough to threaten that by trying for more when the chances of it ever becoming something were most likely less than zero? No. No, he was not. So what if he liked her? He could make himself stop. Probably. If he really put his mind to it and stopped giving up at the first scrunch-nosed smile aimed his way.

At least, he thought he could. This was, after all, close to the thousandth time he’d told himself the exact same thing, and he’d ended up dancing with her not quite a week ago despite all his best don’t-go-there intentions, and sitting next to her all night even though he knew it was only going to make things harder.
“I might enjoy it,” he said finally, scratching his chin absentmindedly as he checked out the frosty ground. Boy, was it a good thing his temporary buzz had won off. A drunk slip of the tongue was about the last thing he needed right now. “But I don’t know any of those people in there other than the ones working. And they’re too busy for that kind of stuff.”

“What?” Kara scoffed, waving a hand. “Come on! You’re the one who said kissing’s like a handshake. Don’t you want to go…I don’t know, meet people? Shake hands?”

“Not really.” The answer tumbled out so fast that he shriveled a little inside. Yeah, that didn’t sound at all suspicious. “I mean uh, Earth isn’t Daxam? People here can take things like that too seriously sometimes, and I don’t want to like, give the wrong impression or anything. You know, make someone think something means more than it does?”

“Oh. Yeah. I guess that makes sense.”

Kara sounded so terse all of a sudden that Mon-El began to worry. Did he seem to be insulting Earthlings? If he did, it definitely wasn’t his intention at all. He just wanted to make her understand that he didn’t want to go in and kiss people, and maybe he also really wanted her to not think that he’d meant anything by kissing her, because then she might get uncomfortable and stop talking to him forever. Before he could ask though, Winn came staggering up, now chalk-faced and haggard-looking.

“So, I puked,” he announced, a distinct slur to his whispery voice. “And now I feel like six and a half percent better. Is the cab here yet? ’Cause if it’s gonna be much longer, I think I’ma just lay m’self down and die. Right here.” He waved a dramatic hand at the curb as he collapsed into a sitting position. “In the gutter. Like Oliver Twist. A dead man walking.”

Mon-El puzzled over that one, finally looking to Kara for clarification since the only Oliver he’d heard of was the superhero one Kara had met on another Earth (and she’d said nothing about that Oliver being twisted), but she only shrugged.

“Winn, Oliver Twist didn’t—okay.” She stopped when a loud snore cut her off. “I think he’s done.”

“Yep.” Mon-El nodded, a little impressed by the volume of the snores. “I think he’s very done, and both he and we are lucky he lasted this long.”

“Yeah, he gets a little bitter and reflective sometimes around this holiday. Oh, I hear the cab coming,” Kara said, standing quickly. “Let’s hope he’s through with the throwing up.” She motioned toward the body now lying between them. “Can you help me lift him?”

“Well, yeah.” Mon-El frowned but complied, tucking Winn’s arm over his shoulder so they could pull the DEO’s resident tech guy to his feet where he could sleep standing. “But…you know, he’s not that heavy, though?”

“What? Oh! No,” Kara chuckled, Winn’s arm dangling over her shoulder, too. “This is just one of those times where you gotta pretend you can’t lift heavy stuff.” She inclined her head toward Winn. “I could probably hold him up with one hand, but the cab driver might get suspicious.”

“Ah, that makes sense.” He pursed his lips speculatively as a thought occurred to him. “Huh. So do you think you could balance him on one hand? Like if he were standing on just your one hand with both feet? Or would he have to do one of those fountain-pose things to keep from falling off?”

Kara leaned around Winn to give him a raised-eyebrow stare. “Mon-El. Please don’t try that
when Winn sobers up.”

He laughed. “Hey, I’m just asking!”

“Uh-huh.”

He kept quiet until the cab was about twenty feet away before sneaking a glance over at her. “It would be kind of cool, though.”

“Mon-El.”

Her voice sounded stern, but even in the dark he could see her lips twitching.

“I won’t do anything,” he promised, grinning as he shuffled slowly toward the taxi along with her. She seemed to have shaken off whatever was bothering her, and that was a big enough relief to lift his spirits again. “Don’t worry.”

“Okay,” she said, shaking her head as the singing off in the distance picked up again. “Just making sure.”

It seemed to take forever to maneuver Winn into the backseat since they kept having to act like he was dead weight or something, so it was a joyous moment when they were all finally squeezed inside and on their way to his apartment (which was a lot smaller and messier than Kara’s, Mon-El noted when they got there). Thankfully though, it turned out to be easy to get Winn settled for the night, because right when they were discussing putting him on the couch rather than the bed, he suddenly woke up, demanded his Superman pajama pants, apparently remembered that Kara was there and that the symbol could technically belong to Supergirl too, apologized, ordered them both to leave so he could sleep, and then flopped onto his bed and started snoring away. There was no point in lingering after that since Winn seemed to be in command of himself again, so maybe twenty minutes later, Mon-El found himself walking back in the general direction of Kara’s apartment and the DEO, talking about all kinds of random things with her to keep his mind away from a danger zone that grew larger with every singing bar they passed, as everyone in the city seemed reluctant to let go of the New Year jubilance. The Old Lane Time song was everywhere, and by the time they had nearly reached the point of the walk back where they had to split off in different directions, Mon-El was in as much trouble as he’d been on Christmas Day—maybe even more so. That song and the traditions that he knew accompanied it were all jumbled together in his head, and he couldn’t decide whether he should make a joke about it, or just talk louder and pretend that he couldn’t hear it?

As usual, his mouth decided for him.

“They sure play this song a lot here, don’t they?” he remarked as they passed what must’ve been the hundredth bar drunk-singing that same tune. Even to him, his question sounded kind of nervous, so he added a laugh and a cough to hopefully hide it. “I mean, I’m not saying it isn’t catchy, but…”

“Yeah.” Kara swung that little bag she used to hold her money and stuff high into the air as she walked, nodding though he noticed she didn’t take her eyes off the street up ahead. “They really do. Variety is um…definitely needed. But for some reason, Earth only has like two New Year’s songs, so…”

Mon-El nodded back, opening then shutting his mouth when he realized he had absolutely nothing to say. Another of those heavy silences he was starting to have nightmares about overwhelmed them, and he couldn’t decide whether he was disappointed or relieved when they
reached the parting of the ways. Ordinarily, he’d have gone with disappointed in a heartbeat—but tonight had been so jampacked with stressful close calls that he knew it was probably better for him to leave before he said or did anything to mess things up yet again. So he stuck on a big smile and told Kara in the most casual (and loud, because since he could still hear the music, he knew she could too) tone he could manage that he’d see her around.

“If you’re not too busy saving the city,” he added, laughing again and wishing that song would just end already.

“Right, yeah.”

She smiled back, and boy was he ever grateful to the streetlights for reflecting off the lenses of her glasses—he knew all too well that if he could see her eyes right now they’d be all twinkly and bunched up around the edges, and he didn’t need to go there again because he’d spent too many nights since the dancing accident on Christmas Day seeing close-ups of Kara’s face whenever he tried to fall asleep.

“All right.” He puffed out a breath that formed a little gray cloud around his face in the darkened street. “Bye. Oh, and—again—thank you for inviting me. I had fun. I mean, I pretty much always do, but…yeah. I—” Okay, he had to stop being such a coward and at least give her some idea of how important all this was to him. “I uh, really like being friends with you, Kara.” he finished in a rush. “Thank you for granting me that opportunity.”

“Oh, well. That’s…” Chuckling sort of self-consciously, Kara waved off the thanks, crossing then uncrossing her arms as she glanced at the ground for a moment. “I can’t really take credit for that. I mean, hey…you fell to Earth in a pod…I fell to Earth in a pod…we both spent a lot of years in those pods…” She made a jerky, side-to-side motion with her hands that reminded him of a juggler. “It’s almost like we were supposed to meet. And become friends.”

Yep. How serendipitous,” he joked, reaching up to scratch a nonexistent itch on the back of his neck.

Kara chuckled again. “Yeah, you know, it…really is.” After a moment or two, she gave her head a little shake. “Well. I probably ought to get going now, so…”

“Right! Right.” Suddenly realizing how long he was lingering after saying goodbye, he started to turn and jabbed his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the DEO. “Yeah, so… I will—see you soon, I guess? Maybe tomorrow? Maybe not tomorrow?”

“Wait, um… hold on.” Her hands fluttered up to press against the sides of her glasses. “Just… one sec.”

He paused, brows drawing toward each other in confusion. “O-kay?”

A funny, tight sort of smile spread over her face. “Since it’s your first New Year’s, and since you are my friend and we totally ignored midnight…Happy New Year, Mon-El.” She stepped close, touching her lips to his cheek in a light, soft kiss that somehow made his face tingle as much as if she’d electric-shocked him or something. “That’s just because it’s your first New Year’s,” she joked, pushing her now slightly-askew glasses up the bridge of her nose. “Don’t—take that too seriously, all right?”

“Heard you right.” He splayed a hand over his chest, forcing a laugh and acting fake-insulted even while he struggled to breathe normally so that she wouldn’t notice how even a small kiss from her affected him. “I never take anything seriously, remember?”
She snorted. “Good point. Don’t know why I worried.”

“Hey.” He cut his eyes over at her and couldn’t help the silly grin that broke loose when he saw her smile down at the ground. “Well,” he remarked after few seconds, raising his eyebrows. “Since it is my first Earth New Year’s and I don’t want to be rude…”

“Uh-huh.” She rolled her eyes.

Mon-El stroked his chin in pretended thought, then nodded. “I guess I can probably return the midnight tradition favor.”

“Mhmm.” Inclining her cheek ever so slightly toward him, Kara rolled her eyes again, even harder. “Well, don’t strain yourself or anything, Mr. Politeness.”

This time his laugh was real as he closed the gap between them and planted a kiss on her cheek that was a little too hearty and mwah! sounding to match the one he’d received. But good Rao, a friendly, smacking sort of kiss was the only kind he could trust himself to give her—if he tried to kiss her the way she’d kissed him, he was going to end up either lingering too long or spilling the bees (beads? Beets? Beaks, maybe? Whatever. He was going to end up spilling the somethings), and as he’d been reminding himself since before Thanksgiving and a kiss she thought he didn’t remember, that kind of confession wasn’t going to end well.

“Happy New Year, Kara,” he said. He didn’t quite manage the nonchalance he’d been hoping for, but considering the way his heart was pounding and that he could point to the precise spot where she’d kissed him, it was pretty amazing that he’d gotten any words out at all. “May your year be full of joy, and luck, and…bad guys to defeat and haul in for justice and things.”

“Thanks.” Her laughter floated up around them as she shook her head. “And may yours be full of fun, happiness, and new experiences.”

“Thank you.” He didn’t mean to wink, but the gesture came so naturally with her that it was out before he could rein it in. “I think it will be.”

She smiled. “Yeah, me too.”

“Well…have a good night,” he said lamely after another way-too long bout of them standing there just looking at each other passed. “I’m not just saying that this time, I’m actually leaving.”

“Ditto. Good night.”

She held out a fist to him, and he frowned for a half a second before remembering that she and Winn had taught him this one.

“Oh, right.” He snatched his hand out of his pocket and bumped his knuckles against hers, grinning sheepishly. “The bro-goodbye.”

“What?” Kara covered her mouth with a hand, the air around them filling with her chuckles. “Is that what Winn called it?”

“Yeah.” Mon-El laughed too, not understanding but enjoying her merriment anyway. “Is that…not what it is?”

“Well…” She shrugged. “It can be.” Her smile flashed as she stuck her fist out again. “Okay. Bro-goodbye, Mon-El.”
“Bro-goodbye, Kara.”

They both turned and headed their separate ways, but even as he headed toward the DEO, Mon-El could still hear her giggling and it kept a smile on his face until about halfway down the street he suddenly realized that he’d done it again—and he could tell himself it was one night with Kara that had done this, one night topped off with a kiss, but he knew better. It hadn’t taken five minutes with her this evening, let alone the whole five or so hours plus a kiss that meant nothing to her to make him forget all his don’t-feel-like-that-about-Kara resolutions. If he didn’t find something to keep him busy—and soon!—he was going to be in huge trouble.

Heaving a sigh, he pulled out his phone and dialed the number of the bar.

“Hey, Rhonda?” he said, slouching against the nearest wall and doing his best to not think about blue eyes, big smiles, and what had to be the softest lips in the entire universe. “This is Mon-El. Listen, I’ve thought it over, and…yeah, what does a mixologist do, exactly?”

Chapter End Notes

Oh, look! It didn't take 500 years for me to update this time! *Self-five* Suddenly, I feel all put-together.
*Title once again taken from The Carpenters' "Merry Christmas, Darling" because I'm feeling slightly uncreative at the moment.
*If this chapter seems all over the map, it's because I worked on it in big segments just like last chapter...I wrote the middle and ending around the time I was writing Ch. 25, and then realized that it was going to be insanely long and rambling, so I then had to invent an opening to this chapter that I wasn't planning. Sorry if it's super incoherent.
*I firmly believe that Mon-El relates hardcore to Ron Weasley (jokes/sarcasm, insecurity, loyalty, etc.). Honestly, no one can convince me otherwise. Kara I'm not too sure about, but I definitely feel like she would relate to both Hermione (the rules, the smarts, the bossiness, the crusading-make-a-difference thing) and Harry (the heroic hotheadedness), so I decided to go with that.
*I REALLL Y wanted to put a *real* kiss in this chapter, but I couldn't do it because I can't convince myself that another on-the-lips-kiss happened between 2x08 and 2x10, when they talk about it. But I can sort of convince myself that they might conceivably have kissed each other on the cheek "Just For New Year's," so I did that instead.
Apologies to everyone who's left unsatisfied...if it helps, I'm unsatisfied too. :P
*I'm moving onto 2x09 after this chapter, and just because it's been awhile, I'll say again that I'm probably only going to do one or two chapters from that ep. because there aren't a ton of gaps there, and because I need to keep trucking along here now that S3's so close :)"
*Thanks for reading/commenting! I love getting to hear y'all's thoughts <3 Hope everyone's having a good Monday and enjoying that promo like I am! :D
Be Cool (Club) Sodapop

Chapter Summary

Takes place at the end of 2x09 (Kara's POV). Begins in the gap between the scene where Kara sees Izzy reunite with her mother and Mon-El drops by.

**I had to manually indent some paragraphs because when I copied this over, some of them indented and some of them didn't. If things look weird, that's why**

**LONG set of notes at the bottom. The important takeaway is SORRY I TOOK FOREVER TO UPDATE, and HOPE YOU'RE ALL DOING GREAT!!! <3 :D**

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

By the time Kara breezed into her apartment, still practically bubbling over with satisfaction at the happy ending to yesterday’s almost-terrible story, she was in the mood for some serious relaxation. Reuniting Izzy and her mother had been like getting an extra dose of yellow sunshine—a comparison she fully appreciated after recent events—but even the glorious high that accompanied a job well done couldn’t bring the same level of pleasure as good food, stretchy jeans, and old sweaters.

So she took care of that necessity first thing, changing into some good-for-lounging-around clothes, digging around in her refrigerator until she found some leftover spaghetti, and then settling down on the couch with a blanket once she’d scarfed down every last noodle. But since there didn’t seem to be much on TV at the moment, she eventually headed over to Netflix and stalled out on The Big Sleep. Sure, she’d seen the movie least a dozen times, but hey, a classic was a classic, and anyway, her brain could do with some serious R&R. After weeks of boring nothing, a lot had happened in a pretty short amount of time, and it was nice to be able to just sit back and not worry about her next move and where it might land her.

And speaking of next moves…

The little paper bag on the ground beside her coffee table caught her eye as she stretched and squirmed into a more comfortable position on the couch, and as silly as it was, she couldn’t help laughing. She’d seen a bunch of Highlights magazines in the display window of a bookshop on her way home from work, and it reminded her so irresistibly of Mon-El that she’d had to buy it. The original plan had been to swing by the bar and drop it off since she knew for a fact that he was working today (during their long walk on Maaldoria they’d had a lot of time to discuss what might happen if they never returned to their jobs), but hunger had won out, and she’d decided to wait until tomorrow. Besides, he was such a sociable guy that he’d probably stop to talk to her, and she didn’t think he needed to be doing that while he was still learning the ropes. Plus she didn’t want to be even remotely connected to him getting fired. He’d had enough job trouble already and though she hadn’t really thought about it before, bartending was kind of the perfect career for him—he liked talking to people and was really good at it, knew his drinks (the alien ones at least) backward and forward, and in addition to all that, he was astonishingly easy to confide in. And when it came to attracting new customers—well, she’d seen with her own eyes how much attention he got the second he walked into the bar. He’d probably have no trouble at all raking in tips, and really, she
wouldn’t be all that surprised if he wound up with so many date offers that she rarely saw him in the evenings anymore.

Which was fine. Totally. So what if he went out and had some fun? That wasn’t any of her business. Like Alex was forever reminding her, Mon-El was an adult and could do as he liked. Even if doing what he liked meant…well, doing whom he liked.

Not that it was any of her business.

What was it he’d said yesterday while they were trudging around without powers? He’d once taken a girl to the Bismuth Mountains? It had required every bit of self-discipline she had to refrain from saying Of course you did, and though the whole thing had inexplicably annoyed her, it had also served as a reminder of why it was probably best for her to not get too involved in his life. As much fun as she generally ended up having with him, she could never quite ditch the nagging voice in the back of her head that insisted on reminding her of their differences, because the starkness of the contrasts seemed destined to cause problems between them at some point. Like that whole discussion they’d had while locked up—she’d already kind of known that he wasn’t nearly as optimistic as her, but attributing their respective survivals to luck?

Shaking her head, Kara flopped back against the cushions. Yeah, she really needed to stop thinking for a while. This wasn’t relaxing in any way, shape, or form, and she was not going to spend her evening sorting through all the reasons why she and Mon-El clashed on so many different things. What she needed to do now was concentrate on something else. Like yesterday’s big-time win, or…okay, see, like the epicness of Lauren Bacall.

Eyes glued to the screen, Kara propped her chin up on the remote and practiced (for a little while, anyway) tossing her head from side to side in an attempt to copy the other woman’s sophisticated glamour. Why couldn’t she ever be that cool and collected? Even as Supergirl, she couldn’t project that much confidence. It was just so not fair—whenever she tried to come up with a crushing retort, she usually ended up red-faced and stammering instead of dignified-yet-snarky, and that kind of thing always gave the bad guys such an advantage.

“Maybe I should start taking notes,” she muttered.

Before she could get too caught up in her only semi-joking study, a knock sounded behind her and she leaned back over the arm of the couch to squint at the door, surprised. Alex had said something about needing to talk to Maggie, so why would she come over? Had something gone terribly wrong with the conversation and now Alex needed to—

Nope. Definitely not Alex.

Kara fought a smile as she sat up and threw back the blanket. Her quick, upside-down x-ray had revealed one of the last people she expected to appear on her doorstep, but unexpected didn’t necessarily mean unwelcome, and she couldn’t make herself feel even a little put out at the interrupting of her relaxing evening. Although considering how much time she’d spent with him yesterday and how often he’d done that thing where he got under her skin and made her want to shake some sense into him, it was a little astonishing to discover exactly how pleased she was to see him. That was…newish.

“Hi,” she said cheerfully as she pulled the door open wide to find Mon-El holding up a clear plastic bottle, his teasing smile just north of sheepish.

“Club soda,” he announced without ceremony, eyes twinkling.
“I see. Thank you,” she chuckled, reaching out to take the bottle from him. His expression was such a ridiculous combination of self-satisfaction and self-deprecation left over from his initial mistake with the bubbly liquid that she couldn’t contain her amusement, and anyway, he was the kind of person who made you want to laugh.

“I found it,” he joked, shutting the door behind them as she started leading the way toward the living area. “You look cozy and...comfortable.”

Kara glanced down at herself, trying to decide whether she was dealing with an observation or a compliment. “Well, I am,” she responded, tugging her sweater closed just in case by comfortable he meant shabby, or something else like that.

“So are you still feeling betwixt and between?” he inquired, following her over to the recently-vacated sofa.

“No, no.” She turned her head a little to look at him. Another smile spread across her face as she spoke, and a laugh snuck out as she recalled her melancholy confession to him at the bar. She didn’t think it would ever cease to amaze her how much could change in a single day, and in all honesty, she wasn’t just thinking about how things had gone from boring to busy at the drop of a hat. There had been a lot of moments in recent weeks where she’d felt incapable of being anything other than guarded and formal around Mon-El, but yesterday had been such a weird bonding experience that it was as if every invisible barrier had been removed. “I feel amazing.”

“Good, good.”

“So, what brings you by?” she asked, setting her drinkable present down on the coffee table and reaching for the remote to shut off the TV. She enjoyed the scene with the real bookstore girl and all, but curiosity about the nature of this visit nipped hard and she didn’t want the background noise.

“Ohh, you know,” he responded lightly, his hand coming up to scratch at the side of his face as he sunk down across from her on the far end of the couch. “Some shopping...little evening stroll...”

They both laughed, Kara folding her legs up and re-settling the blanket over herself. To her surprise, Mon-El immediately did the same, picking up the end of the bright knit fabric and depositing it carefully over his knees with a businesslike little cough.

“There we are,” he remarked, though whether it was to himself or to her, Kara wasn’t sure.

For a second she held out a hand, intending to explain that he didn’t have to use the blanket just because she was. But then he looked up, tongue curled into the inside of his cheek as he grinned at her, and she caved to the cuteness of it all. Covering her mouth, she giggled into her fingers, his cheerful, matter-of-fact acceptance of her laughter only adding to her merriment.

“I was—I was wrong,” he continued, holding his arms out in vague illustration. “That’s what I—that’s what I wanted to—”

“About?” she interrupted teasingly before he could get farther into the as-yet unspecified story behind his call. “Cause the list of things you were wrong about is, is...it’s long.”

“It’s a long list. Um, I...” He joined in her laugh, smiling almost self-consciously down at the blanket and picking at it for a second or two before looking up again. “About getting involved. And then I saw you with those people, and...” Hesitating, he made a sound that fell somewhere
between a tsk and a click, biting his lip as he gave his head a small shake. “I mean, there wasn’t much to inspire me on Daxam.”

Kara frowned, the unusual diffidence in his manner confusing her. “What about the prince?”

All absorbed Kryptonian prejudices aside, she knew Daxam hadn’t been the most spectacular place to grow up. The things they did, the kind of so-called ‘values’ generation after generation instilled in their children—ugh, that kind of existence would skew just about anyone’s definition of right and wrong. But surely, surely Mon-El could see the hope represented in the prince’s sacrifice? Even if, as she’d discovered back in Roulette’s stupid cell, he had a pretty cynical outlook on life, he had to recognize the significance of an irresponsible, party-animal (slash playboy) prince being willing to trade his life for the life of someone he probably barely even knew. That kind of behavior didn’t just come from nowhere; it meant that whatever else he might’ve been and done, the prince had had some good instincts. Wasn’t it possible that the man had been at least a little inspirational?

But Mon-El didn’t seem at all encouraged by the suggestion. If anything, he appeared even glummer.

“He wasn’t worth admiring,” he said quietly, his gaze drifting downward for a moment before returning to meet hers. “But I, I—I want to be.”

Okay, she thought, eyeing her visitor semi-suspiciously as she processed this new piece of information. If she didn’t know any better, she’d almost say he was setting her up for a joke of some sort. The only thing she couldn’t figure out was why.

“So, um…that’s the next thing.” He moved around in his spot nervously, making Kara forget her questions for a bit as she pinched her lips together to keep from laughing. “I’ve made a decision.”

“Sounds decisive,” she teased, mimicking his motions by shifting around herself.

“It’s very decisive.” A smile edged its way across his face and he looked down, then up again quickly, something she couldn’t quite identify in his expression. Embarrassment maybe, or…no, was that enthusiasm? “I wanna be a superhero.”

Huh?

Too amazed to do much more than blink, she leaned forward, eyebrows approaching her hairline. “Say what?”

This had to be a joke, right? After the conversations they’d had on this particular subject, she found it almost impossible to believe that he wasn’t just pulling her leg. Building up to some really dumb punchline. But then what he was saying about a name, an outfit, and a cape registered, and she nodded to herself. That was it. Now everything made sense.

“You want the suit,” she said laughingly, not sure whether she should roll her eyes or reproach him for treating this like some kind of game—a low-stakes game, even.

“No,” he answered, sounding indignant. Then he seemed to think better of the denial and grinned a little. “I mean—I mean, YES I want the suit, but no, no. I wanna—I wanna get my hands dirty, you know? Like…” He faltered, seemingly struggling to get the words out. “I wanna…I wanna do something.”

Kara squinted at him, trying—with marginally more success than usual (maybe)—to gauge
what was going on in his head. “You’re serious,” she said finally, the words not quite a question, but close to it.

“Yeah.”

He dipped his head, the emphatic confirmation coming with no hesitation, and now she didn’t know what to think. He looked serious. He sounded serious. But was he, really? And how serious could his seriousness even be? What if this was just a whim for him—a passing fancy, a way to lessen the boredom?

“If you take this road, easy is over,” she warned, deciding to test out the waters.

The response was prompt. “Well, I don’t want easy.”

Yes, she’d thought that once upon a time herself. In hindsight, easiness was a luxury she’d never fully appreciated until it kind of evaporated from her life, and now she had moments where she really, really missed it and would give a whole lot to have it back. “Cape can get heavy sometimes.”

“I want a heavy cape.”

Kara laughed against her will, slapping a hand down on her leg. “Come on!”

This was just…so weird. He’d pretty much refused to let himself be turned into a superhero back when she’d kind of attempted to force him into it, and although a part of her was jumping for joy at the idea of finally getting to help him become what she was sure he could be, a more sensible part of her wanted to make absolutely, positively sure that he also wasn’t doing this because he felt guilted into it. Because that might be a worse thing than doing it for fun.

But just when she started to doubt his motives, he abruptly quit grinning and sobered up.

“I want to help you keep the world spinning,” he told her, his gaze so steady and his voice so earnest that she had to believe him. “To prove that I was spared for a reason.”

She tried to smile. The whole atmosphere of the room felt different with him being serious, and she wasn’t quite sure how to handle the heavy-yet-charged aura.

“You’re gonna have to listen to me,” she pointed out, hoping to lighten the mood a little.

Mon-El stared at her for a second, apparently digesting this bit of news. Then, like a two-year-old deprived of their favorite toy, he stuck his lips out in a pout and produced a long, slow motorboat noise that made her laugh.

“I will listen to you,” he muttered with exaggerated reluctance, putting a hand over his mouth as he said it and grinning when she chuckled again. “I will, I will. This time, I will.”

“Well…” She supposed now was as good a time as any to present him with her impulse buy of the day and held in a smile. “You got me something. It’s funny, ‘cause I…got you something, too.”

“You got me something?”

“Yes,” she answered, reaching down for the bag and pulling it into her lap so she could dig out the little magazine. Holding it in front of her face with a flourish, she laughed along with him as he took it from her.
“Wow. For me?” he joked, touching the glossy pages dramatically to his chest.

“Mhmm.”

“My very own?”

“Mhmm,” she repeated, struggling to not dissolve into laughter at his expression.

He laughed again, folding the magazine hotdog-style as he sent her another of those twinkling, rascally sort of smiles. “Uh…can I ask why?”

Kara looked away for a moment, caught between giggling at the poorly-disguised merriment in his voice and blushing for no apparent reason. “Yesterday you were…” Wow. How was a person supposed to explain something like this without sounding completely ridiculous? As far as she knew, there wasn’t really any rhyme or reason to the purchase…she’d just seen it sitting there, and it had immediately reminded her of him in the fake doctor’s office. “A little less Goofus and…a little_more Gallant,” she finished, holding her fingers about an inch apart to illustrate.

She didn’t know for sure how she expected him to respond, but since she was definitely anticipating a reply along the lines of What, only a little? it came as kind of a shock when he laughed and glanced down almost bashfully for a second before looking up again and giving her a small smirk.

“You noticed,” he said, his voice slipping into a slightly-lower register that made her want to introduce a new topic—and fast.

Quickly, she held out a fist to him, her face wrinkled into one of the most awkward smiles she had ever smiled. If ever there were a perfect time to insert a bro-ish gesture, it was now. He was obviously teasing rather than flirting, but her stomach seemed unable to tell the difference, and she didn’t want to give herself the opportunity to dwell on it for fear she’d make the encounter uncomfortable for the both of them. Good grief, where had all her calmness gone?

“I’ll take it,” he declared, bumping his knuckles against hers just like he’d done on New Year’s and belatedly joining in the explosion and lame sound effects she added this time.

For a minute or so, they just sat there in silence—him absently tracing a finger over the ridged seam of the couch’s back cushion, her doing the same with the cabled pattern of the blanket, and both of them looking up every now and then to exchange smiles that were probably a little wider than the situation warranted. Although now that she thought about it…it was kind of a big deal, so maybe some serious smileage was justified? She didn’t voice that opinion, of course, but it sure felt like it ought to be.

Ever since she’d gotten to know him—really know him, not just the careless front he presented to the world—she’d felt sure that Mon-El could do this. Beneath all the goofiness, sarcasm, and annoying habits he displayed on an almost hourly basis was someone who wanted to care but had clearly given up trying, and she knew, she just knew that if he’d take it upon himself to try again, he could make a huge difference in the world. It had stung some when he’d declined that kind of the life the first time, but now that he’d made the decision on his own to jump into superheroing, it was hard to not grin her head off.

“So,” she said brightly, then stopped when she realized all at once that she had no idea where on earth she was going with this.

“So…?” he echoed.
So, so… Kara shrugged, the giddiness she was trying to contain spilling over into chuckles. “So, I don’t know, actually. Guess I’m still reeling from the news.”

He laughed. “Well, yay for surprises.”

“Yeah. Um…” She tapped a finger against her chin in thought. “Are you—what do you have going on tonight?”

“Oh, uh…nothing,” he answered, tapping the magazine against his knee. “I got off of work, and it was pretty much go back to the DEO, or—oh. Um. Wait.”

He broke off abruptly, and she swallowed a grin at the wry expression on his face.

“It was either go back to the DEO or go see Kara?” she teased. “Wow, I’m flattered. You chose me over J’onn and an empty room!”

“No. No.” He pointed at her, grimacing comically. “That is not what I meant. I just—”

“Uh-huh. It’s okay. I getcha.” A loud guffaw escaped even though she bit her lips in an effort to keep it in. “I mean, I know I’m not quite as exciting as the bar, but I’d rather visit me than the DEO, too.”

He groaned, the effect somewhat marred by the hearty laugh that followed. “I stopped by because I wanted to talk to you. There, is that better?”

“Oh, much.” And it was. Oddly.

“Good. Let’s pretend I said that, then,” he responded, chuckling. “Hey, wait a minute,” he added, gesturing toward the TV. “Weren’t you watching something when I got here? I’m not like—making you miss your movie, am I?”

“What? Oh, no,” she answered, waving off his concern. “I’ve seen it before. It’s good, but you know, we can just talk. We haven’t really done that in a while. I mean, aside from yesterday, of course, when we…did a lot of that,” she corrected herself. “How uh, how was your day?”

“Well.” He smiled again, tilting his head as he apparently thought it over. “I liked it. Only got one order wrong this time—”

“Club soda?” she interjected, pulling a fake-disapproval face.

He burst out laughing again, the sound so contagious she had to join in. “No,” he answered when they’d calmed down a little. “I asked around and found out what that is. And,” he added, wiggling his eyebrows teasingly, “it’s apparently a very weak drink by human standards. Some consider it gross, and several people referred to it as ‘lame.’”

Kara snorted. “Ha. Well, then those people have no taste, and I’ll prove it,” she retorted, stretching forward to grab the bottle. “Here,” she told him, twisting the cap off so briskly she accidentally broke it. “Whoops. Okay, now we’re really going to have to go for all of this.”

“Oh.” He nodded, lips pursed. “And what is the ‘this’ we have to go for all of?”

In answer, she tapped a fingernail against the bottle. “This, my friend,” she announced, holding it aloft like those fancy-dressed women on daytime game shows, “is club soda. AKA, the best non-alcoholic drink you can get at a bar ever.”
He eyed the clear liquid skeptically. “It is, huh?”

“Yes, it is. And...actually, hold on a sec.” Thrusting the container into his hands, she sped into the kitchen, grabbed two glasses out of the cabinet, filled them with ice, and returned before he could do much more than blink a few times. “There.” She plunked the glasses down on the coffee table in front of them and motioned for him to go ahead and pour. “Let’s see those skills, Mr. Bartender.”

“All right.” He smirked. “Sure you can handle the uh-mazingness, though?”

“Oh, I’ll do my best,” she assured him, giggling at the dramatic flourish he made as he asked the question. “And you know, I think that I’ll manage. Somehow.”

“Okay, then. Here goes.” Making an exaggeratedly solemn face, he tilted the bottle over the glasses, raising it higher and higher.

“All right, already,” she put in when the stress of the thin stream finally got to her. “You’ve got excellent pouring skills. Just...don’t splash it everywhere and waste it.”

“Fine, fine.” He pretended to pout, then chuckled, setting the mostly-empty bottle down on the table. “One club soda on the rocks,” he announced, extending a glass to her.

“Ooh, on the rocks.” She raised her eyebrows appreciatively, trying to ignore the little tingle that made its way down her back when their knuckles—their knuckles, for Rao’s sake, was she out of her mind?—brushed. Hadn’t she just fist-bumped him with no problem? “I’m impressed. Did you learn that today, too?”

“Nope.” Smirking again, he picked up his glass. “That I learned the first time I went to an Earthen bar. It was very enlightening.”

Yeah, now that she thought about it, that did make more sense.

“The important things, huh?” she teased, settling back into the cushions on her half of the couch and holding out her glass for a toast.

“Exactly.” He extended his glass too, eyes twinkling, then pulled it back. “Wait, you said this last time, now it’s my turn. What are we toasting?”

“Umm...” Kara frowned, suddenly nonplussed. “I don’t know? You’re the drink expert. You tell me.”

“Okay, let’s see.” He squinted into the fizzy, frothing depths for a few seconds wearing a look of intense concentration. “Well, we did fun last time, so how about...new stuff?”

“New stuff,” she repeated, turning it over in her mind. “Yeah. I like that.” Straightening up, she held her glass aloft elegantly. (Or as elegantly as a girl sitting cross-legged on her sofa in oldish clothes could.) “To new stuff.”

“New stuff,” Mon-El echoed, clinking his glass against hers. “Am I going to hate this?” he asked as she took a sip and he inspected the drink one more time, peering at her through the chunks of ice.

She laughed, rolling her eyes when he bent over and gave the beverage a suspicious sniff. “Just try it, okay? If you can knock back multiple glasses of whiskey made on who-knows-which planet, you can survive one little sip of club soda.”
“All right, all right,” he grumbled good-naturedly. “I’m gonna do it. I’m just asking.”

“And stalling,” she chirped, pointing at him with her drink. “Come on. Let’s see it. Count of three. One, two…”

“Three.” Wrinkling his nose, he squeezed his eyes shut and took a large gulp. “Ugh.”

“Yeah!” Applauding as best she could with a very breakable glass in her hand, Kara laughed as he spluttered into the drink. “Well?” she demanded when he finally swallowed. “What do you think?”

“Not bad,” he coughed, blinking fast. “Once you get past the uh, you know—the fizzing in your brain, it’s kind of nice. In a very flavorless, very boring way, but…nice. And maybe even a little refreshing?”

“Oh, hush,” she laughed, rolling her eyes. Without thinking, she stretched a foot out beneath the blanket and gave the side of his leg a little shove. “Ah! Sorry. I’m sorry,” she babbled, face reddening as she wondered what in Rao’s name had possessed her to do that. “I didn’t mean to…”

“Eh, it’s fine,” he answered easily, waving off her apologies. “Besides, if you’re going to train me to do the superhero thing, I can’t let a little toe-prod from Supergirl take me out, can I?”

“Yeah! Right. That…is true,” she agreed, even though that wasn’t the cause of her horror at all. She hadn’t thought she’d hurt him or anything because the couple of times they’d sparred had already proven that he could take some pretty rough blows like a champ; what disturbed her was how little control she apparently had over her own actions. There hadn’t been any kind of conscious decision involved at all—she just poked him with her foot, and where had that come from? She didn’t do stuff like that with anyone except Alex, and not much then for fear of hurting her, yet it had never occurred to Kara to be embarrassed about it before.

“Speaking of training,” she added, talking quickly to prevent herself from brooding over her own dumb moves, “when do you want to start? Tomorrow…?”

He smiled at her over the top of his glass as he took another (this time more cautious) sip. “As long as you don’t end that sentence with ‘morning,’ yeah. Tomorrow sounds good.”

Kara laughed, relieved to have something else to focus on. “You and mornings! You know, not to scare you or anything, but this is one of those things where the heavy-cape thing comes into play a lot.”

“Oh, it is?” He grinned, slouching back into his corner of the sofa. “Well, that is a bummer. Do you have to be like…cheerful all the time to be a superhero? Is that a requirement or something?”

YES, Kara started to say, but a mental image of Oliver Queen rose up before her mind’s eye and she thought better of it.

“No,” she admitted, narrowly restraining a chuckle at the idea of Oliver being cheerful all the time. If anything, it was creepily sinister. “But it is a nice gesture to be…well, nice. Helps separate us from the bad guys, because really, who wants to be rescued by a grouch in a scary mask? It’s terrifying!”

“Mmm.” Mon-El rested his arm on the back of the couch, leaning his head against his hand. “So you’re still burned up about that Guardian guy, huh?”

“No,” she scoffed.
“Okay.” He lifted the glass to his lips, but the transparency of both drink and container did nothing to hide his grin.

“What?” she demanded.

The grin widened. Wordlessly, he tapped a small area between his brows.

“Oh, brother.” Emitting a groan of disgust, Kara flopped back against the pillows. “That’s twice in a week now! I’m not kidding anymore; I’m really going to see if the DEO’s science division can’t figure out some way to Botox this thing out of existence.”

“But why?” he asked, laughing while she reached up in a vain attempt to smooth out her annoying little lie ridges. “It’s so helpful.”

She grunted. “To everyone but me, you mean.”

“Oh?” The ice in his glass clinked as he tossed the rest of the contents back like he would a shot. “So you need to successfully lie a lot, then?”

“What? No, of course not,” she answered, frowning at the idea. “I mean, yeah, okay, I do about my identity, but not for anything else…”

“Mhmm.” He nodded seriously, eyes dancing in a way that told her he wasn’t fooled at all.

“All right, you know what?” She crossed her arms over her chest, trying her best to look offended even while an unhelpful giggle threatened to escape. How he managed to make her want to start laughing at the worst times, she’d never understand, but boy, was it ever irritating. “I’ve changed my mind. That’s enough talking for now. We’re going to watch a movie.”

“Okay.” His grin mischievous, he shifted to face the TV as she leaned over to grab the remote. “Evading questions; cool. Is that something else superheroes have to know how to do to save lives and stuff?”

Clearing her throat pointedly as she clicked on the television and restarted the film, Kara jerked her chin at the screen. “Just shut up and enjoy the show, Smartypants,” she told him, giving the blanket a sharp tug that hauled most of it over to her half of the couch and re-tucking her feet up under it. “Nobody likes a too-talky audience.”


“Oh, please,” Kara snorted, biting her lips in a miserably unsuccessful attempt to contain her amusement. “You know, not to ah, rain on your parade or anything, but if you can’t withstand a little chill, you’re never going to make it in the superhero business.” Snatching the blanket away again, she chuckled when he missed catching the corner by maybe an inch. “Ooh, see? Too slow! Lesson number one—”

“—never try to get under a blanket with Kara Zor-El?” he interjected, another laugh ruining the sarcastic effect of the question. “Yep, got it. Lesson learned.”

“No,” she chortled, lightly whacking the arm that rested atop the sofa’s back. “You can always get under a blanket with me, Mon-El.”

The instant the words left her mouth, she went hot all over and wanted to yank them back. Or the chance at some kind of do-over where she could remove ninety percent of the playfulness from
her voice, because that had come out sounding *way* different than she’d intended it to, and he hadn’t noticed, had he?

“Oh, really?”

Her cheeks heated, the exaggerated speculation in his tone making her squirm with embarrassment. Yeah, okay. He’d definitely noticed.

“Not like *that,*” she pretend-grumbled, rolling her eyes when he sent her an especially smart-alecky grin that only amplified her blush. “I mean, I—I’m not going to hog the whole thing. You can have *some,* just not *all.*”

“Mhmm, yeah. I see how it is. I can take a hint.”

His smirk changed suddenly into a full-scale belly-laugh, and even though it was kind of at her own expense, Kara couldn’t help joining in.

“Okay,” she said through her giggles, tucking a handful of hair behind her ear. “Enough jokes! Are you going to watch this movie or act like a wise guy?”

“I don’t know.” He sat up ramrod straight as she slouched back, subtly maneuvering his head to where it completely blocked her view. “Can I not do both?”

Rolling her eyes again, Kara reached over to the chair on her right and snagged one of the sofa pillows she’d moved out of the way earlier, thumping it down over her legs.

“Can you? Yes. Should you?” She grabbed hold of his shoulders, forcing him to lie back on the cushion while she maybe—possibly—scolded herself for noting how very solid that particular set of muscles felt on him. (Not that there was anything wrong with noticing that her new superhero-trainee had apparently been using the DEO’s extra-strong workout equipment. She was just… making an observation. About health. Because physical fitness was important for superhero work.)

“No. Not if you don’t want to get woken up for a really, *really* early, and really, *really* intense morning training session. And if you have any ideas about getting to share this blanket, you’ll keep that head of yours out of the way. I’d like to actually see what’s going on in the scenes, thank you.”

“What?” He grinned up at her from his spot on the pillow, eyes twinkling as he tucked his arms casually underneath his head. Despite the awkward position he was semi-jackknifed into, he still exuded an air of ease. “I thought you had x-ray vision?”

Kara snorted. “Well,” she joked, pushing her hair back so she had an excuse for breaking eye contact, “while under normal circumstances I’d jump at the chance to x-ray your head…”

“Hey,” he inserted mildly, chuckles spilling out.

She laughed too, tapping the remote lightly against his head (for the remote’s sake). “It’s true. Right *now,* I want to just kick back, relax, and enjoy a movie. I’ve expended a lot of energy over the last twenty-four hours. Do I really need to use up some more, and just for entertainment? I mean, come *on.*”

“Oh, yeah.” A small furrow appeared on his forehead, his look suddenly uncertain. “Do you uh, do you want me to move? There’ll be more room for you to stretch out if I sit on the—”

“No! No.” Pretending to miss the curious little frown he aimed her way when her voice rose, she patted his arm. Then she blushed again, annoyed at how handsy she seemed to be tonight.
No, wait. That was not the correct word. She wasn’t being handsy, she was being…something. Demonstrative? Less restrained than usual? Maybe a little more touchy-feely than was her wont?

Not handsy.

That would seem to imply an interest in him that she definitely, definitely, definitely didn’t have. At all. They’d just hung out together and had fun a few times, been capture-buddies two times too many, and so what if they’d kissed that once? It didn’t mean anything; Mon-El had basically even said so himself at both Christmas and New Year’s. And just because she’d seen him without his shirt a few times…

Kara blinked rapidly, clearing her throat as she shoved that unproductive set of thoughts away.

“That wasn’t a hint,” she told him, turning her gaze to the screen in an effort to get her one-track mind to stop pointing out how she could sort of feel the warmth of his back resting against her knees, because who cared about stupid stuff like that? “I…I was just kidding. You don’t have to move. I mean…unless you want to?” she amended, remembering that she had been the one to put him there in the first place.

“Oh, no. I’m very comfortable here.” Was it just her, or did he sound relieved? “You sure you don’t mind?”

She shook her head at the question, stomach cartwheeling for reasons she wasn’t sure she wanted to understand when he wiggled around on the cushions so he could drape his legs over the arm of the couch. Her fingertips itched with the oddball desire to brush some of that hair off his forehead, and she wondered for the umpteenth time why she couldn’t seem to make herself understand how much she was overthinking a perfectly insignificant situation.

The facts of the matter were really very simple: Mon-El didn’t like her. She didn’t like Mon-El. (Not like that, anyway.) They were nothing more, nothing less than friends who’d had a few embarrassingly up-close-and-personal interactions that might be misconstrued by some people with overactive imaginations, and all they were doing right now was hanging out. Like friends did.

So why in Rao’s name did she keep analyzing every move either of them made?

“Kara?”

She glanced down to find him still watching her, eyebrows raised, and realized that she’d yet to verbalize a response to his question.

“Oh! No,” she said quickly, linking her fingers together so she wouldn’t be tempted to do anything else awkward. “No, I’m good.”

Which she was. Totally.

She guessed.

Chapter End Notes

*Title taken from one of my favorite Veronica Mars quotes ("Be cool, Sodapop") that’s referencing one of my favorite books (S.E. Hinton’s The Outsiders), because I’ve been re-watching some VM episodes lately, and apparently, I do stuff like this now.
*Sorry this took so insanely long to update! After I said last week (was it last week or
the week before???) that I would hopefully have this chapter finished, I...failed to do
that once again, because of course I did. My area got a couple inches of snow (which
happens very rarely), and then I got busy and while plenty of writing happened, no
editing did. So the good news is that I got a lot of work done on the 2x10 chapter; the
bad news is this chapter is only just now being updated. The goal is to spend this week
getting more written on the chapter following this one so I can hopefully update again
in December (*laughs* *cries*).
*I have no idea whether or not the correct spelling is "Maaldoria" or "Maldoria"
because when I looked it up I saw both, but the Arrowverse wikia says it's
"Maaldoria," so I went with that.
*Okay. I may have gone (and by "may" I mean "definitely") a little overboard with the
flirting in this chapter, but S3's angst has made me miss Kara and Mon-El's cuteness,
so I decided to add in a little more than I'd originally planned when I first started
writing this chapter. I don't consider Kara letting Mon semi-put his head in her lap
TOTALLY out of the realm of possibility though, because of how close K&M seem to
be when 2x10 begins and how much they went through together in 2x09. If she put a
pillow in between them, I could see her (maybe) doing it.
*One of the reasons I wanted to do this chapter from Kara's POV is because I've been
intrigued by what's going on in her head during this scene for a while now. Her whole
insistence on Mon becoming a superhero is a little strange from the get-go...not
everyone is cut out for the Hero biz, and not wanting to participate in the often-
reckless crimefighting Kara engages in isn't actually wrong (ESPECIALLY since the
thing that could kill/injure Mon-El isn't nearly as hard to find on Earth as the thing that
could kill/injure Kara). So why is she so intense about him joining the crusade, and
why is she so mad at him when he refuses? In my opinion, it says a lot about how
much she already cares about him—because she can see the potential, watching him
not use it frustrates her on a level it wouldn’t if he were a stranger. That’s why she’s so
excited to hear that he’s going to join her, and so upset in 2x10 when she asks him
“Why are you doing this?” She doesn’t want him to decide to be a hero because just
because he wants the suit or likes her...she wants him to want to do it, and I think an
argument can be made that she’s a little bit afraid that he’s got a crush on the suit, not
her.
*My headcanon since 2x11 when M’gann tells Kara that Mon’s been drinking only
club soda is that he doesn’t even really like club soda when he first tries it. Many
people (idiots!) don’t. But he drinks it because he’s thinking about Kara, and
eventually, just like his feelings for Kara, a liking for it sneaks up on him. (Don’t
judge me for this. It’s late, I’m highly-caffeinated, preparing to watch several hours of
Doctor Who Christmas episodes with my sisters as soon as one of them finishes her
book, and I’ve had way too many cookies today. Sappy exuberance is inevitable.)
*I planned to not do any “First Day of Hero Training” scenes and just start the next
chapter around where 2x10 begins because I’ve already started working on the
“Comets” scene from 2x10 (I’ve actually been working on it since the summer
because the feelings parts take me a while :P) and it already spans a lot of time. The
goal is to have the chapter end with the confession, but if it stretches much longer, I
may have to put the confession (which will be from Mon’s POV) into another chapter
along with the follow-up after he leaves (Kara’s POV). So basically, “Comets” should
be arriving in 1-2 chapters. Knowing me, 2 is better bet.
**Random note: The Big Sleep is well worth a watch if you love classic
movies...especially film noir-ish, detective ones.
*As aforementioned, I’m doing a Doctor Who mini-marathon with my sisters, so I’ll
be checking comments later today/tomorrow (as long as I’m not making tamales with
the rest of my family, which I’ve just learned is also supposed to happen tomorrow). I promise, I’m not ignoring anyone <3

*Thanks for reading/commenting! It’s been eons since I updated this, which I apologize for. Hope you guys are having a great holiday season so far, and with any luck, I’ll see some of y’all on Tumblr sometime soon! <3
Watching For Comets

Chapter Summary

This chapter mentions a few things that occurred before 2x10, but mostly takes place within the episode (Mon-El’s POV).

Sorry it once again took a while to update! I had to condense things down from almost 10.5K words because there was JUST. TOO. MUCH. GOING. ON for one chapter, and then I caught the OTHER cold that’s going around my area just now (oh, the joys of event work with lots of people and their multitude of germs), so I didn’t quite get this post-ready by Valentine’s Day. It’s not as good as I wish it were, but I couldn’t for the life of me figure out the best place to split the darn thing, so I just went ahead and crammed in a bunch of scenes. Hopefully it’s still readable!

Chapter Notes

Beware the messy feelings stuff and potential typos! As mentioned before, I’m not great at writing feelings because I myself tend to avoid those like the plague, and parts of this chapter were edited while I was on flu medication. I just discovered that in the last chapter I overlooked the use of "wall" instead of "while," so I’m SURE I missed something in this one.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The morning after Mon-El apprised Kara of his decision to become a superhero began in a remarkably similar way to his first day at Catco. Apparently forgetting her promise to not roust him too early—or maybe she thought not waking him up while it was still dark was letting him sleep in—the blonde Kryptonian burst into his room at eight-fifteen on the dot, aglow with excitement and chattering about so many things all at once that he could barely understand her. From there on out, anytime he and Kara weren’t at their regular jobs and she wasn’t out actively saving the city, he was busy. And not kind of busy, a little busy, sort of busy—he was a lot of busy, undergoing some of the most physically exhausting work he’d never thought he’d ever do.

But the strange thing was that he enjoyed it (also a lot). Sure, he ruined a whole bunch of comfortable shirts he liked and kept finding scrapes and bruises in weird places after some of the toughest bouts of training, and yes, J’onn did make him sit through a lecture on the benefits of good nutrition and apologize to the nice people who stocked the vending machines that one after a really intense lesson when he was waiting on Kara to go get pizza with him and couldn’t stand it any longer so he cleaned out every single one of the handy little food boxes in the building. All in all though, it was nice to feel like he was learning something that could maybe make him useful.

The only thing that worried him was a nagging suspicion that the biggest reason he didn’t mind getting thrown across rooms and smacking into mats had less to do with what he was learning, and more to do with whom he was learning it from. Because try as he might to focus on the task at hand, Mon-El could never quite forget Kara’s presence. And yeah, she was watching like a teacher
and not like anything else, true, but the desire to make her proud, to impress her, remained strong as it always seemed to be these days. And the danger of her cluing in on that was really beginning to grow. Especially since the more comfortable he became with everything, the more his mouth seemed inclined to run off by itself. Ever since he’d made the conscious decision to take several steps back before he frightened her away with a load of unwanted attention, the effort to not flirt with her had all but killed him, and the torture only worsened with every hour they spent running around an ugly gray room that smelled of must, stale sweat, and cleaning fluids. (Which didn’t sound even a little bit romantic now that he thought about it, but somehow, Kara made it seem that way.) One second he would be concentrating on attack strategies or leaps; the next, she would say or do something that he wasn’t expecting, and then, almost before he knew it—certainly before he could even consider trying to stop it—the flirt just sort of…spilled out of him.

Like that one time Kara said something that wasn’t really funny but did a happy little dance thing while she said it and he laughed. A goofy, dumb laugh that came out of nowhere and just made her blink confusedly then laugh, too, but which earned him a sharp look and a pair of skyrocketing eyebrows from Alex (who had allegedly wandered in to observe and report but who, Mon-El noted, spent more time glancing at Kara and smirking at him than anything else). His ears got hot fast, and he immediately ran the course again just so he’d have an excuse for looking red-faced and winded, but then his time was so good on the second round that Kara squealed, grabbed him by the shoulders, and did the exact same dance all over again while she shook him excitedly and yelled about how great he’d done. So of course the same stupid laugh left his lungs again, and Alex departed wearing a humongous smirk and talking about how she was going to go tell J’onn that the two of them seemed to be getting along swimmingly, whatever that meant. (There were exactly zero pools nearby so he wasn’t quite sure, but her smugness made it seem scary.)

Then there was that weak moment during the restraining techniques phase when they were practicing and he maybe (okay, not maybe) pretended like he was having trouble understanding how the whole behind-the-back chokehold worked because it was really nice having her arm around him. And yes, he knew that sounded maybe a little strange, but the way he saw it, it wasn’t an accurate recreation of a truly life-threatening chokehold and he could be forgiven for enjoying this exercise more than he was probably supposed to. Because after all, how many actual bad guys smelled like flower shampoo and gave instructions on how to escape their grasp in calm, soft voices that tickled his ear, sent goosebumps down his back, and just generally made him wonder what would happen if he turned his head a little to the side since her—their—face was already right there? (Besides…even J’onn when he walked in during one of the practice attempts said that Kara needed to tighten the hold if she ever wanted to move on to new techniques, so surely it wasn’t too weird to acknowledge that he kind of enjoyed it.)

No matter how obvious he accidentally got, though, Kara didn’t seem to notice anything amiss. Even when they were working on takeoffs and landings in a field outside the city and he made one really horrible, grass-destroying landing, she just doubled over laughing and attributed it to error. (It was, but it was an error in focus and not an error in coordination like she thought—he’d been distracted by the way the sunlight glinted off her hair and seemed caught in her smile when she floated all those feet above earth and hadn’t remembered to watch the rapidly approaching ground.) That was probably why he forgot to guard against the inevitable end of his lucky streak, which, when it finally happened, happened so fast that there was almost no time to process any of it.

One minute, everything was fine. He was listening to Kara declare him Superhero Ready, trying to not smile too widely when she gave him a little shoulder-bump on the way out of the training room, and feeling prepared for anything. The next, they were rushing off to battle a very pale lady with crazy white hair and lightning powers, Kara was telling him to protect the humans running around even while she was lying on the ground with lightning being aimed at her, and then suddenly the fear of Kara dying in front of him rose up so strongly that he sort of lost his head, completely
Then it just became a mess—the Guardian guy got hit trying to protect the people Mon-El had left exposed, it turned out the Guardian guy was actually James (Mon-El thought that was pretty cool even if Kara didn’t seem to think so), and no matter how many stupid jokes Mon-El made to try to suck some of the tension out of—well, everything, he got the feeling after Kara told everyone to leave the DEO room so she could have a chat with James that it might be a good idea to go get some food. Whenever she got upset, she tended to want to go off by herself to ‘cool down’ (he’d learned that expression from Alex, who claimed it was always a major pain in the ass), and aside from the first couple of times they’d spoken to one another, he wasn’t sure he’d ever seen her this angry. Probably she wouldn’t want to talk to anybody just now.

As usual though, he guessed wrong. Barely had he exited the DEO than he heard Kara’s voice behind him.

“Hey. Hey, wait.”

He halted, turning around to see that she’d changed from her Supergirl costume back into her work clothes. The purposefulness of her stride worried him; so did the set look on her face.

“We need to talk,” she announced, coming to a stop a couple of feet away from him on the sidewalk.

We need to talk. Mon-El remembered Winn saying something about how those were some of the scariest words known to mankind and felt immediately nervous. “Y-yeah?” he said resting his hands on his hips and wondering where exactly all this was going. “What’s wrong?

Kara stared at him for a split second, her expression unreadable. “I can’t trust you.”

Can’t what?

Confused, he stared right back. “Me?” he questioned, racking his brain for anything he’d done lately that seemed shifty. This wasn’t quite the opening he’d been expecting. Did she think he had something to do with these attacks? He’d never even heard of this Leslie person until tonight.

“You were reckless,” she told him, her teacher voice tinged with what he couldn’t help suspecting was leftover I’m-Mad-At-James-ness. “You left your post, and because of you, someone got hurt.”

Ohhh.

That’s what this was all about? He should have figured it out; really, he should’ve. She never worried about herself. Never, not once. Not when she didn’t have her powers, not when she did and someone was trying to kill her and had the means to do it, for Rao’s sake! He’d heard Alex rail at her time after time about taking stupid chances, but he’d never really truly witnessed it until Maaldoria, and then again tonight. She was strong and she was smart, but she was always putting herself in danger; all someone needed was one good shot, and maybe that shot wouldn’t kill her, but it could hurt her, and why did she think that other people were okay with seeing her in pain?

“I was trying to protect you!” he blurted, disbelief making his voice rise. Why, why was it okay for her to stick her neck out for everyone else in the entire world, but not for anyone else to want to do it for her? Just because she could survive a bazillion volts of electricity, or however many it was, didn’t mean she had to.

“Yeah, but I don’t need that! I need a partner who will listen to me!” Kara half-shouted, making
a little box with her hands that she stuck right under his nose like she was considering wrapping her
hands around his neck or something. “And I told you; I, I said ‘protect the people above all else,’
and…” She trailed off suddenly, mouth clamping shut. After a second or two she shook her head,
sort of deflating. “Why can’t you just listen to me?”

“Because!” Mon-El burst out, hastily shutting up before anything more than a very quiet I that
she didn’t seem to notice escaped. This wasn’t good. He’d almost let the truth slip, and here, now
—he couldn’t let that happen.

“WHY?” she demanded.

Because I care about you. Because I can’t watch you get hurt. Because yes, you’re amazing and
hilarious and beautiful and I would very much like to mate with you, but there’s no way I can
possibly tell you that.

He stared at her for a long moment, too afraid to even open his mouth. After a bit, her
combative glower faded and she sighed. But just as he thought she might be about to let it go, a
look of intense scrutiny spread over her face.

“Why are you working with me?” she asked abruptly.

The question seemed odd in light of the others she’d posed so far, but it was, thankfully, a
question which had a nice, safe, truthful answer, and Mon-El didn’t hesitate to deliver it. “Because
I should,” he said. “Right, I have these powers, and I should use them—”

“That’s not an answer,” she interrupted, sounding almost weary.

Yes, it is he argued silently. Hadn’t he told her all this that night when they were sitting together
on her couch? He wanted to help her. Wanted to make his existence count for something like it
never had back on Daxam. That was his answer, and it was the truth.

The difficulty lay in that she didn’t seem convinced of that.

Taking a deep breath, she leveled another of those probing, enormously uncomfortable stares at
him. The shiny little panes of glass did nothing to temper the force of that gaze, but when she spoke
again, her voice was soft.

“Do you like me?”

What?

If she had hauled back and punched him with every bit of her strength, or put him on a rug and
then yanked it out from under him for no reason whatsoever, Mon-El couldn’t have been more
dumbfounded. Eyes widening, he tried to cover his alarm with a laugh that didn’t come off quite as
natural as he would’ve preferred.

“Do I like—?” he repeated, the words coming out closer to a whisper than anything else.

Good Rao, who said things like that? He hadn’t mastered Earthen social graces by any means,
but even he knew that wasn’t done here just like it wasn’t done on any planet he’d ever visited.
Where did a person even find the courage to make that sort of inquiry?

Turning away so he didn’t have to meet her gaze, he forced out another fake laugh. He didn’t
think he was capable of actually saying ‘yes,’ he knew ‘no’ wouldn’t be convincing because he
was still too rattled to even try to make it into that neighborhood, but he had to say something.
Pulling himself together, he went for a jokey tone in the hopes that the sarcasm would act as camouflage. “Uhhh, at the moment, that’s a tough call.”

She didn’t even blink. “You kissed me when you were sick.”

*Rao.* There it was. Yanked out into the open in a way that made him want to cover his eyes with both hands and pretend he was anywhere but there.

“Yeah, um…says you.” Wow, that was definitely something adults said, wasn’t it?

He gave a nervous laugh, recoiling inside at both the weakness of the reply and the speed at which it shot out of his mouth. *Ugh,* this was horrible. Plain and simple, no two ways about it—horrible. She wasn’t giving up, and he couldn’t decide whether the best way to end this ghastly conversation was to be calm, funny, or defensive, so he was just sort of going for all three as the mood struck. And since he was too scared to do any of them very well, he ended up just feeling really, really cornered, and looking really, really foolish.

On top of that, he got the impression that his bizarre combination of attitudes was just making Kara madder. Half-turning away, she made a frustrated sound somewhere between a laugh and a sigh and muttered a disgusted *Ugh!* under her breath before she wheeled on him again.

“Are you working with me because you like me?” she challenged again, stomping her foot this time like her already-insistent voice needed any extra emphasis.

No. He wasn’t. Not *because.* That wasn’t it at all. But he did like her, and yes, that was almost certainly one of the reasons he enjoyed working with her, so…what?

“I don’t know what to tell you, okay?” he almost yelled, not really sure *why* he was almost yelling but powerless to stop it. “I—I want to work with you, Kara, and that is it!”

Oh, damn. That was a lie. He knew it as soon as he said it, but by then it was out and floating in the air and too late to brainstorm a different excuse, so he clamped his jaw shut and just let it be. A funny look flitted over Kara’s face then, like maybe she didn’t quite believe him, and he very nearly groaned. He had to stop this. Soon. Better to have her mad at him than feeling bad about hurting his feelings, right?

“I’m sorry if that disappoints you,” he heard himself say sarcastically, and somewhere in the back of his mind, he admired how believable and annoying *that* actually sounded.

Kara seemed to think so at any rate. This time, her *ugh* came through loud and clear, and in an instant she was pushing past him and heading off down the street in that fast-paced walk she always did when she was angry.

“Now, where are you going?” he asked, twisting around as she strode off.

“I’m going to find Livewire and her soldiers” came the wrathful reply “because someone has to, and apparently, I’m the only person in National City that appreciates how evil she actually is!”

“Well, let me come with you,” he called after her in a calmer voice, praying she wouldn’t do anything that really did need two people just because she was too mad at him to want to put up with company.

“No, you’ve done enough superheroing today!”

He bit back a retort as he watched her leave, staring briefly skyward before heaving a sigh that
felt as though it came from the depths of his soul (or at least his toes). Once he knew for sure that
she was gone, he groaned and just sort of sat down in the middle of the sidewalk, feeling like he’d
been through the twister-thing that carried off Dorothy’s house in that weird movie Kara liked so
much.

*Way to go, Mon-El.*

Now she was so irritated with him she’d never want to let him help with anything ever again,
and beyond that, he’d deliberately obscured the truth from her. Not bent it, not omitted it, not let
her go on believing what she already believed, he’d just…gone out of his way to cover up
something that directly concerned her and lied.

Although—not all of it was false. He *did* want to work with her. That part was a hundred percent
true. It was the *and that is it* he’d added when he panicked that was making him squirm now. That
one was a flat-out lie, because holy Rao, how could anyone be around that woman for longer than
five minutes and *not* want have more than a work relationship with her? She’d told him once that
she hadn’t dated much when she was younger, that guys tended to walk right on past her without a
second glance, but he’d never quite bought that story. Earthen males did, generally speaking, seem
to be more boringly reserved than even the most uptight Daxamite (a close race between his mother
and a few nobles who pitched loud and intimidating fits whenever they showed up to a council and
their favorite foods weren’t cooked to their exact specifications) but he hadn’t met anyone
completely stupid. Kara might come across shy and awkward sometimes, especially when she was
playing human and wasn’t quite sure what was going on in a given situation, but she was so—so
light.

No, that wasn’t it. Bright? Radiant? Glowing? He didn’t know how to describe it, but whatever
it was, he felt it was impossible to overlook.

He certainly couldn’t.

*So you lied, and now she kind of hates you again. Yeah. Good decision.*

Heaving another huge sigh, he covered his face with both hands and wished he could rewind
everything back to when Kara had told him to stay with the people. But no, that would be pointless.
He knew himself well enough to know he’d just do the exact same thing. The impulse he had to
protect her was as strange and hard to control as a reflex—he could tell himself she was fine, she
was Supergirl, she was basically indestructible and able to withstand more than him all he wanted.
The second potential danger rose up, it was like all that knowledge went flying out of his head, and
there he went after her.

He had to stop. He *had* to.

Except…he had a terrible feeling that he couldn’t. That he’d gotten himself in too deep for
simple self-instruct to drag him out now, and how was that even possible? She frustrated him like
no one he’d ever known, so why did he worry about her so much? Why couldn’t he make himself
not care?

Too confused and shaken to want to dwell on it any longer (and with his appetite completely
gone), he did what seemed like the most sensible thing and went back inside. J’onn was busy
dealing with something involving M’gann—from the Martian’s grimness, Mon-El gathered that he
still wasn’t quite ready to end that lockup nonsense—and Alex was busy dealing with J’onn, so
other than one semi-suspicious squint from the two of them when he explained that Kara had gone
to do Livewire recon, he was able to go to bed without bringing any more personal examinations
down on his head.
But bed turned out to be a bitterly disappointing form of escape. He spent most of the night tossing and turning, replaying his superhero blunder and the argument with Kara over and over in his head until he finally gave up trying to sleep and instead went for a run that also did nothing. And for the rest of the day, even when Kara glared at him when he walked into the control room and he kind of internally shriveled, even when he was sneaking along the streets following Winn to see what exactly he was up to, the denial with the ocean of reasons behind it lurked around the edges of his mind and refused to let him alone.

Because really, wasn’t fear once again his problem? He knew Kara wanted a partner she could depend on and would probably appreciate knowing where they stood. He definitely wasn’t comfortable shoving all this stuff down. What was holding him back was a nagging fear that she might not want to speak to him ever again once she found out he cared for her. Especially considering that he didn’t just care for her a little bit. No, unfortunately for him, he cared so much that it made his stomach hurt to think he might upset her to the point where she didn’t want to have anything to do with him.

So he made up his mind: he’d go right on keeping quiet. That way, things could stay relatively normal between them. He could pretend he only liked her as a friend, right? Yeah, he thought so.

Until he found himself sitting beside a very grumpy James in the shabby little lair of a mad scientist guy, fully expecting to become the newest part of whatever crazy experiment the man had planned. Then, as Kara burst in to rescue them and he felt himself light up like he’d swallowed a spotlight or something, he realized it was no good. He fought with the others, joked with Winn on the way back to the DEO, even managed to bid Kara a fairly normal goodnight as he left for work and she stayed to talk things out with Winn and James. But the whole time, he knew what had to be done. And throughout his shift at the bar—even throughout his shift next day at the bar, where he cleaned things that didn’t need to be cleaned, snapped off the neck of a bottle of tonic water, and accidentally plopped three fake umbrellas into three whiskies instead of into three margaritas, he worked at gathering the courage to actually do it.

(Which was, he concluded, almost as hard as deciding to stand in front of a loaded gun on a planet where you had no powers.)

The instant he clocked out, he sped straight over to the alley next to Kara’s building, slowing down like she’d taught him as he emerged onto the sidewalk. Standing on the darkened street looking up toward the upper stories of the brick structure, a part of him whispered that he should really consider just coming back later—tomorrow, maybe, or the day after that, because if she were even home, she might be tired, and then he’d be dumping this atop her fatigue. But…he had enough sense to know that he’d most likely lose his nerve if he didn’t take the plunge tonight. It needed to be done, therefore it had to be done.

Still, he mused, knowing the best course of action and taking the best course of action were frustratingly dissimilar things. Palms damp with sweat, he tried hard as he headed for the door to convince himself that this was all very doable. Step one was now accomplished. He’d arrived. All he needed to do now was go inside, go up the stairs, knock on the door, confess the awful truth to the most incredible woman he’d ever met, and then leave with all possible speed so she could be repulsed in private and he could curl into a ball and die of either embarrassment or heartache. He could do that, couldn’t he? Yes. Absolutely. He could. And he would. Also absolutely.

Right after he threw up.

About-facing, Mon-El sped back to the alley. He wasted a solid ten minutes there, hunched over a soggy cardboard box (he didn’t feel like expending the effort to climb up and hang his head over
the tall dumpster’s edge) while his stomach debated on whether or not it wanted to jettison all cargo. Eventually though, he realized that the unexpected wave of nausea that had attacked him wasn’t because he was in actual danger of getting sick—he was just so nervous that it felt that way, so he scraped the little pieces of his resolve together again and made his way inside.

None of Kara’s neighbors seemed to be about thank Rao, because by the time he reached her floor, he felt like a hollow, wobbly echo of his normal self—a sleepwalker maybe, or one of those really ugly undead things that Winn was always watching movies and shows about and comparing Alex to when she showed up to work without coffee. He wasn’t sure why, though. He’d been about to die more times than most beings in the galaxy, yet somehow, he’d never known this level of nervousness even existed. With every step he took down the hall toward her front door, his bravery ebbed and his apprehension grew until his mind became one big muddle of thoughts.

He knew she didn’t like him—not in the way he liked her. That was a fact. He knew telling her how he felt would only make things awkward between them. Also a fact. He knew the most likely outcome of all this was losing the best friend he’d ever had. Fact as well. This was a bad idea. A terrible idea. The worst idea.

Fact, fact, fact.

So…why was he doing it?

Because it’s the right thing to do, his brain responded with annoying and unwanted promptness. And you know it, don’t you?

Yes, he knew it all right. This wasn’t at all like keeping to himself the fact that he’d once been prince of a planet that was now nothing more than a mass grave located somewhere far away from here; it wasn’t a detail from the past that had no bearing on the future and affected only him. It was a status update from one team member to another, and not admitting it to Kara was as potentially damaging to a mission plan as not telling her he had an injury. He could see that clearly now. That was probably why she’d been so mad about it in the first place—his not listening because he maybe liked her was one of those liabilities she’d spent so much time talking about in training. She didn’t want to know whether or not he liked her. That wasn’t it at all; that wasn’t why she’d pushed so hard for an answer. She just needed to know if he did so she could figure out the best way to keep everyone safe. And like an idiot, he’d tried to convince her—and maybe himself a little bit, too—that he didn’t like her in that way at all.

Closing his eyes as he reached his destination, he balled his hand into a fist. He could do this. He could. It was just a knock on a door and a conversation with a good friend. A painful, uncomfortable conversation that could very well result in him passing out or vomiting all over her nice clean floor, true, but—yeah, okay, he really needed to stop thinking himself into a breakdown and just get this over with.

He took a breath and knocked.

“Grife,” he muttered after a minute or so, rubbing a hand over his chin. She wasn’t back yet. That was discouraging, and very unhelpful to already-frazzled nerves, but other than running—which he was bound and determined not to do—he didn’t have much choice. He’d just…

Panic.

No, not panic. He refused to panic. He hadn’t come all the way over here just to lose it on her doorstep. What he was going to do was sit down and wait for her. Except hold on, he’d never be able to sit still, would he? He was way, way too anxious. Standing was a much better plan, because
at least if he was standing, he could pace, and if he could pace, he could maybe wear off some of
this restless energy and possibly even map out what he was going to say to her once she arrived.

So he paced for a good long time, mumbling possible explanations under his breath, hating
every single one and getting lightheaded during most of them every time he got to the part where
he announced that he remembered kissing her.

Which he did, and so much more clearly than he wanted to tell her, because if he started talking
about it, he might not be able to stop. The medication he’d been on at the time had blurred the
edges of things quite a bit, but the feel of those soft lips closing around his wasn’t the kind of thing
he could easily forget. Great, and now his mind was stuck in that dim hospital room and he was
seeing it all over again—her face, and her eyes, how upset she was about everything, and oh Rao,
were those her footsteps coming up the stairs?

Heart hammering, he darted back over to lean against the wall. Staring down at the ground, he
took several deep breaths to calm himself. Okay, she was here. Step two…three…whatever-it-was,
was now here. All he had to do was tell her and then leave. He could do it. Definitely. It would
take some effort, but it might not be as bad as he thought, right?

Before he could assure himself of anything, motion at the end of the hall made him look up
quickly. It was Kara, and as his eyes landed on her, Mon-El’s heart turned an evil, death-defying
sort of flip inside of him. No, this would be exactly as bad as he thought, and maybe even more.
She looked beautiful—because of course she did—and yep, it was time to go ahead and accept the
fact that he was about to make a gigantic ass of himself. (Not that that was a typically unusual
occurrence, but still. He had a feeling this was going to be one of those really memorable
experiences.)

“Hi,” she said, none of yesterday’s animosity in her voice or expression though the falter in her
steps suggested she was more than a little surprised to find him there.

“Hey.”

The greeting emerged breathier than he preferred, like he’d just dropped by her place after a
really intense jog or something, and he winced. But when he tried a stealthy glance at her to see if
she’d noticed, she was just wearing one of those funny little smiles of hers, and since she seemed to
realize that she was about to walk right past her own door, he decided it was okay. She was
probably too tired to register details, so he just made a few halfhearted and uneasy jokes about her
near-mistake as she turned the key in the lock, and reminded himself to keep things brief and direct
so that he could leave quickly and let her get some rest.

“Come on in,” she told him over her shoulder, and for the first time ever he wished she hadn’t
smiled at him.

Following her inside, he tried to gauge—from the back of her ponytail, which was extremely
useless and he had no explanation for why he did it other than he wasn’t thinking straight—what
was going through her mind. Was she annoyed to find herself with a visitor? Was she even more
annoyed that he was the visitor? How would she respond to hearing—no, actually, he had the
answer to that one already. She would be kind about the whole thing. That much was certain
because Kara was always kind, and he knew she would feel badly over this, so he was going to
have to remember to make a joke or something when the awfulness was all over just to make sure
she knew he was okay.

“So, are you okay?”
What? He wondered wildly for a moment if she’d somehow developed the ability to read minds. But then it hit him that she was just being her usual polite self and he quickly recovered, clearing his throat and answering in the affirmative. Ugh, what line had he decided to open with? As he closed the door and she went to set down her keys, he racked his brains. It had been a decent sentence and he’d taken a while to plan it out, but now—nothing. Scratching twitchily at the side of his face, he moved slowly across the room.

“Um.”

*Say it and get it over with, you coward.*

He could feel a cold sweat breaking out on his forehead and wondered vaguely when the little apartment had gotten so stuffy. The hand he’d used to close the door and scratch his face also seemed to be mysteriously clumsy and in the way now, so he quickly relegated it to his pocket. “Just, you uh…” Okay, now she was looking at him, he had her attention, and oh Rao, if he got sick on her floor right in front of her he was going to *die.* “You were right.” So far so good. He was shaky but still breathing, and the roaring in his ears wasn’t completely deafening. “I remember kissing you.”

He hadn’t settled in any of his imaginings how he thought Kara would respond, but he definitely hadn’t expected anything like the utter stillness in front of him after he made his announcement. For a terrible second, he wondered if she’d even heard him, if he’d gotten the words out after all. But then her eyes fell to the ground and her hand fluttered awkwardly up around the frame of her glasses, and he knew she had.

“So far so good. He was shaky but still breathing, and the roaring in his ears wasn’t completely deafening. “I remember kissing you.”

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“Do you wanna—do you wanna sit?” he asked quickly, motioning toward the counter as he realized her stillness came from shock. “I feel like—”

“Uh, sure.” Her voice low, she moved over onto the stool nearest her with stiff, almost robotic movements. “Okay.”

Mon-El sat down, too, dimly aware that he was babbling something about sitting being a good idea. Only the countertop separated them now, and it occurred to him that he should’ve maybe pointed to the table and made sure they took seats at the far ends of the thing, because this countertop put them…close.

“Oh, Rao, why was he telling her this? The way she’d looked at him, the way he felt about how she’d looked at him—that was the part of the confession that was supposed to stay a secret! But as usual, he seemed unable to stop talking just when not-talking seemed to be the best plan and kept right on broadcasting his patheticness while she sat watching him, motionless and disconcertingly wide-eyed.

“They always are,” he went on, heat creeping up his neck under her gaze until his head and shoulders felt large and unpleasantly fuzzy, “but they were like…like comets. And I had never seen anyone so stunning.”

Her shoulders rose and fell with a quick breath he had no clue how to interpret since she was
still so unnaturally static, so he took a hasty breath of his own and plowed on.

“And I kissed you.” His train of thought hit a snag in the rails there, and he stared at her for a little too long as the best kiss he’d ever had played through his head on a really distracting loop. _Ugh_, he had to think of something else or he was never going to finish this. “And it was, uh—it was okay that I was…”

No. His head tilted down then, rebellion flaring up in him. He couldn’t tell her that. He _couldn’t_. It was stupid, and embarrassing, and private, and she was already looking like he’d made her so uncomfortable that she wanted to superspeed out of the room and never return. But the words insisted on fighting their way out anyway, so he compromised by mumbling, _It was okay that I was gonna die because I’d gotten to kiss you_ to one of the blue goblets sitting on her kitchen shelves because he couldn’t seem to make himself say something that dumb-sounding to her face.

For what felt like an eternity, the only sound was the blood thundering in his ears. Then, moving jerkily, Kara removed her glasses. She still didn’t say anything, but her mouth fell open in some kind of a silent gasp, and her hand traveled up to either mask her eyes or massage her forehead.

Maybe it was both, Mon-El thought, guilt rippling through him as he watched the astonishment take over her. She looked very similar to how he felt, and he swallowed hard, hating that he still had one more confession to unload on her.

“I, um, I saved you at the police station because…because I care about you,” he said quietly, wishing he could put a bag over his head or something just so he didn’t have to see her eyes.

Oh, holy Rao. Her eyes.

On some distant level, he knew he was just sort of _there_, staring at her with all his might. That it was dumb, that he looked like a fool, and that for his own sanity, he probably shouldn’t.

But…her eyes. Every time he saw them these days, he went a little weak and wobbly in the knees. And here, in the warm, friendly glow of her five thousand and one lamps, it was even worse. They were just so blue, and shimmery, and soft, and gorgeous, and full to overflowing with that light he couldn’t explain that when she looked up at him that it was like getting run over by a rocket ship or something.

“Comets,” he said softly, unable to help it. Rao, if only she wouldn’t look at him like that, he might be okay. Eventually. Maybe?

“Mon-El…”

Right. The other terrible part.

Quickly, before she could move farther than his name, Mon-El jumped in.

“I’m not here to change your mind,” he told her, hoping desperately that she didn’t think he was crazy enough to think she might actually be talked into giving him that kind of a chance. In the past she’d minced no words about how egotistical she found him and yeah, sure, he kind of agreed with her about that though he always pretended not to whenever they argued about it, but surely she didn’t think he thought _that_ much of himself, right? And besides that, when had he—or anyone else for that matter—ever been able to talk her into anything? “Okay, I get—I get that you don’t care about me.”

“I _do_ care about you,” she interrupted, a frown drawing her brows together.
In spite of the tightness in his chest, Mon-El nearly smiled. Of course Kara would say that. She had a very big heart, and it was sort of obvious that she truly did care about him. Just like it was sort of obvious that she cared about Alex, and her mother, and her cousin, and Winn, and J’onn, and James, and Lena, and the people she worked with at Catco and the DEO, and the hot dog guy on 52nd street who smiled at everybody, and most of the people in National City.

“But not in the same way,” he pointed out. “And that’s…” He cleared his throat, primarily conscious of a strong desire to hide. “It’s good, that’s fine, it’s…it’s okay. You know, just—just keep on working with me. I—I’ve been honest about this, so let’s just—then we can ignore it, right, we can let it go? Just put it behind us?”

Oh, Rao he hoped they could put it behind them. Preferably far, far, far behind, where no one would see, hear, or speak of it ever again. The idea of losing his friend over a thing like this was awful, and he just wanted her to understand that all he wished for was for them to go on like none of this had happened. To work together and just be partners.

For a little while, the lake of silence that filled the room remained undisturbed. Then they both broke the uncomfortable pause at the same time, their individual yeahs overlapping so that it took Mon-El a second to realize that she was actually agreeing.

“Keep being my partner?” he asked, checking just to make sure.

“Of course.” She sounded slightly more like herself now, but the guardedness was still evident in her face when she glanced up at him. “Thank you for being honest.”

Yeah, okay, Mon-El thought. Or did he say it? He wasn’t sure anymore; he was so ready to put this in a box and lock it up so tightly that he never had to open it ever again that he didn’t pay much attention.

“Good talk,” he said lamely after a moment, holding a hand up for a high-five.

Why, he didn’t know—it just sort of happened, like the really awkward period to the end of a somewhat less-awkward sentence. But since it made Kara snort out a laugh before she brought her palm up to slap his, he couldn’t consider it a failure. Thus, even though he still felt hollow and a little sickish, he couldn’t help laughing as he turned to leave.

“See you tomorrow, partner,” he told her in a decently-cheerful tone as he reached the door.

She smiled, the lines of her face finally relaxing. “Uh-huh.”

Sternly ordering himself to not get caught up in that smile, Mon-El grinned back at her and left, heaving a squall-like sigh of relief once the door closed behind him. All right. It was done, and so was he, and now he was going to get out of here with all possible speed. So, feeling very much as if he were fleeing the scene of a crime, he headed straight for the stairs and didn’t slow down until he burst outside. Where he went after that, he wasn’t sure. When J’onn woke him up early the next morning, the only thing he really remembered was deciding that he needed to drown his sorrows in a soothing drink and think about anything except Kara. He had a hazy memory of wandering into a poorly-lit store and of roaming around the darkened halls of the DEO all by himself, but he didn’t recall climbing up to the second floor landing, or going into the infirmary.

He definitely didn’t know how he’d ended up falling asleep next to an empty bottle of club soda in the same stupid hospital bed he’d been in twice now. He was just grateful that J’onn didn’t mention it. Or seem to find it strange.
*Title taken from the song “Watching For Comets” by Skillet. I stumbled across it toward the end of S2, and it became one of my Official™ Karamel songs after the way things ended. Every time I listen to it I’m reminded of this scene, so of COURSE I had to use it as a title. It’s just so perfect for them in my opinion <3

*So. The confession scene is one of my absolute favorite relationship scenes, not just from SG, but from TV. I’m pretty unresponsive in general to “I Like You” moments in shows (okay, and in books and movies), but this one made me horrendously uncomfortable because it came across so genuine (now I know why!) that I felt as though I were intruding on a private moment and needed to leave immediately. It’s just so incredibly AWKWARD… Even though Kara practically cornered Mon, collared him, and demanded the truth from him, she’s really not prepared to hear it, and he knows that. He’s just convinced that it’s because she doesn’t like him when really, she’s not ready to hear it BECAUSE she likes him. Honestly, the only other time I’ve experienced that level of discomfort/feelings during a TV show was in the Veronica Mars alterna-prom scene (if you’ve ever been a fan of that show, I’m betting you know EXACTLY what I’m talking about and can probably quote the line(s) that just about did me in). The whole sequence from the moment Mon appears by her door is like watching one of my nightmares play out onscreen, and I think that it was probably my first moment of complete and total empathy with Kara in two seasons. I’m a devoted member of the “Do we have to do feelings? Are you sure? Can we not just run away instead?” club, and it became obvious to me in about 2.5 seconds that Kara, who I’d kind of considered my polar opposite, was a member of that club, too. It also demonstrated once again how K&M balance each other…Kara’s brave in confronting the physical dangers that daunt Mon-El. Mon-El’s brave in confronting the emotions that daunt Kara. It’s just kind of awesome.

*Random question: I spent close to an hour (AN HOUR!) trying to figure out what kind of shampoo I thought Kara might use before I gave it up in disgust. Is the whole the-person-I-like-smells-like-this just a fanfiction/YA cliché, or am I the only person in the entire world who doesn’t really pay attention to how other people smell unless they reek of either B.O. or too much cologne/perfume?

*Okay. That last episode of Supergirl? Mon-El’s scene with J’onn? Everything I’ve ever wanted and more. Space Dad was the first character I liked on Supergirl, and I will never get tired of how he’s always there for his adoptive kiddoes. I almost cut out the part at the end of this chapter where J’onn wakes Mon up because I wasn’t sure how accurate my headcanon of J’onn witnessing a lot of Mon’s side of the K/M saga was, but then I saw the episode and decided that I’m justified in that particular headcanon, so I left it in. (Also, the way J’onn and Alex look when Mon makes the big announcement in 2×14, you just get the feeling that they’re sitting there like, “Yes, we know. It’s about time, children.”)

***I don’t want to freak out prematurely, but I just saw the title for Supergirl 3×16, and my inner classic literature nerd is high-key wondering if it’s going to have some good Karamel + what Imra’s up to content. Because besides suggesting that people are having some serious differences of opinion, “Of Two Minds” sounds an awful lot like a play on “Of True Minds,” which sounds an awful lot like a reference to “Let me not to the marriage of true minds/Admit impediments” from Sonnet 116 by Shakespeare. And since 2×16 was heavy on the Karamel and titled “Star-Crossed” in reference to Romeo and Juliet, I can’t help thinking history might repeat itself. Plus, “Love is not
love/Which alters when it alteration finds,” “it is an ever-fixed mark/That looks on
tempests and is never shaken,” and “Love…[b]ears it out even to the edge of doom?”
Come on. I can’t be the only one seeing/hoping there’s a connection, right???
(Realistically speaking though, it could just be a random pun and center around
Brainiac 5 and someone else really book-smart, like Winn or Lena.) To be honest, I’m
going to be mad at the SG writers if they somehow overlooked this golden opportunity
to chunk in another reference to The Bard.

**As always, thanks for reading/commenting! Love you guys, and hope you’re
making it through the hiatus! <3 <3 <3
Chapter Summary

Kara struggles to deal with the knowledge that Mon-El likes her, and Mon-El struggles to deal with the knowledge that Kara doesn’t (LOL) like him. Starts after 2x10 ends and continues through 2x11. Alternates between K&M’s POV.

*This is a long chapter that I officially hate because I just couldn’t keep the scene-switching under control. I fixed the awkward breaks as best I could by noting the timeline at the beginning of each section, but it’s not great, so apologies in advance. Also, Kara’s essentially in a controlled panic throughout the chapter, so beware the rambling!

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Evening, Post-Confession

Long after the door clicked shut, Kara sat frozen on her stool. Drawing a long, shaky breath, she did her best to assess the mishmash of emotions that was currently simmering inside of her. After a bit, it hit her:

Fuzzy.

That was what she felt. And not in a good way, either, like the kind of fuzzy that involved comfy socks and baby birds—fuzzy like a concussion, or not getting enough sleep or food, or too many glasses of Aldebaran rum which no one should ever, ever drink anyway. The space across from her was empty now, but that didn’t have any calming effect whatsoever on the thoughts rampaging through her head. Why would it? She didn’t know what to think about anything anymore. Because just when she’d thought she knew exactly where the two of them stood, he had to show up and drop this bombshell.

Mon-El liked her.

Her. He liked HER.

The thing was almost unbelievable. How could he possibly like her? She wasn’t the kind of girl he was supposed to feel any sort of attraction toward. She…annoyed him. Drove him crazy. Fussed at him to use a napkin when he ate messy foods with his fingers and shushed him when he talked too loudly in public places. She was from Krypton, and he was from Daxam. He should have considered her the stuffiest, stodgiest alien on the planet.

And yet, he’d kissed her. And remembered it. And he said her eyes reminded him of comets…

Unbidden, Kara’s face heated. Immediately, she clapped both hands over her cheeks in an effort to cool her suddenly fiery-feeling skin and let out a groan. Admittedly, that was one of the nicest, sweetest things anyone had ever said to her. But why did Mon-El have to be the one to say things
like that, and just when she’d convinced herself that he only cared about her as a friend? Moreover, why did he have to look at her like that when he said them? She didn’t want to kiss him again, not really, it was a terrible idea that would just make everything between them even messier, but when he’d looked at her like that a part of her had almost…

_No. Do not go there, Kara._

_Ugh._ Why did he have to be so nice about it? Why did he have to give her that ridiculous high-five and smile at her when he left? Also, why, _why_ did all of those horribly unexpected things put together have to make her so shivery and tongue-tied that even breathing became difficult?

It wasn’t fair.

Slumping forward, she propped her elbows on the tabletop with a loud thump. For a heartbeat or two, she stared bleakly at the window, the image of him stumbling awkwardly through his little speech as fresh as if it were seared onto her mind’s eye. Then she buried her face in her hands.

What was she going to do? He lived at the DEO, and in the mornings lately, so did she. She couldn’t avoid seeing him, especially not now that they were training together whenever they had time. As a matter of fact, they were scheduled to meet up tomorrow to go through some new moves. How was she supposed to act normal around him knowing what she now knew—that he liked her?

But why did he like her?

And there she went again, her brain caught in an endless loop of uncomfortable questions for which she had no answer and that all seemed to come right back to the same place: Mon-El _liked_ her. Not as a friend. As…something more. He hadn’t kissed her because he thought she was someone else, or because he was looped on meds and willing to kiss anyone who showed up right then. He’d kissed her because he wanted to; because he thought he was dying. He didn’t tell her he remembered it because he thought she didn’t like him.

Which…

Kara straightened up, heart pounding as an unfamiliar strain of nervous energy fizzed through her.

Which she _didn’t._ At all. And holy Rao, was she _still_ sitting here? In her work clothes? Why on earth hadn’t she changed? She needed to get food, get to bed, possibly do a few loads of laundry so she wasn’t caught without clean socks or anything this next week, and wasn’t there a really big mustard stain she’d been meaning to take care of for like a week now on that one shirt? And speaking of earth, wasn’t Earth Birthday coming up soon? She should probably brainstorm some activities for the day, because she and Alex hadn’t hung out and done something stupid just for fun in a while, and Alex was definitely too busy with work and Maggie and who knew what else to plan anything, so why couldn’t Kara do it?

Speeding around the apartment, she quickly executed the first half of her taking-care-of-responsibilities thing. Laundry was started, food was eaten, sticky notes with ideas for activities were written and posted in hard-to-miss places, more food was eaten, and when there was absolutely nothing else she could do to stall—or, rather, there was nothing else to busy herself with since she hadn’t done a whole lot of chores lately thanks to work and Supergirl stuff—she went to bed.

Where an uncomfortably large portion of her night was spent tossing, turning, and trying very
hard to think about nothing at all while a traitorous little voice insisted on reminding her that the most annoying guy she’d ever met hadn’t been out of his mind when he’d told her she was beautiful—he really thought she was.

Not that that mattered to her, of course. Because he was still annoying. And ridiculous. And… not her type at all. She absolutely, positively drew the line at falling for flirty guys with dumb jokes, perfect hair, and grins that said they knew exactly how hot they were.

Not.

How hot they were not.

Oh, Rao. Kara jammed a pillow down over her ears, forcing herself to breathe slowly and deeply as she shut her eyes.

Line dancing. Country-western style. That was what she and Alex could do. It would be fun.

Early Morning, 9+ Hours Post-Confession

When she opened her eyes again, sunlight greeted her. But in gloomy contrast to the bright, happy world around her, the heaviness she’d hoped would fade with sleep still lingered. Instead of welcoming the morning as usual, she found herself dreading it. She’d told Mon-El she didn’t like him, and now she had to deal with the outcome of that action.

Except she hadn’t told him, exactly. Now that she thought about it, she hadn’t said any of the actual words. She’d just sort of sat there in shock, like a giant bump on a giant log, and let him do all the talking. Which wasn’t good. She was fine with him being under the impression that she didn’t like him in that way at all—because she didn’t—but it worried her that he might think that maybe she didn’t like him, period. And that was so wrong, so very wrong, because of course she liked him! How could she not? He was goofy and cheerful, and much funnier than she thought it wise to ever admit to him, and actually—astonishingly—sweet sometimes, and he really was fun to be around, and every now and then, when he made some terrible joke and grinned at her while she rolled her eyes and tried not to give him the satisfaction of laughing, she almost wondered if…

You’re late. No time for what-ifs right now. Just get a move on.

Throwing back the covers, she leaped out of bed and darted into the bathroom, cheeks glowing red. There wasn’t, of course, anyone around to see, much less question her wacky behavior, but it still embarrassed her. Because really, what was she thinking? Entertaining that kind of notion about Mon-El, even hypothetically, was just ludicrous, and was she seriously going to do that after all last night’s freaked-out agonizing?

Still…she couldn’t make herself rest easy. Something about the way she had handled the whole thing bothered her deeply, almost as though she’d been dishonest. And she wanted to ask someone about it, but that didn’t seem right, either. Talking to someone else about this before she’d even explained herself to Mon-El—that just felt wrong. And she couldn’t ask advice in vague, general-sounding terms, either. Alex and Eliza would ask too many questions like the amateur love-detectives and professional family members they were, Clark and Winn probably wouldn’t have a clue what she was even talking about unless she spelled it out in the most specific of specifics, she
and James were still a little tense about the stupid Guardian thing, Lena would ask too many questions that couldn’t be answered normally, and Cat Grant was who-knew where. That left J’onn and her mother’s hologram, both of which were located at the DEO along with Mon-El.

So yeah, none of that was happening. She was just going to have to confront the awkwardness head-on and hope with all her might that they could move past this whole thing.

Without warning, her phone buzzed on the bedside table, making her jump. A quick check of the notifications revealed that it was only a please-come-in-to-work-early summons, but her relief was short-lived when she realized that showing up to Catco earlier than usual meant canceling training at the DEO. And in light of everything last night, canceling training at the last minute was going to look awfully suspicious. For a moment or two, she toyed with the idea of just pretending she’d forgotten all about it in the rush to head to work. But conscience rebelled, and grudgingly, she obeyed.

Sighing, she frowned down at the phone in her hand before opening her contacts and pressing Mon-El’s name.

It’s just a phone call, she told herself firmly, the dial tone humming in her ear like a large, resentful bumblebee. You make them all the time. You can handle this.

Maybe she’d be lucky and he wouldn’t hear it. Maybe he wouldn’t pick up and she could just leave a message. Maybe—

“Hello?”

Nope. No dice. Of course not.

Swallowing hard, she yanked nervously on a piece of hair. Rao, how could one word, one random, totally everyday word, make her so uncomfortable?

“Kara, are you there?”

“Oh. Yeah. Yeah, I’m here. Hi.” Okay, and now she was fake-smiling, Why, she had no idea. It wasn’t like he was there to see it, and anyway, what did she have to feel guilty about? She hadn’t done anything wrong. Neither had he. They’d just had a really awkward conversation about a really awkward topic. That was it.

“Hi,” he said. “What’s uh…I mean, is something wrong?”

Wrong? Wrong as in a Supergirl emergency, or wrong as inoh, hey, are you still freaking out because I told you less than twenty-four hours ago that I like you wrong? She didn’t know. She felt like a dunce. She was definitely panicking a little. And…what had she been going to tell him, again? Oh, right. Work stuff.

“Listen, Mon-El,” she began, silently cursing her strung-out nerves, “I’m gl—” Wait, she couldn’t say she was glad she’d caught him. It might be misconstrued, and anyway, it would be a lie—she’d much rather have got his voicemail. “Uh, so,” she corrected herself, making a face at the ceiling. “I know we were supposed to meet up for sparring and stuff, but I just got a call from work and it’s this whole thing with Snapper and some of the layouts; it’s not bad yet but I did one of the stories and they need me to—”

“Yeah, sure. No problem.” Was she imagining it, or did he sound relieved? “Actually, I uh, I was just about to call and tell you pretty much the same thing.”
Kara frowned, her mouth falling open a little. “You were?”

“Yeah, see, they’re kind of short of people for the morning shifts, and if I don’t go, it’s going to be just M’gann all day, and since it’s her first day back, I said I’d help out.”

“Right. Of course. I completely forgot about that.” Biting a fingernail, she took a deep breath as the silence grew heavy on the other end of the line. No one was saying it, but it didn’t take a genius to figure out what they were both thinking of. “Um. So,” she stammered at last, tiring of the hush, “I know last night was pretty…”

“Yep.” He laughed, the sound light but too grating to seem natural. “No need to go into detail. I was there, so…”

Her eyes squeezed shut. Ugh, this was the worst. The worst! Never had she wanted so much to dive back into bed and hide under the covers all day.

“I just didn’t want you to think I was postponing to try and avoid you,” she blurted out finally. “Because I’m not.”

“What?” came the incredulous reply. “Why would I think that?”

“Well…” Poking impatiently at her glasses, she slumped against her counter. “I don’t know. I guess I just thought that after I—that you might.”

His chuckle filled the line, but somehow, though it sounded more genuine than the laugh, she couldn’t join in. “Look, Kara. I told you. I get it. We’re not a good match, and that’s…just that. It’s fine. It doesn’t have to be a big deal.”

“Right. You’re right. Totally. Um…” Balling her hand into a fist, she whapped herself on the forehead as she tried to come up with something—anything—to say that might enable her to bring this weirdness to an end. “Okay. Well, I just wanted to clear that up, and now we have, right?”

“Right.”

For lack of a better occupation, she resumed her nail-chewing. “So…I’ll see you later, I guess?”

“Yeah, for sure.” Why did it bother her so much that she couldn’t tell whether or not the smile in his voice was real? “Have a good day, Kara.”

“You too.”

The phone clicked almost immediately, and though she knew it was probably just because he was in a hurry, she couldn’t help feeling like it had a final sort of sound to it. Rao, why did this have to happen? Why couldn’t she have kept her mouth shut and just let things play out? She had liked being friends with him. Now, no matter what he said, everything felt ruined. Maybe forever.

Mutely, she buried her face in her hands as a weird, empty kind of sensation took over. He liked her. She liked him, but not like that. He wasn’t mad at her, he said it was fine and actually seemed to be serious about the staying-friends thing, but she couldn’t she stop thinking about it. Why? Why did it feel so much like she was sticking a knife into someone?

And why couldn’t she shake that tiny little voice way down deep inside that kept whispering *You idiot?*
Early Evening, 12+ Hours Post-Phone Call

“You doing all right over here, barkeep?”

Mon-El jumped, his elbow skittering across the counter as the calm voice spoke closer to his ear than expected.

“Yeah! Sure,” he answered quickly, grabbing the rag draped over his shoulder to swipe busily at a spot that didn’t actually need cleaning. Straightening up, he flashed a wide smile at the too-observant-for-comfort Martian beside him. “Just…trying to calculate how many hours it’ll be before I can clock out.”

“Oh.” She smiled, the gesture a little too soft and sympathetic for his peace of mind. “I see.”

“No, really,” he insisted, forcing out a laugh that made him instantly want to groan at its overt fakeness. “It’s so boring when we’re just standing around here with nobody to talk to.”

“True,” M’gann agreed, straightening the bottles against the mirror until they were lined up like a bunch of little glass soldiers. “But it’s also a good time to get some serious thinking in.”

“I don’t want to think.” The words spilled out before his brain had even the chance to consciously register the thought, and he winced at their bluntness. “I mean, not that I object to thinking in general, I just…don’t feel much like doing it today. Tomorrow will be better. Maybe.”

M’gann nodded, reaching out to give him a light pat on the shoulder as she moved past him toward the cabinets. “More club soda?” she inquired in a businesslike tone, swinging open the door.

He glanced down at the empty glass tumbler beside him. “Sure, why not?”

“Well…” Squatting down, she rummaged around through the stock. “I could answer that, but are you really asking me, or just being rhetorical?”

Mon-El shrugged, stepping back to give her room. “Rhetorical, I guess.”

“Thought so.” Pulling out a clear plastic container, she held it up. “Okay, here we go. One brand new serving of flavorless bubbles coming right up.” Hands on her knees, she pushed herself back upright. “You know,” she added after a second or two as she twisted the cap free briskly, “things really are pretty slow right now. If you want, you can go ahead and take off after you finish this.”

He caught himself just before he shuddered. Go back to the DEO and risk running into Kara when he knew very well that neither of them was prepared to weather that kind of awkwardness? No. When he’d talked to her earlier, she was clearly doing her best to act like everything between them was okay, but he didn’t have to see her face to know that she was struggling with all this. The less she saw of him right now, the better. And the less he saw of her, maybe the less he’d think about her. Which would also be for the better, because even though she wasn’t physically present at the bar, his thoughts were still way too preoccupied with her.

“Uh, thanks, but I’m good,” he said, managing another smile. “Might as well hang out here as anywhere else, right?”
M’gann scooped some ice into his glass, than into hers. “I suppose.”

“I mean—it might get busier.” He handed her the whiskey when she nodded at him, wondering idly if J’onn knew that she knew that J’onn was keeping what Winn called Low-Key Surveillance on her.

“It might,” she agreed, raising her voice slightly as the ice began crackling beneath the clear liquid.

“And you know how mad some of the regulars get when it takes a while to serve them their drinks,” he added, catching the drink as she slid it toward him. “The faster we can get them out, the happier everyone’ll be.”

“That’s an excellent point.” She picked up her glass and took a sip. “But you are just filling in, so if you need to take a break…”

He shook his head, his reply driven suddenly out of his head by what felt like the ten thousandth tragic love song that had played that day. For Rao’s sake, how many different ways were there for humans to sing about sadness? And why would they even want to?

“If you’d like, I can change the station,” M’gann said without missing a beat. “To something more upbeat and less…full of heartbreak.”

O-kay. He wasn’t the most expert reader of signals, but that sounded a lot like a hint.

Nervously, Mon-El shot his coworker a glance and found her watching him with the same kindly smile J’onn had worn when he’d woken him up and announced that he was in the wrong room. Groaning, he dropped the towel over his head so that it covered his face.

“You know?” he mumbled, groaning louder when she mm-hmmed. “Great. Did you figure out how to read my mind, or did J’onn figure out how it’s done and tell you?”

She chuckled. “Neither, actually. I’ve just been doing this job for a while now, and I know the signs. The way you talk about her is one. The way you look at her—that’s another.”

The way he talked about her? The way he looked at her? It was on the tip of Mon-El’s tongue to ask what she meant since he’d kind of thought he’d been pretty careful about stuff like that, but then again, did he really want to get into a conversation of that sort now?

“Oh,” he said instead, yanking the towel off and tossing it onto the back counter. “Right. Highly-developed observational skills in the practiced bartender. I guess that makes sense.”

“Uh-huh.” Reaching for her phone, M’gann tapped a few buttons. Almost instantly, the place came alive with the much rowdier and very welcome strains of guitar music. “You want to talk about it, or is it still too raw to relive?”

“The second, I think?” he answered, grimacing as the stunned expression on Kara’s face once again surged to the forefront of his memory. “I just—you know, I found out recently that my home world is dead and, I didn’t really think anything could be as bad as that. But this is surprisingly comparable, so…”

“Ooh.” She sucked in a hissing, sympathetic breath. “Ouch.”

“Exactly.” Heaving a sigh, he held up his glass in a mocking toast. “But hey, bottoms up, as they say here.”
She smiled, lifting her own glass in return before crossing her arms and leaning back against the counter. “You know, you could switch to something a little harder, if you like. We are in a bar.”

Yeah, that fact hadn’t escaped his notice.

“Thanks, but no thanks,” he answered gloomily, hating himself for the way a certain bright, toothy smile kept popping into his mind. “I’d love to, but if I have one drink right now, I’ll want to drink until I forget my every problem, and I can’t do that because of work. Plus I’m kind of trying to not go there anymore.”

“Gotcha.” She hummed along to the song playing in the background for a few seconds before clearing her throat. “And, for what it’s worth, I think that’s a good plan.”

“Really?” he asked, surprised and pleased to hear that at least one recent decision seemed to be the correct one.

“Really.” She sighed, the faraway look he saw J’onn wear sometimes spreading over her face. “No matter how much you drink, it doesn’t ever make you forget long enough to help anything, and it certainly doesn’t make the problems go away. If anything, it creates new ones.”

“Good to know,” he muttered. “Just out of curiosity though, do you happen to know what does make the problems go away?”

M’gann chuckled, giving him another of those wise, understanding smiles he was beginning to suspect went along with being Martian. “Confronting them, usually. After that…time.”

“Time?” he repeated, unable to keep the whine out of his voice. He’d definitely been hoping for something a little swifter and more reliable than time. “So…you’re telling me I have to forget the slow way, then.”

M’gann chuckled again. “Basically, yes. But it’s not the worst remedy in the universe. They have a saying here on Earth…’Time heals all wounds.’”

Mon-El sighed, trying to not sound too disgruntled as he linked his hands together atop his head. “And would you say in your experience that you’ve found that wise old Earthen saying to be true?”

Laughing, she gave him another pat on the shoulder. “On occasion, yes. But you know Mon-El, the word heal doesn’t mean disappears completely without a single trace. It means the hurt gets better. Becomes less-painful and easier to handle. When wounds heal—especially the deepest ones—they very often leave behind scars. The trick is to keep those scars from getting infected.”

“Great,” Mon-El commented without humor, inspecting his glass while he wondered if any of that was true. It had to be, since M’gann didn’t strike him as the type to make up feel-good lies. “Good thing I’m resistant to disease on this planet, huh?”

“Mhmm.”

He’d meant it as a joke, but the knowing note in her voice made him glance up sharply. “What?” he said.

“Nothing,” she responded peaceably, but he followed the direction of her gaze and realized with a flash of embarrassment that at some point during the shift, he’d apparently turned every single bottle of Aldebaran rum around so that he wouldn’t have to see the labels.

“Okay, I did that, but I didn’t do it because…” he began, but her eyes flicked over to him and he
immediately shut his mouth with a louder-than-necessary snap. “Oh, never mind.” Swirling the ice
cubes around in his glass, he sighed out something that could maybe pass for a laugh. “Right. Is it
supposed to suck this much when you actually like someone?”

“Ah. That I can’t answer, I’m afraid,” she told him, signaling to the customer who’d just entered
—a giant human in one of those black leather vests people who rode motorcycles seemed
inordinately fond of—that she would take his order. “Everyone handles emotions in their own way,
and from what I recall, your people and mine had very different methods of dealing with and
expressing intimacy.”

Mon-El’s nose wrinkled. “Yeah, you say intimacy. I’ve been informed several times since I
arrived here that that word means many different things on Earth, so which one are you referring to
in this particular case?”

She laughed out loud, starting toward the far corner of the counter to get the evil-looking brown
bottle of whiskey the man indicated—a bottle that even Alex and J’onn refused to touch. “Feelings,
Mon-El. Not sex. Although I believe our people had diverging views on that, as well.”

“Oh.”

That made more sense. Given the number of Martians that had existed once upon a time, he’d
theoretically known that some form of procreation had to have existed on the red planet. But as
much as he liked M’gann and J’onn—or maybe because he liked them—he couldn’t imagine either
of those two engaging in anything as non-solemn and totally enjoyable as sex, much less being
proficient in that field. Though J’onn had had kids, so at one point he must’ve…nope, there was
the limit to his imagination again. J’onn was J’onn, and he didn’t do stuff like that. He was just
too…J’onn.

Biting back a grin at that supremely weird line of thought, Mon-El nodded to the man who’d
taken a seat at the counter in front of him. “How’s it going?”

“Eh.” Taking the drink M’gann slid down the counter toward him, the man drained the whole
glass in a few gulps.

“’Bout like that, huh?” Mon-El said, raising his eyebrows at M’gann, who handed him the
bottle and mouthed an I’ll get more from the back before setting off toward the storage area.

“Yup.” Wiping his mouth off on the back of his very decorated hand—tattoos, Mon-El had
learned they were called, not arm art, which is what he’d first referred to them as in his head—the
man crunched down relentlessly on a piece of ice. “Girlfriend walked out on me. Just like that,
pfft! Ten years, down the drain.”

“Oh.” Tilting the bottle onto its side, Mon-El refilled the glass with all possible speed when the
man pushed it forward. “I’m very sorry to hear that. But at least you had those ten years with her,
right?”

“Hah. No,” the man growled, plopping his scruffy chin into his hand in a gesture that seemed
almost unbearably sad to Mon-El. “Turns out she only liked me ‘cause she thought I was some big
tough biker dude with a prison record and no feelings. I mean, I got like two weeks once for drunk
and disorderly conduct, but was that enough for her? No. You want some advice kid, take it from
me—never tell a chick how you really feel. It makes ‘em think you’re some spindly little wuss
who cries at dog movies.”

Great, Mon-El thought. Winn had explained in great detail what wuss meant (a description that
had included several bitter remarks about ‘jealous jock-straps’ which Mon-El didn’t quite follow but assumed had a lot to do with why Winn mocked Earth movies that waxed nostalgic about high school, so he knew it wasn’t a good thing. As usual, he’d gone about everything the wrong way. No wonder Kara was so distressed about the whole situation—not only was he relaying news she didn’t want to hear, he was committing another huge breach of Earthling etiquette in the process. And yes, maybe Kara was Kryptonian by birth, but she’d grown up with Earthling customs, so that must’ve been awful for her.

“What…would you advise instead?” he asked haltingly after a few seconds. If this gentleman had been in a ten-year relationship, surely he had some useful information, right?

The big man made a noise that sounded suspiciously like a sniffle, though from the thundercloud expression on his face, Mon-El gathered he didn’t want anyone to address that fact. “Sports. Or Monster trucks. Talk about those and you’ll be all right.”

Sports or monster trucks.

Mon-El cocked his head as he thought it over. Sports, okay. The Earthen ones were a bit tame compared to those adored by the rest of the galaxy, but he figured he probably could have managed a decent conversation on that topic. Monster trucks, though? He’d seen the huge-wheeled things with the loud engines and wacky names on TV before, but it had never occurred to him to ask Kara her opinion on them. Even now, he couldn’t imagine that she found them very interesting. Maybe if she were to drive one, but still—would it really have been better for him to talk to her about boring Earthen garata and oversized Earthen vehicles instead of telling her how he felt about her? Was that really a custom here?

He fully intended to ask, but when the bearded giant gave another sniffle, Mon-El felt too sorry for him to want to press for information and just brought him a roll of napkins, telling him it was in case the drink spilled. He figured it was the least he could do, and besides…anything that kept him too busy to think about beautiful, overly-solemn, kindhearted blonde Kryptonians and the way they looked when he’d horrified them was a plus. Because he’d definitely horrified Kara. He knew that for certain now. The sad, scary-looking guy had confirmed it, and so did several other regulars who overheard the advice and agreed loudly with the sports part.

So when Kara walked into the bar a couple nights later and sort of chased him around the counter, explaining in unnecessary detail (because really, he got it, he’d told her he got it, and why he couldn’t seem to make her see that he got it, he couldn’t understand) why she didn’t like him the way he liked her, his path became very clear to him:

He had to move on, and with all possible speed if things were ever going to return to normal between them.

The fact of the matter was that she didn’t like him because he was an idiot Daxamite who worked in a bar and didn’t take life as seriously as she did. That kind of response wasn’t likely to change, and even if by some catastrophic sequence of events it did, she’d already said she didn’t have time for relationship stuff anyway. Therefore, he needed to get over this. Quickly. Whatever he felt for Kara, whatever it was about her that made his heart stick in his throat every time he saw her—it wasn’t to be. He just had to accept that. He had to.

And he intended to.

As soon as he got home, he went on that website he’d heard so many people at the bar talk about, and filled out the stupid profile thing. It took a few tries to figure out the whole swiping situation, but finally, he got skilled enough to discover how to look at all the matches for his area.
And, since he recognized one of the faces, he decided he might as well give it a shot. After all, Winn had told him there was something called 'stranger-danger' associated with this particular technological application, so it seemed best to ask out someone he’d already met. Plus, Eve was a very nice person. Maybe he just didn’t respond to her the way he responded to Kara because he was too dumb to understand how romance worked on Earth. At any rate, how would he know unless he tried?

Taking a deep breath, he clicked on the message button.

This would work, right?

Late Evening 5+ Hours Post-White Martian Attack

For a long time after she got home, Kara laid on the couch, legs draped over the seatback as she stared up at the ceiling. Feet bouncing in time to an unknown rhythm, she wondered aimlessly why she’d never thought to repaint. When she’d first moved in, she’d been told that she was allowed to spruce the place up to her liking—it was old, it had been the same “boring” color for years, and as long as she didn’t bore giant holes in the walls or floors, she could decorate pretty much how she liked. Which she’d done, scattering around all kinds of happy, bright-colored furnishings that made her smile when she saw them. But she’d never thought to redo the paint. Not even on the brick parts like most of her neighbors had done, not even once. And over time, she’d become so used to her neutral walls that she’d reacted with horror when Eliza dared to suggest on one visit that she might enjoy a chance of pace. Like robin’s egg, or marigold, or coral instead of taupe’s relative. Kara had just answered immediately—no. No, she did not want to change anything. She liked it the way it was.

At the time, she didn’t consider it that big a deal. It had seemed perfectly natural for Eliza to smile, say okay, and let the subject drop just like she used to let it drop back in high school when Kara was resisting the idea of school-related schedule changes. Recently, though, and especially in light of all the White Martian craziness at the DEO, she found herself wondering about that. Not the walls or school stuff, necessarily, just…why she hated the thought of things being different than they’d been. Why she couldn’t help feeling a little miffed at Winn for running around with James all the time and having secrets she knew nothing about. Why Cat Grant leaving and Snapper taking over felt like a pit of quicksand sucking her down at work. Why she got so upset when Alex wanted to bump back the Earth Birthday plans.

Especially that last one.

Sighing, Kara sat up and flipped on the TV, scrolling through channels until she landed on Auntie Mame. She’d overreacted about Earth Birthday. That much was obvious, just like it was also obvious that everyone from J’onn to Maggie (not to mention Alex and that one White Martian) knew she’d overreacted. Alex hadn’t been trying to kick her annoying little alien sister to the curb—she’d just wanted to do something fun with her girlfriend, and Kara had basically reverted back to some weird, pouty, middle-school version of herself that said she was cool with something when she really wasn’t and then sulked when nobody seemed to notice that she’d been lying. And the scariest part about it all was that Alex could have died. They all could have died, every last one of them in that building, and the last thing Alex would have remembered about her younger sister was that she was angry over the postponing of a silly celebration.
Although seriously, it still stung a little that Alex had been so willing to blow off Earth Birthday. That was like—their thing. A tradition they could both share, and a part of her hated to see it fall by the wayside because letting go of it was like admitting that she was okay with something that had been a huge part of her life just bam, disappearing in the blink of an eye.

Which she wasn’t.

She didn’t want to keep Alex from living her own life or anything like that, but she loathed that gut-punch feeling of being left in the dust while her sister marched on toward new horizons. In a senseless kind of way, it scared her. Made her feel alone. Made her try extra-hard to keep her world in the order that gave her comfort. Like Agnes Gooch, she, Kara Danvers, was in the class of poor suckers starving at life’s banquet. Spontaneity had never been her forte outside the Supergirl arena, and there was now no doubt in her mind that her mini-meltdown had less to do with Alex forgetting their tradition and more to do with Kara just wanting everything to stay the same. It was like a self-defense thing—she just wanted to fight off this change because there had been so many changes in her life as of late and she didn’t want the next one to be the loss of her sister.

Unfortunately, Alex didn’t seem to share her opinion.

A few minutes after the oldest Danvers showed up bearing the universe’s most welcome cupcake ever, Alex brought up the other night at the bar and actually went so far as to suggest that the You Ignored Earth Birthday fiasco had maybe had something to do with Mon-El.

Which it didn’t.

“I told him how I feel,” Kara pointed out, making as much eye contact as she thought prudent considering she wasn’t too excited about this topic. Try as she might to banish it, the look on his face when she’d spouted all that horribly-worded stuff about why she thought they’d never work wouldn’t leave her mind. Yeah, she’d told him how she felt, all right. In the most awful, clunky way possible, and she didn’t blame him one bit for retreating to the opposite side of the room.

“Mhmm. And you really believe that?” Picking up the other fork, Alex stabbed at a small mound of spongy goodness, her expression neutral.

Kara stifled a groan. Great, now she was using her negotiation voice. That calm, unstoppable cross between a mom and a therapist that sort of forced you to think things through, even if you didn’t want to.

Things like how you felt about really annoying Daxamites who sometimes did really sweet things like telling you it wasn’t your fault when the only reason their life was in danger was because of their association with you, or really surprising things like switching from every kind of alcohol in the known universe to nothing but club soda.

“He’s complicated,” she said finally, her eyes moving involuntarily toward the couch as she took another bite of cake. They’d had such a good time when he came over to tell her he wanted to get into the superhero biz. Why did all that have to change? And besides that… “It’s not just about him,” she added abruptly. “It is about me. Every time I put myself out there, it backfires. I don’t want that to happen again, I—it’s too risky.”

“You know, I happen to have taken a rather big romantic risk recently,” Alex commented, eliciting a chuckle from Kara. “And I got to say…it pays off.” Looking up from the ruins of the cupcake, one of the most feared new-recruit trainers at the DEO smiled softly. “Maybe he’s worth a shot.”
“Maybe,” Kara murmured after a few seconds, clinking her fork absentmindedly against the plate.

Alex did have a point. Mon-El could be such a pain in the ass at times, but other times—other times, she saw this side of him that kind of didn’t even seem like a side. If anything, it seemed more…him. Like the guy he maybe would’ve been if he’d grown up anywhere but Daxam. If he’d had someone—anyone—who cared enough to point out the actual difference between right and wrong, selfish and unselfish, smart and dumb. Maybe that was the guy who liked her. The guy she could maybe—possibly—like back. Maybe. And…

Wait.

She frowned, pointing her fork at her sister as a certain conversation came flooding back. “Hold on a sec. At the bar, you acted like you weren’t surprised about any of this. You said, and I quote, duh, when I asked if it was obvious. What was I missing?”

Alex snorted. “Um, everything?”

“Alex.”

The other woman chuckled. “No, I stand by my statement. You know, for a girl with superpowered vision, you really don’t see all that much, do you?”

“Oh, don’t be so patronizing,” Kara scoffed, stuffing another bite of cake into her mouth. “I see things. Most of the time.”

Alex tilted her head to one side, eyes twinkling. “Most of the time, Kara? Really?”

She felt her chin jut out in defiance. “Yes.”

“Oh-huh. Well. You certainly don’t grasp the significance of these things you allegedly see, then,” her sister returned coolly. “Which is just as bad.”

Kara made a face. She was almost positive that wasn’t true. As Supergirl, she had to piece together evidence all the time. And her day job was along those same lines, too—she collected information, sifted through it to compile the real story, and then told it. Surely Mon-El liking her hadn’t been that apparent. Surely Alex had only noticed because, as both a big sister and a secret agent with a scientific background, she was just majorly attuned to stuff like that.

Surely.

“Look,” she argued, “maybe I’m not Sherlock Holmes or anything, but I think I’m kind of observant.”

“Observant?” Alex repeated, eyebrows shooting to the top of her hairline. “Kara, that boy gets moon-eyed around you almost constantly and you’re about the only one who doesn’t notice.” Grimacing, she scraped the fork against her teeth to get the remaining glob of frosting off. “It would be absolutely disgusting if it weren’t so damn cute.”

“Moon what?”

Kara’s face creased, warmth creeping over her neck as she started to shake her head. Mon-El looked at her, yes, she knew that, and now she knew why, but there was no way he’d ever looked at her like how Alex said he did. Except for maybe that one time he’d smiled at her from the couch after they escaped Cadmus. And the other night when he told her how he felt, but Alex couldn’t
possibly know about that one. Because if Mon-El had ever, ever looked at her with the look he’d had in his eyes the other night…

“No,” she declared, shaking her head again. “No, he doesn’t. I would’ve noticed that.”

“Mmm.” Alex looked and sounded unmoved. “Hate to break it to you, sis, but he does. He does, and you don’t. Just last week, for instance, when you almost broke the water fountain over by the vending machines, he—”

“Okay, okay, enough! I get it. I’m oblivious; let’s just leave it at that.” Covering her face with both hands, Kara groaned. “Although you do know there’s no such thing as ‘moon-eyed,’ right?” she demanded after a moment, looking up. “That’s like…some made-up, nineteenth century description.”

Her sister shrugged, unperturbed. “Maybe so, but the condition still exists. I’ve seen it.”

Tapping the fork against her upper lip, she paused for a second, a smirk spreading across her face. “And not just on him.”

“No. Nope, uh-uh, no you haven’t,” Kara insisted, shaking her head vehemently as her face went from warm to boiling hot in the space of one second. “Whatever that is, I—I don’t do that. At all.”

“Sure you do.” Gathering up the plate and utensils, Alex headed into the kitchen. “Infirmary,” she fake-coughed out over her shoulder.

Kara frowned, twisting around on her stool. “Come again?”

“The infirmary.” Alex repeated, slower this time as she set the dishes in the sink. “I’m sure you remember. A deadly biological weapon in the form of a virus…two very slow-on-the-uptake aliens left in a dimly-lit room without adult supervision…one of them was under medical observation and the other was really worried about him…”

Kara’s eyes widened. No, there was no way she knew about that.

Alex smirked again, propping her back against the counter. “Let’s play a game, shall we? Raise your hand if you have not kissed a dying Daxamite in the medical area of the same place where you work as a superhero.” Sticking her hand obnoxiously high into the air, she cocked a brow. “Oh, hey. Just me, then? Huh.”

“Oh my God!” Kara half-shouted, covering her eyes again as her sister burst out laughing. “I did not kiss him, okay? I didn’t! I mean, technically speaking, he kissed me.”

“Well, yes.” Alex was by her side far too soon, trying unsuccessfully to bat her hands away from her face. “But you did kiss him back, so also technically speaking…”

“Uggggg.” Kara slumped down, resting her forehead on the table. “That is so creepy that you even know that! I mean…how? How do you even know that? How could you possibly obtain that kind of information? Were you spying on me?”

“Oh, Kara,” Alex sighed, giving her head something that was probably intended to be less of a sympathetic pat and more of a what-is-wrong-with-you whack. “Kara, Kara, Kara. How many times do I have to remind you that you superhero in a top secret government facility?”

Oh.
Her face scrunched in understanding. “Security cameras?” she asked sheepishly, sitting back up.

“Security cameras,” Alex confirmed, reaching out to brush a stray crumb off her face. “They see all and know all.”

Kara grunted. The cameras. Why hadn’t she thought to remember those? Of course Alex knew. And probably other agents, which she didn’t even want to think about, because she’d never be able to look them in the eye ever again if she knew they’d seen all that.

“Great,” she muttered. “Not only is Big Brother watching, but Big Sister is, too.”

Beside her, Alex stayed quiet for a moment before fake-coughing again. “So?”

Kara glanced at her, eyebrows raised. “So what?”

Her sister smiled. “So, you kissed him. How was it?”

How was it? She hadn’t let herself think about that, not really, not since right after it happened anyway, but in an instant, she felt it all over again—the butterflies, the warmth, the way his lips seemed to fit against hers so perfectly, the way it was like flying, and running, and falling all at the exact same time...it wasn’t like any kiss she’d ever had.

Without warning, a loud, snorty giggle escaped.

Horrified, she clapped both hands over her mouth, whipping her head around to stare wide-eyed up at Alex. “Um…” she began, not quite sure where that sentence was heading. “It um, it was…”

“Wow.” Alex folded her arms, her smile now somewhere between smug, sympathetic, and maybe even a little misty. “That good, huh?”

Kara could feel her face blotching a deep, incriminating shade of scarlet under the scrutiny. But there was no point in denying it. Even if she wasn’t clear on what she felt about Mon-El, she knew darn well how she felt about that kiss.

“Yeah,” she mumbled, yanking the ends of her sleeves down to cover her hands since every part of her—but especially her hands—felt suddenly big, bumbling, and awkward. “Yeah, it was... pretty good.”

“Yes, you looked like you thought so.”

“A-lex!” Kara screeched. “Stop it!”

“Sorry!” Alex shook with laughter, holding up a hand as she dodged back from the swipe aimed her way. “Sorry, I’m sorry.”

“Ha.” Eyeing her sister sourly, Kara folded her own arms. “No, you’re not.”

“No, I’m really not.” Wiping her eyes, Alex chuckled again and darted forward to wrap Kara in a quick hug. “But I am here for you.”

“Jerk,” Kara mumbled, hugging her back anyway.

“Whiner.” Kissing the top of her head, Alex gave her another comforting squeeze. “Do you know what you’re going to do yet?” she asked quietly.

Kara shook her head, a sigh billowing out. “No. I just—-I don’t know. I mean, it’s not like I’m
trying to figure out what pizza topping I want. This is a big decision. I mean, let’s say I do like
him…” She chose to ignore her sister’s thinly-veiled scoff. “I still have to grapple with whether or
not I even want to go there. I mean, do I have time for anything like that? Am I willing to chance
everything maybe falling to pieces? I’ll probably have to do some serious soul-searching before I
make up my mind.”

“Yeah.” Alex patted her shoulder, humming sympathetically. “Been there, done that. You want
me to leave you to it?”

Slowly, Kara nodded. “Thanks,” she said, tightening her arms so gratefully that the other
woman grunted. “Oh…sorry.”

“No worries.” Alex poked her gently in the head as she let go. “You just sit and think, okay? I’ll
let myself out.”

“Okay.”

For a long time after her sister departed, Kara sat and thought on the exact same stool she’d sat
and thought on just a few nights ago. Except this time, the petrified feeling wasn’t quite so
overpowering. This time, her head was calm enough to let her heart speak up, and this time, she
was calm enough to listen. To weigh what she thought she should do with what she wanted to do,
and to identify where one thing began and the other ended. She’d told herself she didn’t like him as
anything but a friend, and she’d herself that repeatedly. And then she’d gone out and told him.

Why?

Because she didn’t like him as anything but a friend? Because after all the times she’d criticized
and complained about him it was mortifying to admit even to herself that he maybe wasn’t as bad
as she’d assumed? Because the thought of telling him face to face that he kind of, sort of, sent her
heart into overdrive with one of those too-cocky, too-flirtatious smiles terrified her so much that
she wanted to punch the ever-living daylights out of just the idea? And if it wasn’t the first
explanation, which she uneasily suspected it wasn’t…didn’t that make her a coward? A hypocrite?

Eventually, she wound up sitting in her window, nose and forehead pressed against the cool
glass as she stared out at the darkened city until the first streaks of light began appearing along the
horizon. Like a broken record, her brain was stuck in a groove.

Any courage I do have, I learned it from you.
It was okay that I was gonna die because I’d gotten to kiss you.
I saved you at the police station because I care about you.

“Oh, crap,” she whispered, puffing out a huge sigh as she hugged her knees to her chest.

Now she was just stalling. Out of pure, unadulterated fear. She needed to just bite the bullet—
relatively speaking—and call him, preferably before she lost her nerve. But as she unfolded her
legs and stood up, the thought occurred to her that the non-face-to-face method might not be the
best idea. It was really late. And Mon-El would definitely be asleep right now. And with M’gann
leaving, there was a very good chance he would get asked to work the early shifts again. Was
calling right this second, just because she was worried her temporary courage might fade, really the
best idea?

Nope.
Plopping back down, she groaned for what felt like the millionth time in an hour. Rats, rats, rats. Okay, well—she’d just have to call him tomorrow. Or, today, rather. And it would probably be best to do it after she got off work, because she had a feeling that this wasn’t going to be a conversation she wanted a lot of people walking in on. After all, she had kind of sought him out less than forty-eight hours ago just to tell him exactly how not interested in him she was. That was bound to make things between them even more complicated. She could just picture it…Hey, Mon-El! Listen, about what we talked about last time we actually spoke? I’ve given it a lot of thought, and I’ve kind of changed my whole stance on the we-shouldn’t-date thing. What do you say?

Ugh, even imagining it made her shiver. Rao, she hoped she hadn’t made him change his mind about her.

Chapter End Notes

*Oh, look. It’s been eons since I updated. I know I say this every time, but I’m sorry for the huge gap between updates, and I’m really not doing this on purpose!  
*Chapter title taken from the song by the same name from "Once More, With Feeling," aka the Buffy musical episode, because I have a weird sense of humor and I sing that line/song to characters whenever they find themselves in an awkward position.  
*Agnes Gooch is one of the more stuck-in-a-rut characters in Auntie Mame (a must-see film if you’re a Rosalind Russell fan, just saying), and Kara is referring to what’s arguably the movie’s most famous quote: “Life is a banquet, and most poor suckers are starving to death!” I’ve always found it interesting that THAT’s the movie SG shows Kara watching in an episode where she’s sort of clinging to conventionalities, so I went with it.  
*I will never not be bitter that I didn’t get to see Mon-El and M’gann working together. I love the scene in the show where Kara shows up and corners Mon-El (that whole moment is so insanely awkward and Kara makes it so much worse that I adore it/end up yelling “KARA STOP TALKING” every time I watch it), and one of the big reasons I love it is M’gann. The way she smiles at Kara pretty much lets you know she knows exactly what’s going on, but she never says anything. I firmly believe she’s been watching Mon-El mope for days (hours? I’m really not sure how the timeline for 2x11 progresses, hence the awkward format of this chapter), and when she tells Kara he’s been drinking nothing but club soda, I’m just sure she has an idea that that’s significant, too.  
*I didn’t include the actual confrontation at the bar because there was just so much already happening in this chapter. Plus, I think we know exactly what Kara and Mon-El are each feeling at that moment because Melissa Benoist and Chris Wood are amazing in that scene and you SEE every emotion on their faces. I wrote in an earlier phone call between K&M though, because the part in the bar where K says “You were right, I’m not so sure we’re a good match” has always bugged me…I watched the confession scene about 1001 times between 2x10 and 2x11, and I got to where I knew that speech backward and forward, and Mon never actually says that. So either there was a deleted scene in 2x11 where that was said, or the line got cut from the confession scene, but either way, I had to write an explanation for it.  
*Okay. It’s been forever, so I have to say: MON-EL’S SUIT! KARA’S REACTION TO MON-EL’S SUIT!! MON-EL HUGGING WINN!!! KARAOKE NIGHT!!!!!!! I’m not overjoyed about the way the show seems to be slowly regressing Kara back to
S1 Never-Wrong-Even-When-She-Actually-Is levels, but I’m willing to see how this plays out. Also, the whole Kara yelling at Mon-El thing…it was so much like watching a negotiation that all I could do was laugh and roll my eyes. “Okay, we have acquiesced to your demands that we explicitly state Mon-El was not perfect in S2. Now he has officially apologized and has obviously changed, so if you continue to heap hate on him, that is now your personal problem.” Also, the Eve thing again? Really? Are we honestly expected to pretend that Eve is not an intelligent adult who is perfectly capable of making her own decisions? Okay. (A side note: WHY ARE WINN AND EVE NOT A THING, AGAIN? The more I think about it, the more it burns me up. They would be so darn cute.) *Speaking of Eve: the next chapter will have some Ms. Teschmacher in it. I originally intended to include the K&M run into each other at Catco when M comes to pick up Eve scene in this chapter, but it was already way too long, there was a lot of Kara’s POV in it, and it was a really depressing note to end on, so I bumped it to next chapter. *Just like always, thanks for reading/commenting, and here’s hoping y’all have a wonderful rest of the week! <3
Can’t We Be Friends?

Chapter Summary

Kara prepares to tell Mon-El the big I-Think-I’ve-Changed-My-Mind News, and Mon-El…goes on a date.
Picks up after the last chapter and covers through the end of 2x11 “The Martian Chronicles” (K&M split POV)

*Sorry it’s been so long and that is a shorter chapter than the last, but I promise more is coming. We are moving ever closer to the Golden Age of Karamel, so hang in there!

Chapter Notes

**For weird reasons of my own, I would like everyone to know that this chapter is EXACTLY 6K words. I know that that basically means nothing to anyone except myself, but it’s a nice even number and it feels like I won something, so I have to share this fascinating fact.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

From almost the second she woke up, Kara felt a lot like a very young, very small hamster racing in a too-large, too-fast wheel. The events of the last week or so had all but wiped her out, and last night’s pretty daunting epiphany hadn’t put her in the calmest frame of mind. She’d ended up losing more sleep than intended, and began her morning by pouring milk into her mug and coffee into her cereal bowl after congratulating herself on her ability to calmly get dressed.

So, in a way, it didn’t much surprise her that the first person she encountered when she arrived slightly late to work was a cantankerous and coffee-stained Snapper. One irate speech on the carelessness of millennials and their “soy-laden” beverages of choice later—Kara’s heart went out to whichever poor person had crashed into him and spilled their drink down his shirtfront—and she was even farther behind on everything she’d planned to get done before noon.

She was also a lot tenser, and it didn’t help her nerves any to find when she got to her desk that almost all of the day’s work required immediate action; from the get-go, it seemed there was to be no time for anything except dashing back and forth between departments. And, while it wasn’t difficult work, she found her patience stretched almost to the limit—there was just such a long string of tasks, and they seemed to never let up. Most of her morning was spent finishing an article that had to be turned in before lunch, fact-checking for another that was due by the end of the day, and running down the hall to pick up a list of potential sources for the one due tomorrow. By the time she went down a few floors to drop off the completed article, it was an hour and a half ‘til lunchtime, her stomach felt like a yawning cavern, and she’d barely had the chance to think about the momentous decision she’d arrived at the night before.

Which…wasn’t ideal.

Because while one part of her wanted to call Mon-El and just get the whole thing over with so
she could get that nervous little reminder out of the back of her mind, the thought of picking up the phone and telling him in cold blood about how drastically her opinion of them dating had changed was pretty terrifying. Especially since her hunger pangs tended to catastrophize her imagination—what if, for instance, someone overheard her and she became one of those embarrassing office-gossip stories? Or worse, what if she got nervous and broke something no human was supposed to be strong enough to break? That wouldn’t just be humiliating; it could jeopardize her secret identity and put actual lives in danger. Worst of all though, what if she passed out under the strain of trying to not be a complete and total dork while telling a guy she really liked that she really liked him?

And not just any guy—a Daxamite. A really cute, really smug Daxamite, who hopefully wouldn’t rub it in too much that a Kryptonian had randomly decided to make a one-eighty turn in the romance department.

But no. She wasn’t going to go there. Not now. That kind of thinking was like a mental quagmire, and she was not going to chicken out. Nope, no way. Not this time. She’d finish the draft of the community park fountain story, drop off the stack of clippings she’d borrowed from the archives last week, take her lunch break, and then she would do what she’d resolved to last night and call him. She would. Even if she had a major attack of awkward over the phone, even if it took every drop of super-strength in her body, she would call him. Let him know where things stood between them now as far as she was concerned, and then…

Oh, Rao.

Then what, for crying out loud?

Kara gulped, stomach fluttering weirdly as it struck her that she didn’t have a clue what was supposed to come after the big announcement. She’d definitely given Mon-El the impression that she didn’t want anything to do with him romantically, and it seemed safe to assume he’d be at least a little surprised to find out she’d kinda, sorta, changed her mind.

But would it be a good surprised, or a bad surprised? She had a vivid, (maybe) irrational fear of him laughing again, this time in an Are you serious, do you think I’m willing to take a chance on someone who basically said ‘You’re the worst, get lost?’ kind of way. But more than that, what if he didn’t hold a grudge? What if he still liked her enough to actually want to start something, and what would that something entail? She didn’t exactly have a lot of dating experience to fall back on, let alone relationship experience. What if—

“Where the hell is Danvers?”

She tensed, imaginary fears vaporized beneath the shadow of a real danger: the sound of Snapper’s grouchier-than-usual voice a few halls away. Shoot, shoot, shoot! Today was the day she was supposed to cover that construction story down at City Hall, wasn’t it? Which meant she was on the cusp of being late again, didn’t it?

Hurriedly stuffing the box of clippings back under her desk, she snatched up her purse and notepad and sped into the hall, slowing to a brisk walk right before Snapper rounded the corner.

“On my way, Chief,” she announced in her most competent voice, hoping like crazy that he wouldn’t see how flustered she was from the strain of almost forgetting. “Any last minute instructions?”

“Yeah.”
If hadn’t expected to find her en route, he sure didn’t let on, and Kara marveled a bit at that advanced level of poker face.

“Get a quote from the mayor,” the man growled, scowling down at the paper in his hand. “Two lines, at least. And if you catch any council members glad-handing it up nearby, be sure and ask which way the vote went. Multiple sources are claiming that multiple sources have been claiming that there’s division in the ranks, but we’re not printing anything until we confirm it. Don’t make anyone contemplate calling security, but don’t let ‘em dodge, either.”

“Absolutely.” Yes. It was just everyday curmudgeon-liness. “Will do.”

Breathing a sigh of relief that she wasn’t on the hot seat for anything too huge, Kara forced all thoughts that didn’t involve interviewing and citywide politics from her mind and set out for yet another tedious speechmaking session at City Hall.

By the time she made it back to Catco (with a bunch of quotes and a headache), she was beyond ready to drop the pieces to her story off at her desk and go out for some edible happiness. Prior to the City Hall visit, she’d been thinking sandwiches. Now, faced with the prospect of a late lunch, she kind of thought the biggest all-you-can-eat buffet in town was more her speed. Especially if a dessert bar was anywhere nearby; with the kind of day this was turning into, she suspected some serious cheesecake therapy was going to be a must.

Oh, who was she kidding?

She was about to cold-call an outrageously cute guy from a planet she’d grown up despising to ask if they could meet so she could revisit a super awkward conversation and tell that same outrageously cute guy that she like-liked him. At least an entire cheesecake was going to be in order no matter how the phone call went. And if she were smart, she’d make sure that thing was big and chocolatey.

Fidgeting in the elevator, she flipped through ink-covered sheets of her notepad to get at a clean page. Maybe, she thought agitatedly, she should write down everything she wanted to say ahead of time like she always did before interviews. Even if it did remind her of those first years on Earth when Alex and Eliza had to teach her about and then force her to use the phone (and she would still only agree to do it if she could pen the message first,) at least she stood a better chance of not sounding like a nervous wreck.

Yeah, that was probably a good idea. Besides—her track record with extemporaneous speaking wasn’t so great when she was Kara and the topic involved delicate subject matter. Supergirl could usually manage to keep her cool in stressful situations, but Kara tended to panic and either blurt out everything she shouldn’t, or go speechless. And she really, really hoped to avoid both of those options.

“It’s just a call,” she muttered, puffing out a sigh that stopped just shy of sending ice particles into the air. “No big deal.”

Now if she could just convince herself of that, she’d be good.

The doors slid open then, and she felt a little better as the bright spaciousness greeted her. Taking a breath, she stepped out into the dull hum of activity, eyes glued to her notepad as she put one foot in front of the other and went over her task list in her head:

*Go to desk.*
Upload recordings to computer.

Put everything in safe spot.

Go to lunch.

Call Mon-El.

Don’t freak out. Just say what you need to say and stay—

“Kara!”

What? No. There was no way. He couldn’t be here. Not now.

Kara skidded to a halt, heart rate bursting into drums at a rock concert territory as she turned to see the exact person she wanted to see—just not at that particular moment—standing behind her.

“Mike!” she managed to respond, something tangling in her throat as she noticed suddenly that he wasn’t alone. “E-E…”

“Hey,” Mon-El said. Casually, as if they ran into each other like this all the time. As if nothing were at all unusual about his turning up at Catco with…

“Eve!” Kara cursed herself inwardly for the sheer effort it took to squeeze that one name out.

“Hi!”

Her coworker sounded chirpy as always, but for once, the happy greeting didn’t automatically cheer Kara up. Instead, a small, queasy sort of feeling wound its way through her stomach, and she noticed inanely that Eve was standing awfully close to Mon-El.

“Hi,” she replied, wondering if her voice seemed as faint to them as it did to her. “Yeah, it’s so funny…” Mike. Not Mon-El, Mike. “Mike…that you’re here.” Gah, what was she even saying? This wasn’t funny; not at all. This was unexpected, uncomfortable. Basically a disaster. “I was gonna call you later to talk about something.”

Later meaning a half hour at most, and wow, he was dressed nice. With the jeans, and the jacket, and the way his hair was—wait.

Why was he dressed so nice?

“But, um…are you two...headed somewhere?” she added tentatively. A part of her protested, not wanting an answer that might confirm the fear she suddenly felt, but she couldn’t help it. The question came bursting out anyway.

Like an actual ray of sunshine, Eve’s smile grew brighter. “Lunch.”

“Together?” The little knot in the pit of Kara’s stomach tightened even as she asked. Please say no. Please say no. Please say—

“Yep,” Mon-El answered, the cheerfulness in his voice cutting through her as swiftly as a knife through butter.

“That’s…that’s great!”

Kara forced a good, big smile, because maybe if she acted enthusiastic, if she told herself this wasn’t as awful as it felt, maybe that would help. Although on second thought, maybe the smile wasn’t that good or big. The muscles in her face had kind of tensed to a point where she couldn’t be
sure; maybe she really only succeeded in giving a grumpyish sneer.

“That’s really great,” she murmured again.

She felt strangely faded, mind scrambling to understand everything going on as she listened to Eve say something about forgetting her phone and going to get it. Because…Mon-El was here. At Catco. With Eve. And he was going to lunch with her. Like he maybe liked her and wanted to get to know her better. Like…they were on a date.

Yep. Kara officially felt a little sick.

“Hey, I um…”

She glanced up to see Mon-El looking almost concerned, and the dizzy, twisted sensation inside of her doubled.

“I heard what happened at the DEO,” he said, lowering his voice as he edged out of the general walkway with her. “Is everything okay?”

“Oh!”

Funny how far away and unimportant all that craziness seemed now that she was standing here confronted by this huge mess she didn’t know how to solve.

“Well, I’ve…” The attention he was paying to her reply only served to rattle her further, and she crossed her arms awkwardly. He sure wasn’t looking at her the way he’d looked at her the other night in her apartment, but her stomach just couldn’t seem to understand that. “I’ve never seen anything like it, but—everyone’s fine.”

“Good. Good, good.” He inhaled deeply right after she did, the air making an almost-whistling sound past his teeth. “All right.”

And, once again, she couldn’t help herself. She needed to know.

“So is that ‘together’ like…on a date?” she blurted out as he turned toward the elevators.

Mon-El halted mid-swivel, something like confusion wrinkling his forehead. “Yeah,” he answered evenly, shuffling a step or two back toward her. “I mean, you, you—you rejected me, so it’s time to move on, right?”

He laughed a little, like it was a light, funny joke between friends, but Kara couldn’t quite bring herself to join in.

“Right,” she mumbled.

Yes, she had rejected him, hadn’t she? Not just once, but twice. Blatantly. Only she hadn’t meant it, for Rao’s sake! Not really. She’d just thought she had.

Believed she had.

Maybe even wished she had. And only at the time.

But beyond all that…he’d stood right there in front of her and told her to her face that he liked her. Her. Not Eve. Who got over someone they supposedly liked that much this fast?

“That was a pretty quick turn around,” she commented—laughing, so she hopefully didn’t
sound anything in the neighborhood of whiny or petty.

Mon-El laughed too, reaching up to adjust his glasses.

“Uh…yes. Yes, I guess that is true. Um…” He laughed again, his grin half-hidden behind a fist. “But you gotta swipe right ‘til you find The One, right? Like the kids say?”

“As you should,” Kara agreed, heart sinking as her feigned enthusiasm rose. Great, her mind whispered while she turned away. Nice going, Kara. You really did it this time, didn’t you?

“Hey, you uh…”

His voice stopped her, and she swung back around, wishing with everything in her that she’d just kept her big mouth shut when she walked into that bar.

“You said you…you wanted to…talk about something, or was it…?” He eyed her curiously, the question hanging unfinished in the air.

“Um…” she began, excuses faltering. How could she possibly start that conversation now?

But before she could formulate anything remotely reasonable, she was saved the trouble. The second she opened her mouth to launch a half-baked explanation, Eve’s cheerful Ready! rang out behind her, and as her beaming coworker rejoined them, Kara realized she couldn’t go through with it. Not after she’d had—and basically forfeited—her chance, and certainly not at the expense of two people who were just trying to have some fun together.

Also…not when Mon-El was so obviously ready to move on to someone else.

“It’s…it’s fine,” she said instead, waving off the subject with the biggest smile she could muster. “You guys have a…a good date.”

A weird numbness welled up inside her as she turned to head back in the direction of her desk, and she wondered vaguely if this was what sleepwalking felt like—empty and robotic. For five, six, maybe seven steps, she held it together. But the instant she was sure they couldn’t see her, her smile dropped and she experienced the horrible, almost overwhelming desire to just lie down and cry. Not that that would change anything.

It’s your own fault, she scolded herself furiously, blinking fast so she wouldn’t add the humiliation of bawling her eyes out at work to this already rotten day. You waited too long because you just couldn’t bring yourself to admit that you maybe like a guy who thinks drinking shots upside down is a talent, and now you’re getting exactly what you deserve. Now he’s moved on.

And now he was with Eve.

Cute, fun, cheerful Eve, who probably wouldn’t roll her eyes at his dumb jokes and who was probably way better suited to him than Kara would ever be anyway. Even though Kara knew he was an aspiring superhero from another planet who didn’t need those glasses at all and Eve still thought he was a nearsighted, incompetent intern named Mike who smiled at everything and everybody and liked to have sex on top of copy machines.

Sinking into her chair, Kara inhaled slowly as she propped her elbows on the desk and rested her face in her hands. Oh, screw lunch. She was going to get the biggest chocolate cheesecake the city had ever seen, and she was going to eat the whole thing. Pronto. Maybe that way, she could forget this had ever happened.
Hopefully as quickly as Mon-El had forgotten he liked her.

~*~

“Mike? Hello?”

At the light touch on his wrist, Mon-El nearly jumped out of his skin. The busy clamor around him grew louder, like someone had turned up the volume in the restaurant, and he realized with a sudden flash of embarrassment that he’d somehow managed to tune out everything his very nice date had just said. Something about—nope, he was coming up empty. The only thing that seemed to have made any impression on him whatsoever was the happy cadence of her voice, but that really didn’t offer a whole lot of clues.

“Yes?” he said, smiling what he hoped wasn’t too guilty of a smile while he scolded himself internally for not paying better attention. “I’m sorry, I—didn’t catch what you just said.”

“I know. That’s what I was just saying. You seem distracted.” Setting her napkin down on the table, Eve leaned forward, concern fringing the edges of the friendly smile he felt certain she wore with the same kind of regularity he wore shoes. “Is everything okay?”

“Yes,” he said quickly, widening the smile. “Yes! Absolutely.”

That was true, wasn’t it? He was alive, dining on tasty food with pleasant company, and he’d gotten the opportunity to pet a large, fuzzy dog on the way to work and a small, fuzzy dog on the way to the restaurant. If that didn’t equal okay, what did? All the same, a tinge of nervousness wiggled through him.

“Why do you ask?” he inquired, wincing when his absentminded pinching of one of those little garlic-laced squares of bread that topped his salad crushed the whole snack into powder. “Um, aside from the…distracted, not-hearing thing, I mean.”

“I don’t know.” She folded her hands together, eyes squinting at him. “Maybe I’m reading too much into it and everything, but you just seem a little…blue.”

“I do?” Mon-El caught himself a split second before he glanced down at his hand to see if the skin had taken on any kind of azure tint. Blue. Right. He wasn’t literally blue, it was just another of those Earth expressions that didn’t mean what you automatically thought it did. “Really?”

Eve’s smile warmed. “Yes. Ever since we left Catco. And, not gonna lie—it feels like whatever’s weighing on you is kind of serious. Do you maybe want to talk about it?”

“No! No, it’s not—I mean, really, it’s nothing,” he insisted, fake-beaming as he scraped the bread-dust into a little heap at the side of his plate so he had an excuse for being twitchy. “Just some personal stuff, but uh, it’s not the greatest topic for lunch, you know? Not very…cheerful.”

“Oh. I see.” Eve tilted her head to one side, her fluffy hair bouncing in a way that made him suddenly realize it would have probably been a much wiser idea to go out with a stranger. A solemn, dark-haired, complete and total stranger who in no way roughly resembled anyone he already knew and definitely didn’t want to think of at this particular moment, because that was just too strange on so many counts. “You sure?”

Mon-El nodded, his fake grin as wide now as if he’d shoved a big slice of watermelon—one of his favorite Earth fruits—edgewise into his mouth. “Very sure.”

“I see.” She was silent for a minute, then gave a little cough. “Listen, Mike, I don’t mean to pry,
but I couldn’t help noticing...back at Catco, you seemed pretty flustered after we bumped into Kara. Does this mysterious sadness have anything to do with her?”

His stomach turned a dizzying flip within him. “Anything—with Kara?”

“Mmhmm.” Eve leaned her elbows on the table, a bright, friendly sort of smile that made him feel very small and very horrible on her face. “I know how it is when you cross paths with an ex. Total bummer, especially when it’s unplanned. I mean, the awkwardness is just so...intense, you know? And the feelings, phew! Roller coaster city.”

Nonplussed, Mon-El stared across the table for a long second. An X? As in…a treasure map? Or a diagram of some terrifyingly complicated mathematical equation? Or possibly just the letter itself? Then, suddenly, it hit him: not an X, an ex. As in two people who once dated. As in him plus Kara…oh, Rao, no. This was taking a jackknife turn into ultra-dangerous territory.

“Together, no; Eve, Kara and I aren’t—” he began hastily, words falling out in what felt very much like exactly the wrong order. “I mean, we didn’t—we never…she, I...no, really.”

The friendly smile morphed into a sympathetic one almost instantly. “No, no, it’s okay. Trust me. I’ve totally been there, done that. Back in college, there was this one guy—ugh. I really liked him, and I cannot tell you how often I’ve accidentally brought his name up at the worst possible times. Getting hung up on an ex sucks. But if there’s one thing I’ve learned, it’s that you can’t rush love. You know, kinda like the song says? ‘You can’t hurry love, no, you’ll just have to wait. Love don’t come easy...’”

Mon-El nodded like he agreed, even though he had no idea what she was talking about. He’d never heard that song and couldn’t see a reason why he would ever want to, but what did that matter when the longer he sat here in silence, the more wrong her ideas about him and Kara became?

Gulping, he opened his mouth to correct her, but she was talking again, in obvious earnest.

“And the thing is, convincing yourself you’re over someone or something you’re actually not is a lot more difficult than it sounds. It’s hurtful, too, because the bottom line is that when you’re not ready to date, you’re not ready to date.”

Oh, Rao. He could feel the sweat beading up on his forehead. “No, but really, Eve, Kara and I—”

“Never dated. I get it,” she finished patting his hand briskly. “Of course. That’s exactly what I said about my ex-boyfriend when I was too embarrassed to tell people how I really felt, which, at the time, was kind of devastated. I talked about him on every date, too.”

He froze. “Too?” he repeated, stomach sinking as he remembered casually mentioning how Kara had introduced him to several items on the menu. “Did I...?”

The smile was now half sympathy, half amusement. “You’ve mentioned her a lot. The potstickers, the club soda, the bacon wraps, the pizza, the cute little dog we saw on the way over, that song that was playing when we got here—”

“Tearin’ Up My Heart. NSYNC,” Mon-El inserted automatically. “That’s one of Kara’s favor—oh.” He tried to swallow the rest of the sentence, but it was already too late. Dating customs weren’t the same on Earth as they were on Daxam or anywhere else Mon-El had ever been to, but even he knew that all this was fast turning into what Winn would term a major boo-boo. “I’m
really sorry.”

Eve laughed, shaking her head. “It’s okay. I promise, I’m not upset. So you’re hung up on your ex-girlfriend. It happens!”

“It…does?” Mon-El ventured, forgetting for a second that he was supposed to be trying to convince her of exactly how much nothing was between him and Kara. (On Kara’s part, anyway—obviously, it was kind of pointless to insist he was indifferent.)

She nodded, her smile overflowing with kindliness as she reached out to pat his hand. “Of course it does. I mean, everyone goes through something like this at some point in their life. It’s not like you’re superhuman, right?”

Right.

Mon-El hoped his answering smile as she laughed didn’t look too suspicious. “No, I guess not, huh?”

“Exactly! And besides, you never know,” she added. “Maybe this is one of those things that’s meant to be, and if you’ll just leave it alone, it’ll all work itself out. Like fate.”

He tried not to let that encourage him, but it was impossible. “You think so?” he asked hopefully.

“I certainly do.” She laughed, stabbing a piece of green leafy something. “See, I had this roommate once who was really into this one guy…I mean, you won’t believe all the drama they went through before they ended up together.”

The rest of the hour passed with about as much normalcy as Mon-El guessed could be expected from a date that morphed into talking about exes (for someone who grew up on a different planet, Eve had a lot of stories from what she called ‘the wild college days’ that were remarkably similar to his blurry memories on Daxam) and ended with a hug and a Hope it all works out for you! Eve was very obviously a gem of a person and whoever eventually won her heart was going to win the Earthen lottery, but as grateful as he was to her for all her kindness and understanding, Mon-El was absolutely certain that he wasn’t going to be that person.

Just like he was also certain he probably shouldn’t risk another date anytime soon. Like Eve had said several times during lunch, he simply wasn’t ready for it. Not when whatever it was he felt for Kara refused to go away, and besides—given the disastrous nature of his first (and probably last) Earth lunch date, he could only assume that this was maybe some sort of sign that he needed to just take a step back and concentrate on all the other stuff he didn’t have a handle on yet. Like…superheroring. He could focus on that, right? That would be something nice and helpful, and it would probably be a good way to get him used to squashing down all those feelings he had around Kara.

Except, when he turned up at the DEO for the standing training appointment he was looking forward to and dreading in almost equal amounts, he found out from Winn that Kara had called and left a message saying she was going to have to cancel.

Again.

“Do you uh, happen to know why?” he ventured cautiously, nervous that the answer might be in the neighborhood of You, dude.

“Oh, something about an article on construction,” Winn explained, his tone nonchalant as he
fiddled with the apparently jammed trigger of his dart gun. “She did give details, but, ah, they were sort of rambling and boring, so I only got like half of them—Snapper, deadline, somebody who writes something out sick, she’s just helping out...I don’t know. But she did say she might be out of commission for a few days, so hey! You get to sleep in.”

“True.” That had probably been what she’d needed to call him about and couldn’t say in front of Eve. “I’m going to be pretty busy at the bar anyway, since M’gann left. It’s probably a good thing.”

“Yeah. Ooh, by the way! Speaking of good things…” Winn shot a dart into Mon-El’s arm, ducking when it ricocheted back toward his face. “How’d the lunch date go?”

“What lunch date? And whose?”

The hair on the back of Mon-El’s neck stood up as Alex appeared from seemingly nowhere, head cocked to the side. How that woman managed to move so stealthily was both beyond him and extremely creepy.

Before Mon-El could respond, Winn used the gun as a pointer. “Mon-El’s. Sadly. My lunch date was with the vending machine. And that really scary lady from Accounting who looks like she could kill me with a Tootsie Roll Pop.”

“She probably could,” Alex agreed, crossing her arms. “Mon-El?”

“Yeah, I…went on a date,” he said, wondering if J’onn would support making all the agents keep bells in their pockets or something. Just so they couldn’t sneak up on anyone. “Over lunch. Like people do.”

“Yeah, so I gathered.” Giving Winn a warning look as he accidentally twirled the foam dart gun in her direction, she leaned against the desk. “I guess what I meant to say is really?”

“Yes.” He wished he could sound more enthusiastic, but recounting the details of his fail-date felt like more of an ordeal than anything else. Especially since his mind was still pretty stuck on how uncomfortable Kara had looked at Catco. Why couldn’t he have thought quick enough to pretend he didn’t see her and keep walking? Then maybe he wouldn’t have made such a mess of things. “Really.”

“He finally mastered the art of dating apps,” Winn announced, then wrinkled his nose. “Okay, not finally. It took him like ten minutes to get four matches which I am not at all jealous of, no sir, but anyways.”

“Oh. You used a dating app?”

Mon-El nodded, not quite sure how to interpret the tone of the question. “I heard Winn mention it a few times, and the regulars at the bar are always talking about them, so I figured hey, why not give it a try?”

“I see.” Alex nodded back, her expression neutral. “And?” she inquired after a moment or two.

“And what?” he asked, even more confused.

“The date, Mon-El.” Brows arched, she eyed him with one of those looks that made him feel like he was in one of the interrogation rooms. “How was it?”

A laugh escaped as he recalled the extensive sort of awkwardness. “Uh, it was…surprising, actually.”
“Surprising.” The woman bobbed her head again, lips pursed. “Okay. Surprising in a good way, or surprising in a bad way?”

“Good.” Technically speaking, that was the truth. He’d expected the date to be much less pleasant than it had been, and he considered it a very good thing indeed that it hadn’t been torture. “It turned out to be fun. And the food was really delicious.”

“Always a plus,” Alex commented.

“Yeah.”

“Hold on, you didn’t like, eat a suspicious amount or anything though, did you?” Winn interjected uneasily.

“No.” He’d been very careful about that, as a matter of fact. “I did have to stop off for pizza on the way back to work, though. And I kinda ate the whole thing.”

Alex snorted. “Hey, speaking of inordinate amounts of food—Mon-El, you haven’t talked to Kara today by any chance, have you?”

The image of Kara staring at him like she was trying to figure out what in Rao’s name he was doing back at the place he’d been fired from not too long ago resurfaced in his mind, and Mon-El gulped.

“Uh, about the training cancellation, or just in general?” he asked, praying he didn’t sound shaky or anything.

“Wait.” Alex held up a hand, her eyebrows going even higher. “Kara cancelled training?”

“Yep, she did,” Winn broke in, pointing like one of those very spirited gameshow TV hosts. “Called me, asked me to pass along the message and everything. Cited journalistic probs as the reason, but if you ask me, I think she’s trying to avoid this place. You guys didn’t have like, a sibling fight during Mars Madness the other night, did ya?”

“No, not a fight,” Alex answered, her frown thoughtful. “Not per se. There was just a little miscommunication. And we made it up a few hours later, anyway, so that shouldn’t be it. There must be some other reason…”

“You know, she might just be kind of tired,” Mon-El suggested, hoping desperately that that was the case. Because if Winn thought Kara was avoiding the DEO, then she probably was. And if that were the case, he was pretty sure that whatever annoyance Kara was trying to avoid wasn’t her older sister. “I ran into her at Catco earlier, and—”

“Catco?” Alex repeated. “What were you doing there?”

“I was…” For some reason, he hesitated. “Meeting my date,” he finished lamely. “For lunch.”

“Ah.” Nodding again, she straightened up and gave Mon-El’s shoulder a light pat. “Got it. Listen, I’ll catch you guys later, all right? I need to go talk to J’onn. See if I can knock off work early.”

“Early?” Mouth gaping, Winn poked Mon-El in the arm. “Wait, I’m sorry. I think my ears are beginning to deceive me. Did Alex Danvers just say something about leaving work early? Alex Danvers? Quick; somebody make sure we don’t have another White Martian in our midst!”
Alex rolled her eyes. “I know where your work toys sleep, Schott. And by that, I mean I know the exact location of your foam armory. Unless you want to go on a dart-buying spree…”

“All right. All right. I get it.” Holding up his hands in fake surrender, Winn grinned cheesily. “Just…being a good employee and making note of the drastic change in behavioral patterns. Kinda in the job description.”

“Uh-huh.” Alex looked unimpressed.

“So, Alex. Do you have a date?” Mon-El inquired, unable to resist the interrogatory favor.

Alex paused mid-step, a funny smile crossing her face. “Of a sort,” she replied, and Mon-El got the distinct impression that she wanted very much to say something she also thought she shouldn’t. “It’s more along the lines of I have a counseling session which I’m already late for, so…I will see you both tomorrow.”

“Right.” Mon-El lifted a hand in a half-hearted wave. “Good luck.”

“Yes.” Winn winced as his salute smacked the plastic handle of his gun against his forehead. “Ouch. See ya, Agent Danvers.” The instant she disappeared down the hall, he spun around in his chair to stare up at Mon-El. “Okay, what? Was that for real, or is she trying to throw us off the scent?”

Mon-El raised a shoulder, his unruly thoughts drifting right straight back to the tight look on Kara’s face. How Eve had come to the conclusion that the two of them were exes, he wasn’t sure. In his opinion, Kara had seemed borderline unhappy to run into him, which meant he was going to have to make it really clear very soon that he was not still hung up on her.

Even if he was.

“Dude, a shrug is so not helpful,” Winn commented, discharging a dart into Mon-El’s ankle. “I’m trying to play Sherlock here. Come on; what do you think she means by counseling session? Are we talking full-on Dr. Phil, or is it sarcasm-speak for she’s going out for coffee?”

Chuckling at the guy’s enthusiasm, Mon-El shook his head. “Your guess is as good as mine. Maybe she’s got a TV show she’s dying to watch.”

Chapter End Notes

*Title taken from the song “Can’t We Be Friends?” by Ella Fitzgerald & Louis Armstrong (AKA, the BEST version <3) because that song is very K&M.

*I always say this, but…sorry it was so long between updates!!! I promise, I have not forgotten this fic, I am still working on it, and I WILL FINISH IT. No matter how long it takes. I’ve got the rough drafts of the next three chapters finished, so now it’s just editing, and then…the good stuff. The next chapter will definitely move into 2x12, so, although I don’t think the confession scene Mxy interrupts will make it into the next chapter, it’ll be coming within the next two chaps. The “I was mad because I thought you were dating Eve” scene will for sure be in the next chapter though, so hopefully that’s something :D*
*It feels like forever since I first saw the K/M/E scene, but I still love it. At the time, I was POSITIVE we were going to go down the usual CW love triangle road, and I was equally sure Kara was going to be petty with Eve... but then none of that happened, and now it's one of my favorite scenes. It's one of the worst “NOW KISS” moments ever, because WE know Kara likes Mon, WE know Mon likes Kara, but neither of them knows that, and it's so. Darn. FRUSTRATING. (Kind of like that decision the SG writers made at the end of S3. Like, I know I've had months to get over this, but really? REALLY? If they wanted to write out Mon and Winn for S4, there were SO many other (better!) ways to do it. Why did they choose that one? Why? *falls dramatically to knees and shouts existentially at sky* WHYYY??? Seriously, it mystifies me, and doesn't inspire much confidence for S4.)*

*Random note: I have no idea how Tinder or any other dating app works because I fall in the class of people who firmly believe online dating anything = ending up as one of those “Murdered In Broad Daylight” news headlines that eventually gets turned into a Lifetime movie. I know there’s swiping involved, but that’s about it. I’ve always just been convinced that Mon-El decided to go out with Eve because she was listed as a single in his area and he already knew her, so that’s kind of how I structured everything. If that’s wrong, let’s just pretend that’s how dating apps work on Earth 38, okay? ;D

***I haven’t had a chance to look at comments for either of my KM fics, but I’ll be answering them later tonight/early this morning since I don’t have to work tomorrow. Hope you guys are all doing okay, especially anyone who lives/knows anyone who lives near the southeast coast of the US (seriously, get gone, Florence). Also, thanks for reading/commenting, and bearing with my glacially-paced updates! You guys are awesome, and I know we've all technically never seen each other, but “I've missed seeing y'all!” seems like the appropriate thing to say, so I'm just gonna say it...I've missed y'all! <3 <3 <3
A Simple Complication, Miscommunications

Chapter Summary

Kara and Mon-El both attempt to prove they’re fine! And friendly! (When neither of them is or wants to be.)
Starts post-2x11 and covers through part of 2x12.

[Also: apologies if anything is spaced weird or I ramble in the notes. This is my third attempt to upload; my wifi quit halfway through the first upload and my computer turned off to run an update when I was almost done with the second, so at the moment, I am a (not) happy camper who just wants to post an overdue new chapter in peace :P]

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

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Raindrops on roses and whiskers on kittens

Bright copper kettles and warm woolen mittens

Brown paper packages tied up with strings

These are a few of my favorite things

Humming along with the TV, Kara stared moodily into the splattered interior of a now-empty carton before shoving the last overstocked spoonful into her mouth. Crap. There went the last of the full-strength, heavy-duty chocolate flavors, and now she was going to have to start working on all the chocolate-accessorized ones like Moose Tracks and Cookies N’ Cream. Because really, at this point, vanilla was just out of the question. Totally.

“Dun, dun, DUN,” she mumbled in a halfhearted sort of way, scowling as Rocky Road went to join Triple Fudge, Brownie Sundae, and Classic Chocolate in an untidy heap on the coffee table. “Another pint bites the dust.”

And another one down, and another one down.

Feeling a little too much like a robot, all motion and no emotion, she leaned forward and grabbed Cookie Dough Surprise off the top of the tower of remaining cartons. Her apartment wasn’t exactly burning up in the temperature department, but the ice cream had been out so long now that all the flavors were starting to look a little melty, so just to be on the safe side, she blew a quick blast of freeze-breath at them to keep them cold until they were called into duty. Just as she resettled back into the couch cushions and her spoon dug into the smooth surface of goodness though, a brisk rap from the door interrupted her. A quick x-ray revealed that her sister stood waiting on the other side, and she groaned to herself as she looked around the room with new eyes.
She’d kind of just let the mess go since Alex was definitely supposed to be at work for another couple hours at least, and it was pretty obvious that there was no positive spin to be put on the current state of her apartment.

“Hold on just a second,” she called. “I’m—putting on pants!”

Devoutly wishing she’d thought to take her junk-food binge elsewhere, she stuffed the gob of ice cream into her mouth and zipped hastily around the room, shoving full cartons back in the freezer and empty cartons in the trash until all damning traces of her high calorie pity party were erased from plain view. Then, taking a half-second to tighten her ponytail and compose herself, she stuck on a big smile and threw open the door.

“Hey, what’s up?” she asked, leaning casually against the doorframe as she moved to let in her visitor. “And, not that I’m not happy to see you, but why aren’t you at the DEO?”

“Well…” Smile bright, Alex held out a bottle of some sort of wine. “I thought you could use this. I got it from J’onn. He keeps a special stash for emergencies. According to him, even you might actually be able to get a buzz from it. A small one, but a buzz nonetheless.”

“Oh.” Kara blinked, stepping back so the other woman could enter. “Great! Thank you. But, um…what’s with the sudden concern?”

“Yes.” Alex threw a sympathetic glance her way as she headed into the kitchen. “So, I may have heard through the grapevine today that you had a little encounter at Catco. With a certain Daxamite?”

“Oh,” Kara said again, blood rushing to her face. “That.”

“Yes. That. And in light of our last conversation regarding this same Daxamite…” Setting the bottle on the counter, Alex dug through a drawer for a bit before holding up the corkscrew. “I figured you could maybe use a little liquid therapy?”

“What? No. No!”

In the rush to sound bright and cheerful, Kara’s voice tumbled out with a quality that bordered a little too closely on Minnie Mouse for comfort, but there was no time to worry about that. As well-meant as the concern was, and as much as she knew Alex would be more than happy to provide a sympathetic shoulder to bawl on, something within her cringed away from the idea of anyone knowing exactly how silly and pathetic she felt for actually letting herself think that she could give dating a shot and maybe have it work out.

“I mean,” she corrected herself in calmer tones, “I appreciate it and all, but it’s not a big deal. I’m not upset or anything. I’m…fine.”

“Kara.” Her sister gazed steadily at her for three full seconds before heaving a sigh. “I love you, but beyond the fact that you will never be a good liar, I can see your trashcan from here. And I’m guessing you don’t know this, but you have chocolate smears all over your shirt that I’m fairly confident didn’t get there all by themselves, so…”

Double crap.

Frowning down at the indicated area, Kara noticed for the first time the unsightly little swoops of melted deliciousness ground into the cloth of her t-shirt.

“Oh,” she muttered. “Well, that still doesn’t mean anything. It’s circumstantial evidence, which
you cannot convict someone on, and you should really know that seeing as how you’re both dating a cop and have played an FBI agent yourself so many times.”

Alex snorted. “True, but cop girlfriends and FBI impersonations aside, I do know my sister and her stress-eating habits.”

“This isn’t stress-eating.”

“Maybe not,” Alex agreed, motioning for Kara to get the glasses. “But it does bear an awfully strong resemblance to it, so if it’s not stress-eating, then it’s probably sad eating. If you want to talk about it…”

Surrendering to the inevitable, Kara set the glasses down and draped herself over the counter in an awkward face-plant before twisting her head to gloomily watch the pouring. “What’s there to talk about? Mon-El is dating Eve. As in Eve, my coworker. Woo-hoo. Good for them. End of story.”

“Uh-huh.” Lips pursed, Alex slid a glass sloshing with burgundy liquid toward her. “So…you’re okay with them dating.”

“Yes.”

“Really?”

Kara grimaced under her sister’s skeptical stare. “Okay, no. Not really. Not at all. But I want to be Alex, I do! I mean, I work with her. She’s nice, and fun, and it’s not like I have a choice anyway—I have to be okay with it. I missed my chance, and that’s that. Besides, as sucky as it feels…maybe this is for the best. I am pretty busy, after all; that was one of my biggest concerns from the start. And who knows, maybe Mon-El and I would’ve been a disaster anyway. This could’ve saved me from making a huge mistake.” Taking a long sip, she stifled a sigh when the other woman merely raised her brows. “You disagree?”

“Not necessarily.” Swirling her glass around, Alex bumped her lightly in the hip. “I just think you maybe shouldn’t be so quick to write off everything that doesn’t turn out exactly how you envisioned it. Life throws a pretty mean curveball, and it usually pops up right when you least expect it. This might be one of those times when it’s best to just wait and see.”

Kara’s nose wrinkled. “What do you mean?”

“I mean you’ve just barely convinced yourself to open the door, Kara,” her sister answered, smiling warmly as she reached over to give her hand a quick squeeze. “There’s no need to slam it shut and lock it just yet. Maybe things will work out between Mon-El and Eve, and maybe they won’t. Why don’t you just ask him how it went next time you see him?”

Dear Rao. Now there was a scary thought.

“I don’t think I want to see him,” Kara mumbled, shuddering inwardly at the thought of asking—actually asking!—for date specifics. “Let alone find out how it went.”

Alex’s brow furrowed. “Why the hell not?”

“You weren’t there.” The mental image of Mon-El and Eve standing together, smiling like one of those fake happy couples in photography ads or something crept into her head, and she groaned. “They were so cute together Alex, and it was horrible. I don’t think I could stomach hearing him talk about how perfect everything probably went.” Gulping down the rest of her drink, she propped
her chin in her hand. “Is there any way you could like…make sure I get sent on a lot of emergency missions for the next week or so? So I at least have an excuse for not making it to training?”

“Whoa, no,” Alex shot back, pointing sternly at her. “I am not inventing crises just so Supergirl can avoid Kara’s problems.”

“I didn’t mean you have to make anything up!” Kara objected, rolling her eyes. “Just…can’t you send every report my way for a little while? Please? Even if it’s only like, lost dog and graffiti-on-public-buildings stuff?”

“No.” Behaving as though she hadn’t heard Kara’s whine, Alex shook her head decisively. “You are not in ninth grade, and I’m not going to assist in the adult equivalent of forging a doctor’s note. Especially when it could land me in the adult equivalent of detention.”

“Oh…” Making a face at her sister, Kara groaned again. “Fine. Then can you at least promise me you will never, ever breathe a word of this? Not to Eliza, not to J’onn, not to anyone. And I don’t mean just this conversation, but all of it—as far as anyone outside of you or I is concerned, me maybe having feelings for Mon-El never happened, okay?”

Alex eyed her thoughtfully, chewing on a lip. “If you say so. But, no offense, Kara—do you think you can pretend it never happened?”

“Yeah.” She said it stubbornly, chin jutting out, but slid her glass over for a refill anyway. “Of course.”

“You’re sure?”

“Yes,” Kara repeated. If it killed her, she was going to make it to a point where the thought of Mon-El and Eve didn’t make her feel kind of hollowed-out and sick. And also like throwing a car half a mile. “I—may need a week or so, though. Just to cool off a little.”

“Cool off?” Alex frowned quizzically at her.

Huffing out a disgusted sigh, Kara waved a hand. “It’s nothing, it’s just…”

“I mean, he said he liked me.” She tried to keep the doleful note out of her tone, but it snuck in anyway, tempering her frustration and embarrassing her so much she took a loud, fast sip of wine. “If that’s true, why’s he already out there dating someone else?”

“Well,” Alex said slowly, inclining her head as she took a sip, “I can’t answer that, but you know, if you really want to find out, you could always just ask him yourself.”

“What, like—out loud? To his face?” At her sister’s nod, Kara shook her head adamantly. “No. No way. I can’t walk up to him and point-blank ask him why he moved on so fast when I basically told him he needed to! That would only make everything super weird and awkward. I just…need to forget it and toughen up or something.”

“Okay, well, on a related note then…” Alex darted a glance at her. “Any chance you’ll have cooled off and become tough enough to visit his place of work sometime oh, I don’t know…around the end of next week?”

“Maybe,” Kara answered, eyes narrowing suspiciously as she sensed something below the question. “Why?”
Pink edged the corners of Alex’s face. “I’ve been thinking, and—I want to introduce Maggie to everyone. Officially. And I figured the bar was a good place to do it, since we all hang out there anyway. But I was kind of hoping you’d be there when I made the introductions, so…”

“Oh my gosh!” Mood lifting as suddenly as the sun emerging from a cloudbank, Kara threw her arms around her sister and laughed at all the good-natured grumbling that followed when she squeezed a little too tight. “Of course I’ll be there! I’m so excited for you guys, and this is huge.”

“I know.” Leaning her head against Kara’s, Alex laughed, then grunted. “Okay. Seriously, you’ve got to let go before you crack my ribcage.”

“Right, right.” Kara terminated the hug, arms held up innocently. “I definitely don’t want to be the reason you introduce Maggie while wearing a body cast.”

“Thanks. I do appreciate it.” Rubbing her stomach ruefully, Alex laughed again, then sent another of those searching looks Kara’s way. “And you’re absolutely sure you’re okay with this?” she asked. “Because if you’re not, I can always—”

“Alex, no,” Kara interrupted, sternly ignoring the twinge of fear that snaked through her at the idea of facing him and seeming cheerful. “You’re not canceling or postponing for my sake. This is about you and Maggie, not me. Besides, there’s plenty of time for me to get okay with it! I’m feeling a little weird now, sure, but I’ll be back to normal in a few days.”

And if she wasn’t, she thought, smiling as her sister immediately began talking about letting everyone know before she changed her mind or they made other plans…well, it’s not like she intended to ever admit that to anyone.

~*~

For what had to be like the quintillionth time since he woke up and found himself on a strange planet, Mon-El wondered if there was some sort of handy-dandy guide to Earthling behavior available for purchase. Preferably one with lots of How-To pictures and charts and things that explained the difference between people being busy and people who were avoiding you because you had made them uncomfortable by telling them you liked them.

Because…that would be helpful. Really, really helpful.

Perhaps even priceless.

From the occasional hurried texts Kara sent these days, he gathered that she was extremely busy with stuff at Catco, and he understood if that was why she kept having to cancel training. But in his heart of hearts, he couldn’t help wondering if there truly were that many Catco deadlines that had to be completed at such strange hours, especially when he began to notice that even James turned up at the bar and the DEO more frequently than she did. It was, he guessed, completely possible that she just had way more on her plate than James, what with being Supergirl and a new journalist, but still…it worried him hugely that she might have picked up on how strange he was acting around her when they crossed paths at Catco. What if she was deliberately avoiding all her usual hangouts because he’d accidentally made her think that he hadn’t accepted her answer and was still holding out hope that she’d change her mind? Good Rao, she might never show up to anything fun
ever again because of him; how could he convince her he wasn’t sitting around being sad and bitter because she found the thought of liking him back very gross?

He thought of texting her and explaining, but it was hard to figure out the right words—*Hey, just so you know, I wasn’t acting strange because I still like you?* No. Even he could tell that was the wrong way to go. *Not sure if this has anything to do with why you keep canceling training, but did you know I really did believe you when you said you didn’t like me?* Ugh. No and no. Maybe a planet existed somewhere in the galaxy where that kind of confession was cool and trendy and effective, but he was pretty sure that neither Earth nor Krypton was that planet (and he definitely knew Daxam wasn’t). So he just sent her a picture of the short-bearded guard guy from that ring movie Winn liked instead, because the guard guy had his fingers in what looked like the OK symbol he also had on his phone, and he wanted to let her know that he was okay with her canceling again.

He was pleasantly surprised when she responded—true, it was only a bunch of question marks followed by the very confusing phrase *One does not simply what?* that led to his finding out he’d incorrectly used what was apparently yet another of those Earthling meme-things, but at least it seemed to break some of the ice and made him feel a little more like he could maybe handle seeing her without it being too uncomfortable.

The trouble was, he got tested a little sooner than he thought he would.

Alex, in a very long message full of stern faces and little death symbols, asked that they all be sure to show up to the bar after work on Friday because she wanted them to meet someone. Mon-El responded promptly that he’d be there—working, of course, but he’d be there—along with everyone else, but even though Kara replied in the affirmative as well, he didn’t really think through the likelihood of her being there, too. In fact, right up until she walked through the doors, he more than half-expected an excuse along the lines of *Sorry! Got held up chasing bad guys & probably won’t be able to make it after all* to pop up in the group text.

And…he didn’t feel as cool and collected when he saw her as he’d thought he’d be. If anything, he felt like one of those really excited small dogs, yapping and bouncing from side to side when someone brought out their favorite snack. Because…well, it had been a good bit since he’d talked to her. Or, it felt like it had, anyway. And Kara wasn’t exactly the kind of person it was easy to go five minutes without talking to; she was fun and happy and cheerful, and the more he thought about it, the surer he became that all this was kind of like a drug thing and he was getting close to some sort of Kara withdrawal.

Exhaling slowly, Mon-El watched as she wove her way through the crowd of regulars in the rough direction of the DEO crowd who were all gathered at a table. If only, he couldn’t help thinking, smiling to himself as she apologized frantically for bumping shoulders with a burly giant and nearly knocking him down, if only he wasn’t so stupid. If only he’d just stuck to his story about not remembering that ki—that thing in the sick bay that he wasn’t going to think about anymore, especially not while working because he didn’t need any more wrong-drink-pouring incidents, then maybe things wouldn’t have to be so awkward and strained all the time. *Maybe,* he thought, gnawing at his lip as he tossed ice into a glass, if he made it really clear how okay he felt about everything, how he wasn’t mad at her for not liking him too, the two of them could go back to how they were before the big mess happened. *Maybe* they could be friends again…or something like friends, anyway.

He didn’t have long to go back and forth with himself on the smartness of that kind of big, bold move, though. Right as he was trying to come up with a smoothish way to announce his all-good state of mind, she stopped in front of one of the TVs, and his feet decided for him. He headed
toward her, determined to act like everything was normal, and immediately started talking without a solid plan in mind. Which meant that even though the story she was following was that of Lillian Luthor and he wasn’t exactly wild about looking at or discussing the extremely scary and evil head of Cadmus, he brought it up anyway.

Just like he somehow managed to bring up popular punishment methods from his old planet, though nope, he didn’t know how or why he did that. It just sort of popped out and earned him one of those *Am I seriously hearing you say these words?* looks from Kara. Which should have embarrassed him but instead made him want to smile, because he’d really missed being on the receiving end of those looks.

Even if they weren’t actually very complimentary and kind of made him want to shrivel into an invisible puddle of nothingness.

“Hey,” he said suddenly, figuring that since he’d already gone this far, he might as well just dive into one of the things he *did* want to mention. “I haven’t uh, haven’t seen you in a while.”

That was an okay thing to say, wasn’t it? Winn said it to people all the time. So did Alex. So did Dana. So did grumpy Agent Shum, though he usually said it in a way that made it sound like Mon-El or Winn had ruined a spotless record. It wasn’t necessarily a weird thing to tell someone you were trying to say *Hey, I’m cool with you not liking me* to, was it? He hoped so. But it was difficult to say for certain based on how stiff and not-normal Kara suddenly seemed.

“I’ve—I’ve…been busy,” she volunteered, smiling at him in a way that instantly made him think she wasn’t telling the complete and total truth.

“Yeah?” he said, trying not to grin and doing it anyway, because—well, the awkwarder (more awkward?) she got, the cuter she kind of became.

“Just…” Her smile widened, but so did the strain around the edges of it. “Chasing bad guys.” The laugh that followed that familiar excuse sounded kind of funny too, and not in a ha-ha-ha way. “Uh, how are you? How’s Eve?”

*Grif*. He’d almost forgotten she ran into him when he was on that date. *Think fast, Mon-El, think fast…*

“Oh, great,” he responded almost instantly, hoping his fake enthusiasm was at least kind of believable. “Great. We are…we’re great, Eve is great. Things are great.”

Her smile seemed to glitch again, right before his eyes, and he silently pleaded with her to understand that he really was doing his best to move past that stubborn little pull he felt toward her. There was no need to avoid him—he was doing good! He was fine with just being friends! He was…getting caught up in her smile again, damn it. Okay, nope, never mind, this wasn’t working.

“I’m so happy for you,” she said in a careful sort of voice, and he wished he dared tell her she didn’t have to do that.

“More drinks for you guys?” he said instead, gesturing vaguely.

She looked relieved. “Yeah, please! I would—I would love that.”

“Yep, um…yep,” he mumbled inanely, moving hastily back toward the glasses while she turned and headed back to the table.

Why this kept happening, he didn’t understand. No matter what he did (or so it seemed,
him look like she wanted to run away and hide. Even when he brought over the drinks and Alex introduced him to her girlfriend Maggie—an occasional stop-in customer he’d talked to only a few times before but definitely liked because she was one of those humans who automatically kept an eye on the drunker patrons and made sure they and everyone else stayed safe (plus she played a mean game of pool)—he could feel Kara’s eyes on him in a way that made him suspect she was trying to gauge whether or not he was as cheerful as he was acting. And though he tried to pretend it didn’t matter, he couldn’t. Not quite.

“Dude, you okay?” Winn finally asked, sitting and squinting at him from his barstool like a sad pirate thanks to the ice pack Alex had insisted the tech wizard wear for a while to combat the swelling eye that had somehow been hit with the nine-ball. “You’re being like—eerily quiet here. I’ve made at least five pop culture references to things I just remembered you can’t possibly know about, and you haven’t asked me even one question about them! What gives?”

“Oh, you know. Just…” He grinned, sliding another beer across the counter. “Getting lost in my thoughts.”

Winn snorted. “Okay, cool. You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to.”

“What?” Mon-El joked, his gaze wandering back toward the pool table in spite of himself when Kara’s loud laugh rang out above the usual hubbub. “You think I couldn’t get lost in thought if I wanted to?”

“Well hey, I guess anything is possible,” Winn returned, chuckling as he tipped back the bottle.

“Is it, though?” He didn’t really mean to say it; the words just slipped out and he only realized it when Winn gave him an odd look. “I mean, you did say ‘when pigs fly’ is just an Earthling expression because it’s impossible for pigs to actually take to the skies,” he added, laughing like he’d been setting up a poor joke all along. “So…”

“Okay, fine. I’ll allow that, but for your information Mr. Life-of-the-Party, I’m not buying it.” Holding the bottle aloft, the smaller man gave him an even squintier stare. “Methinks there’s more to this than meets the eye. The eye singular, sadly; damn pool sticks! I can’t believe physics and geometry actually failed me like that. I mean, the treachery.”

“More ice?” Mon-El put in, sympathetic to the pain but shamelessly glad of its presence since it formed a very nice distraction.

“Yes. Please. Buckets, if that’s allowed,” Winn muttered. “Igloos, even. Oh, shoot. Listen, I told Kara when I left the table area I’d bring her back a refill. You don’t by any chance happen to remember what she was drinking, do you?”

“Yep.” As if he could forget, he thought, half-unwillingly flashing back to that night on her couch. “Club soda, on the rocks.”

“Ugh.” Winn screwed his face up, making a gagging noise. “Yeah. Gross. I forgot she likes that stuff. Bo-ring, right? It’s like…drinking water that’s trying to be cool, no pun intended since we’re also talking rocks.”

“I don’t know,” Mon-El smiled again, unable to help it when another loud cackle from Kara rose up behind them. “It’s not so bad. I guess maybe it just takes some getting used to before you can fully appreciate it.”

“True, but—hold on a sec.” Frowning, Winn pointed to the glass Mon-El kept on the back
counter, out of the way. “You’re drinking club soda now, too?”

“Oh. Yeah.” Quickly, he finished filling the second glass and slid it over, shrugging off the curious look now being aimed his way. “Like I said, it’s not bad. And hey, it is a better drink for while I’m on the job than most of the others that are available, right?”

“Right.” Winn said slowly. “Huh. Hey, so, you wouldn’t mind carrying that back for me, would ya? I kinda have my hands full with beer and ice packs.”

“Uh, yeah. Sure.” Apprehension rippled through him when he glanced across the room and caught sight of a certain shiny blonde head bobbing around in time to whatever song was playing, but he sternly squashed it down. “Lead the way, One-Eyed Winnie.”

“I will, thank you. Let the record show, however, that I’m pretty sure it was a mistake to foster a love for *The Goonies* in you,” Winn commented as he hopped off the barstool and began weaving through the tables.

“Probably,” Mon-El agreed, laughing what felt like a very nervous laugh as the crowd parted just in time for his gaze to cross paths with Kara’s. Awesome, and now it looked like he was staring creepily at her, didn’t it. Summoning his best fake smile, he held all the pieces of his nerves in check as he approached her and extended the glass. “Winn had his hands full.”

“Oh, uh...” She smiled brilliantly back at him, but he noted with more than a little gloom that it still seemed strained. “Thanks.”

“Yeah, no problem.”

He did his best to scrunch his fingers down toward the bottom of the glass so they were well out of the way, but there just wasn’t enough room to do it and not completely lose his grip on the thing. When Kara reached out to claim her refill, the last two fingers on her hand skimmed over his thumb, and it occurred to him that his skin might burn less if she shot him with heat vision.

Taking a quick breath, he glanced up to see her looking more rigid than ever.

“Sorry,” she said before he could make a joke. “I didn’t…this glass is *really* small.”

“No, no. It’s fine.” Digging his hands into his pockets—or kind of; *Rao*, where were the pockets on these pants anyway?—he grinned. “Next time I’ll just…play it safe and bring you a pitcher or something.”

“Yeah.”

Her lips twitched into something somewhat resembling a smile, but the usual enthusiasm was lacking, and he sighed inwardly as he realized that yep, in five seconds, he’d just gone and done it all over again. So, as fast as he could, he invented a couple of bottles that needed to be restocked immediately, ignored Winn’s confused stare, and scurried right straight back to the bar—where it wasn’t very fun, but where he at least wasn’t making people uncomfortable.

Yeah, he was never going to convince her he was fine, over her, and ready to be friends, was he?

~*~
A day. That was what it had been—Kara and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day.

Or week, really. Kara and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Week.

In truth, that was what it had been from start to finish: a week of awfulness, and technically, though it was already one of the most maddening weeks she’d ever had the misfortune to live through, the week of awfulness wasn’t even over yet. First, there had been the stupid Guardian cloud hanging over everything—she and Winn and James were all back on speaking terms, but only she and Winn were really back on fun terms. James was still miffed at her and she was still mad at him, and then there was that whole thing with Lena getting arrested and basically everyone that Kara knew in law enforcement thinking she was crazy for believing her friend was innocent. And then she had to go and run into Eve, actually get up the guts to wish Mon-El and Eve happiness, and find out that Mon-El had been lying to her about dating her coworker the whole time.

It was, in a word, exasperating. And yeah, she was at most two seconds away from losing it, so it was definitely time to do something.

“J’onn?”

Kara thought she had at least her voice and maybe her face under control as she burst into the records room, but the second the director of the DEO looked up from the document he was inspecting, he sighed as deeply as though he’d actually read her mind and shook his head.

“Downstairs,” he said, turning back to the stack of papers. “Training room. You can break up to five blocks, but no wall damage, please. Maintenance doesn’t appreciate having to coordinate patchwork jobs in the cement, and frankly, I don’t appreciate having to constantly run background checks on new maintenance hires.”

“Right. Thanks.”

Striding off down the corridor, James’ accusations ringing in her head until they mixed with all the other concerns rolling around in there and created a nice big boulder of frustration, Kara drew a long, unsteady breath. If one more person—just one—came at her with a new issue today, she might have to fly off on some kind of extended, angry vacation. She wasn’t mistaken in Lena; she was sure of it. She wasn’t picking on James; she was sure of that too. And she definitely wasn’t putting her faith in one friend over the other. They were completely different scenarios, like, how could James not see that? She was convinced Lena was innocent, and she was worried about James’ safety. As in his actual health and wellbeing. This had nothing, nothing whatsoever to do with trust!

Growling under her breath, she managed to dial back some of the strength she really wanted to expend when she hit the door (the last time she’d entered a room in a blast of irritation, she’d bent a door, the whole thing had had to be replaced, and J’onn had made it very clear that he didn’t want another big repair job happening because she was out of sorts) but the heavy metal thing still slammed hard against the wall, and she had to take care not to stomp her way down every single step. The blocks, enormous concrete cubes stacked neatly against the wall, were easy enough to spot, and she immediately hauled one over to the middle of the room and gave it a good Karate Kid type chop.

Which felt good, but not quite good enough. The stone split far too easily under the force of the blow for her liking, so she dragged two more giant squares over, stacked them one on top of the other, and lit into them with every punch in her medium-sized repertoire.
Friendship, *hah*.

Gritting her teeth, she drove first one fist, than the other into her target. What a stupid, stupid idea. As *if* believing one friend wasn’t a complete and total criminal was anything like getting upset with another friend because you didn’t think they (as a *human*) could fight aliens and stay safe! As *if* she was an idiot for wanting to believe that a person she’d only ever seen try to clean up a bad family name and make a difference in the world was innocent! As *if* she cared that probably everyone she knew thought believing in other people was a waste of time and she was some kind of dummy for trying to do better about condemning someone based on hereditary! What, was she automatically bad because her mother had embraced questionable methods of punishment all in the name of justice and her father had developed a virus intended to wipe out every non-Kryptonian alien out there?

Outrage flaring up again, she let loose with another barrage of stone-chipping haymakers. Ugh, ugh, *UGH*. What she really needed, she thought resentfully, was a non-essential mountain or something—preferably one outside the city limits that she could demolish in times of uber-frustration without putting any innocent citizens in harm’s way. But, until that fabulous solution happened, she was stuck with *this*. The crappy cubes of concrete.

Leaning back, she drew her foot up and slammed a kick straight into the top block, only half-satisfied by the sharp crack of breaking cement and the big cloud of white dust it raised. Great. Awesome. One physical therapy tool down, two to—wait, was that…applause?

Startled, and breathing hard from all the angry breath-holding she’d been doing, she turned around to find one of the last beings in the entire universe she expected—or wanted—to see leaning against the stair railing, surveying all the destruction she’d wrought and looking more impressed than he probably should have.

“That was good,” Mon-El commented. Casually, like he’d just watched her make the high score in a game of pinball or something, and she couldn’t help wondering exactly how long he’d been standing there. “Is there uh, is there a technique to that?” he questioned when she didn’t respond, swinging himself up over the rail and landing lightly on the other side. “Or were you just…giving it a swift kick in the caboose?”

Yes.

No?

She didn’t know.

Hands fluttering to rest somewhere in the general vicinity of her hips, Kara desperately tried to regain some semblance of cool as he moved toward her. Or, if not actual *cool*, at least some appearance of *calm*. What was he even doing down here, anyway? He never came down here. Not at this time of day. This was like, his sleeping time if he’d had to work late, or, if he hadn’t worked late, his out and about town time. She knew, because she’d sneaked a peek at J’onn’s security logs when Alex wasn’t around to catch her and give her another lecture on facing her problems, and had figured out exactly which hours of the day Mon-El tended to check in and out. This, this time right now? It was wrong. He should have been elsewhere.

Only…he didn’t act like there was anything at all weird about this.

“Cause if there’s a technique,” he went on nonchalantly, “I wanna *know* it.” Apparently unfazed by her continuing silence, he feinted a textbook front kick, even remembering to keep his guard up just like she’d showed him in their first ever training session—the one he owed her after he made
her drink that stupid glass of Death Rum—and laughed. “I miss...I miss training with you,” he
remarked, his voice cheerful as he scuffed his way toward her with one of those easy grins she
sometimes wished he would quit grinning already.

“Yeah,” she tried, smiling back in spite of herself as she gestured vaguely at nothing. “I’ve just
been...”

“Busy,” he filled in straightaway, and she shut her mouth like a trap as she studied his face for
any signs of what he was aiming for with this whole conversation. “I get it. Chasing bad guys.”

She nodded, hating how tense her entire body suddenly felt when he propped his hands on his
hips almost as though he were imitating her and sent her another grin, this one with his head
cocked to the side. Rao, what was wrong with her? She was mad right now. Not nervous, or
whatever the hell that awkward feeling in the pit of her stomach was, just...mad. And justifiably
so.

Fortunately, though, his next words got her bad-mood priorities back on track with amazing
swiftness.

“And with what’s going on with Lena, I’m sure it’s...I’m sure it’s extra busy.”

He crossed his arms unconcernedly over his chest, like he was the first one to hint around at
how stupid she was being in regards to the Luthor trial, but of course, the joke was on him. He
wasn’t the first; just the latest in a pretty decent line, but still. Emitting a disgusted noise that
wound up sounding like some weird mixture of scoff and snort, Kara turned her back on him.

“Are you gonna tell me not to believe in her?” she bit out, wishing she could make people
understand the importance of believing in other people’s innocence until they were definitely,
beyond all shadow of a doubt, proven guilty. Shouldn’t he, of all people, get that after everything
that had gone down when they’d first met?

To her surprise (and mild offense) though, he just laughed. “You believe in a lot of people that
others don’t.”

“Oh.” She tried not to sound huffy, but it happened anyway as she put two and two together and
realized who he must’ve run into on his way down. “Did you talk to James?” she inquired,
swiveling back to face him.

Mon-El paused, his expression wrinkling a little. “No,” he said slowly, his sort-of smile
annoying her because it lent the distinct impression that he found her sour mood pretty funny.
(Which it was not.) “I’m actually...actually talking about myself.”

Oh. So he did get that part.

She hoped she didn’t look as completely embarrassed as she felt. Darn it all, why couldn’t she
just keep her mouth shut? Here he was trying to say something nice, and there she went, already
gearing up in defense.

“You know,” he went on like he hadn’t noticed her confusion, “you—you believing in me, it
meant a lot.”

It did? she almost asked, but bit her tongue just in the nick of time. Rao, this was bad. So bad.
He was serious. Actually serious, and totally sincere (at the same time!) but did that sincerity
count? Because she’d also just found out he was a liar; he’d let her think all this time that he was
dating Eve when he wasn’t, and that was just so...so not fair. Not that it meant anything since
she’d done a lot of rethinking on her earlier Maybe-I-Can-Date decision, but still. That kind of stunt was just wrong.

But, speaking of wrong…she wasn’t as blameless in all this as she really wanted to be.

“You’re right,” she announced abruptly, shifting so that they faced one another head on, even though her eyes couldn’t be induced to meet his for very long. “I have been cold. And distant.”

“Mhmm.”

She tamped down another rising stab of irritation at his prompt, matter-of-fact agreement—like, really, did he have to be that blunt about it?—and plowed on. “And I’d like to apologize for that.”

“Hey, I’m just glad to know that…it’s not me adjusting to Earth’s chilly climate,” he joked, the grin he gave her this time wide and goofy.

But for some reason, even that catchy grin couldn’t make her feel any better. If anything, it made her even more upset, this time in a vaguely unsettling kind of way. And before she knew it, the last couple weeks’ worth of simmering frustration boiled over in the form of the one confession she’d been trying to avoid mentioning to anyone, even herself:

“I was mad at you because I thought you were dating Eve,” she blurted out, the sentence landing like a brick between them.

“Ah.”

He stood quietly for a second or two, gaze falling to the floor while she struggled between feeling horrified at her own big mouth and feeling relieved now that the thing was finally out there in the open.

“Were,” he repeated after a bit, glancing up and scratching a fist over his mouth. “As in—as in…past tense, right? As in…she told you that the date didn’t…actually go well?”

“Yeah, she…mentioned it.”

*Mentioned it as in said you kept talking about me.*

And as much as it made her face heat to even think about it, Kara needed to understand the reasons behind news like that. Had he kept namedropping her because he was upset with her for saying all that stuff about how she couldn’t like him because of who he was and what he did, or was it—something else? Because if it was something else and he didn’t hate her for saying no, *why would he go out with Eve in the first place and then pretend he was still going out with her?* It just made no sense!

“Yeah. You know…” Mon-El said gradually, the confused little wrinkle deepening as he brushed at his ear with a fingertip. “I’m not super, you know—*hip* on earthly social cues, but…why would you be mad if…I was dating Eve?”

Mad? What, like he could make her mad just by dating someone else? How childish did he think she was?

“I’m not mad!” she snorted.

He didn’t even bat an eye. “You *literally* just said you were mad.”
Okay, yes. Technically, she had said that, hadn’t she? But she hadn’t meant it in *that* way—at least, she thought she hadn’t.

“No…” she offered, dismally aware that she wasn’t even convincing herself.

“Two seconds ago,” he reminded her with the kind of slow, calm, patient insistence that was just beyond infuriating, “you said, *I am mad about—*”

“Yeah, I’m—I’m *surprised!*” she exploded finally, exasperation getting the better of her. Why was this such a difficult concept for him to grasp? Did he not get how it felt to see someone who had said they liked you, who had *looked* at you like *that*, turn right around and start dating someone else? Or how it felt to find out that they were lying to you when they also said things were going well with that new relationship? Seriously, did he not get that?

“Oh, not mad,” he said in a voice that made it very clear he had no idea what that meant. “Surprised.”

“I’m surprised that…y-you’d just…” Her brain scrambled for words; she wasn’t sure what she was trying to say, but she was bound and determined to say it anyway. “Date someone else w-when you were serious about me, because I mean, if—how could you be serious if you did that?”

The look on Mon-El’s face now said he thought she just might be starting to lose her mind, and she wanted more than anything to sink through the floor or go invisible or something.

“You don’t *like* me,” he reminded her, a funny twist to his smile. “Why do you—why do you care?”

She didn’t care. Not really. Not about who he dated, it just seemed…wrong. So very wrong. Because if he was going to be with anyone, he should be with—someone who at least didn’t think he was an irresponsible former Catco intern named Mike.

“I-I’m gonna go check and see if they found Lena,” she announced awkwardly, clearing her throat. Then, before he had the chance to say anything else and maybe make the fuzzy little flutters in her stomach multiply, she hurried toward the stairs.

Or maybe *fled* was a better word. Because even though he didn’t follow, she didn’t slow down until she was a good five miles away from the DEO and a good five miles in the air.

*Why do you care?*

The question both haunted and mocked her, because yeah…she kind of wanted to know the same thing.
*It has, as usual, been forever since I updated (sorry!), but the good news is that the next chapter will cover one of my FAVORITE K&M scenes, and basically kick off the Golden Age of Karamel (FINALLY). Depending on how the editing goes, it may be another K&M split POV chapter, but the way it’s shaping up right now, I’m thinking it’s going to be too long to be anything except a Mon-only chapter. So beware; because I really, REALLY want to get both K&M’s perspectives on some of those scenes, the next couple updates may seem a bit repetitive and/or overlapping at the start. Also, I’m definitely wanting to get another update to this story out within the month of December (*laughs* *cries*), but I’m so close to finishing my other Karamel fic that my current goal is to wrap that one by/before Christmas, so the next chapter for this fic will most likely be published after I post the last chapter of that one.

*I have no idea how much time was supposed to pass between 2x11 and 2x12, but I have always labored under the impression that it was a few weeks at least, because Winn and Kara seemed to be fine again when the episode started up, and Kara and James weren’t as hostile as they were toward the end of 2x11, so that’s what I was working with here. (Note, because I spent a lot of time having Kara bash him in this chapter and want to be fair: I’m totally on James’ side re: the Guardian thing. You don’t have to LIKE your non-superpowered friends being determined to foolishly place their lives at risk, but you can’t get on them for doing exactly what you would be doing in their shoes. Especially when you also got on someone else *coughcoughSlaver’sMoonIBelieveYouKeepFightingSpeech* for NOT wanting to get involved WITHOUT having superpowers. Like...am I the only one who sees a mixed message here???)

*The training room scene. Ugh. I can’t even begin to describe how much I love it. The cute awkwardness is just too wonderful, and I love how you can SEE both K&M working to figure out what’s going on in the other’s head without actually saying “So do you like me, or…?” It’s another of those oh-look-we’re-in-middle-school-again things...he likes her, she likes him, but they each think the other doesn’t like them, so naturally neither one will admit it. Ugh. A wing(wo)man was so needed in this scene.

*My sister and I have been watching this season of SG together for moral support since we both love Karamel, Winn Schott, and Kara Danvers actually having to grow as a character, but sickness for me and finals for her made us fall behind, so tomorrow night we watch like four episodes to get caught up before Elseworlds. Wish me luck; I may not make it.

*Thanks, as always, for reading/commenting (and a special thank you to akane171 who advised breaking this chapter off at a less-evil point than the one I debated going with, you da best <3). Also, everyone who’s actually still reading this despite my ridiculously slow updates: you’re amazing, I love you, I’m sorry, and I promise we really are getting to the good parts :)

End Notes

**I’m beginning from the gap between 2x03 and 2x04, but I can almost guarantee that at some point I’ll end up going back and writing things from 2x01. I just didn't start there
because Mon-El's only activity was being Sleeping Beauty at that point** So, I'm trying to get better at writing more internalized scenes because I tend to lean on dialogue a lot and forget to advance my plot because I'm having SO MUCH FUN making characters talk to each other! I'm not a huge feelings person myself (which is why it's such a shock to me that I completely adore this couple!), so I sometimes don't spend as much time on that as I should. If you notice my robotic-ness creeping in and you feel like letting me know, please do!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!