and sugar, we're going down swinging
by cold_century (orphan_account)
Summary

“So we may not always be winners. But we're not lazy. We take chances. We go for broke. We swing for the fences. And sometimes, yeah, we strike out. But sometimes, you get a home run.”

or, a very slow-burn director sanvers college baseball au in which Lucy Lane is the biggest flirt in the universe, Maggie Sawyer is the jock that Alex Danvers loves to hate, and Alex learns that somewhere down the line, that when life throws her a curveball she just needs to step up to the plate. this story starts by exploring Alex’s growing feelings towards Maggie until ultimately, one revelation leads to Alex discovering something about herself which is far more than she bargained for…
whole new ball game

Chapter Notes

This is a result of a two hour long conversation with a good friend after realising the Red Sox have a player called Vasquez. I have no idea how American college baseball works but that's why it's called fiction, right? I just needed something happy in my life and I don't want to give too much away so... enjoy the adventure of the Superfriends as they balance relationships, the complications of their early 20s and, most importantly, baseball

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“Have you heard what J’onn did?”

“Of course, he told me in person two hours ago,” Alex says, not looking up from the textbook she’s been studying for the past hour, pen poised on her notepad.

“Well?”

Alex sighs, pushing her glasses back up her nose before putting the book down and looking up at where Lucy Lane is leaning over her desk, staring at her with intense green eyes that let Alex know she’s not getting away from this conversation.

“Well, what? There’s nothing we can do, Luce,” she says as her best friend slumps down into the chair opposite Alex, flicking the corner of Alex’s copious stack of notes.

“We’re a month away from the start of the season,” Lucy says, exasperated. “And now J’onn decides to kick Max Lord off the team? What the hell is he playing at?”

Alex stays silent for a moment, letting Lucy blow off some steam and cool down before even attempting to reconcile her friend.

“Honestly? I’m not sad to see Lord leave,” Alex says and Lucy looks at her aghast. “Oh come on, Luce, he’s a dick!”

“Yeah, trust me I knew from the first time I caught him staring at your ass in training,” Lucy mumbles. “But still, he was a good catcher, Al.”

Alex shrugs her shoulders, picking up her pen again and turning back to the textbook. She taps the pen against her bottom lip, then poises it on the paper before Lucy jolts her concentration again.

“So what are we gonna do?”

“There’s nothing we can do,” Alex says, following the line with her pen, not looking up but not absorbing any words on the page. “J’onn will hold tryouts and find us a new catcher. A better catcher,” she adds and Lucy huffs again.

“I didn’t like him much either, but if J’onn thinks he can find us a new catcher, train them and let them mix with the rest of the team in a month, he’s more stupid than I thought,” Lucy says.
Alex is about to say something when the desk is covered in shadow by the tall form of James Olsen hovering over them.

“Have you heard?”

Alex nods and he pulls out a chair, spinning it around so he’s leaning forward on the back of it, arms folded on top.

“What the hell are we gonna do?” he asks and Alex shrugs again.

“We’re screwed,” Lucy groans, resting her chin on her hand, tearing out a small corner of Alex’s notes and stops when she scowls at her. “We need to go convince J’onn to let Lord back.”

“I don’t see what good that’ll do,” James says. “Lord’s been suspended ‘cause of that fight him and his lackeys had with the football team and there’s no way he can train with two broken ribs and a busted hand.”

Alex snorts a laugh; it’s not that she enjoys the fact Max Lord got beaten up, but she isn’t exactly sorry it happened. Since freshman year, he’d been making snide comments in her direction, trailing her around campus and he took hints from Alex no better off the pitch than he did on it.

“Like I said, we’re screwed,” Lucy says and Alex slams her textbook shut again, taking slight pride in the small jump from Lucy.

“We are not screwed,” she says with a kind of quiet authority she usually reserves for training. “When has J’onn ever let us down?”

Lucy and James stay silent and she ploughs on.

“Lord was crap, he never listened, he didn’t respect any of us and thought he was the poster boy of the team,” she continues. “I’m not sorry to see the back of him, and neither should you and it won’t do us any good sitting around doing nothing. So here’s what we’re going to.”

“I love it when you get bossy,” Lucy says with an over the top, dreamy sigh and Alex glares at her.

“We each find someone we think would be a good fit on the team, set up some tryouts and go to J’onn with our pick,” she says and James nods his agreement. “That way, we know he’s not going to pick out some idiot that makes us wish we had that greasy haired man-child back.”

Lucy laughs at that, and Alex knows she’s won them over.

“Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have to study for this test,” she says, picking up her book and pen again, waiting until Lucy and James had vacated their seats and left her alone in the small corner of the library she might as well live in.

“She even need to study, genius,” Lucy says and Alex flips her off which earns a kiss blown back at her.

James holds the door open for Lucy who ducks under his arm on their way out of the library.

“So, you got any bright ideas?” Lucy asks him as they walk down the nearly empty corridor and James’ laugh is deep and somewhat nervous.

“I have one,” he says, scratching his jaw. “But Alex isn’t gonna like it.”
“Bad day?”

Alex slumps down on the couch next to her sister, resting her feet on the coffee table which earns her a frown from Kara. She ignores the question, heaving out a sigh and closing her eyes.

“I take it you’ve still not found someone to replace Lord?”

Alex presses the heels of her palms against her eyes until she sees stars. She blinks them away, turning her head to look at Kara who’s watching her with mild curiosity.

“Nope,” she huffs, then sits up so suddenly it makes her head spin. “We’re three weeks away from the first game and no one has even come close to making the cut.”

That wasn’t technically true; between the entire team, they’d come up with at least twenty prospects and at each suggestion, Alex had turned them down. It wasn’t that she was picky or a perfectionist, it was just that she was still holding out hope that they would find someone better than Lord. The guy may have been a dick, but he had been a good catcher, despite what she had said to Lucy and James to get them onside.

“Just…” Alex says, waving her hand around trying to find the right words. “No one seems to fit.”

“Well, how do you know if you’re not giving anyone a chance?” Kara asks simply.

“I just do, it’s a gut thing,” Alex tries to explain. “I’m starting to think we’ll have to beg J’onn to let Lord back in.”

Kara wrinkles her nose at the idea.

“You’re a freshman now, why don’t you try?” Alex suggests, only half heartedly. “We’re in sync enough, plus you’ll get to spend more time staring longingly after James,” she teases and Kara’s cheeks go red.

“I don’t stare…” she mumbles. “Anyway, you know I can’t. If anyone found out your catcher had alien super-speed, I’d hate to think what would happen.”

Alex tries not to be too disappointed; it had been a long shot and besides, she’d rather her little sister focussed on her studies than sports. Maybe they would have a better chance of winning the league if they had a Kryptonian behind the plate though…

“I’m sure you’ll find someone,” Kara says, pulling Alex out of her daydream.

Alex shakes her head, picking at her nails until she feels the soft weight of Kara’s hand on her shoulder.

“Hey, come on, I know you,” Kara says. “You’ll get there and this season is going to be amazing, just you wait.”

“You think so?”

“I know so,” Kara says with a sunny smile that infects Alex until the corners of her lips upturn enough to make Kara happy. Her sister thrusts the takeout menu she’s been holding for the past ten minutes into Alex’s hands. “Now can we order food?”
James and Lucy drag her out a few nights later against her will so she could, in Lucy’s words, ‘take a break from trying to balance the world on your shoulders’. She wasn’t wrong; in between class, study sessions in the library and trying to find their team a new catcher, plus training sessions, Alex had barely had a minute to kick back with a beer and talk to her friends about something other than college and baseball.

They head a few blocks away from Lucy and Alex’s place to a back alley at the end of which is a shady-looking bar that they frequent far too often. M’gann looks up from behind the counter when they walk in and they return her wave as she pulls up three bottles from underneath the bar.

“Thanks, M’gann,” Alex says, twisting the top off and sliding onto the barstool as Lucy and James grab their drinks and head straight over to the unoccupied darts board which provides the best view of the television in the corner that is currently playing the LA Angels’ match.

“You look exhausted,” M’gann says, wiping out a glass before leaning forward, resting her elbows on the counter top. “Is everything okay?”

Alex takes a long pull of her drink, picking at the label when she puts the bottle back down.

“Did you hear what happened to the team?” she asks and M’gann nods with a sympathetic smile. “We’ve been trying to find someone new for over a week, but so far we’re still looking at starting the season without a catcher.”

“There’s still time,” M’gann says. “Maybe you should start looking at what the other people have been missing and focus on that?” she offers and Alex laughs softly.

“Half of them couldn’t even catch,” she says. “One of them jumped out the way when I pitched a fastball to him and the rest... they just didn’t get me, you know?”

M’gann laughs, wiping down the surface of the bar and passing a bowl of peanuts Alex’s way.

“So you’re looking for someone who can catch, not jump when a baseball is thrown at their head and your soulmate all in one?” she says, raising an eyebrow and Alex rolls her eyes.

“If you were a pitcher, you’d understand,” Alex says, grinning.

“Enlighten me and the next round’s on the house,” M’gann offers and that’s something Alex can’t refuse.

“I just want someone who doesn’t need me spell out every move I’m about to make,” Alex says, picking apart one of the peanuts and chewing on them slowly. “I watch other teams do it and the catcher knows the play before the pitcher’s even started to wind up. That’s what I need.”

She crushes a peanut shell with her palm. Alex knows full well this isn’t the Majors, or even the top college leagues, but to her it might as well be. She didn’t care if people thought she took the game too seriously because when it was her on the pitch, surrounded by her team, Kara cheering from the stands, it felt like she was a pitch away from winning the World Series.

“I’m not saying they have to be perfect,” Alex says when M’gann stays silent. “There’s a reason we lost last season and that’s because the guy behind the plate was about as much in tune with me as any man could ever be.”

M’gann laughs at this and Alex can’t hold back her smirk. She takes another drink, drawing a line
“I need to be able to stand on that pitcher's mound and know that I can trust the person catching as much as they trust me,” Alex says. “Right now, that’s looking pretty impossible.”

She doesn’t look up until M’gann pushes a fresh beer into her hand.

“You’ll find someone,” she says. “Your catcher soulmate is out there right now just waiting for you to notice her.”

Alex rolls her eyes at the gentle teasing but she appreciates the words all the same.

“You know, you give pretty great advice,” she says, sliding off the stool.

“I work behind a bar, it’s part of the job description,” M’gann says, handing her two more drinks. “Now go find James and Lucy and for once, just relax.”

Alex takes the beers with a smile of thanks and heads over to the pool table where Lucy is talking to Vasquez, their left fielder. James racks up the balls and hands Alex a cue.

“Hey, Al, me and Vas were just thinking,” Lucy starts. “Do you think Kara would tryout for us?”

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“Hey, Al, me and Vas were just thinking,” Lucy starts. “Do you think Kara would tryout for us?”

Alex laughs, chalking the cue.

“I’ve already asked her,” she says and their shoulders slump. “Come on, you know why we can’t have Kara on the team.”

“It’s not like she would actually use her powers to help us win,” Vasquez says, lowering their voice so only the rest of the team can hear them. “She’s too honest.”

“Vas is right,” Lucy says but Alex shakes her head.

“It’s not that Kara would use her powers, it’s that I don’t think she could control it,” Alex says and understanding dawns on her teammates faces. “High adrenaline, competitive energy and a hyperactive alien with superpowers? Not a good combination.”

Lucy takes the chalk from Alex who wipes the blue dust on the back of her jeans.

“I hate it when you’re right sometimes,” Lucy says.

“I keep you all in line,” Alex reminds her and Lucy scoffs. “So, me and Vas against you and Olsen?”

Lucy places the white at the top of the table, nodding her agreement along with the rest of them. Alex is about to go and break before James pipes up.

“How about we make this a bit more interesting?” he suggests and Alex stands up again, shoulder to shoulder with Vasquez.

“How so?”

James exchanges a look with Lucy who encourages him with a withering glare.

“Well…” James says slowly and Alex raises her eyebrow impatiently. “If we win, you have to let me try someone out for catcher.”
Alex glances between Vasquez, Lucy and James and shrugs.

“Okay, sure, who is it?”

Lucy avoids her eyes. James looks almost guilty.

“Maggie Sawyer.”

And Alex’s stomach drops, staring incredulously at the three of them.

“Are you kidding me?” she says, draining her first beer and slamming the bottle down on the table nearby. “No, no way.”

Lucy rolls her eyes, Vasquez mutters something about “I knew she’d take it like this,” but Alex ignores them and turns to James, folding her arms.

“Come on, Alex, give her a chance,” James sighs before Alex can protest even more. “Give us one good reason why you shouldn’t let Maggie try out.”

Alex fumes silently for a moment, staring at the television screen to distract herself from James’ smug face and Lucy and Vasquez’s barely concealed smirks. It’s true, she has no good reason not to let Maggie Sawyer try out for the team except for the fact she cannot stand Maggie Sawyer, and the rest of them know it.

Ever since she’d transferred to National City State in their sophomore year, Sawyer had set Alex’s teeth on edge. She had befriended James easily enough but apart from that, kept to herself. That didn’t stop her from annoying Alex every chance she got and when they were put in the same class, it was the final straw. For a whole term Alex had to endure comments and sniggers from the back of the classroom which distracted her, as did the fact she always sauntered in ten minutes late, leather jacket hung over her shoulder, passing Alex with a wink that made her grind her teeth together.

It wasn’t like she could escape her over summer break, either; whenever she met up with her friends, more often than not, Sawyer was there, shoulder to shoulder (well, shoulder to chest-height) with James. So Alex tolerated her presence on trips to Midvale, an Angels game or three, attempted to not let Sawyer get on her every nerve but by the end of the summer, she was resigned to the fact that no matter how hard she tried, there was no changing her mind that Maggie Sawyer was up to no good and had an ego the size of Canada.

What made it even worse however, was Lucy and her numerous questions about the real reason Alex didn’t like Maggie after every time they had hung out.

“You feel threatened by her, don’t you?”

“I’ve got three inches on her, Luce, you really think I’m intimidated by Sawyer?” had been enough to shoot down that particular interrogation but Lucy had narrowed her eyes, determined to get to the root of the problem.

James clears his throat and brings Alex back into the present. She blinks, tears her eyes away from the television screen just as the LA Angels score another run.

“So? Are you in?”

Alex puts out her hand for James to shake. Sawyer wouldn’t even make the team. There was no way she would click with Alex, so, amazing catcher or not, there was no chance Sawyer was going to be their new teammate.
“Best of three?” she asks, giving herself some leverage; she wasn’t a half bad pool player, but she’d seen Vasquez play and they were far better at catching fly-balls than they were at pool.

Unfortunately for her, leverage didn’t mean shit when James potted the black with ease ending the second game. He turned and high-fiving Lucy before picking up his drink and swaggering around the table to where Alex was stood, glaring at him before he even had a chance to open his mouth.

“Don’t gloat, James, it doesn’t look good on you,” Alex says.

“Deal’s a deal, Danvers,” he says before he picks up the white ball and stares somewhere over Alex’s left shoulder and yells, “Maggie, heads up!” and throws the ball with practiced skill and Alex’s stomach drops.

“What the fuck, Olsen?” comes the yell from near the bar, and it’s not M’gann shouting because James just smashed a bottle of expensive scotch on the shelf. It’s not M’gann shouting because Maggie Sawyer just pulled off a catch nothing short of spectacular right in front of Alex’s very eyes, and there was no way it was just luck.

And before Alex can even think, before she can process that she’s been strung along by James (and probably Lucy and Vasquez) who knew perfectly well what a good catcher Sawyer was, she’s marching over to them with laughter behind her eyes as she stares up at James.

“You know if you don’t want to be friends anymore, you can just tell me,” she says, but she’s grinning. “Instead of taking my head off with a pool ball.”

“I knew you’d catch it,” James shrugs. “Anyway, that’s not why I did it.”

“Didn’t think so seeing as you’re surrounded by the LA Dodgers’ next draft picks,” Sawyer smirks, folding her arms. “Or is it the Angels? I always forget.”

Alex clenches her jaw because Sawyer knows full well that the four people standing there, and most of all Alex, are nothing if not die-hard Angels fans.

“So, come on then, what’s the deal?” she asks, catching Alex’s eye who looks down at the floor, still nursing wounded pride at losing to James and Lucy.

“Er… actually, Danvers wants to ask you something,” James says and Alex nearly kicks him in the shins but then she’s being pushed forward by Lucy’s hand on her back. Oh, they were going to pay for this.

“Really?” Sawyer says, drawing the word out. “High and mighty Alex Danvers wants to ask me a question?”

Alex swallows her natural reaction to snap back, and it’s the hardest thing she’s ever had to do. But she has a few inches on Sawyer and she uses it to her advantage, drawing herself up to her full height in the hopes that it’s somewhat intimidating; if the dimpled grin on Sawyer’s face is anything to go by, it’s not working.

“We need a new catcher,” Alex grates out.

“I heard Lord had been kicked to the dirt,” Sawyer says, raising an eyebrow. “Isn’t it only three weeks until your first game?”

“Yes,” Alex says tersely. “Hence the need for a new catcher.”
James clears his throat behind her and she resists the temptation to say something to him and instead settles with a glare.

“Better find one quick then,” Sawyer says indifferently.

“We’ve been trying,” Alex says. “But so far no one has made the cut.”

Sawyer laughs and Alex tries to ignore the little flip her stomach does at the sound.

“Of course, you’re all a bunch of perfectionists, that’s why,” Sawyer says and James laughs behind Alex.

“We just like to make sure our team is at it’s best,” Alex shrugs, not perturbed by Sawyer’s clear intention of riling her up. “It’s not our fault there’s no one who doesn’t fear a hundred miles per hour baseballs flying at their heads.”

“You can pitch at a hundred?” Sawyer challenges.

“You think I can’t?” Alex says, taking a step forward, invading Sawyer’s space in the vain hope of making the other girl at least flinch. “How about we test your theory?”

This time she succeeds in throwing Sawyer off. She covers up the surprise with another smirk, her eyes searching Alex’s, deep brown boring into her skull and she has to look away.

“What’re you saying, Danvers?”

“I’m saying that we’re holding tryouts tomorrow morning at eleven,” Alex says. “If you want to be proved wrong, I’d show up.”

“Oh, I don’t doubt you’ll prove me wrong, Danvers,” Sawyer says, rocking back on her heels. “But I’ll be there and prove to you that the real reason you’re asking me to try out isn’t because you’re desperate, but because you know I’m the only person in our year who can effortlessly catch a pool ball being thrown at their head.”

Somewhere behind her, Alex hears Lucy suck in a breath as though preparing to hold Alex back before she really rips into Sawyer. But she doesn’t. In fact, she steps back, allows herself to breathe again because, as much as she wanted to, Alex could not prove Maggie wrong. It had been one hell of a catch. And she had lost the bet.

“Eleven sharp,” Alex says with finality in her voice. “Don’t be late.”

Sawyer looks like she’s about to say something but decides against it, unfolding her arms and tucking her hands into the pockets of her jacket.

“See you around, Danvers,” she says with a final steely glare at Alex before turning on her heel and walking not back over to the bar but instead out of the door with the rest of the team watching her.

What follows Sawyer’s exit is a long, pointed silence. Alex has half a mind to grab her jacket and leave so she doesn’t have to face the reactions of her friends and teammates. But she bites the bullet and turns around, the tension in the air crackling.

“Well, I like her!” Vasquez says with a warm smile that Alex does not share. “She’ll be a great person to have on the team.”

Alex doesn’t pay them any attention, instead rounding on James who’s brilliant grin does nothing to
improve her sullen mood.

“You set me up for this, Olsen,” Alex says, but she’s no match for him in the height department so she can hardly intimidate him into apologising; not that she needs to when James Olsen is the kindest person she knows, apart from her sister.

“Don’t know what you’re talking about,” he shrugs but the grin doesn’t disappear from his face.

“You’re so lucky you’re our best hitter,” she says and even though she’s pissed off, she can’t help but smile back at him. “But pull a stunt like this again and I will turn your bat into firewood.”

James just laughs warmly, putting a hand on Alex’s shoulder.

“That’s an empty threat,” he says. “Just give her a chance, Alex. You’ve got nothing to lose. And hey, if you really don’t like her at tryouts tomorrow, then I won’t hold it against you. I mean, she might though.”

She couldn’t really give a crap if Sawyer held anything against her. It didn’t matter anyway, because even if it was a league-worthy catch, there was no way Alex would have her on the team.

But, as Lucy racks up the balls for another game, Alex wonders if she really has much choice in the matter.

Chapter End Notes

I will be adding more characters (aka Winn and J’onn) to this in the coming chapters. And for people who follow my other story, I definitely won't be neglecting it - it's just nice to have a balance. I hope you enjoyed this first chapter, and feedback is really appreciated! Have a great rest of the week everyone
put me in, coach

Chapter Notes

I am so sorry this took so long, but it was a combination of horrible writer's block and university stress. I'm not entirely happy with this, but I didn't want to keep you all waiting any longer!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Alex gets up at nine o'clock sharp the next morning, showers and dresses and is just on her way out of the door when Lucy saunters out of her room, hiding a yawn behind her hand.

“Are you going down to the pitch already?” she asks, spotting Alex’s bag in her hand.

“Kara’s meeting me there, she says she’s bringing coffee,” Alex says and Lucy laughs.

“Thought you might be going to sabotage the catcher’s helmet so Sawyer can’t try out,” she says, walking to the kitchen and leaning up on her tiptoes to reach Alex’s box of cereal.

“She’s so stubborn I think she’d try out naked just to prove a point,” Alex grumbles, slinging her bag over her shoulder, about to walk out of the door before she notices Lucy staring at her, hand buried in the box. “What?”

“Nothing,” Lucy shrugs, chewing slowly. “Just, why are you thinking about Sawyer naked?”

“What? I - I’m not! I’m just saying…” Alex says, stammering out a laugh because dammit, Lane of course now she’s thinking about Sawyer naked. “She’s stubborn, that’s my point.”

“I wouldn’t complain,” Lucy shrugs and when Alex gives her a look, she just says, “what? Sawyer’s hot! You’d have to be blind not to see it.”

Alex doesn’t even bother dignifying that with a response, throwing open the door.

“Don’t be late,” she calls over her shoulder and Lucy raises a hand in acknowledgement. “And don’t eat all my cereal!”

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Kara texts her just as Alex leaves the apartment to say she was running a few minutes late but with the promise of pastries, so Alex decides to take the long route on her motorbike to the campus ballpark.

The traffic was never too bad on the outskirts of the city this time of day, she could just let herself enjoy the adrenaline of going that little bit faster, that bit of danger - and then suddenly a blur of red shoots past her and she swerves, just avoiding the car she had been about to overtake, swearing loudly.

The responsible, safest thing would have been to just let it go, but Alex wants to give this idiot a piece of her mind so grips the handlebars and speeds up until she’s on their tail. Just when she thinks she’s caught up with the red bike, it turns off and before Alex can process it, she’s turned into the
parking lot of the ballpark.

She pulls up quickly, stuffing her helmet into the saddle bag and starts marching over to where the other person has parked, ready to rip them a new one when they take off their helmet and -

“Hey, Danvers!”

Well, that’s just fantastic.

“What the hell were you playing at, Sawyer?” Alex growls, brushing away her surprise with anger. “You nearly ran me off the road!”

Sawyer doesn’t seem remotely apologetic but rather fakes surprise.

“Good job I didn’t or else the team really would be screwed,” she says, barely concealing a smirk. “A catcher and their ace pitcher down.”

Alex ignores the last comment, ignores the fact that Sawyer’s Triumph is one hell of a good looking bike, ignores how hard it is to stare Sawyer down when her eyes sparkle like entire galaxies.

“That was reckless, you could have crashed,” she says instead and Sawyer raises an eyebrow.

“Wow, Danvers, I didn’t think you cared.”

“I don’t, I - ” Alex starts to say before someone calls her name and she turns, seeing Kara bounding up to her, coffee and a bag of the promised pastries in her hands; she’s not exactly sorry at the interruption.

“Sorry I’m late!” Kara says, all sunshine and smiles even at half past nine in the morning, pressing the coffee into Alex’s hands before realising who Alex was talking to. “Oh, hi, Maggie! What’re you doing here?”

Alex barely made the effort to not roll her eyes; she wanted to believe that Kara only tolerated Sawyer’s presence during their summer hangouts, but she knew her sister better than she knew herself and the friendship that had sprung up between the two had been genuine, much to Alex’s annoyance. It was a lot harder to dislike someone when your little sister was constantly telling you how amazing they were, but Alex was nothing if not stubborn.

“Your sister invited me,” Sawyer says and the shared look of barely concealed contempt goes right over Kara’s head.

“Really?” she says, surprise evident in her voice and Sawyer laughs. “I… I mean, that’s great!” she stammers at the look Alex gives her. “That must mean you’re here to try out for their new catcher?”

If Alex doesn’t get her coffee soon she might just jump on her bike and head home.

“Yeah, they couldn’t ignore my talent any longer,” Sawyer says. “Isn’t that right, Ace?”

“Right,” Alex says shortly.

“You should have told me you were meeting Maggie, then I’d have brought you coffee too,” Kara says, still all bright and shiny and happy.

“I wasn’t meeting her,” Alex says. “We just met here.”

Kara’s brow furrows as she glances quickly between Alex’s steely glare and Sawyer’s determined
“Well you’re more than welcome to come sit with us,” Kara says and Alex could not think of a worse start to the day that hadn’t involved copious amounts of alcohol the night before. “My friend Winn is coming too, I probably brought enough food for seven people.”

For a moment, Alex thinks Sawyer might take Kara up on the offer, if only to annoy her but then the coolness of her glare disappears and the spark is back, and something else Alex can’t quite place as she looks away from her and at Kara.

“Thanks for the offer, but I should go ahead and get practising,” Sawyer says, gesturing in the vague direction of the ballpark. “Don’t want to give your sister any more excuses to bench me from the team.”

Alex clenches her jaw in frustration, literally having to bite back a response.

“Well, we’ll be in the stands if you want to come and join us,” Kara offers and Alex silently begs her to stop talking.

“Thanks, Kara,” Sawyer says, shouldering her bag. “Catch you later, Danvers,” she adds to Alex, smirking at her own joke before turning on her heels and stalking away to the locker rooms.

Alex doesn’t realise she’s watching her leave until an elbow to the ribs from Kara makes her jump.

“Ow! What was that for?”

Kara’s trying her best to look intimidating and annoyed, but it comes off as more of a pout, one which Alex has become immune to over the years.

“Can’t you just be nice to her for once?”

“I am being nice to her!” Alex argues. “I’m letting her try out for the team, aren’t I?”

“You know, you could do a lot worse than having Maggie Sawyer for a friend,” Kara says, following Alex as she walks towards the gates, this time not even bothering to attempt hiding her eye roll.

“Oh, please, you only like her because James does,” Alex says with a bit more harshness to her tone than she had intended, but Kara doesn’t speak to her again until they’re sat in the middle row of benches, staring out across the ballpark.

“That’s not true,” Kara says eventually and Alex knows she’s struck a nerve. “I like her because she’s a nice person, she’s a good person, Alex. And if you gave her a chance instead of being so stubborn about it, you might see that side of her, too.”

Alex sighs, wrapping her hands around the polystyrene cup, feeling the warmth seep through the material to her skin.

“I just don’t understand why you don’t like her, Alex.”

It’s not a question Alex can answer easily. All she knows is that she doesn’t like Sawyer. She never has, and it wasn’t like she hated her or actively went out of her way to make her dislike known. Maggie Sawyer wasn’t a part of her life and Alex would rather it stayed that way. Right now, that looked pretty impossible.
“You are going to give her a fair chance today, right?” Kara says sternly.

“Of course I am,” Alex mumbles. “I might not want her on the team but it doesn’t mean she doesn’t deserve a fair trial.”

Kara pulls a bear claw out of the bag before offering it to Alex. They sit there in silence, the only sound the occasional *woosh* of baseballs flying out of the machine Sawyer has set up in the practice nets. Sawyer’s almost silhouetted against the wall in the black catcher’s gear and even from a distance, Alex can tell she’s running out of excuses to not let her onto the team. It’s almost effortless the way Sawyer moves, unflinching, as the machine fires baseballs left right and centre.

“Why don’t you go and help her?” Kara suggests, jolting Alex out of her daydream state, looking away from Sawyer quickly.

“What?”

“Go pitch for her,” Kara says, already on her third pastry. “If you’re going to be teammates, it can’t hurt.”

“Who said we’re going to be teammates?” Alex says, although the words hold no conviction as she knows full well that Sawyer is a better catcher than all their other prospects combined.

“Well, you’re always going on about how you want to connect with the person doing the catching,” Kara says. “This is a good opportunity to get to know her!”

Sometimes Alex hates how right Kara can be. After a moment of debating in her head, she hands her sister her half-eaten pastry, downs the rest of her lukewarm coffee before standing and grabbing her bag.

“I’m only doing this because I love you and I need to warm up,” Alex says, ignoring Kara’s smile, evidently pleased with herself. “Are you gonna stay and watch?”

“I… I mean, sure, if you want me to, I don’t mind,” Kara stammers, the tips of her ears turning red. Alex just smirks, bending down to press a kiss to the top of Kara’s head.

“Plus James looks great in a jersey, right?” she teases and the blush spreads to Kara’s cheeks. “I’ll come and find you and Winn when we’re done. Thanks for the coffee.”

“Whatever,” Kara mumbles but she can’t hide her smile for very long. “And don’t be too harsh on Maggie!” she calls after Alex as she jogs down the steps, heading towards the locker room.

She steps out onto the pitch a few minutes later, shivering slightly in just her jersey and loose training pants as a cold breeze whistles through the park. She stuffs her hands into her pockets, baseball glove tucked under her arm, as she wanders slowly over to where the nets are, watching Sawyer from a short distance not wanting to distract her.

The ball fires from the machine just above Sawyer’s head, reminiscent of the pool ball from the night before, and just like last time, Sawyer makes the catch easily before pressing the switch by her feet to turn the machine off.

Alex steps around the edge of the net just as Sawyer takes the helmet off, wiping away the sweat on her forehead with her sleeve.

“Like what you see, Ace?”
She instantly regrets giving in so easily to Kara’s pout and likes the way her brain short-circuits even less because yes, she does like what she sees. From a technical, captain of the team standpoint. Not the way Sawyer means it, that’s for sure.

“I’ve seen worse,” she says, picking up the basket of baseballs by the machine and moving it out of the way.

“That’s reassuring,” Sawyer says as Alex puts her glove on her left hand, pulling her cap down firmly. “What’re you doing?”

“What does it look like?” Alex says, reaching into the bucket and grabbing one of the balls, standing a fair distance away from Sawyer. “Kara told me to come and practice with you.”

“Well thanks, but I don’t need your help,” Sawyer says.

“If you want to stand a good chance in tryouts, you’ll take it,” Alex says, scowling; it wasn’t like she wanted to be here either, but she was trying her hardest to be nice. “How long has it been since you’ve actually played?”

At this, Sawyer stands as tall as she can, arms crossed defensively across her chest.

“Two years,” Sawyer says and there’s something in the way her whole body deflates slightly that doesn’t sit right with Alex; in fact, she wished now she had never asked.

“Injury?” Alex asks, and Sawyer shakes her head.

“I stopped a year before I moved here,” Sawyer says. “Never really had the chance to pick it up again.”

There’s a finality in her tone that cuts off any more questions from Alex, although it doesn’t stop her from wanting to ask why Sawyer had decided to get out of the game.

“Moving here can’t have helped,” she says instead but Sawyer grins and shakes her head again.

“Actually, I think moving here might have been the best thing for me,” she says with such conviction Alex can’t help but smile. “Now I’ve got Jimmy to keep me from getting rusty.”

“Jimmy?” Alex smirks. “He lets you call him that?”

“Apparently it’s reserved for his mother, but he lets me get away with it,” Sawyer grins. “I called him that the day we met and it kinda stuck.”

“He must really like you,” Alex says. “Even Lucy didn’t call him Jimmy and she dated him the whole of freshman year.”

“I guess so,” Sawyer shrugs. “He’s a good guy,” she adds. “Trying to get me on the team, even though he knows…”

She drifts off and for the first time Alex actually feels a small spike of guilt in her stomach for how she’s treated Sawyer. James had fought for his friend even though the odds were against him, and that was something Alex admired greatly.

“Let me practice with you,” Alex offers again and when Sawyer opens her mouth to probably dismiss her, continues, “look, that machine isn’t doing you any favours, it’s not half as fast as what I’ll be throwing at you.”
“You gonna show me that hundred fastball?” Sawyer says, the familiar smirk on her face although now it doesn’t seem nearly as annoying as it had done all the other times it had been thrown in Alex’s direction.

“If you think you can handle it,” Alex fires back.

“I can handle whatever you throw at me, Danvers,” Sawyer says with a wink and puts her helmet back on, securing it in place, giving Alex a second to compose herself and pretend that wink hadn’t made her stomach twist into knots.

Instead, she channels her feelings the best way she knows how, through one fluid, fast movement of her arm, her emotion turned into pure power as she releases the baseball like a bullet leaving a gun, keeping her eyes open as it lands with a soft thud into Sawyer’s glove.

She doesn’t so much as flinch and as much as Alex hates to admit it, even to herself, she’s impressed; even with the protective gear on, it took a certain courage to stare unblinkingly as a baseball hurtled towards your head.

“Not bad, Sawyer,” she calls out as she picks up another ball.

Sawyer lifts the guard of her helmet up and that infuriating grin that makes her dimples appear is back on her face.

“Are you sure that was a hundred, Danvers?” she says. “Don’t get soft on me after all this time.”

“Not a chance,” Alex says, taking her stance as Sawyer lowers the guard. The last pitch had probably been around ninety from Alex's reckoning so this time she puts as much force behind the throw as she can, following through as the ball whistles through the air slightly off centre.

And still Sawyer makes the catch with effortless skill and Alex knows no one else who will turn up later will come even close to matching that.

“Isn’t this an unfair advantage?” Sawyer asks just before tryouts are due to start, removing the catcher’s gear and joining Alex with it at the entrance to the nets.

“If everyone else cared as much about getting this spot, they’d be here practising, too,” Alex says, picking up the basket of baseballs.

“Fine by me, I like going one-to-one with you,” Sawyer says, eyes sparkling.

“You’d be surprised how many girls I hear that from,” Alex says, taking immense satisfaction in the way Sawyer’s mouth drops open slightly at the unexpected counter from Alex, but the moment passes almost instantly.

“Somehow I don’t think I would be,” Sawyer says and before Alex can process what she’s said, before she can come up with a reply, there’s a call of her name and she whips around, seeing Lucy approaching them.

“Hey, Maggie,” she says but keeps her eyes on Alex, her smirk barely there but Alex knows her too well to not know exactly what’s going through her friend’s mind. “Everyone’s in the locker room, Alex, if you’re not too busy.”

Alex knows she’s going to have to give a good explanation to Lucy when they get back to flat, and no doubt Lucy would tell James and Vas so she would have to suffer their taunts the next time they all went out to the bar.
“I’ll go set up,” Alex says. “Take Sawyer with you, and meet me when J’onn gets here.”

Lucy and Maggie head back to the locker rooms where the rest of the team and prospects were waiting for J’onn. Alex heads in the opposite direction, taking the bucket of baseballs with her and placing them next to the pitcher’s mound, trying to clear her head. The way Sawyer had spoken about how she hadn’t played in nearly two years didn’t sit right with her. There was a story, that much Alex could say for certain, but she wasn’t going to press the issue, not when she barely knew, or liked, the woman in question.

It wasn’t long before Lucy and James were walking over, followed by the rest of the team, J’onn and their last group of potential teammates, all dressed in spare uniforms and borrowed catcher’s mitts. Half of them looked arrogantly confident, and the other half just on the right side of nervous that she could use to her advantage. Sawyer fell into the first category, standing a little apart from the rest of the all-male group, arms folded.

The rest of her team fell into position at J’onn’s word, but before she could step to the pitcher’s mound, one of the guys stepped forward.

“Rick,” she grinds out as a greeting. “I didn’t expect to see you here.”

“Nice surprise, then,” Rick says with a hint of swagger that nearly makes Alex visibly recoil; she’d known Rick since middle school and had never felt at ease around him. This time was no different.

“You didn’t tryout last year,” Alex says.

“Well, I thought I might stand a chance this time around, I heard you’re struggling,” Rick says. “Plus, we go way back, don’t we, Alex?”

“I guess,” Alex says. “If you can just go and wait with your friends over there,” she adds, gesturing to where the rest of the prospects lined up, Sawyer at the back and it makes Alex smile. She knew that she’s going to out-perform every single guy in front of her and she can’t wait to see the smug smirks knocked off their faces; she knew all too well the satisfaction that could bring.

A flicker of annoyance passes over Rick’s face, and Alex knew he had expected some kind of special treatment because they ‘go way back’.

J’onn stood to the side and let Alex take the lead. She started with a few basic drills, putting James into bat and pitching varying balls to whoever was behind the plate. Only three out of the first nine caught everything, and then Sawyer stepped up, taking the gear from the last guy who looked her up and down with a smirk.

As Alex had predicted, the smirks fell into a mixture of annoyance, anger and shock and when Sawyer took off the helmet and glanced at Alex, she just nodded at her and Sawyer returned the gesture with a dimpled grin.

After nearly two hours, a combination of pitching and batting drills, several arguments stopped by J’onn, an incident involving one of Rick’s friends being hit in the ribs with the ball when Alex had overheard him shit-talking Sawyer when they paused for five minutes, Alex was certain they had found their new catcher.

And it certainly wasn’t Rick, who was walking over to her; he was the only one who’s grin hadn’t faded when he was being clearly outdone by Sawyer.

“So, when do we find out who’s got the spot?” he asks. “Or you could just tell me now, I don’t
“Actually, I have to talk to the rest of the team, we’ll put it to a vote,” Alex says and she just can’t resist getting his hopes up. “But you looked good out there.”

He puffs out his chest slightly and Alex bites back the urge to laugh as he walks off, getting patted on the back by his friends as they walked towards the gates.

“He’s an ass,” Lucy says, watching them go. “Thank God he’s not going to be on the team.”

“Don’t speak too soon,” Alex says but laughing anyway. “Okay, you’re right, I’d rather have Lord back rather than him. That guy creeps me out.”

“So, we’re all agreed then?” Lucy says as the two of them lead the way back to the locker rooms. “Rick’s an ass and Sawyer’s got the spot?”

And although Alex would rather not say it and give her and James the satisfaction that yes, they had been right, Sawyer was the best person for the job, she can’t deny it anymore. She had known she couldn’t as soon as James had thrown her the pool ball, if she was being honest.

“I guess so,” she says and Lucy grins, nudging Alex with her elbow as they walk into the locker room, the rest of the team standing in a semi-circle, waiting for J’onn.

“While I think we can all agree on who is taking Mr. Lord’s spot, we have to take a vote on it,” J’onn says, although his smile says everything. “Mr. Olsen, we’ll start with you.”

“Sawyer,” he says almost instantly and Alex catches his eye and he gives her that winning smile. They go around the rest of the team and everyone follows James’ lead, unsurprisingly. Then Lucy says Maggie and finally it’s Alex turn and everyone watches her; the decision has to be unanimous, and she feels strangely under pressure. It’s not exactly a secret that her and Sawyer don’t get along.

“Sawyer,” she says and the rest of the team cheers and she catches J’onn’s eye and he nods approvingly.

“Good choice, everyone,” he says. “First practice is on Tuesday evening. Who’s going to tell Miss. Sawyer the good news?”

Lucy stands up next to Alex, grinning and oh, Alex has been waiting for this moment. She couldn’t deny that what they were going to do next had been part of the reason she had been glad Sawyer had been as good as James had said.

“We’ve got a few ideas, coach,” Lucy says and Vas laughs. “Danvers, Vas, James and I have got it covered.”

J’onn narrows his eyes looking between the four of them and the rest of the team laughs knowingly; it was something they had all been through.

“I don’t think I’m even going to ask,” J’onn says. “Just make sure we get our new catcher back in one piece.”

“Don’t worry, we won’t let Danvers get too out of control,” Lucy says.

“Don’t listen to her, coach,” Alex says, rolling her eyes. “Sawyer’s going to be there, I’ll make sure of it.”
She has a feeling she’s going to be saying that a lot more over the coming months. And, surprisingly, the idea doesn’t bother her in the slightest.

Chapter End Notes

(This is the same endnote from my other fic, apologies if you've already read this)

I wish I could say that I would update quicker next time, but life is pretty hectic right now. I'll have much more time on my hands in a couple of weeks, so apologies in advance for the wait, but I really hope you stick with me on this. Your support means so much, I love reading every comment you guys leave so thank you!
Kara texts Alex just as they’re leaving the locker rooms to say her and Winn were waiting for them at Kara’s favourite diner, just two blocks away from campus. She had been about to head to the gym, but as she’s running on caffeine and half a pastry, she concedes that joining her sister might be the more sensible option.

“Noonan’s, ten minutes?” she asks her three friends and they all agree, splitting up in the parking lot.

Alex looks to her left, noticing Sawyer’s bike is already gone when she feels a hand on her shoulder. She jumps and twists around but relaxes immediately when she sees it’s only James.

“Can I talk to you for a second?” he asks as Alex grabs her helmet from her saddlebag.

“Is everything okay?” Alex asks, slightly bewildered.

“Yeah, yeah, it’s fine,” James says, waving away the concern. “I just wanted to ask you a favour.”

Alex wasn’t exactly sure what she thought the conversation was going to entail, but still, she’s relieved that it’s nothing more than a favour between friends.

“Sure, what is it?” she asks, tucking her helmet under her arm.

“About tonight,” James says, slowly. “I know that it’s a thing everyone new on the team has to go through but… can we go easy on her? Not that I don’t think she can take it,” he adds when Alex quirks an eyebrow, “but I’d rather she didn’t, you know?”

There’s no question who James is talking about and far from being irritated or feeling undermined, she feels proud of James for sticking up for his friend, just as he had done for her in the past.

“I know, it’s tradition and everything but -”

“Well, screw tradition,” Alex interrupts and that winning smile starts to etch itself back onto James’ face. “If you really don’t want to go through with all this, we don’t have to. You’re part of the team, too, James.”

“Really?”

“Really,” she says, gently punching his shoulder. “It used to be a tradition for it to be a male-only team, and that broke apart, right?”

“So you’re not annoyed at me for asking?”
“Of course not,” Alex frowns. “It’s good she’s got someone in her corner. Although Lucy’s gonna be pissed when she finds out you stopped Sawyer’s initiation and not hers,” she jokes and James laughs.

“That was payback,” James shrugs, grinning. “You know she helped Vasquez plan both of ours even when she wasn’t on the team?”

“Why doesn’t that surprise me?” Alex mutters, kicking the bike stand up and wheeling it back. “I guess you’re not gonna tell me why you’re asking us to tone it down?”

“Not my story to tell, Alex,” James says.

She had been right about one thing earlier that morning when she was practising with Sawyer; there had been a story behind the two-year break, and whatever had happened was enough to make James question the long-standing tradition of initiation into the team. Alex had nothing but respect for him; she was sure he would do the same for any of them and not for the first time, she counts herself lucky that she could call herself one of James Olsen’s close friends.

“Well, Sawyer’s in good hands with you as a friend,” Alex says as she straddles her bike. “See you at Noonan’s?”

James nods and looks as though he’s about to say something but Alex just smiles and that seems to say it all. She watches him walk out of the parking lot before she puts on her helmet and kicks her bike into life, her thoughts occupied with Sawyer’s comments in the practice nets and the reason for James’ brotherly protectiveness.

Her head still isn’t quite clear when she pulls up by Noonan’s, parking her bike and jogging up the steps and through the door. She pushes her thoughts aside for now, sure she’ll have plenty of time to over-analyse everything later. Or simply forget about it after a few beers with the rest of the team and their new catcher.

Kara waves her over to the booth at the back of the diner, what looks like half the menu spread out across the table and Alex knows that most of it is for her sister. Winn looks particularly uncomfortable squashed between Kara and James, gripping his bottle of Coke like a lifeline. Alex slides in beside Lucy, leaning over and grabbing a fry from the basket in front of Vasquez.

“What’ve I missed?” Alex asks as Vasquez bats her hand away.

“Nothing much, we were waiting for you to give the good news,” Lucy says as the waitress comes over and Alex orders herself a root beer and some fries at the request of Vasquez.

“Come on, tell me,” Kara says, practically bouncing in her seat. “Don’t make me pout.”

“We chose our new catcher,” Alex says, and Kara lights up, looking around the table.

“And?”

“It’s Maggie,” Alex says and Lucy nudges her playfully in the side as Kara’s smile shines brighter than the sun pouring through the window.

“Alec, that’s great!”

“But I thought you hated Maggie?” Winn asks but it’s Kara who answers him with a roll of her eyes, pushing her glasses back up the bridge of her nose.
“She doesn’t *hate* her, Winn,” Kara says. “They just don’t always see eye-to-eye, that’s all. But this is so great, you’ll finally be able to be her friend, Alex!”

Alex just shrugs; right now, she can’t really see it happening. Of course she’d be friendly, they were now teammates, but it wasn’t something she would see forming a solid friendship like she had with Lucy, Vasquez and James.

“After catching for me for a whole season?” Alex says instead. “I think she’ll be about ready to knock me senseless with her bat.”

“You think it’s gonna take a whole season?” Lucy says and Alex doesn’t give her the satisfaction of a comment.

The waitress comes over with Alex’s drink and food and immediately Vasquez snags two of Alex’s fries as Alex twists the cap off her drink. Before she can even take a sip, however, Kara interrupts, the smile quickly disappearing from her face.

“Hold on, if Maggie is on the team, does this mean you’re planning what I think you’re planning?” she asks, leaning forward and nearly putting a elbow in some ketchup. “It’s so immature, I can’t believe you’d -”

“Hey, Kara, relax,” Alex says, holding up her hands. “We’re not going to do anything, don’t worry.”

“What?” Lucy asks, staring at Alex as though she’s got two heads. “I’d have thought you of all people would be jumping at the chance for a good old-fashioned initiation for Maggie.”

Alex catches James’ eye and he nods quickly.

“Exactly, it’s old-fashioned,” Alex shrugs, leaning over Lucy to grab the ketchup from Kara. “Change is good sometimes.”

A heavy silence falls over the group and Alex can feel five pairs of eyes on her which only serves to make her uncomfortable, gripping the bottle of root beer if only for something to distract herself with.

“Why couldn’t you have been like this when I got on the team?” Lucy says, finally breaking the tension. “What’s Maggie got that I haven’t?”

Alex knows Lucy doesn’t mean it, but after her talk with James, her comment nettles her slightly. Not that she knows what exactly James had been talking about, but it was enough to know that whatever had happened in the past initiations wasn’t going to be repeated tonight.

“After your initiation, we thought it was time to change the rules,” she says, trying to lighten the mood.

“Maggie has a lot to thank me for, then,” Lucy says. "At least you made it up to me later that night," she adds with a wink and Alex chokes slightly on her drink at the very obvious implication of Lucy's comment.

“Can we move on?” Kara says, wrinkling her nose. “What’s your plan?”

Alex, pointedly ignoring Lucy’s hand resting on her thigh to try and get a reaction, sips her drink and looks towards James.

“If everyone’s okay with it, I’d like to be the one to tell her,” James says and there’s a murmur of agreement around the table from the players. “Then we could just head down to the bar?”
“Calm down,” Lucy snorts into her milkshake but Alex kicks her lightly under the table, and again when Lucy opens her mouth to complain.

“That sounds good to me,” Alex says. “Although, there is one thing I think we should try and keep…”

***

It’s late evening by the time Maggie gets back to her place after pulling a six-hour long study session in the library after tryouts. It hadn’t been especially productive; her mind kept wandering between the tryouts and the practice with Alex beforehand. She had spent more time trying to figure out the enigma that was Alex Danvers more than she had reading her textbook, and she had accomplished nothing in both areas.

She knew Alex didn’t particularly enjoy her company, that much had been clear over the summer break when James had invited her to come and join him and his teammates. Alex had never been mean to her, she didn’t strike Maggie as the type to be, but she had been cold, making her indifference known. It hadn’t bothered Maggie; she couldn’t please everyone and she had grown used to that.

But it didn’t mean she was going to give up on trying to soften Alex’s rugged exterior and when James had thrown her that pool ball, the perfect opportunity had struck. Even if Alex hadn’t let on, Maggie knew she was impressed, if not shocked, at just how good Maggie was behind the plate. James knew it, Maggie knew it. And now Alex and the rest of the team did, too.

And if there was one thing, perhaps the only thing, Maggie was proud of, her skill at catching was it.

So, yes, she had expected J’onn to just give her the spot on the team there and then. She wasn’t going to lie and be humble about it when it was just true that she had out-performed everyone else there. The one thought that kept crossing her mind was that maybe Alex really disliked her enough to not let her on the team and each time it did, Maggie pushed it away, choosing to believe that even stubborn Alex Danvers wouldn’t be that selfish.

Yet the insecurity rises again as she climbs the steps of her building, foregoing the lift, and by the time she reaches her door, it’s still taunting her. Maybe she had pushed too far with the blatant flirting, but it had been an all too easy way to get a rise out of her and it wasn’t as if Alex had outright ignored it.

She unlocks her door, more than ready to just binge-watch something on Netflix instead of dwelling on the very real possibility that she’s not made it onto the team. She dumps her bag down by the couch, and goes into the small kitchen to grab a glass of water. Then there’s a knock at her door and she spills some of the water down her front when she jumps, cursing silently.

She frowns when she sees who is on the other side of the door through the peephole, but opens it anyway to find James standing there, arms behind his back.

“James, what’re you doing here?” she asks; it was unusual for James to go so far out of his way to see Maggie, let alone for him not to text her first. She knows exactly what this is about and her stomach drops. “Is this about the tryouts?”

“Yeah, I thought I should be the one to come and tell you,” he says, and Maggie sighs, really wishing that he hadn’t if he was just going to tell her what she had tried not to believe.
“Oh… well, it’s fine, James, don’t worry about it,” she says, desperately trying to keep a hold of herself but the words failed, failed, failed, keep running around her head and she misses the frown on James’ face. “Can I ask why though?”

“Why what?” James asks, looking thoroughly confused.

“Why I didn’t get the spot,” Maggie grinds out and James’ eyes widen. “I don’t mind, really -”

“You got it,” James says, cutting her off and Maggie freezes, not sure she heard him correctly.

“What?”

“You got the spot, Maggie,” he says again. “You’re on the team.”

“I’m on the team?”

James laughs, scratching his jaw with one hand, the other still behind his back. “Probably should have led off with that, right?”

“You think?” Maggie says with a shaky laugh and she feels like she could fly. “You’re being serious?”

“Of course I’m being serious,” James says and then draws his hands out from behind his back and oh yeah, he is definitely serious. He pushes the dark purple jersey towards her and she tries to stop her hands shaking as she takes it; despite the confidence that she had more than earned her right to be on the team, it didn’t make it any less of a relief.

“It was a unanimous decision,” James says, beaming as she runs the fabric through her fingers, holding the jersey up so she can see the black panther and yellow team name stitched there.

“Really?” she asks. “Even Danvers?”

“Even Alex,” James says. “You really thought she wouldn’t agree you were the best person there?”

Maggie shrugs, folding the jersey up but still holding onto it as tight as she could, worried that if she lets go, it might all be a dream.

“She’s stubborn,” she says. “It just wouldn’t have surprised me, that’s all.”

“We didn’t even have to convince her once,” James says. “She knew you were the right person for the team, but just don’t expect her to admit it any time soon.”

“I’m not holding my breath,” Maggie says but before James can say anything else, she throws her arms around him and he lifts her up slightly as he hugs her back; James was the one person who knew just how much this meant to her after two years out of the game.

“Well done, Mags,” he says when she pulls back. “You deserve it.”

Maggie tries to remember a time where she felt so supported, or when someone was proud of her. Then it hits her that she can’t remember because the way James is looking at her with a kind of proud older brother look is the first time her heart feels so big in her chest it might explode.

“Yeah, well, I couldn’t have done it without you,” Maggie says and she means it, even though she knows James is just going to wave her away.

“Happy I could help,” James says. “But it was all you, it’s gonna be your name stitched onto the
back of that jersey.”

Maggie turns the jersey over in her hands, tracing the area where her name should be.

“You should get changed,” James says, gesturing to the jersey and it dawns on Maggie what exactly he’s talking about.

“Right, the whole initiation thing,” she says, surprised when James shakes his head.

“It’s not what you think,” he says. “We’re going to meet the others and then just go to the bar. Nothing stupid or dangerous, I promise.”

And of course Maggie trusts him; James never broke promises. She was sure that initiation into the team didn’t usually just involve going to bond over drinks, but she would take that over some of the rumours she’d heard about in other places.

She leaves James stood in the doorway as she goes to get changed. Instead, she finds herself sinking down onto her bed, her knuckles white from where she’s gripping the jersey, allowing herself a moment to just breathe.

All the nagging doubt from earlier now seemed ridiculous; she knew she had been the best person at the tryout, and yet as she was prone to do, she had talked herself out of it and knocked her own confidence. So being handed the jersey felt like a key to her own success. And for the first time in a long time, she felt proud of herself.

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“Maggie?” comes James’ voice through the door and he knocks gently.

She gathers herself and changes, slipping the jersey over her head, and God, does it feel good. It’s like a part of her that had been missing for two years has suddenly returned and filled the space in her heart. Taking a deep breath, she opens her bedroom door.

“You ready?”

“Are you kidding? I’ve been ready for two years.”

Chapter End Notes

summer break is finally here, meaning i could finally finish this chapter! hopefully this means more regular updates, too, but my writers block is prone to coming back with a vengeance. i’m enjoying writing this story so much, it’s giving me a chance to really explore the character and friendship dynamics. thank you for all your support, both here and on my tumblr, it means so much!
I could use some friends for a change

Chapter Notes

I've been really nervous about posting this chapter for various reasons, but I'm finally somewhat happy with it, so enjoy! Who doesn't want to read a chapter about the superfriend's drunk antics?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“James, where the hell are we going?” Maggie asks for what feels like the hundredth time as James takes another right turn. But, as she had expected, James remains silent, humming along to a made-up rhythm he’s tapping on the steering wheel.

She’s slowly been eliminating possible locations; they’re going in the opposite direction to both the campus and the ballpark, and they passed the bar long ago when James had sped past what he had once pointed out to her as Alex and Lucy’s apartment.

Just as she’s about to incessantly repeat the question until James gives in through sheer annoyance, he pulls into a parking space on a dimly lit side street and cuts the engine. Still not disclosing any information about their whereabouts, he gets out the car and stands on the sidewalk, waiting for Maggie to do the same.

She feels more than a little bit apprehensive when she steps out and sees that some of the streetlights aren’t working, casting parts of the street into shadow as the sky darkens. A cool breeze cuts through the street, and she wishes she’d brought a jacket.

“Are you going to tell me where we are now?” Maggie asks, joining James who has his hands tucked into his pockets, a small smile on his face.

“You’ll see,” he says and Maggie fights the urge to just get back into the car and refuse to leave until he tells her.

“Fine,” Maggie says, her curiosity winning out, gesturing for James to lead the way down the street.

They pass a few closed stores, the rest of the street deserted except for the two of them and if she’s being honest with her slight trepidation, she’s expecting to get jumped at any second. They abruptly turn a corner and Maggie sees a crowd of people gathered a little further down the side street, tensing as her and James approach them.

Even when she realises who it is, she doesn’t quite relax.

“Looking good, Sawyer,” Lucy says, unashamedly raking her eyes up and down Maggie’s jersey-clad form as her and James join them. “Purple suits you.”

“Welcome to the team, Maggie,” Vasquez says with a warm smile.

Alex almost blends in with the shadows, dressed in her all-black bike leathers Maggie had seen her in earlier that day. If she didn’t know her, Maggie would really not want to run into Alex in a dark alleyway, especially with the cold look she has on her face.
So when she speaks, Maggie can’t help but be surprised.

“You’ve earned it,” Alex says, her steely guard dropping for just a moment; if Maggie had blinked, she would have missed the smile.

She doesn’t quite know what to say to all the congratulations, her brain stutters, overwhelmed, but she’s saved by James who just puts a hand on her shoulder and says, “shall we go get this over with?”

And even though the words are ominous, she’s put at ease by the presence of the four teammates, her teammates, even Alex who has a glint in her eye like she’s been waiting for this since they accepted Maggie onto the team.

“So what should I be expecting?” Maggie asks as Alex leads the way a bit further down the street. “James told me not to worry, but I know what happens at initiations, I’ve seen the movies.”

Lucy laughs and throws an arm around her shoulder.

“You’re in safe hands with us.”

“Are you sure about that?” Maggie says. “Cause Danvers is dressed like she’s some kind of ninja assassin.”

“Ninja assassin, really?” Alex says, not bothering to turn around and James laughs.

“Once you start admiring how great her ass looks in those pants, you get used to it,” Lucy says, tilting her head and Alex stops so abruptly that Vasquez walks into the back of her.

She’s about to agree with Lucy, if only to rile Alex up more, that she wasn’t exactly complaining from where she was standing but then it dawns on her that they’re standing in the middle of the street, Vasquez and James looking slightly hesitant, Alex and Lucy almost unnervingly excited.

And when she sees where they’ve stopped… well, Maggie had expected a lot worse. They’re standing in front of the only open store on the street, red and green lights from the signs in the window bouncing off the smooth leather of Alex’s clothes, and when Maggie looks in the window, her own shocked expression is reflected back at her.

“You have got to be kidding me,” she says, breathing out a laugh as Alex knocks on the door and pushes it open without waiting for an answer, followed by Vasquez, James and then Maggie when Lucy prods her in the back.

The inside of the shop is surprisingly light in contrast to both the street outside and what Maggie had imagined in her mind. She had expected a dingy, slightly dubious atmosphere but the light gives off some kind of reassuring warmth as the rest of the team, except Alex, stand along one side of the room.

It’s the way James is watching her that reassures Maggie the most, but she’s not even sure she would need James’ back-up if she decided to back out. He nods and smiles and it calms her enough that she tunes back into the sound of Alex’s voice.

Maggie doesn’t know how she missed the other man standing there, her observation skills she’d honed as a catcher fleeing her for a moment as she was knocked off balance by the appearance of the shop.

“Maggie, this is Eduardo,” Alex says and her name rolls off Alex’s tongue with ease; Maggie won’t
allow herself to get used to it, she knows it’s purely for the sake of introduction. “He’s going to be your tattoo artist.”

“Well, I’d be worried if he was anything else considering where we are,” Maggie says, the words slipping out before she has a chance to stop them and from the side, Lucy snorts a laugh.

“Nice to meet you, Maggie,” Eduardo says, shaking her hand. His shirt sleeve stretches up slightly to reveal the start of a very intricate sleeve design, his demeanor effortlessly cool, his smile genuine. “I hear congratulations are in order.”

“Thanks,” Maggie says, not knowing how else to reply, still slightly stunned at how the night has turned out.

“Don’t look so worried, you’re in good hands,” Eduardo says, clasping his hands behind his back. “I’ve been tattooing this lot for years.”

Then the fog clears in Maggie’s head and she kicks herself mentally for being so oblivious; with everything else that has been going on, receiving news of her place on the team, her jersey, a slightly foreboding car journey, she’s going to let herself off for not picking up on it sooner.

“You did James’ tattoo for his initiation?” she asks and Eduardo nods.

“Everyone here has sat in that chair,” Eduardo says, gesturing to the open back room in which sits a black leather chair. “Some of them have even done it twice;” he adds, looking between James and, not entirely surprisingly, Alex, who just shrugs.

“Well, when we joined, you had to get the panther, too,” James explains, and as if to prove his point, rolls up his sleeve to reveal the panther curled around his bicep.

“Not that we’re complaining,” Alex says and Maggie half expects her to show it off to everyone as James had done, but instead Alex stands back, her arms folded as if challenging Maggie to ask.

“So is this your big initiation challenge?” Maggie asks, both relieved and yet almost disappointed it wasn’t something more scandalous as she had imagined. “You all have to get tattoos of panthers?”

“Not the panther,” Alex says. “Traditionally everyone gets their jersey number, kind of a reminder of where we all began even after we’ve all moved on.”

“But if you don’t want to, we’d understand,” James starts. “No one’s going to force -”

“I want to,” Maggie interrupts; her mind had been made up as soon as she had stepped foot into the shop. “This is my beginning, right?”

She shares James’ small smile; he knows exactly what Maggie is talking about, the only person Maggie had confided in since she moved to National City to start a new life away from everything about Blue Springs.

She had arrived lost, feeling completely alone in the world, but it had been her new beginning in so many ways. Starting fresh as a transfer student to NCU, beginning to talk to James who was now more like her brother, finally letting herself be who she was and realise that those now closest to her wouldn’t push her away.

And now it had become a place where her baseball career could begin again, after two years out of the game she thought she had left behind with her old life in Nebraska.
“Great, let’s get started then,” Eduardo says, clapping his hands together and leading Maggie and the rest of the team to the back room.

She sits on the chair and signs the forms he hands her and he starts setting up.

“Any idea what you want your number to be?” Alex asks. “It’s all up to you.”

She sits there, contemplating silently, running over different numbers in her mind but there’s one that keeps sticking out at her, the one she first thought of before Alex had even asked, before she even knew she had a place on the team.

“Nineteen,” Maggie says. “The age I was when I moved here.”

She catches Alex’s eye and Maggie half-expects her to push for an explanation, one that Maggie is definitely not ready to give, especially to someone she’s not entirely sure she could call her friend. Maybe that would all change now they were teammates, spending most days in each other’s company. In fact, Maggie is determined to make it change, however stubborn Alex would inevitably be about it.

“Good choice,” is all Alex says. “You don’t need someone to hold your hand through this, do you?”

“I’m made of strong stuff, Danvers,” Maggie says. “I think I can handle it.”

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“Well, you certainly took it better than Lucy,” Vasquez says as they join Maggie, Alex and Lucy in the kitchen, taking the drink Lucy hands them.

“I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Lucy says airily over the music, sipping her drink and staring off in the direction of James, Kara and Winn on the couch.

“You nearly crushed my hand,” Alex says. “I don’t think the bruise has ever faded.”

“Oh, stop being dramatic.”

“Yeah, you’re one to talk,” Alex says; the day she was more dramatic than Lucy would be the day Hell froze over. “You equated the pain to childbirth, I thought you were gonna punch Eduardo.”

“It can’t have been that bad,” Maggie says, raising an eyebrow. “It barely stung - ow!” She jumps back when Lucy pokes her collarbone where Maggie’s new tattoo is.

“Moving on,” Lucy says, pointing in the direction of the couch. “Should someone go grab Winn and tell him to leave the two lovebirds alone?”

Alex wrinkles her nose; just because it’s in plain sight, and neither James nor Kara are even attempting to hide their attraction towards each other, it doesn’t mean she should be subjected to it in her own home.

“Poor kid doesn’t know what to do with himself,” Vasquez says, their tone more amused than pitying.

“Well we can’t just drag him over here, or else those two will mount each other on the couch,” Lucy says and Alex spills beer down her chin, turning red when she catches Maggie’s smirk. “Let’s just go intervene before Danvers combusts.”
Alex was seriously starting to regret hosting this party; it had all been James’ idea, but her and Lucy’s place was bigger and closer to the tattoo shop and of course, Lucy had jumped at the chance to be hyper-organised and set up a party with seven hours notice.

Then Kara had got wind of what was happening, invited herself and arrived an hour after everyone else with Winn in tow. The congratulatory hug she had given Maggie was genuine enough, but Alex knows her sister better than she knows herself, and the fact that she has been talking to James the entire time leaves little doubt in Alex’s mind as to why Kara had been so insistent on coming.

She grabs a couple more beers and is about to join the others when she realises Maggie hasn’t moved, instead staring off into space.

“Are you okay?” Alex asks, feeling more than a little bit awkward. “This isn’t too much, is it?”

She knows what it feels like to be completely overwhelmed in situations like these, and she can’t blame Maggie if she does feel that way. But she just shakes herself out of it and Alex can tell her smile isn’t just there to cover up her unease.

“No, this is…” she pauses, looking at Alex. “Honestly? I expected something a lot worse. But you didn’t have to go through all this trouble.”

“It was all James’ idea,” Alex says, not wanting to take the credit but the meaning is lost on Maggie whose face falls slightly, clearly thinking Alex hadn’t wanted to bother. “But it’s no trouble, really. You’re our new teammate and we all wanted to give you a proper welcome.”

The spark returns to Maggie’s eyes at that, and for second it looks like she’s about to say something else, gathering her thoughts, but then Lucy interrupts them.

“Are you two gonna stand there whispering to each other all night?” she shouts over from the chair by the couch. “It’s bad manners to ignore people at your own party.”

“Is she always like this?” Maggie asks Alex, taking the beer she hands her, the moment gone.

“You get used to it,” Alex says, following Maggie over to where the others are sitting, Winn having moved to the floor; James and Kara are sitting at a polite enough distance apart, and Alex almost just wants to knock their heads together. She might not exactly be comfortable with seeing it under her own roof, but she only wanted to see her sister happy.

She sits at the foot of the chair Lucy’s sprawled in, bat ting her foot away when Lucy tries to rest it on her shoulder.

“So, let’s hear it,” Maggie says, gesturing between the teammates with the hand holding her beer. “Initiation stories. The good, the bad, the dirty, I wanna know.”

“Oh, mine is definitely dirty,” Lucy says, and Alex can feel her eyes on the back of her head and knows the exact look Lucy will have on her face if she turned around.

“They’re not that interesting,” Alex says before Lucy can continue. “Just a group of people getting tattoos and then really drunk.”

“James did a keg stand in a toilet,” Vasquez says. “I’d say that’s pretty interesting.”

“It was only interesting because you nearly dropped him,” Alex says. “Also, it was a pathetic attempt, James.”
“You can see for yourself,” Kara says and James groans when she pulls out her phone, leaning over to show Maggie the video Alex had sent to Kara the day after her and James’ initiation. “Alex did much better.”

Alex doesn’t miss the raise of Maggie’s eyebrows when Kara swipes across to the footage of Alex being held in place by a very drunk James and Vasquez, cheered on by the rest of the team behind the camera.

“I kinda hate that I’m impressed by that,” Maggie says, just as Lucy climbs over the arm of the couch to go to the kitchen. “But I’m also not surprised.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Alex asks, and shoots a glare towards Winn when he mutters an ‘uh-oh’.

“Nothing,” Maggie shrugs, taking a pull of her drink, seemingly unaware that the rest of the room has lapsed into a tense silence. “You’re just the type of person who wouldn’t back down from a challenge. I mean, they probably had to drag you off there before you drowned yourself, even though you’d beaten James.”

It’s then she realises that everyone is watching her and she slumps back on the couch, dropping her gaze to the beer bottle in her hands. Alex glances over at Lucy who’s kneeling by the drinks cabinet, looking quizzically over at her.

“It’s not a bad thing,” Maggie adds hastily. “You’re just super competitive, which is good, it means you’re passionate. I’ve seen it help the rest of the team when you play, too.”

Alex is slightly lost for words, very aware everyone is watching her, waiting for her reaction. To Alex, it had been a stupid dare, just so she could show up James and yet Maggie had picked up all of that just from watching one video.

“It’s just what I saw,” Maggie says and then pauses. “Anyway, who’s next? Lucy?”

Lucy looks up from where she’s rummaging in their virtually empty drinks cabinet, apparently finding nothing worth the occasion and darting across to her room, leaving the door open.

“It involved neon pink spray paint,” she calls out and Alex pushes aside her thoughts about what Maggie had said, joining in on Vasquez and James’ laughter.

“Come again?”

“That’s a whole other part of the story,” Lucy says, emerging from her room, grinning at Alex who feels the base of her neck growing warm. “They decided to spray paint all of my stuff neon pink.”

“It wasn't all of it,” Vasquez says, before anyone can question it.

“And nothing too bad,” James hastens to add. “Not until Alex got hold of it, anyway.”

Maggie raises an eyebrow questioningly at her as Alex lifts herself up to take Lucy’s vacated seat.

“I may have turned her cleats neon pink,” she says in a rush and Winn laughs.

“My brand new cleats,” Lucy says, now somewhere in the kitchen, a bottle of alcohol in her hands.

“Hey, you still wear them!” Alex counters.

“No, I bought a new pair the same colour,” Lucy says. “There’s a difference!”
Maggie’s laugh makes her dimples show, and Alex distracts herself from the flip her stomach does by turning back to look at whatever Lucy is doing in the kitchen.

“And that’s why she looks like a blurry bi pride flag when she sprints to first,” Vasquez says as Lucy walks back towards them, holding a bottle of tequila and balancing shot glasses on top of each other and that is Alex’s early morning study session effectively cancelled.

“Out and proud,” Lucy says and Maggie raises her empty bottle to that. “Now, who’s ready to make this a real party?”

It wasn’t until shot number eight that Alex starts to notice it. She’s fairly sure it’s not the tequila-infused fog in her brain making up just how closely Lucy was sitting next to Maggie, but she was sure it was the tequila that was making her stomach boil at the sight.

And of course, she knew exactly what it looked like when Lucy Lane was putting the moves on someone, having experienced it herself, and if the way Maggie was looking at Lucy was any indication, it was working.

She would be lying to herself if she says she definitely isn’t jealous, but it’s totally about the situation, not the people involved. She doesn’t even like Maggie as a friend, they were acquaintances at best and Lucy was her best friend, who admittedly she had slept with on more than one occasion but it didn’t mean anything.

It’s easier to convince herself it’s the situation she’s jealous of because Kara and James have been sitting next to each other for the entire night, the looks between them not hidden as well as they might like, at least not to Alex’s eyes. So it’s the situation. It’s boring when you’re the one not being flirted with.

“Your turn, Lane,” Alex says, snapping her fingers in front of Lucy, knowing she’s trying far too hard to sound normal.

“Yes, boss,” Lucy says, and Maggie snorts a laugh.

“You’re the one that suggested this stupid game,” Alex says. “Least you can do is take part, or you and Sawyer can go off somewhere else and have a party of your own.”

There’s a short intake of breath from Alex guesses is Vasquez, as Winn is passed out on the couch. She half expects Lucy to go for the second option, if only to rile Alex up more and with the glint in her eye, Alex braces herself for their party of seven to be knocked down to five.

“Fine,” Lucy says, grabbing the bottle of tequila from Alex and refilling their shot glasses.

Alex can feel Maggie watching her but she looks directly at the floor, holding the shot glass just for something to distract her.

“Never have I ever had sex with someone in this room,” Lucy says and there’s a collective groan; Alex knows exactly what game Lucy’s playing but she’s going to go along with it, determined not to let Lucy get under her skin.

Only James, her and Lucy drink, and she feels a kind of vindictive pleasure at the shock that unfurls on Maggie’s face, too drunk to even bother covering it up.

“Seriously?” Maggie says, looking between the three of them and Alex notices the way Kara pushes
her glasses up her nose, avoiding looking at either James or Lucy.

“Jealous?” Alex says, the question slipping out, unfiltered from the alcohol. “Don’t be, it was before your time, Sawyer.”

“What about that night after the beach party in Midvale?” Lucy says, unceremoniously wiping her mouth with the back of her hand. “Maggie was there then.”

“What, do you want to hand out a list of dates or something?” Alex says, rolling her eyes and taking the bottle.

“Can we move on?” Kara says before Lucy can say anything else, watching Alex carefully.

“Fine, never have I ever made out with someone in this room,” Maggie says, maintaining eye contact with Alex as everyone except Maggie drinks.


“So in a sense you’re quite literally playing the field,” Maggie says, amused.

“Everyone except the catcher,” Lucy says. “I wouldn't touch Max Lord with a baseball bat. Although I suppose he isn't our catcher anymore.”

Alex just pours herself another shot, throwing it back, impervious to the sensation, her mind foggy and the room hazy. She’s very aware of the pounding of her heart, the sound almost drowning out Lucy’s next words.

“I'd hate for you to feel like you're missing out,” she says to Maggie, almost dangerously close to her and Alex braces herself for what feels like the inevitable.

But then Maggie is leaning back, a smirk on her face and Alex has to admit, she's impressed someone has managed to resist that look on Lucy’s face.

“Sorry, Lane,” Maggie says. “You've got to earn this.”

She has to join in with the others laughing at the shock on Lucy’s face; it's not like she's used to being turned down. She covers it up well enough, pouring herself another shot and settles back against the chair next to Alex and raising the glass to Maggie.

“Well, I'm sure you're worth the wait.”

Alex sips at a glass of water while she stands in the kitchen, debating between just going to bed or clearing up the mess so she doesn’t have to deal with it hungover in the morning. She considers the second option briefly, not sure she'll be able to sleep anyway.

She can’t stop listening to the annoying voice in her head (which sounds strangely like Lucy) that’s trying to tell her why she feels jealous, even though she knows the voice is wrong. Because this is not about Maggie, and Maggie and Lucy. It’s about the situation, it’s about how close everyone around her was getting and the entire point of hosting a party was for it to be a team bonding thing not a Lucy bonding in a completely different way with everyone thing.

She’s far too drunk to over-analyse things now, exhaustion seeping into her bones at the mere
thought of having to drag herself to the gym at some point tomorrow. Alex just pours herself another
glass of water, draining it swiftly and heading back towards her room before her path is blocked by
Lucy emerging from the bathroom.

“So are we going to talk about what happened earlier?” Lucy asks, folding her arms. “And by that I
mean how clearly jealous you were when I nearly kissed Maggie.”

“It’s nearly four in the morning,” Alex says, glancing at her watch. “I wasn’t jealous.”

“Right,” Lucy says, drawing the word out and steps in front of Alex when she tries to go around
Lucy. “It’s not like you missed out or anything. You know there’s plenty more where that came
from.”

“You don’t ever stop, do you?” Alex says and Lucy just shrugs.

“Not really,” Lucy says, her eyes searching Alex’s. “So is that a yes?”

She reaches up and folds down the collar of Alex’s shirt, fingers deliberately brushing against her
neck, sending a slight shiver down her spine.

“Come on, Luce,” Alex says, breathing out a laugh. “We can’t do this every time one of us is horny
and drunk. Usually both at the same time.”

“Like there’s a rule or something?”

“Yeah, it’s called not sleeping with your roommate and best friend,” Alex says, but Lucy’s fingers
have moved to the hair at the nape of her neck, and Alex feels herself automatically drawing closer.

“Well, I hate to be the one to tell you this, but you’ve broken that rule several times,” Lucy says. “I
should know, I was there.”

“Yeah, but…” Alex says, drifting off, her argument lost as Lucy catches her eye, so close that their
lips are practically touching. But then Lucy steps back, the heat gone but the spark still there in her
eyes.

“Fine, go be alone and sad in your room,” she shrugs, smirking like she already knows what Alex’s
answer is going to be. “Just know that I’ll be alone in my room and more than willing to cheer you
up, and you can’t even deny that it works.”

She hates how right Lucy can be sometimes, so right that she can’t deny that it does work. Her
morals and judgement are already clouded by the alcohol and she knows that, just as it had been all
the other times, the morning after wasn’t going to be awkward, Alex as easy-going about it as Lucy
was about everything.

“Or we could have a nice long chat about our feelings if you’d rather,” Lucy says, and that’s all it
takes for Alex’s brain to make the inevitable choice, pushing Lucy backwards into her room, kicking
the door shut and tugging on the hem of Lucy’s hoodie and crashing their lips together in a messy,
heated kiss until they part, breathless.

“Talking is overrated.”

Chapter End Notes
Eduardo is my own personal shoutout to my awesome tattoo artist, that guy rules. This fic will be turning more serious, but I just wanted to have a fun chapter exploring the dynamics of the team and setting up future scenarios. My thanks as always to you all for supporting this through kudos, comments and the occasional messages I receive on tumblr, you guys have no idea how much it means to me!
smile like you mean it

Chapter Notes

please check the updated summary - this is a very slow-burn fic and also my first attempt at writing director sanvers so i want to kind of put my own spin on things. it really felt like the natural progression for this fic-verse to take. thank you for all the wonderful support i've received both here and on tumblr, it means the world to me!

now, let's get this show on the road...

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A resounding crash stirs Alex from her slumber. She groans into the pillow, inhaling the soft scent of vanilla, twisting her body to try and bury herself back into a deep sleep. However, the light streaming through the blinds has other plans for her, and she sighs, rolling onto her back, shoving the pillow over her face just as she hears the door to the bedroom open.

“You know you’re supposed to put the pillow behind your head, right?”

Alex groans again when she hears Lucy’s voice and throws the pillow down beside her, holding her hand up to shield her eyes from the light. Her hangover is already in full force, her head pounding and her mouth feels like she’d spent the night drinking sand.

“It’s too early in the morning for your sarcasm,” Alex huffs, drawing the sheet against her body as she props up the pillow behind her so she can sit up against the headboard.

“It’s eleven,” Lucy says, already dressed and holding two mugs of coffee, the smell pulling Alex forward with urgency, taking the mug which nearly burns her hand.

“Coffee in bed? What did I do to deserve this?” Alex says, raising an eyebrow and taking a sip.

“Nothing special,” Lucy shrugs, sitting on the edge of the bed. She shows no signs of the amount of tequila she had consumed the night before; it always makes Alex hate her just for a second, unable to understand how Lucy could look so put together at all times. “I just wanted to corner you before you ran off so we couldn’t talk about last night.”

Alex rolls her eyes, holding the mug against the duvet, the heat seeping through the fabric and onto her thigh.

“Nope, not happening,” she says. “We didn’t chat about our feelings last night, and we’re not doing it now. There’s nothing to even talk about.”

Lucy scoffs, crossing her legs and for one surprising, although ultimately naive, moment, Alex thinks she’s won with the way Lucy is just watching her and sipping her coffee.

“You know, I’ve tried to be nice,” Lucy says and Alex snorts into her coffee. “I’ve given you too much time to try and figure things out on your own,” she continues, leaning over and setting her mug down on the nightstand. “So, I’m going to give you a friendly little nudge.”

“Why do I get the feeling this nudge won’t be little or friendly?” Alex grumbles but resigns herself to
the fact that she isn’t getting out of this bed until they’ve had this talk.

“I know why you act like you don’t like Maggie,” Lucy says, shifting so she’s facing Alex, a look of pure glee on her face like she’s been waiting for this moment her entire life.

“Go on, enlighten me,” Alex says, although she’s sure she knows where this is going; she just can’t wait to prove Lucy wrong.

“You’re using it as a cover,” Lucy says. “You’ve buried all your feelings so far down that even you don’t recognise that what you’re really feeling is actually a huge crush but instead of facing it, you’re trying to find excuses not to be friends with her so you don’t have to deal with it all.”

There’s a long pause and before she can even figure out a proper response, Alex just bursts out laughing, trying not to spill the coffee on Lucy’s white sheets.

“Seriously?” she says, still laughing. “That’s what you got? I’m not burying anything, and I do not have some crush on Sawyer which I’m covering up by not being her friend, that’s just… that’s crazy.”

But is it crazy? The small voice in her head is loudly questioning what she just said, Lucy’s words running around in her mind. It’s true, she has been known to bury her emotions rather than deal with them, but this was an entirely different situation. And Lucy was just wrong.

She’d accepted Maggie onto the team, she was willing to see past her indifference to their new catcher and maybe, just maybe, they would become friends rather than just teammates. The idea didn’t repulse her as much as Lucy was suggesting; after talking to Maggie in the practice nets and last night, Alex feels like she understands her a bit more. She even felt bad for giving Maggie such a hard time in the past. That definitely didn’t strike Alex as burying her feelings and hiding an apparent crush.

“Anyway, if anyone has a crush on her, the way you were talking to her last night tells the truth,” Alex says, putting her mug down.

“Yeah, and the way you got jealous about it proves my point,” Lucy says. “Maggie’s an attractive woman, I have eyes and a brain and there was alcohol. Who wouldn’t flirt with her?”

“If this is you asking if I’d be okay with you two hooking up, feel free,” Alex says.

“It didn’t mean anything,” Lucy says, brushing her comment off. “Harmless flirting, and yet every time I so much as looked at her, you looked like you were about to storm off.”

Alex slumps back on the pillows, rubbing the ache between her eyes with her thumb and forefinger.

“We’re having two different conversations here,” she mutters. “Look, let’s just agree that neither of us have any feelings for Maggie. You weren’t seriously flirting, I wasn’t jealous. End of story.”

So maybe it wasn’t the entire story. It sure as hell wasn’t going to be the end of it if Lucy had any say in the matter. Alex had to admit, she had been a little bit jealous. She’s trying to blame it on the alcohol, and there’s no real reason she can fully work out in her hungover state that tells her why she felt that way. She suspects it’s something to do with the apparent friendship forming between Lucy and Maggie; she wasn’t usually a jealous person, she didn’t see the point. But she had to admit, the way Lucy and Maggie had been acting around each other… yeah, she felt pushed out.

And she knew she couldn’t blame it on anyone but herself, being too damn stubborn to even relent a little bit and get to know Maggie, having had plenty of chances over the summer when she had hung
out with them all. She had made her mind up and refused to change it and it had come back to bite her in the ass.

She almost feels like she’s got no chance of salvaging the hope of becoming friends with Maggie with the way she’s acted. She wouldn’t blame Maggie, she’s been cold and distant, accepting but not with open arms. That’s why she feels jealous; for the others, it had been easy to accept Maggie into the group and for Maggie to fit so smoothly into their team dynamic, especially considering she’s been friends with James for nearly two years now. Alex, however, had a long way to go before Maggie would accept her hand of friendship, even if they were teammates.

“You really don’t want to tell me anything?” Lucy says, her tone changing to one of concern, one Alex didn’t hear very often behind all the bravado and sarcasm Lucy usually provided. “Because you can, if you want. You know I’ll always be here to listen to you.”

Alex sits up again and sighs, draining her now luke-warm coffee, letting the caffeine sink into her bones. She runs a hand through her hair and over her face, trying to clear the sleep from her eyes.

“I know,” she says softly, dropping her hand and nudging Lucy’s knee. “What are best friends for, right?”

“Right,” Lucy laughs, nudging Alex back.

“Seriously, though, thank you” Alex says.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Lucy grins, rolling her eyes; Alex knew the seriousness wouldn’t last long.

“Now get dressed and get out of my bed.”

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It’s past one by the time Alex makes it to the gym. She had been torn between just not going at all and having a very long nap or forcing herself to actually move and try and sweat out the hangover. When she sees just how busy the gym near campus is, she wishes she had just stayed at the apartment and studied.

She stuffs her bag into one of the lockers, leaning her forehead against the cool metal for a moment before rolling her shoulders, trying to motivate her body into actually working. She feels like she’s showered in tequila, can’t quite shake the feeling that the smell is seeping out of her pores and she drains half her water bottle as though that will stop it.

Emerging from the locker room, she makes her way to the rowing machines, wondering what wonders the motion would do for her stomach, but she needs something to work up a quick sweat. Just as she sits down, she spots James over in the corner by the weights and -

“Kara?”

Her sister jumps at the sound of her name being called and Alex’s lips quirk up into a smirk, standing up and grabbing her towel and water bottle, making her way over to where James and Kara are stood, startled.

“Alex!” Kara says, finally gathering herself. “I didn’t think you’d be here today.”

“Nice to know I can still surprise you,” Alex says, folding her arms and looking between the two of them. “Nothing like a good workout to get rid of a hangover, right James?”
“You’re the scientist, you tell me,” James says, laughing, seemingly unfazed by Alex’s appearance (or interruption) although Alex can see right through him; he doesn’t want to incur the wrath of Alex being protective over her little sister and she doesn’t blame him.

“Works for me,” Alex shrugs. “I’m surprised to see you here, though, Kara, seeing as you’re the lucky one who can’t get drunk.”

“Oh… well, you know,” Kara says, glancing at James. “James wanted a workout buddy today, he said Maggie was going to be late so I offered.”

“Well, that’s very nice of you,” Alex says, receiving a nearly deadly glare from her sister had she not had better control of her heat vision; Alex wouldn’t put it past Kara to use it right now, even just to scare her off.

“You want to spot me, Alex?” James says, clearly trying to act as normal as possible but he must know Alex doesn’t buy it. She knows sooner or later, James is going to come to her and talk about Kara, unless she has to push their heads together at the rate they were going about it.

Before Alex can respond, she hears someone else call out, a voice she very much recognises; she’s barely recovered from her conversation with Lucy earlier, she doesn’t want to have to deal with this yet.

“Think that’s my job, Olsen,” Maggie says, striding over to them.

All Alex can think is that it’s a good job Lucy isn’t with her; she’d probably have to hold her back from jumping Maggie right in the middle of the gym. She has to admit, Maggie cuts an impressive figure in her workout clothes; she might not like her in that way, but she wasn’t blind and it would be pointless denying she didn’t check out the taut muscles of Maggie’s abs for a brief second. She looks away quickly; if she was going to try and be friends with Maggie, she definitely shouldn’t be thinking about her in that way.

“Afternoon, Danvers,” Maggie says, and God, Alex hopes she didn’t notice the slight staring. “Didn’t expect to see you here after last night.”

“That seems to be a running theme today,” Alex says, offering a small smile. “I don’t think either of us need to be here, it looks like Kara’s got it covered,” Alex adds, patting Kara on a rock-hard shoulder, hoping Maggie catches on.

“Sure,” she says, grinning, shoulder to shoulder with Alex. “Wouldn’t want to interrupt their date.”

“Wha – no, this isn’t… it’s not a date,” Kara splutters, James’ eyes wide.

“Could’ve fooled us,” Maggie shrugs, then after a pause leans over and punches James on the arm. “Don’t look so worried, I was joking,” she says and James rolls his eyes, finally finding his voice.

“Hard to tell sometimes,” he mutters, scratching the back of his head and Maggie turns back and winks at Alex, cutting off her laugh; well, maybe being friends with Maggie would be easier than she thought. “Are you going to stand there cracking jokes all day or actually work out with me?” James says and Maggie just laughs and moves to grab a pair of weights.

“We’ll be over there,” Alex says, pointing towards the treadmills, steering Kara around by the arm and tugging her away from Maggie and James, Kara raising a hand in farewell.

“So how quickly did you take James up on the offer to work out with him?” Alex teases as soon as they’re far enough out of earshot.
“This wasn’t a date!” Kara says quickly, her cheeks tinged red.

Alex leads them further out of the way of people, over to an empty corner by the water coolers.

“I’m sure James would take you somewhere far nicer than the gym for a first date,” Alex says and then tries to catch Kara’s eye. “You know I wouldn’t have a problem if it was, right?” Alex says, watching carefully for Kara’s reaction.

“It wasn’t -”

“I know,” Alex says gently. “But if it was. Or if there’s plans for there to be a date in the future.”

Kara looks at the floor, scuffing her toe of her sneakers.

“I don’t like him that way,” she mumbles and Alex sighs, placing her hands on Kara’s shoulders.

“You mean you don’t like him that way or you’re scared he doesn’t like you that way?” Alex asks and when Kara looks up, she avoids Alex’s eyes and shrugs a little bit; the sight makes Alex’s heart break slightly.

“It’s complicated,” is all Kara says. “He’s Lucy’s ex…”

“Kara, it’s the furthest thing from complicated,” Alex says. “James likes you, I can tell. We all can, especially Lucy. Trust me,” she adds when Kara starts to shake her head. “He’d be the luckiest guy in the world.”

Kara rolls her eyes, but a smile tugs at the corners of her mouth and Alex knows she’s won.

“You know he’s probably thinking the same thing about you,” Alex says. “You’re both waiting for the other to say something first. So, as your wise older sister,” she continues as Kara laughs. “I’m telling you, go for it. It’ll all work out, you’ll see. And if he says no, I’ll get J’onn to bench him. If he says yes, I’ll threaten him with a lot worse.”

Kara wraps her arms around Alex, hugging her as tightly as she can without breaking her ribs but still makes Alex stumble back with the force.

“You really think so?” Kara says.

“I know so.”

“You’re right, you are wise,” Kara mumbles into Alex’s shoulder.

“Well, I’ve got to be better than you at something,” Alex says and Kara hugs her harder before pulling away. “So are you gonna actually work out with me or just stand and admire James from afar?”

***

Alex ends up losing track of time, only stopping when Kara tugs on her arm and protests that she’s hungry and she knows Alex hasn’t eaten enough today. She almost tries to get Kara to go on her own to Noonan’s, but then her stomach rumbles as she’s getting off the treadmill and she concedes that maybe Kara was right.

On her way back to the locker room, she glances over at where Maggie and James are having a
planking competition, Maggie swiping at James’ arms with her left hand to try and get him to fall down. She smiles to herself, wiping the back of her neck with her towel.

“What were you staring at?” Kara asks as Alex pushes her way into the locker room.

“Nothing,” Alex shrugs, pulling her stuff out of the locker, dumping her towel into the bag.

“I don’t have to give you the same speech you gave me, do I?” Kara says, leaning against the lockers, watching Alex intently.

“No, definitely not,” Alex laughs, draining her water bottle before stuffing it into her bag and pulling on her hoodie.

“I saw you last night -”

“Don’t you start as well,” Alex says, rolling her eyes. “I’ve had this conversation already today. I’m not jealous of Lucy and Maggie.”

Kara hums her disagreement, and Alex has a feeling she would body block her if she tried to escape the conversation.

“Look, it’s not that kind of jealousy,” Alex says, sitting on one of the benches. “It’s just… okay, you’re all friends with her and I’m not. Which is my own fault,” she adds quickly when Kara opens her mouth. “I know, it’s my own fault.”

“So… you’re saying you want to change that?” Kara asks, brow furrowed as she sits next to her sister.

“Sure,” Alex says, acting less bothered than she actually feels. “She’s on the team now, and you know… maybe I was wrong about her, but…”

“But it’s harder to change that when you’ve not exactly been the friendliest person towards her,” Kara finishes somewhat bluntly and Alex laughs bitterly, knowing she shouldn’t even be getting an inch of sympathy.

“Exactly,” Alex says. “She’s… I could see us being friends, I’m… I’m trying to be her friend,” she finishes and Kara beams at her.

However, whatever Kara is about to say to that is lost when the door to the locker room opens and Maggie strides in, not noticing them until she looks up, that same bright smile from earlier on her face.

“Hey Maggie!” Kara says and Alex bites back a groan because she knows that look on Kara’s face all too well. “We’re going to Noonan’s, you want to come?”

“I would, but I’ve got to head to the library,” Maggie says, grabbing her stuff from the locker, including her bike helmet. “Thanks, though.”

“Oh, it was Alex’s suggestion,” Kara says brightly, standing up. “I’ll wait for you outside,” she says to Alex as she leaves the room, leaving Alex sitting there, stumped and slightly irritated.

“Does your sister ever slow down?” Maggie laughs, shrugging on her jacket, undoing her hair from it’s ponytail.

“Not really,” Alex says. “It’s hard to keep up sometimes.”
“Well, you do a pretty good job of it,” Maggie says, and Alex just returns the smile. “Would I be right in saying that you and her had a little talk when you two went off?”

Alex laughs, shouldering her bag, holding the door open for Maggie as they walk out of the locker room. She spots Kara talking to James over by the exit and feels a nudge in her side from Maggie.

“You would,” Alex says. “I mean, it’s not just me, right? You can see it too?”

“Oh, yeah,” Maggie grins. “I knew the first time I saw them together.”

They raise a hand to James as he leaves and they approach Kara, who is staring at the now empty space until Alex waves a hand in front of her face.

“Earth to Kara,” she says and Maggie chuckles next to her, the three of them walking outside onto the street. “Come on, time to focus on food instead.”

Kara links her arm through Alex’s as they start walking away from the gym, only getting a few paces before Alex spots the same bright red Triumph that had almost ran her off the road the day before.

“This is my stop,” Maggie says, zipping up her jacket.

“Try not to cause a crash this time,” Alex says and Maggie laughs, swinging her leg over the bike. Already things felt different between them and even though Alex sometimes enjoyed being stubborn, she liked that things were beginning to change.

“See you at practice tomorrow.”

“Wouldn’t miss it.”

Chapter End Notes

just a heads up that comments are still being moderated for this fic as certain people really don’t know when to move on and grow up... thank you so much for the continued support. back to the baseball action next chapter, and as always hmu @llucylane on tumblr if you wanna chat about this or my other AUs (or anything really!). have a great week everyone!
touch base

Chapter Notes

writer's block is the worst... shoutout to @karolsens on tumblr for being my editor and helping me carve out a plan for the next few chapters, not sure what i'd do without them! (also check out their writing, especially if you love karolsen).

just a warning, there's the use of a homophobic slur and minor violence in this chapter

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Practice goes far better than Alex had predicted; she had expected a challenge, what with it being the first practice of the year, not to mention the first one with a new teammate. She had arrived with Lucy just before practice was due to start at five, meeting James by the practice nets with J’onn. She was itching to get back out there and just play, and the fact that their first game of the season was still two weeks away filled her with all this nervous energy that she didn’t know what to do with.

After their first practice, she was even more impatient. It may only be two weeks but the wait might as well be two years the way Alex saw it.

They had run through various drills, the whole team slipping back into the swing of things easily, and what was more, Maggie had fit seamlessly into the mix. There had been initial nerves, she had even seemed slightly overwhelmed but, like Alex, once they had started, all of that had been left behind. She had worked well with the other pitchers, who made various comments about the vast improvement she was on Max Lord.

The best part, though, was that Alex’s wish had seemingly come true. What she had said to M’gann, about finding a catcher that fit with her pitching style, who understood her plays… Alex hated to admit that she was wrong, but that didn’t change the fact that her first impression had been about Maggie when James had asked if she could try out.

She tried not to let it all go to her head, tried to push aside the persistent thought in the back of her mind that was telling her that this was their year. She was too scared of disappointment to believe it, and she calmed the excitement with sobering thoughts that this was only their first training session. It would be a whole different story once they were out there, playing their first game.

“You made the right choice,” J’onn says to her as they start walking back to the locker room.

“It was a team decision,” Alex shrugs, adjusting her grip on the basket of balls in her right hand.

“But the team values your opinion the most,” J’onn says. “You’re the best starting pitcher this team has seen in a long time, Alex. You need a catcher with the same level of skill and I think you’ve found her.”

Alex glances over her shoulder where Maggie is walking back with Lucy and Vasquez, laughing at something Vasquez says which makes Lucy hip-check them. There was no denying Maggie’s skill behind the plate; even in practice, her signals had been clear and she had a quick arm to catch runners out at second with the help of Vasquez.
The most surprising thing had been her batting. Alex hadn’t expected great things when they’d run batting drills, but Maggie had a good eye and decent power behind her swing. She just hoped that when it came to their first game, things would run as smoothly.

“Do you think we’ve got a shot this year?” Alex asks J’onn and he offers her a wry smile.

“You know it’s too early to be talking like that,” J’onn says.

“Humour me, then,” Alex laughs. “More or less than last season?”

“If we play as well as you’ve shown me you can today, then I would say we have a shot,” J’onn says, holding the door open to the locker room. “Let’s just not throw it away.”

Alex just nods; after the near disaster of last season, she thinks anything might be better than that. The voice in the back of her mind is getting louder, telling her to believe, just this once.

“Our first game is two weeks away,” J’onn says as Lucy, Maggie and Vasquez join the rest of the team inside. “You all started well out there today, but let’s keep working at it and pushing. There’s still room for improvement before the season starts. And Sawyer?”

Maggie looks up from where she’s sitting next to Lucy on one of the benches, catcher’s helmet in her hands.

“Coach?”

“Good work today,” J’onn says with a rare smile and Maggie looks slightly dumbfounded until Lucy nudges her.

“Thanks coach,” Maggie says, a hint of a blush creeping into her cheeks.

J’onn nods in her direction and then leaves, the team bursting into talk as soon as the door closes behind him, Alex catching various snippets while she stands at her locker, pulling out her book bag and bike helmet.

“You’re gonna make Douchewell Lord wonder how he ever got picked for the team,” Dunagan, their centre fielder says as they pass Maggie, clapping a hand on her shoulder on their way out of the room with Vasquez.

“It’s a shame you weren’t here last year, you could’ve made the world of difference,” one of the relief pitchers, Riley, says and Maggie just laughs her comment off with a shrug.

The way her smile drops slightly isn’t lost on Alex; it’s the same kind of expression she had when they had been talking in the practice nets at tryouts, something hidden behind her eyes that she was still fighting to control. Maybe one day, if things kept going the way they were, Maggie might trust her enough to confide in her like she had with James.

Slowly, the rest of the team file out, leaving behind her, Maggie and Lucy. She sits on the end of the bench, pulling on her boots and stuffing her cleats into her bag, wiping some of the red dust off the hem of her trousers. Even with Lucy in the room, it’s strangely silent, until Maggie breaks it.

“Why do I get the feeling that J’onn doesn’t give out many compliments?” she asks and Lucy laughs, leaning against the lockers, shouldering her bag.

“Because he doesn’t,” she says. “I don’t even remember him giving one to Lord, and he played for us for a year.”
“Well, he didn’t sound like the most popular member of the team,” Maggie says, throwing a towel over her shoulder, shutting the locker door.

“Of course, Alex here gets them all the time,” Lucy says and Alex just rolls her eyes. “She’s the star.”

“It’s a team effort,” Alex says shortly. “I’m no better or more important than any of you.”

Lucy just hums her disagreement, fixing Alex with a stare to challenge her before changing the subject.

“What’re you doing later?” she asks, directing the question at Maggie and for a brief moment, Alex wonders if this is going to be her asking Maggie out on that date she had mentioned at her initiation. “We’re having a game night at our place, if you want to join.”

Alex lets out a breath. *Right, game night, of course.*

“I would, but I’ve got plans,” Maggie says and both Lucy and Alex exchange a look and Lucy folds her arms, smirking at Maggie.

“Oh, really?”

“Hot date with my criminology textbooks,” Maggie laughs. “There’s a test tomorrow and I’d really rather not fail even if your evening sounds way more fun.”

“You’re almost as bad as Alex,” Lucy says, earning her a glare. “Almost, don’t worry, you still take the top spot of how much time can you spend in the library before your brain explodes.”

“I’m honoured,” Alex mutters, standing up from the bench. “Well, we have game night every week so… maybe next time?” she offers.

“Definitely maybe,” Maggie says with that winning smile that Alex has a feeling she’s going to be seeing a lot of that over the coming months. “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

The three of them go their separate ways, Maggie to the showers and Alex and Lucy out of the locker rooms, making their way towards the gates. Alex pulls her baseball jacket tighter around her against the chill of the wind rushing through the park.

“Look at you making an effort to be friends with Maggie,” Lucy says as they walk around the locker room. “Inviting her to game night, what’s next? Romantic candlelit dinner at Noonan’s?”

“Come off it,” Alex says, knowing Lucy wouldn’t have let this go. “I’m just being friendly. She’s our teammate, and you know, she’s not as bad as I first thought. You all get along fine with her so… why should that be different for me?”

“All I’m saying is that she must be good to make Alex Danvers change her mind,” Lucy says with a shrug, fumbling around in her bag as they walk before cursing. “Left my keys behind, I’ll catch up,” she says and sprints off before Alex can even blink, watching her go.

She shakes her head, heading towards the gates before her path is blocked by someone stepping away from the fence, casting a long shadow over her.

“What do you want, Rick?” Alex asks, but she has an idea what this is about by the thunderous expression on his face.
“I want you to give me another go.” Rick says, towering over her in what he hopes is an intimidating gesture. “That spot should be mine, you know I should be up there behind that plate!”

Alex doesn’t even flinch; Rick really should have known better than to try and intimidate her, she had to endure that kind of crap for two years just for being the team’s star player and a girl, too. Instead, she folds her arms, gives a disinterested shrug. She’s not going to give him the satisfaction of getting annoyed.

“Tryouts are over, Rick, we chose our catcher,” she says. “Sawyer won, fair and square. She’s the right person for the job. You can try out next year, if we need you.”

Somehow, she doesn’t think that will be necessary.

“This is bullshit!” Rick shouts, spit flying in her face.

“What’s going on?” says a voice, Lucy’s voice, from behind Alex. “What’s your problem, Ricky?”

Alex curses silently to herself; this would be a lot harder to handle now that Lucy was here, all fire and no filter.

“My problem?” Rick says, now glaring at Lucy. “Just because you want more of your dyke friends -”

“What did you just say?”

Alex recoils, mostly from Lucy pushing in front of her, over a head shorter than Rick. But she has to admit that, if looks could kill, Rick would be in no position to be trying out anyway.

“Luce, leave it, it’s fine,” Alex says, grabbing Lucy’s arm which is promptly wrenched from her grip.

It wasn’t anything she hadn’t heard before, and she’s become immune to the sting, she’s had to since she was in high school. But Lucy had always taken it upon herself to defend Alex, her fist almost as quick as her wit that sent people like Rick scurrying for cover. Alex knew why Rick did it, he was hoping that it would make her snap, but Alex was built of stronger stuff, and it was going to take more than one homophobic jerk like Rick to make her crack.

“Let it go, Lucy,” she tries again.

“No! Say it again, see what happens,” Lucy says venomously at Rick. “What’re you afraid of?”

“Is everything okay?”

Rick whirls around, coming face to face with James and his defiant stance crumbles slightly.

“This isn’t over,” he says, turning back to Alex who matches his glare before he stalks off towards the gates, muttering to himself.

“What the hell was that all about?” James asks, looking between the retreating form of Rick and Lucy’s expression of barely concealed volcanic rage.

“Nothing, it doesn’t matter,” Alex says, but true to form, Lucy doesn’t listen.

“It does matter!” Lucy says, matching Alex’s strides as they follow Rick, watching him turn the corner. “He can’t just go around saying things like that, no one can! I mean, it’s no wonder we don’t want him on the team, not if he’s going to insult about half the players -’”
“Woah, Lucy, slow down,” James says, walking in front of them and backwards. “What did he say? Cause I can go talk to him if you want me to.”

Alex hitches her bag higher up her shoulder, holding a hand up so the other two stop walking.

“Look, it’s nothing new,” she says. “And I know, I know I shouldn’t have to put up with it, but it barely ever happens now, that’s the first time in months, so just… it’s not worth it, okay? There are always going to be people like Rick and that sucks, but… it doesn’t affect me, let’s just drop it.”

Lucy opens her mouth to argue back but closes it again at Alex’s glare, sighing.

“Fine, but I have no problem punching his lights out if you change your mind,” she says and Alex laughs, throwing an arm around her shoulder.

“That’s the only reason I’ve kept you around all these years, Lane,” she says.

“We both know that’s not quite true,” Lucy says, eyes glinting and Alex knocks her hips into Lucy’s side.

She reaches her bike and breathes a sigh of relief when it seems untouched; she has no doubt people would stop at nothing to get their message across about how much they resented Alex Danvers, out and proud lesbian, star pitcher for their college baseball team. She hands a helmet from the saddlebag to Lucy before turning to James.

“Can you do me a favour?” she says.

“What you need,” James says, brow furrowed. “Are you sure everything’s okay?”

“Yeah, yeah, I’m fine,” she says, waving away his concern which she appreciates nonetheless; it’s a reminder of just how much she would support his relationship with Kara. “Just keep an eye on Maggie for me? Make sure Rick and his friends don’t start going after her next. I get the feeling she’s been through enough without having to endure Rick’s crap too…”

“Sure, I’ll make sure nothing happens,” he says. “Maggie’s tough, just like you.”

She doesn’t doubt him.

“Thanks, James.”

“This is going to mess up my hair,” Lucy interrupts, frowning at the helmet Alex had given her.

“If you don’t want to walk home, you’ll wear it,” Alex says and Lucy considers her options before putting the helmet on. “Game night later?” she adds to James.

“Actually, I’ve kinda got plans,” James says, scratching his ear and then checking his watch. “Which I might be late for, so I’ll see you guys tomorrow,” he adds and then walks off to his car with a wave.

Lucy stands watching him go, arms folded.

“Wonder what that’s all about,” she says and Alex shrugs, but she isn’t entirely clueless after what she had said to Kara at the gym yesterday. Maybe finally they had both realised what was right in front of them and taken the chance.

“Well, there’s no point in having game night if it’s just going to be you, me and Winn,” Alex says, straddling the bike and waiting for Lucy to climb on the back. “Kara’s busy, too.”
“What about Vas?” Lucy asks, gripping Alex around the waist.

“What about Vas?” Alex says, pulling on her helmet. “Apparently it’s their third with Dunagan.”

“Excellent, James owes me twenty,” Lucy says and Alex laughs. “But that’s a shame, I was hoping to introduce Maggie to strip poker.”

“We never have, and never will, play strip poker,” Alex says for what feels like the thousandth time. “And you know what, just for suggesting that again, I'm hitting every speed bump on the way home.”

“You wouldn’t dare,” Lucy says, muffled to Alex’s ears.

Alex kicks the engine into life; by now, Lucy should have learned not to test her.

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As it turns out, the lack of game night is a blessing in disguise for Alex. As soon as her and Lucy step through their door, Lucy still berating Alex for hitting that last speed bump so sharply, Alex’s phone rings.

Holding a finger up to silence Lucy mid-rant, she answers it and hears M’gann on the other end of the line asking if Alex’s is free to come good on her promise to help out at the bar in order to start paying off her tab.

“I’ve had someone call in sick, I could really use you down here.”

“When do you need me?” Alex asks.

“Half an hour ago,” M’gann says and Alex can hear people in the background.

“I’ll be there as soon as I can,” Alex says, and M’gann thanks her and hangs up.

She leaves ten minutes later after what must be the world’s fastest shower, opting to go on foot to the bar rather than bother with her bike. She makes it just twenty minutes after M’gann’s call, sliding in through the door past two guys she recognises from her genetics class.

She barely has a chance to say hi to M’gann before she starts serving people, the bar crammed with people which makes sense when Alex happens to glance up at the television screen and sees the LA Angels playing.

A couple of hours into her shift, the bar has thinned out and she can finally take a breather, grabbing herself a bottle of seltzer from under the bar. And then she promptly almost spits it out when someone moves out the way and she can see who is sitting in one of the booths.

Well, at least now she knew exactly what James’ plans had been that had made him cancel on game night and it explained why she had received such a flimsy, panicked excuse from Kara. It hadn’t really taken much to piece it all together, but at least now she had confirmation that finally they were taking a chance.

She stands back, leaning against the counter behind her, watching them and when Kara glances in her direction with that bright smile, she just raises her bottle and grins back, her heart melting slightly at seeing her sister so happy.
“They look good together,” M’gann says, walking up to Alex, wiping out a glass. “You always said it would happen one of these days.”

“I had to give them a little nudge,” Alex shrugs, sharing M’gann’s laugh.

“You wouldn’t be you if you didn’t interfere,” M’gann says. “You’re as bad as Lucy sometimes.”

Alex huffs in mock offence, before moving off to serve someone at the end of the bar, keeping one eye on Kara who was laughing loudly at something James had said, their fingers intertwined on the table top.

Her sister and James stay until just before last call, leaving hand in hand. Alex is tempted to fire off a text to Kara, the protective older sister part of her yearning to be heard. Alex would never hear the end of it from Eliza if James ended up breaking Kara’s heart, but she was sure that wouldn’t happen. She puts her phone back in her pocket, ignoring the texts from Lucy detailing the episode of *American Ninja Warrior* that she’s missed.

M’gann lets her go about half an hour later, waving away Alex’s offer to stay and close, thanking her for coming in on such short notice.

“Least I can do,” Alex says, grabbing her jacket and raising a hand in farewell as she steps into night, shivering. She thinks about texting Lucy that she’s on her way back, but she’s sure Lucy is probably asleep by now when she checks the time as she makes her way down the alley.

She doesn’t see it coming.

She’s too focussed on the speech she’s going to have to give James at some point in the future, too occupied with remembering how happy Kara had looked in his company. She doesn’t register that anything is wrong until it quite literally hits her.

Suddenly she isn’t seeing the end of the alleyway, the streetlights carving a path along the empty sidewalk back to her apartment. Sharp pain shoots across her back as she finds herself staring up at the night sky, unsure if the lights dancing in her vision are stars or not. And then everything goes black as a figure hovers over her, and the panic kicks in, sharp and loud and biting and she wants to scream but her voice has fled, frozen in her throat.

Her instincts kick in and she starts to struggle and scramble to her feet but the person shoves her shoulders hard, sending her crashing back onto the concrete floor of the alley, the security light from the bar flicking on and casting the figure into sharp relief.

“I told you this wasn’t over.”

Chapter End Notes

me vs not using cliffhangers all the time.... thank you for all the wonderful comments about last chapter, it felt good to be back writing this fic! i really hope to have the next chapter up quicker, but i have a lot going on over the next couple of weeks. your support means everything, thank you for reading and have a great week everyone!
“Let me go, Rick.”

Alex’s breaths come harsh and heavy, her mouth half-open in the beginnings of a cry for help but the shock has silenced her, an icy chill flooding her veins. She tries to scramble up but Rick is faster. He pins her back to the floor with a boot to her chest, a bruising force against her ribs.

Naively, she calls out for Kara in her mind, wishing her sister would be able to pick up on her panic, just this once maybe Kara can save her… but no, Kara was somewhere maybe with James, distracted, happy, feeling more human than perhaps she had ever done, trained not to use her powers…

“You could have made this so much easier on yourself,” Rick says, snapping Alex back to the terrifying reality. “Just let me on the team, it wouldn't have been difficult.”

Alex is suspended in disbelief that Rick is going to such an extreme over this, she had never expected it.

“Do you know what happened when I told my parents I didn’t get on the team?” Rick seethes, towering over her. “Tell me, Alex, do you know what it feels like to fail all your parent’s expectations all the time? To be called a disappointment even for things outside your control? Alex Danvers, star pitcher, top of her class… of course you haven’t.”

Alex holds her tongue; no, Eliza has never called her a disappointment, she doesn’t think her mother is capable of that. But Alex knows what it feels like to fail, to feel the blame, even if the words were never said.

“This is on you,” Rick spits. “You did this. I was right for this team, I could have done something and proven myself, finally not given them an excuse to yell but you took that chance away from me!”

“Just let me go,” Alex says. “Let me go and we can talk about this, okay?

She doesn’t want to hurt him, she doesn’t want to fight back because she has no idea what Rick is hiding, she has no idea what he’s capable of but if it comes down to it, she’s not going to let him win that easily, no matter how terrified she feels.

“We’re done talking,” Rick says and Alex’s blood runs cold as he stands up and any second now she expects to feel unbearable pain shooting through her body, from what she doesn’t know, but he just stands there, watching her.

“Don’t do anything stupid, you’re smart, Rick, you know you won’t get away with anything,” Alex says, then decides to use his own words against him. “You said it yourself, we go way back. Just
think, please -”

Blinding pain shoots up her arm and a cry is torn from her throat as Rick’s boot slams down on her right hand, crushing it against the concrete, grinding the heel into the palm and Alex almost whites out, her own shout echoing in her ears, clear between all the pain and the panic.

Then the pressure disappears, the pain radiating all over her body. She feels dizzy, blinking away the white lights, Rick’s face swimming into view again as he stands over her. He’s open for Alex to fight back but it’s like she’s frozen in stasis, her body and mind no longer connected, nothing pushing her to fight.

“Look at that,” Rick says, his sneer now a leering grin. “I don’t think either of us will be playing now. You’re lucky this time -”

“Hey! What the hell do you think you’re doing!”

A shout comes loud and clear from somewhere behind Alex, a voice she would recognise if her brain would kickstart again. The sound of pounding footsteps slowly grow distant, a shadow no longer hangs over her until whoever had called out steps into her peripheral vision.

“Alex? What happened, are you okay?”

M’gann’s hands grip Alex’s left arm firmly, pulling her up and catching her when Alex stumbles on shaking legs, staring straight ahead at where Rick had run off to.

“Alex, look at me,” M’gann says and Alex tears her eyes away from the street, only noticing then that she isn’t breathing properly as she comes back to herself and then she can’t breathe, her lungs empty and full all at once, ropes crushing her ribs.

“Hey, hey, it’s okay, he’s gone, look at me, Alex, focus on me,” M’gann says, putting her hand just next to the spot where Rick had kicked at Alex’s chest. “Breathe against my hand, it’s okay.”

She tries to focus on her breathing, on the rise and fall of her chest before closing her eyes and letting the darkness envelop her. After a while, the tightness loosens, her breaths are more shaky than sharp. When she opens her eyes again, she’s half afraid that it’s going to be Rick in front of her and not M’gann.

“Let’s get you inside,” M’gann says.

The next thing Alex knows she’s back in the bar, feeling completely separate from her body, barely registering M’gann leading her up a staircase, her feet feeling like lead.

She sinks into a chair and M’gann disappears. Slowly, the world around her comes back into view, the pain in her hand shooting up her wrist and arm.

The words Rick had spat at her run around in her mind, and she has a hard time focussing on anything else as clearly until M’gann steps back into her line of sight, phone in hand.

“What are you doing?” Alex asks, her voice sounding distant.

“Reporting this to the police,” M’gann says.

“No!” Alex says before she can stop herself, her mind as clear as it had been since the attack. “Don’t call them, it’s not worth it.”
“One moment I’m clearing up and the next I here screaming and run out to find you being attacked in front of my bar, Alex! You’re shaken up, you’re hurt, whoever did this -”

“M’gann, please,” Alex says. “Don’t call the cops, it’s just going to make everything worse. Please, just trust me.”

She stares at Alex in disbelief for a long moment, her thumb hovering over her phone as she watches Alex as if she’s trying to figure out exactly why Alex won’t involve the authorities. It’s a piercing stare and Alex has to look away; getting the police involved would only cause more stress. She’d get all the pity and the concern from her team and she can’t have that. She’s not letting this defeat her, she’s not letting this change how people view her.

“At least tell me what this is all about,” M’gann says with a sigh, locking her phone and leaving the room before returning with a first aid kit in her hands.

“It’s not a big deal,” Alex says, despite how shaken she feels from the ordeal.

She knows that sooner rather than later, it’s going to hit her like a ten ton truck, smash through the shock barrier that’s been built up.

“It’s a big enough deal for you to be attacked,” M’gann says, leaving no room for negotiation in her tone. “If you’re not going to tell the police, then you have to tell me.”

She gently eases Alex’s jacket off her shoulders, rolling her shirt sleeve up her arm and Alex hisses when M’gann accidentally brushes against the bruised part of her wrist.

“Someone wasn’t happy about our choice of catcher,” she says, staring down at her hand, grazed, bloody and bruised. “Wanted to make sure he got the message across I suppose.”

M’gann brushes an antiseptic wipe against Alex’s knuckles to remove the grit stuck in the wounds, and tears burn at the back of her eyes.

“So you know who it was?” M’gann asks but Alex shakes her head in answer to the unasked question.

“I’m not reporting him,” Alex says. “It’s not worth the trouble, he’s got his anger out and now we can all move on.”

“He took his anger out on your pitching hand,” M’gann says, tenderly turning Alex’s hand over so she can wipe her palm.

“It’s fine, it’s just bruised,” Alex says, knowing she would be in a world of pain right now if it was broken.

She’s more shaken than anything else. Her breathing has slowed considerably, but her hands are still trembling while M’gann tends to the scrapes as the adrenaline floods out of her system.

“Are you okay?” M’gann asks and this time, Alex knows she’s not talking about her hand.

For a moment, she considers just shrugging it off but flashes of what happened were replaying in her mind like a old fashioned film reel, jagged images which she couldn’t quite piece together.

“I just didn’t expect anything like this to happen, that’s all,” Alex says. “You think you know someone, you know you know them, and then all it takes is one thing for them to snap and… and then you’re on the floor, hand crushed against the concrete.”
She tries to force a laugh at the last part, at the sheer absurdity of it all, that one moment she had been in the bar, over the moon for her sister and one of her oldest friends, and the next she was being beaten in a dark alleyway.

Instead, all that comes out is a choked sob and she digs her nails of her other hand into her knee to stop herself.

“It’s okay to feel scared,” M’gann says, resting her hand over Alex’s.

“I feel… I feel like I should have seen it coming,” Alex says, sniffing. “I had no idea what he was going through at home…”

“But that’s not an excuse,” M’gann says firmly. “People aren’t let off the hook just because they’re going through something. That’s not how it works.”

“I know, it’s just…” Alex trails off, knowing she doesn’t have a point to make; she knows M’gann is right but it still doesn’t sit easy with her.

“If you had known whatever it is that you know now, would you have chosen a different person to be catcher?” M’gann asks and Alex doesn’t even need to think about it, shaking her head. “Exactly,” M’gann continues. “So this is completely his own doing. He chose how to react.”

“Maybe I should’ve just softened the blow, then I might not be sitting here with a mangled hand,” Alex says pointedly.

“You couldn’t have known what he would do,” M’gann says, ending any further avenue of argument from Alex, before standing and walking out the room, taking the used wipes with her.

Alex sits there in silence, distracting herself from the pain by taking in her surroundings. She didn’t know what to expect of M’gann’s place, living above a bar, but this certainly wasn’t it. It was fairly minimalist, bright, completely unlike the bar downstairs and yet it carried a similar comfort and warmth. It calmed Alex almost as much as the presence of M’gann herself, who returns with ice wrapped in a towel, pressing it gently against Alex’s hand.

“Nothing’s broken,” M’gann says as Alex winces at the cold contact. “Keep that on your hand, I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

Alex takes the towel from M’gann, biting back the hiss of pain that suddenly seems a whole lot sharper than it had done before. She trusts M’gann isn’t going to call anyone behind her back and she allows herself to relax as much as she can given the circumstances. Eventually, she hears M’gann moving around in the kitchen. The pain reduces to a dull throb and she shifts the makeshift ice pack to the other side of her hand.

“Here you go,” M’gann says, setting down a steaming mug on the table next to Alex. “I think the situation calls for tea more than anything else.”

M’gann sits back in the chair opposite her, taking the towel off Alex’s hand to assess the damage. Now she has a chance to properly look at it, Alex has no idea how she’s supposed to turn up to practice tomorrow and pitch.

She only knows that she’s going to give it a damn good try. The skin on the back of her hand has been nearly scraped away, leaving red and raw patches, her knuckles bleeding lightly from where they had been ground into the concrete. Her palm isn’t much better, purple bruises already forming, the edge of Rick’s boot heel still imprinted clearly onto her hand.
“Keep the ice on it for a while to help with the swelling, then I’ll call Lucy and tell her to come and pick you up,” M’gann says, resting the towel gently back onto Alex’s hand.

“She’ll be asleep, don’t bother her,” Alex says; she’s sure Lucy would pick up, she never has her phone on silent, but Alex doesn’t want anyone to see her like this, especially not Lucy who would probably storm out and go on a hunt for Rick in her underwear.

“Kara, then.”

“Definitely not,” Alex laughs. “She’d call Eliza, that’d make everything ten times worse. I’ll be fine.”

“You’ve said that word so much tonight, I’m surprised you still believe yourself,” M’gann says. Alex rolls her eyes, taking a sip of her tea. “You can’t hide this Alex. They’re your team.”

“I can still play,” Alex says stubbornly. “They’re going to notice, it doesn’t mean I have to stop practising. It’s my hand and I know my limits.”

She has the excuse already formed; she had tripped on her way out of the bar and put her hand out to stop the fall. But she wouldn’t stop practising, not when their first game was so close.

She could power through the pain, and she knows no one is going to question her about it. And by the time their first game rolled around, her hand would be good as new and she could start as she meant to go on. In her mind, there was no use worrying her friends about her ability to start the season.

“I’m not going to force you to tell them what really happened or how hurt you are, or your coach for that matter,” M’gann says and Alex knows she’s lucky her hand isn’t broken, lucky her damn baseball career is still intact. “I trust you to do the right thing and make the right choice.”

Alex just drinks more of her tea, the guilt already rising in her gut. But the team would be worse off without their starting pitcher than they would be if she did start and her hand wasn’t back to full function. She had been through worse, taken harder hits and both her and the team knew that this would be nothing she couldn’t handle.

“When you’ve finished your tea I’ll walk you home,” M’gann says.

“You don’t -”

“You stopped me from calling the police, Lucy and Kara,” M’gann says. “So you’re going to let me do this one thing and walk you home, you’re not going back out there alone tonight.”

Alex looks down into the nearly empty mug, her hand twitching under the damp towel. Her body and her mind are exhausted, both from exerting herself in practice and moreso from what had happened to her tonight.

Her legs are still a bit shaky when she goes to stand and she steadies herself on the back of the chair. More than anything, she just wants to get home and sink into her duvet, curl up and try and forget any of this ever happened, but she knows she’ll be lucky to get a good night’s rest.

“Thanks,” Alex says when M’gann holds out her jacket, helping her get her right hand through the sleeve as painlessly as possible before leaving M’gann’s flat.

They walk mostly in silence, M’gann close by her side as they take the front entrance of the bar, away from the alley and out onto the still lit street. Alex pulls her jacket tighter around her rather than
bothering with the zip, the chill seeping under her skin. Every nerve in her body has suddenly
returned to high alert, her senses unusually heightened, like she’s just waiting for someone else to
step out of the shadows.

She only speaks to give M’gann directions back to her and Lucy’s apartment. It’s a ten minute walk,
but to Alex it felt like a year, the fear prickling at the back of her neck, her heart beating a furious
tattoo against her ribcage.

“Do you want me to walk you up?” M’gann asks her as they step through the main entrance.

Alex considers it for a second, takes one look at the elevator and the stairs half in shadow and then
nods, letting M’gann take the lead as they make their way up three flights of stairs, Alex’s legs
screaming with exhaustion.

She fumbles with her key as she extracts it from her pocket, slipping it into the lock but not turning it.

“You’ll be okay?” M’gann asks her and Alex nods lamely. “The swelling should go down
overnight, but if it doesn’t, promise me you’ll go get it checked out?”

“I promise,” Alex says and she means it; she owes M’gann at least that much. “Thank you for
everything…I don’t…if you hadn’t been there…”

She drifts off and M’gann rests a hand on Alex’s shoulder.

“But I was and that’s what matters,” She says. “You’re safe now. Go inside, try and get some sleep.
You know my door is always open if you want to talk more about this, okay?”

“Thank you,” Alex says again, turning the key in the lock and raising her good hand in farewell to
M’gann before stepping inside and closing the door with a snap behind her.

She stands there for a while, resting her head against the door, her eyes closed, letting everything
calm inside her. Letting the anxiety, the fear, the pain, seep out of her. Her whole body aches with
tiredness but she can’t seem to push herself off the door and she vaguely wonders what Lucy would
do if she just found Alex slumped against it in the morning.

And then she hears a loud thud and her eyes snap open, her heart already in her throat, hand tingling
with the now-familiar sensation that she’s being watched. Her other hand scrambles to pick up
something from the small table next to the door but it only has her keys on it and then -

“Jesus, Lucy, you almost scared me to death,” she says, exhaling shakily as Lucy steps out of
the shadows, her hair tied into a messy bun, her stare still piercing despite how sleepy she looks.

“Where the hell have you been?” Lucy demands, although it’s a lot less threatening when she has to
hide a yawn behind her hand. “You text me over an hour ago to say you were leaving.”

Alex subtly moves her injured hand behind her back as she stands up straighter.

“Yeah, I know, but I was leaving the bar and tripped over something, messed up my hand,” Alex lies
easily, continuing when Lucy opens her mouth to talk. “It’s just a scrape, M’gann patched me up.
Sorry if I worried you, I didn’t think you’d still be awake.”

“I wasn’t worried,” Lucy says although Alex knows that’s a lie and she smiles. “I was up studying
anyway, and you’re back now and that’s what matters. Is your hand okay?”

“Fine,” Alex says. “Like I said, just a scrape.”
She knows she won’t be able to get away with this in the morning when Lucy can see her hand in the daylight, but for now she can pass it off, the two of them too exhausted to do anything except go back to their rooms and sleep.

“You’ll be okay to practice tomorrow?” Lucy asks and Alex just nods. “Well, you look like crap, so you should probably sleep.”

Alex laughs, shaking her head.

“Thanks for that,” she says. “Night, Luce.”

Lucy walks back to her room and Alex doesn’t move until she hears the click of Lucy’s door. She takes her hand out from behind her back, wincing at the sting as she makes her way to her own room, noticing the small strip of light under Lucy’s door disappear.

Everything is going to hurt ten times more tomorrow, she knows the memory will be clearer too. She almost doesn’t want to sleep, her mind too preoccupied with dreading the next day, but her eyes are already drifting shut as she sinks onto her bed, barely managed to kick her boots off before she shuffles under the duvet, keeping her right hand out of the way.

She sinks into a fitful sleep, her dreams punctuated with all too real images of Rick standing over her, in the alleyway, in her bedroom, and then suddenly she’s not the one lying on the ground but rather she’s watching, as if she was M’gann in the situation, watching as Rick stands over someone else, someone smaller than her, with longer, darker hair…

Alex jumps awake, sitting bolt upright, her breathing as harsh as it had been earlier that night in her panic, sweat trickling down her back, her shirt stuck to her skin. Only the pain in her hand serves as a sharp, nausea-inducing reminder that it had been her on the ground, injured, terrified, and nobody else. And she knows beyond a shadow of a doubt that she would endure Rick’s wrath than allow him to go anywhere near Maggie Sawyer.

Chapter End Notes

i really miss m'gann... anyway, i wanted to get another chapter up before i start moving out of my flat and get really busy with that! hopefully i'll find some time to write, but in the meantime, thank you so much for reading and for all your wonderful comments and support here and on my tumblr @lucylane :)
Alex would have been foolish to expect to get away with leaving for class the next morning without Lucy seeing the state of her hand. So she doesn’t even bother to hide it. She had barely slept after waking up from her nightmare about Maggie and Rick, drifting uneasily in and out of her slumber, jolting herself awake whenever she started to drift off.

She’s exhausted, the ache in her hand is a constant reminder of the previous night, and she is in no mood for Lucy’s inevitable, and unavoidable, reaction. She stalls, taking her time getting ready, stays under the burning heat of the shower for even longer than Lucy usually does. The speed at which she moves isn’t entirely deliberate; it takes her a full five minutes to button up her shirt with her left hand, every movement of her right hand pulling at the red raw skin.

Eventually, with still over an hour until her class is due to start, she’s ready. She makes her way into the kitchen where Lucy’s sitting at the table, one headphone in, staring so intently at her textbook leaning up against the orange juice that she doesn’t notice the cereal (Alex’s cereal) slipping off her spoon.

She doesn’t look up while Alex rummages around the kitchen, deciding to go for a calming mug of tea to settle her shot nerves rather than coffee. Lucy does finally tear her eyes away from the textbook when Alex sits opposite her and Alex braces herself. Sure enough, Lucy’s smile disappears as soon as she glances down at Alex’s hand.

“That’s what you call a scrape?” Lucy rips her headphone out and slams her bowl down before storming around the table to stare at Alex’s hand. “Alex!”

“It looks worse than it is,” Alex says quickly, almost instinctively.

“What the hell happened?” Lucy asks, moving to the cupboard under the sink as quick as a flash, returning to Alex’s side with a first aid kit.

“Lucy, come on, you don’t need to -”

But Lucy just silences her with a glare and pulls a chair around so she’s sitting opposite Alex, opening the box.

“What happened?” she asks again.

“I told you, I tripped and scraped my hand,” Alex says, although the lie is becoming less and less believable with each passing second she looks at her hand. “I just didn't realise how bad it was in the dark.”
Lucy pulls out the same antiseptic wipes M’gann had used the night before. She presses one to Alex’s hand with surprising tenderness.

“You’re telling me you did that when you fell?” Lucy says as she turns Alex’s hand palm up.

Alex hadn’t entirely been lying; it did look a lot worse in the daylight. The bruising on her palm has spread like ink, yellow, blue and purple. Dark red lines outline where Rick had slammed his boot down.

“Yeah, I guess I must have done,” Alex shrugs.

“It’s insulting to my intelligence and our friendship that you think you can get away with lying about this,” Lucy says. “Who hurt you, Alex? Tell me.”

“No one did anything,” Alex says.

If she wanted to make a big deal out of it, she would have let M’gann call the police. So she sure as hell isn’t going to tell Lucy, who would probably call her a few hours later asking for help hiding a body.

“I tripped,” she says shortly. “End of story.”

“It was Rick, wasn’t it?” Lucy says and Alex can’t even attempt to tell her she’s wrong. “No one else has a reason to go after you like this. I heard what he said, ‘this isn’t over’. Alex, you have to tell someone, this is… he should get arrested for this.”

“No, no way,” Alex says, knowing Lucy would have a similar reaction to M’gann. However, it was a lot harder to say ‘no’ to her best friend of five years than anyone else. “It’s not going to help, he thinks he’s won.”

“He could have broken your hand!” Lucy says. She grabs the first aid kit, her chair scraping on the floor as she stands to go back to the sink. Alex rolls her eyes at her retreating form; Lucy always did have a flare for dramatics.

“What would you have done then? It could have ended your season!”

“Exactly, it could have,” Alex says as Lucy turns around, arms folded. “It didn’t. And my hand will be fine, I know my limits.”

“So you’re coming to practice?” Lucy asks her.

“Of course I’m coming to practice,” Alex bristles, draining her mug and setting it back down on the table before standing.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” Lucy says, and Alex can tell she’s just burning to give Alex a piece of her mind and stop her from practicing by any means necessary.

“I have to get to class,” Alex says rather than answer her because she knows, just as much as Lucy does, that going to practice is not a good idea.

She walks back to her room, ignoring Lucy’s call of her name which is cut off as she closes her door behind her. She hates to admit that Lucy’s right; it really could have been a lot worse. But she would persevere. It wasn’t like they were playing a real game. And by the time that day came around, her hand would be fine. She could take a couple of hours of practice.
At least, she thought she could.

But after three hours of classes, taking notes, her hand was shot. She could barely contain the shake as she walked out of her final class of the day, struggling to zip up her jacket as she filed out behind the rest of her classmates.

Tears sting the back of her eyes when she looks at her hand, hissing as she clenches her fist to try and stop the shaking. She checks her watch; only an hour until practice. She should call Lucy and tell her she’s not going to be able to make it. She should, for once, accept defeat and back down. Go back to the pitch at the next practice session when her hand has started to heal.

She reaches into her pocket for her phone, about to move out of the way of other students making their way down the corridor before she’s shoulder barged and she stumbles, her phone almost slipping out of her hand.

She looks up, about to tell whoever walked into her to watch their step but the words die in her throat.

“Watch where you’re going, Danvers,” Rick says, smirking as the rest of his friends laugh. “Wouldn’t want you to get hurt, would we?”

Alex grits her teeth, gripping her phone so hard she might break it, or throw it in Rick’s smug, arrogant face. He glances down at her hand and laughs before turning and walking away. Alex stands there, hot, visceral anger coursing through her body as she watches Rick get swallowed by the crowd of students.

The anger floods out of her system only to be replaced by the same panic which had gripped her last night. She shoulders her bag and pushes her way through the crowd, keeping her hand close to her chest. She dives to the left and into the restroom, locking herself in the first empty stall. Her bag drops to the floor with a heavy *thud* as she leans against the door, clutching the wrist of her injured hand.

Alex closes her eyes and takes deep breaths. Her knees feel weak as flashes of Rick towering over her flood her mind, remembering the pain, the *fear* and she chokes out a breath. She forces herself to think of something else, racking her brain until she finds a distraction.

Eventually, the panic clears and the fog lifts as she goes over and over the previous season statistics for all the LA Angels players, her breathing even and steady as she mumbles out the words and numbers.

Her hand has stopped shaking. She picks up her bag, shouldering it again before slipping out of the stall into the empty restroom. She splashes some cold water on her face and her reflection stares back at her.

She can feel the weight of her phone in her pocket but has no desire to take it out. If anything, this encounter with Rick has just made her want to prove herself more. She wasn't going to let him win, she wasn't going to let word get around that Alex Danvers was missing practices because she was injured.

So yes, she would persist. She would be stubborn. She wasn't going to let what happened consume and control her. She was going to get out there and practice with the rest of her team, reason and
logic be damned. She was not a quitter. Not this time.

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“You're joking?”

“Not at all,” James says, leaning against the locker and frowns. “I almost wish I was.”

“So she refused to wear it?” Maggie asks him, raising her eyebrows.

“We had to wait until the end of the fifth before Lucy could go fetch her spare jersey,” James says. “Mine was the only spare we had on the field, but she couldn't wear it, it was like a dress.”

“So she was really stood on third without a jersey on?” Maggie says. “Not even the one she’d ripped sliding into the base?”

“Apparently she thought it was more practical to wear nothing rather than a torn jersey,” James shrugs.

“That's…”

“That's Lucy,” James finishes for her and Maggie laughs, opening her locker. “Plenty more where that came from, isn't that right, Luce?”

Maggie puts her bag into the locker and closes it, turning around as Lucy walks over to them.

“What's that?” she asks, throwing Maggie a wink as she takes her jersey and glove out of her bag.

“Just telling Maggie the story of the infamous jersey tearing incident,” James grins and Lucy laughs.

“No one seemed to mind,” Lucy shrugs, tossing her bag in the locker next to James’. “And I still managed to score a run.”

“Yeah, well, you'd have been tagged out if their catcher hadn't been totally distracted,” James says.

“Isn't that technically cheating?” Maggie asks, folding her arms.

“Would you have complained if you had been that catcher?” Lucy smirks and Maggie just rolls her eyes.

She has to admit though, that no, she probably wouldn't have complained. And she would have definitely been distracted. Before she realises what's happening, Lucy pulls her shirt over her head and throws it at Maggie before tugging on her jersey.

“There you go, now you don't feel like you totally missed out,” Lucy says, taking her shirt back and putting it in her bag.

“Thanks for that,” Maggie says dryly.

Lucy shuts her locker and pulls on her cap, about to say something else when the door to the locker room opens and Alex walks in.

It's clear she's trying to avoid people, hands stuffed into her pockets. Even from a distance Maggie can see how tired she looks. She also doesn't miss the way Lucy watches Alex, almost like she's
disappointed.

“Don't give me that look,” Alex says to Lucy and Maggie shares a confused glance with James.

“Can't say I'm surprised you're here,” Lucy says, not bothering to lower her voice.

“Why would you be surprised? She's the pitcher.”

James’ laugh is cut short when Alex takes her hands out of her pockets to unzip her bag.

“Alex, what the hell happened?” James asks, eyes wide with concern.

“Tripped,” is all Alex says and when she opens her locker, Maggie sees the true extent of what has happened to her hand. Across her knuckles and down one side of the back of her hand the skin has been scraped away, leaving it red and raw.

“You tripped?” Maggie says, reaching out and grabbing Alex’s wrist before she can move her hand from the locker door.

She looks at the bruising and then at Alex who tugs her hand out of Maggie’s grip, tucking her glove and cap under her arm.

“One hell of a trip, Danvers,” she says and Lucy stands at her shoulder. “You're really going to practice like this?”

Alex shrugs, closing her locker with such force that Maggie jumps. Clearly this isn't something Alex wants to discuss any further.

“I can pitch with my left hand,” Alex says and Lucy scoffs a laugh, shaking her head.

“You're unbelievable,” Lucy says, pushing herself in front of Maggie, jabbing Alex in the shoulder.

“What?” Alex says. “We always joked around to see if I could do it, so why not give it a try and see what happens?”

“No way, you're not doing this,” Lucy says.

“If it means I can practice then I am,” Alex says with a strong sense of finality. “What's wrong with trying something new?”

Either Lucy doesn't have an answer for her or she knows it's futile to continue battling Alex; Maggie suspects the latter. Somehow she doesn't think this is the first time Alex has pulled a stunt like this. But this was before Maggie had joined their team and she wasn't just going to back down like Lucy and James were.

“If you go out there and practice, your hand won't have a chance to get better,” Maggie says, ignoring James’ tug of her jersey sleeve.

“I know what I'm doing, Sawyer,” Alex says and Maggie is taken aback by the hostility. “My hand’s going to be fine. So why don’t you worry about what you're doing and I'll worry about me.”

And with that Alex turns and walks out of the door, following the rest of the team. Just before the door closes, Maggie sees Sullivan, one of their other pitchers, stop Alex but then the door hides them from view.

“Okay, I knew she was stubborn, but what the hell was that?” Maggie says, trying to quell the
sinking sensation in her stomach.

She suddenly feels cold despite the closeness of James and Lucy to her, like Alex’s tone had taken all the warmth from the locker room. They had been getting along just fine in Maggie’s eyes, working past their slight animosity and building what Maggie had hoped to be a solid friendship. And now with Alex’s words, harsh and biting, Maggie feels as if they’re back at square one. It’s not what she expected, nor deserved, from her new teammate.

“That was Alex,” Lucy mutters. “She’ll realise, in time, that she was wrong. Don't take it personally.”

And of course, that was the trouble. Maggie took things personally, she was just that kind of person. It pushes her to fix things, ease the tension between her and someone she doesn't quite see eye to eye with. And Alex is such a unique challenge, she had been from the moment Maggie met her. But this isn't about the two of them and their relationship, friendship, whatever. It’s about the team.

“Who did that to her hand?” Maggie asks Lucy as James heads out of the locker room.

“Like she said, she tripped,” Lucy says although Maggie doesn’t believe her in the slightest. “If you want my advice, it's better to just leave it. She’ll come around, soon enough.”

“I can't just leave it,” Maggie says. “She's our ace pitcher, and I'm her catcher. What good is it going to do anyone if we’re not practicing well together?”

“Maggie, trust me,” Lucy says firmly. “Leave it. It'll all blow over or maybe this time Alex will get the wake up call she needs to stop acting so stubborn all the time.”

Maggie would really rather not take the risk of allowing the possibility of Alex’s own stubbornness bringing the team down. But, the others seem to believe she would find her own way out of whatever mess she was in. So, for now, she’s willing to give Alex a chance.

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Needless to say, practice is abysmal. The rest of the team are better than fine, looking as good as they had in the first practice.

The only problem was Alex.

Why she thought she would be okay pitching with her left hand was beyond Maggie. Their pitching and catching drills are almost embarrassing to be a part of and Maggie still isn’t completely sure the rest of the team have accepted her. This display isn’t doing her any favours.

However, from the looks their teammates were giving her, she’s sure none of them really think the poor standard of catching was her fault; it wasn’t as if many of Alex’s pitches had been on target. If anything, Maggie thinks she might just have proven her worth by the quality of catches she had to make.

True to what Lucy had implied, Alex hadn’t backed down. She had ignored the calls from James who was leading the training session to sit this one out and carried on, blinded by her own ignorance and drive. If Maggie wasn’t extremely frustrated at the lack of care Alex has for herself, she’d almost admire it.

But two hours of practice later, James finally calls it a day and they all head back to the locker rooms.
Much like Lucy and James, the rest of the team don’t seem remotely surprised that Alex is acting this way. It’s clear they don’t condone her attitude but, as Maggie had thought, they had been through this enough times to know that arguing was futile.

When Maggie corners Alex in the locker rooms as everyone else heads out besides Lucy, she knows she’s surprised the pitcher by being so persistent.

“So, you still want to pretend you’re fine?” Maggie asks, not looking at Alex as she pulls her bag out of the locker. “Well, I’ll tell you something, I don’t think I’ve ever had to work so hard in a practice before now,” she adds when Alex stays silent.

Alex turns away from her locker, putting her bag on the bench and Maggie follows her, aware of Lucy watching them with her arms folded by the door. It seems she’s not going to intervene or take sides, and Maggie is grateful for it.

“Alex, come on, you can’t say you’re fine,” Maggie says. “Throwing with your left hand did you no favours -”

“I don’t need a lecture, Maggie,” Alex says shortly, still not looking at her which Maggie finds almost as irritating as her stubbornness.

“Then don’t give anyone cause to give you one,” Maggie says. “You shouldn’t have been out there today. Why can’t you just admit you’re injured?”

“So maybe using my left hand wasn’t my best idea,” Alex shrugs. “I’ll be better tomorrow. It’s just a scrape, you’re all blowing this way out of proportion.”

Maggie glances over at Lucy who shrugs in an ‘I told you so’ way.

“Fine,” Maggie says and this time Alex looks at her. “I’ll give you this one. But if you don’t get better, and especially if you get worse, I’m telling J’onn.”

“You can’t -”

“Watch me,” she says fiercely. “You may have been on this team longer than I have, Danvers, but I’m not going to sit back and watch as you make matters worse for yourself and everyone else. We’re two weeks away from our first game and I know how much you want to be ready to throw out there. So don’t let yourself down.”

She shoulders her bag, giving Alex one last, lingering look. Maggie doesn’t expect her words to sink in; maybe if it had been Kara or even Lucy, Alex would listen. But not to her, not after the display of hostility Alex had put up before practice, completely different to how she had acted at the gym a few days earlier.

She passes Lucy on the way out of the locker room and she gives Maggie an almost sympathetic smile. Maggie’s just grateful that Lucy didn’t take Alex’s side this time; they both knew that Maggie was right.

As she starts walking back to the parking lot, Maggie just hopes that by the time they come to practice again tomorrow, her words have gone some way to making Alex see she’s in the wrong.

She expects Alex to make the right decision. But she doesn’t count on just how stubborn Alex could be.
don't worry, this will all be resolved soon. as lucy put it, alex is just being alex. maybe she can change with a little help from her friends...

thank you for all the wonderful comments and messages i’ve received on tumblr about this fic! talking headcanons and stuff about it with you guys is amazing, i couldn't wish for better support! i’ll really try to be back with a new chapter soon! have a great week everyone :)}
after the drama that’s just happened, i thought i’d upload a new chapter to give people (hopefully) something to smile about. this is something a lot of you have mentioned you want to happen so... i hope i’ve done it some kind of justice! thank you to @karolsens for editing this with me (again)

She knows how smart Alex is. She’s heard from James how she had been top of nearly all her classes in high school. Now she’s studying both biochemistry and engineering and still managing to get fantastic marks while balancing a very impressive college baseball career. Apparently, she knows a great deal about space too, although where that fits in with her field of study, Maggie isn’t entirely sure.

However, there’s one thing Maggie is certain about; Alex Danvers is the dumbest genius she knows.

A whole week and nothing had changed. At least, not for the better. Alex still wasn’t pitching well in practice and there was no need to question why; her hand wasn’t being allowed to heal properly, all because Alex was too determined to save face.

And Maggie had reached her limit.

She had been willing to give Alex her chances to prove that she wasn’t as stubborn as she had first seemed. Maggie, wrongly, had thought that after a few more attempts, Alex would give in and admit she needed to rest to let her hand get better. As she had said to Lucy after voicing her concerns yet again, it wasn’t as if Alex needed the practice.

If anything, continuing to turn up and pitch at Maggie was having the opposite effect to what they wanted. Maggie was getting more and more frustrated with Alex as it went on. The team and their own partnership was suffering, and all because Alex refused to listen to reason. Maggie was tough, she could handle Alex taking out her own frustrations on her rather than admitting she was in the wrong.

But by the time the final practice of the week comes around, Maggie has had enough. If Alex refuses to sit out of this practice, then she isn’t just going to let her walk away. And she certainly isn’t going to let Alex speak to her the same way she had been for the past week.

They reach the end of the practice which seemed to have dragged on for hours. So far, Alex hadn’t said anything to Maggie but the tension was there, nearing boiling point. Alex makes no attempt to hide her annoyance at the way she slams her locker shut, striding around the locker room with a permanent scowl on her face. When Maggie stands to retrieve her bag, she braces herself for what’s coming.

“You better pick it up soon, Sawyer,” Alex says, leaning against the locker, arms folded. “We’re a week away from starting the season and we don’t want any problems. I expected you to be better
than this.”

The words sting, but she knows that Alex doesn’t mean them. Alex has told everyone around her and herself so many times that her hand is okay, that she probably believes it. She’s taken it so far that she doesn’t even realise she’s the one not performing well. Not that Maggie sees that as an excuse, more as an explanation for Alex’s, clearly out of character, behaviour.

“Yeah, well, I expected better from you, too,” Maggie grates out, closing the locker and turning back to the bench, avoiding Alex’s stare.

“What’s that supposed to mean?” she asks and a hush falls over the locker room.

“It means I didn’t expect you to be so blinded by your own stubbornness that you can’t see that you’re the problem here,” Maggie says, the words flooding out of her after days of letting them sit inside her.

The rest of the team doesn’t even attempt to hide the fact that they’re listening in; Maggie’s somewhat glad they’re not making a quick exit before Maggie really finds her footing. She knows they’re on her side, even if none of them voice it.

“Where do you get off on having a go at me when you’re the one with the busted hand?” Maggie says, turning to Alex who takes a step back, looking rather stunned. “You know you shouldn’t be practicing, you should have rested up until you could throw a decent pitch.”

There’s a sharp intake of breath from Lucy to her right and Alex glances around her as if looking for some kind of support. While no one else is backing Maggie up verbally, their lack of defence for Alex is enough.

“You’ve got no right to talk to me the way you have been for the past week,” Maggie says firmly, not dropping eye contact. “I get that you want to prove yourself or something, but that doesn’t mean you can pass the blame onto me just because I’m new, it’s not fair. And you know it. So whenever you’re ready to apologise, come and find me.”

And without looking back, she grabs her bag and heads for the door, leaving Alex and the rest of the team stunned in her wake.

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Lucy hadn’t been sure if Maggie had what it took to stand up to Alex. Clearly she shouldn’t have underestimated her. Maggie always struck her as calm, reasonable, so the sudden outburst at Alex had been unexpected. But the way Alex had spoken to Maggie over the past week had been, as Maggie had said, unfair and uncalled for. It seemed Maggie had reached her limit, and Lucy couldn’t blame her.

She knew from speaking to the rest of the team that they were just as frustrated by Alex’s stubbornness; it had never been quite this bad before, but Lucy thinks that’s more to do with how she got injured, rather than the injury itself. It had been a heavy blow to Alex’s pride and stoic balanced state of mind, being attacked by Rick like that.

So Lucy found it hard to blame Alex as much as she would if this had been in any way Alex’s fault. Every time she saw Alex clench her fist or wince or struggle to even hold a fork for an extended period of time back at the flat, she was overcome with intense anger towards Rick.
She needed him to pay for what he had done. She needed a plan.

It seems James has had a similar thought. He’s the only one left behind after the rest of the team leave shortly after Maggie and then Alex, who had still looked dazed. Maggie’s words had definitely had some kind of impact.

“Well, Maggie really gave Alex a piece of her mind,” James says, sitting down next to Lucy on the bench and pulling his sweatshirt over his head.

“She was right,” Lucy says, zipping up her bag. “Alex shouldn’t have been talking to her like that. We all know she gets frustrated, that’s part of the game but to take it all out on Maggie wasn’t right.”

“Kara was right,” James says with a grin. “You do have a soft spot for Maggie.”

Lucy rolls her eyes and shoves his shoulder. He wasn’t wrong, but the way he worded it made it sound like more than it was.

She had clicked with Maggie from their first meeting when James had introduced them. Maggie had a quick wit, was easy to talk to and they had plenty in common to build a solid friendship, even before Maggie had joined the team. And now Maggie was their new catcher, Lucy couldn’t help but feel slightly protective, especially considering Alex’s previous (and now recent again) indifference and coldness towards Maggie.

“She's my friend,” Lucy says. “And she doesn't deserve what Alex is saying. I just hope she's not actually taking it to heart because it's obvious Alex is only looking for someone else to blame.”

“I don't know how Alex can even think it's Maggie’s fault they haven't been practising well together,” James says.

“She's being Alex,” Lucy says and James laughs. “Stubborn as hell and convinced she's actually right.”

James kicks off his cleats and takes his shoes out of his bag.

“So, what actually happened to her hand?” James says. “She told you she tripped and told Kara that she fell off her bike. She's covering for someone.”

Lucy knows it's pointless to deny it. Besides, she has no intention of letting Alex get away with bringing the team down by carrying on pretending she's okay. More importantly, it's not good for Alex, physically and mentally. She needs people she can talk to.

“Promise me you won't run off and do something stupid when I tell you?” Lucy says and James’ brow furrows.

“I won't,” he says. “Is it really that serious?”

“It was Rick,” Lucy says. “That night she went to cover a shift for M’gann -”

Before James can even open his mouth, the door to the locker room slams open, bouncing off the wall and making the two of them jump.

“Rick ?”

“Kara! What are you doing here?”

James scrambles off the bench and over to Kara who's standing there, frozen, looking far angrier
than Lucy has ever seen her. James manages to grab her by the elbow before she walks out.

“I came to find you,” Kara says, staring between James and Lucy. “I overheard the two of you talking and... Rick did this?”

“Kara, listen to me, it's okay,” James says calmly.

“It's not okay!” Kara says. “He hurt Alex!”

“We don’t know what happened exactly,” Lucy says quickly. “Alex won't talk about it but... it makes sense, he threatened her.”

“And you didn’t tell me?” Kara says, looking at Lucy. “Why would you keep that from me?”

“Because I knew this is how you'd react,” Lucy says honestly. “She didn't see it as a big deal, none of us thought he'd actually hurt Alex. I figured it out as soon as I saw her hand.”

“You told someone, right?” Kara says but Lucy just stays silent. “So Rick’s still walking around without feeling any consequences? We have to tell someone, J’onn or Director Grant -”

“See, this is why I didn’t tell you,” Lucy says. “The whole reason Alex is keeping it quiet is because she doesn’t want anyone to make a big deal out of this.”

“Alex doesn’t have a choice anymore,” Kara says firmly. “This is stupid, if she lets him get away with it, what’s to stop him from going after her again? Or you, or Maggie or any of the team?”

Lucy has to admit Kara has a point. Not only might Rick come after them again, but the result of this had been a week of Alex not being herself, possibly injuring her hand more and taking it all out on Maggie. Enough was enough, and somehow, Rick needed to pay.

“I get that you want to respect what Alex asked you to do, but I can’t just sit back and do nothing,” Kara says, looking at James. “She has to learn that she can count on her friends, her family, and it doesn’t make her weak if she does.”

“Kara’s right,” James says, his hand resting gently on Kara’s shoulder to calm her; Kara looks like she’s about to explode at any second and tell them she’s going to handle this herself. Lucy knows she’s more than capable, but it doesn’t mean she should.

“If we’re going to do something we can’t just make it up as we go along,” Lucy says. “We need to deal with this right or we could just make things worse, and that’s the last thing we need a week before the first game. It’s the last thing Alex needs.”

“I want to talk to Rick,” Kara says, no room for negotiation in her tone. “And we have to tell someone else.”

“We can talk to Rick,” Lucy agrees. “But we’re not telling J’onn or Director Grant. Alex would see that as some kind of betrayal, it was the one thing she specifically asked me not to do. And I’m sorry, Kara, I know she’s your sister, but she’s my bestfriend and I’m not going behind her back. If she wants to take it to them after we talk to Rick, then that’s her choice.”

Lucy doesn’t expect Kara to back down as quickly as she does; probably the only thing running through Kara’s mind right now is going to find Rick and kick his ass to the ground. She’s never seen Kara this worked up before, but it’s only fitting that she’s acting this way because it was Alex who had been hurt.
“Fine,” Kara says through gritted teeth and James squeezes her shoulder. “Where is he?”

“I know he goes to this bar with his friends a lot, it’s just a couple of blocks away.” James supplies and Lucy picks up her bag, standing.

“We’ll start there.”

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Rick never sees Kara coming.

James and Lucy watch, crouched behind some bins as Kara speeds, seemingly out of nowhere, and shoves Rick’s back so he stumbles, catching himself before he falls. At only the sight of him, Lucy’s blood boils; she’s picturing what the attack on Alex must have looked like, perhaps not too different from their own ambush.

“Where do you think you’re going?” Kara says as Rick catches up with what just happened, glancing around him, clearly wondering how Kara had got the jump on him. He recovers quickly and a leering grin on his face.

“Heading home for the day,” he says, taking a step forward. “Why? Do you want to come and keep me company? I don’t usually go for blondes, but I think I could make an exception.”

Lucy throws her arm out against James’ chest as he makes to run out from behind the bins, his kind, warm brown eyes mingled with blind fury at what Rick had just said.

“I know what you did to my sister,” Kara says, unperturbed. “I know what you did to her hand. Did you really think you could get away with it?”

Rick sticks his hands into his pockets, still grinning.

“Funny, I’m still standing here,” he says. “Because you have no way of proving what I did and Little Miss Perfect Pitcher hasn’t opened her mouth to anyone important. So yeah, I think I did get away with it.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure of that, Ricky” Lucy says as she steps out from behind the dumpster, along with James who still looks as if he’s mustering every bit of self-control not to just sock Rick in the face.

“What’s this? Alvin and the Chipmunks reunion?” Rick sneers.

“We know what you did,” Lucy says, taking the lead from Kara. “You threatened Alex, James and I both heard you. And then when she didn’t back down and change her mind, you ambushed and attacked her, waiting until she was vulnerable like the coward you are.”

Rick’s eyes narrow, his sneer fixed in place as he takes a step forward, towering over Lucy.

“Prove it,” he smirks.

“I could try,” she says with a shrug. “But I agree with you, it’d be difficult to do so. And if you got away with it this time, what would be stopping you from trying to hurt Alex, or any of the team?”

“Why would I? Didn’t I make myself clear?”
“Oh, yeah, crystal,” Lucy says. “And now let me be clear. If you come anywhere near my friends again, I will make sure it’s the last thing you ever do, so you better think twice about trying something unless you want to spend a long time staring at the same four walls of a prison cell.”

“You’ve got nothing on me,” Rick spits.

“You’re right, I don’t,” Lucy says. “But I can still make you disappear, and trust me, I’d enjoy it.”

For the first time, a glimmer of fear flickers across Rick’s face as he glances between Lucy, James and Kara, all stood glaring at him.

“You see, sometimes it pays to be the daughter of highly respected army general, Sam Lane,” Lucy says. “Very influential figure, I’m sure you’d agree.”

“You’re lying,” Rick says and Lucy relishes the way his face pales slightly. “You wouldn’t dare, you don’t have the guts, that’s why you brought him with you,” he adds, pointing at James. “If I don’t do what you want, you’ll just unleash him on me.”

“Oh, I’m not here to protect them,” James says with a laugh. “I’m here to protect you, and trust me, you’d need it.”

“Not that you have to worry if you do what I say,” Lucy says. “I’m sure my father would be very interested to know why the baseball team he has funded for the past two years has suddenly slipped down the rankings because their star pitcher has an unexplainable injury.”

It’s not a card she wants to play; Lucy has never relied on her father, and she doesn’t want to start now, especially when she barely talks to him anyway. It was a strained relationship, polite, almost forced. And she wasn’t lying when she had mentioned the funding; it seemed Sam Lane thought he could win his youngest daughter’s affections through money, a ploy Lucy certainly wasn’t going to fall for any time soon.

“Stay away from us, Ricky,” she says. “Stay well away and then you’ll have nothing to worry about. And if you don’t… well, I’m not sure you want to risk that.”

Rick gulps, his cowardice obliterating his bravado, his eyes scared as he takes a step back, but not quickly enough. Kara’s fist lands smack on his nose, sending him reeling; even though Kara had clearly held back, she’d done enough damage to break it. Both Lucy and James grab Kara’s arm, equally as stunned that Kara had actually lashed out like that, yet sharing identical grins.

“That’s for my sister,” she says. “Don’t ever go near her again!”

Rick stumbles over his feet as he turns to run away, his nose dripping blood, eyes wide. They watch him go, glancing back as he turns the corner out of sight.

“Nice right hook,” Lucy says as James bursts out laughing, pulling Kara to his side and kissing the top of her head. “I don’t think he’ll be forgetting that any time soon.”

“Good,” Kara says, her eyes still steeley, but a grin unfurls on her face as James wraps his arm around her waist. “He deserved it for what he did to Alex.”

“Alex definitely isn’t the only badass in the Danvers family,” Lucy laughs, shaking her head. “I think we could all use a drink after that.”

“Couldn’t agree more,” James says, leading the way with Kara out of the alley behind the bar they’d found Rick in and onto the street; Rick is nowhere to be seen. “So, how do we handle Alex?”
“I have a plan for that, too, Olsen,” Lucy says as they head towards M’gann’s bar in the direction of Alex and Lucy’s place. “I’m prepared for anything, including Alex Danvers and her stubbornness.”

“And what exactly are you going to say to her?” Kara asks, slightly cautious.

“Oh, just you wait and see,” Lucy says, probably taking slightly too much glee in what she’s about to do. “This is going to be so much fun.”

Chapter End Notes

despite my views on what happened at sdcc, i will still be writing my fics - i can't let myself get so upset about it all that i don't write anymore, and i still love these characters outside of the actors, especially in my writing and other people's. again, thank you all for your support and comments, you guys are the best! until next time :)
there's no 'i' in team

Chapter Notes

So sorry about the time between updates for this. I've had a busy week followed by a bad few days mentally, which drained my motivation and enthusiasm. But I wanted to get this done because you guys are awesome and have been really supportive! So without further ado, here's the conclusion (OR IS IT) to the Rick plotline!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

“DANVERS!”

Alex jumps, spilling her beer down her chin. Spluttering, she looks up, wiping her face and her eyes go wide when she sees Lucy striding towards her. The entire bar has fallen silent, including M’gann who seems to have no issue with Lucy yelling in her bar.

“We need to talk,” Lucy says as she reaches Alex, drawing herself up to her full height. Considering Alex has a few inches on her, she’s still rather intimidated. “Now.”

“Can’t we do this at home?” Alex asks, very aware that all eyes are on her, including most of their teammates who ventured to the bar after that very bad practice. From the withering look Lucy is giving her, leaving this bar is not an option.

Without another word, Lucy turns and walks over to one of the empty booths and Alex knows she has no choice but to follow. She has a sneaking suspicion she knows what this is about and she already feels uncomfortable, the guilt pooling in the pit of her stomach.

“This has gone on long enough,” Lucy says as soon as Alex has sat down.

“What has?” Alex asks, stalling.

“Don’t do that,” Lucy says, her eyes flashing with anger. “Don’t play dumb, don’t try and worm your way out of this because it’s not happening, I won’t let you.”

Even though Lucy’s voice isn’t as raised as it had been when she had stormed into the bar, Alex knows that people around them are keeping a close eye on their conversation, trying to listen in.

“How long do you think you could have kept this up?” Lucy asks and Alex shifts uncomfortably in her seat, picking at the label on the bottle. “Everyone knows it’s too bad to be from just tripping outside the bar or falling off your bike, a lie which Kara is going to eat you alive for, by the way.”

“What?” Alex says, looking up at Lucy. “How does she know it was a lie?”

“I told her the truth,” Lucy says, completely unabashed.

“That wasn’t your place to do so,” Alex says, nettled.

“She deserved to know!” Lucy counters. “It’d at least explain to everyone why you’ve been acting like you have the past week, why you’ve been treating Maggie like crap.”
Alex holds Lucy’s gaze for as long as she can before she looks away down at the table, ashamed. She knows she’s been unfair. For a while, she had somehow convinced herself that she was getting better, that maybe it really wasn’t as bad as it had first seemed. But then Maggie had snapped at her and shaken Alex back into a reality where she’s still injured and unfairly taking her anger and own failure out on someone who doesn’t deserve it.

“What’s going on, Alex?” Lucy asks, reaching over the table and resting her hand on Alex’s wrist. “You should talk to someone, talk to anyone. Because Maggie deserves an apology, Alex, you know she does. But if you’re still going to act like nothing’s wrong, if you don’t admit to yourself why this is affecting you, then I don’t think that apology will mean much.”

Alex slumps back in her seat. She hadn’t expected Lucy to take this long in coming to talk to her. She was usually the first to tell Alex to cut the crap and be there for Alex to talk to, whatever it was. Maybe she really hadn’t expected Alex to be quite this stubborn. She knows her time is up pretending everything's okay.

“It’s just… it’s humiliating, you know?” Alex starts and Lucy visibly relaxes and gestures over to M’gann for two drinks with the hand not still resting on Alex’s wrist. “I was terrified. When he had me on the ground, standing over me, I was helpless and terrified and I guess… I don’t know, I needed to feel strong again?”

She doesn’t really know where all this is coming from and she doesn’t want to make it sound like she’s excusing herself for being a poor teammate and mean to someone she’s only just started to build a friendship with. She really hopes she hasn’t ruined her chance.

“It’s my hand, you know?” Alex continues after M’gann gives them their drinks. “I… never mind, it’s stupid.”

“No, it’s not stupid,” Lucy says. “What is it?”

“It’s just…” Alex starts and then pauses, looking at the bruising on her knuckles, the healed over scrape. “What if he’d done more damage? Broken my hand? I’d be out for the season and then what? Be stuck in the dugout watching you all play?”

“And you’d have come back next year,” Lucy says firmly. “He didn’t break it. It’s going to heal, if you let yourself just relax and take it easy for once.”

“I was scared,” Alex says. “I was scared that if I let it get to me, I’d look weak and I felt weak enough when Rick was standing over me with his boot crushing my hand. I thought if I didn’t acknowledge it, it would go away which is stupid, I know,” she adds hastily. “I just wanted to play. You know what it means to me, Luce.”


Alex glances around the side of the booth over to where Maggie is playing pool with Vasquez on the other side of the bar.

“I get that you felt scared, humiliated, and I’m not trying to make light of what you went through because it’s… horrible,” Lucy says. “But Maggie’s new, she’s our teammate and our friend and I’m sticking up for her, too. She doesn’t deserve to be the person Alex Danvers projects her anger onto, even if you didn’t really mean it.”

“I know,” Alex says, tearing her eyes away from the pool table. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t tell me,” Lucy says with a smile. “Tell her. And if you need anything else, just come and talk
to me. Or anyone on the team, because that’s what we are, Alex. A team. You can’t carry it all on your shoulders, you know better.”

Lucy’s right, she does know better. She’s acted like someone she knows she’s not. The least she can do is wait until the bar has cleared out a bit and go and apologise to Maggie. For now, she pulls herself back into the conversation with Lucy just as the door to the bar opens again and Kara and James walk in, hand in hand.

“Oh God, Kara’s gonna kill me, isn’t she?” Alex says and Lucy just raises her eyebrows and takes a sip of her drink.

Kara’s practically bouncing as she grabs one of the menus off the bar top; Alex thinks she might be hovering if it wasn’t for James’ hand on her shoulder. Alex had expected a very similar reaction to Lucy’s from her sister and yet…

“Oh she’s just going to come in and order the entire menu,” Alex frowns, turning her attention back to Lucy who, if Alex didn’t know her better, looks sheepish. “What did she do, Lucy?”

“Nothing,” Lucy shrugs but Alex turns her glare up to ten. “Okay, let’s just say Rick definitely won’t be coming after anyone else any time soon. Not until his nose isn’t broken anymore.”

“Lucy!”

“What? I didn’t know what she was going to do!” Lucy says. “But it was quite funny, he didn’t expect it either and he’s just lucky she held back.”

“She can’t go around doing that, what if she’d really hurt him?” Alex says. “And punching him in the face isn’t the best solution, either.”

“Oh, come on,” Lucy scoffs. “As if you would have even hesitated to punch his lights out if he’d hurt someone else. You can’t get all high and mighty about it.”

“It’s totally different, this is Kara we’re talking about,” Alex says.

“Yeah, so God help anyone who tries to mess with the Danvers sisters,” Lucy laughs.

Alex can’t even deny that Lucy’s right; they’ve both seen the proof of what happens to people who pick on Kara and Alex makes no apologies for it. She just wishes she hadn’t influenced Kara quite that much that she feels the need to go around punching people, too.

James leaves Kara at the bar, sliding into the booth next to Lucy.

“I presume you were part of this whole vigilante justice group?” Alex asks him but James doesn’t look remotely ashamed.

“Something had to be done,” James says. “We couldn’t have gone another practice with you acting like everything was fine. We thought maybe this way, knowing Rick wasn’t going to do anything else, you would calm down and take things easy. Or at least feel comfortable enough to talk to one of us about how you’ve been feeling.”

Alex doesn’t know what to say to that; obviously she knows her friends care, but she’s never been in a situation where they’ve had to be quite so supportive. She appreciates it far more than her mumbled ‘thank you’ can say.

“That’s okay, we know you’d do the same for us,” James says. “But someone should go and make
sure Kara doesn’t start hovering with adrenaline again,” he adds, nodding over to the bar where Kara is bouncing on the balls of her feet.

Alex grabs her beer and leaves Lucy and James to walk over to the bar, avoiding looking at the pool tables where Maggie is still playing. Kara doesn’t turn around when Alex leans on the bar next to her, but the bouncing stops.

“I heard Rick has a broken nose,” Alex says but Kara ignores her, tapping on the bar top. “You shouldn’t have done that, Kara. You could get in heaps of trouble.”

“Not as much trouble as he could be in if someone told on him,” Kara says as M’gann brings her a club soda and offers Alex a smile like she knows she’s had a talking to. “He hurt my sister, I was angry. I did it before I could even stop myself.”

There’s a slight hint of remorse in Kara’s voice and Alex rests a hand on her arm.

“Well, I appreciate you standing up for me,” she says. “And I’m not exactly sorry, he got what he deserved.”

Kara takes a sip of her drink, looking over her shoulder at the booth Lucy and James were sat in, laughing about something. She turns back to Alex, adjusting her glasses.

“You should have told us,” Kara says. “I know you must have felt humiliated and I can’t imagine how terrifying it was. But we could have helped you, we’d have understood, you know that.”

“Yeah, I do.” Alex sighs. “It’s just hard when I was so convinced I was doing the right thing by trying to be strong. I thought somehow I’d let you all down if I let it get the better of me. Turns out I still let you down by doing the opposite.”

“Hey, no!” Kara says, rubbing Alex’s arm. “You haven’t let anyone down. Everyone makes mistakes, even Alex Danvers,” she says, nudging Alex’s shoulder to get her to smile. “Just apologise to Maggie, I know she’ll forgive you. And by the time the first game comes around, you two will be back to building a friendship.”

Alex notes the teasing tone in Kara’s voice and rolls her eyes. But she really does hope her sister is right. Not in the way that Kara means it, but Alex is more than a bit worried she’s ruined her chances with Maggie for good. She had never been friendly towards her when they had first met, something she realises was completely uncalled for. So now she’s actually hurt Maggie, she wouldn’t be surprised or blame her if Maggie wanted to keep their relationship strictly baseball related.

“Look, Vas has gone,” Kara says, nudging Alex’s side just as M’gann sets down a huge portion of chicken wings and fries in front of Kara. “Now’s your chance to go talk to Maggie.”

Without giving Alex time to argue, Kara grabs her food and makes her way over to Lucy and James, leaving Alex standing at the bar alone, watching over her shoulder as Maggie racks up the balls for a solo game of pool.

She watches for a while, running her finger over the top of the bottle in her hand, trying to think of what she’s going to say. She’s not going to make excuses or try and dig herself out of the mess she’s caused. She’s going to be honest and apologise. And hopefully, Maggie can see past Alex’s stubbornness and flaws and they can move on.

“Here,” says a voice from the bar and Alex tears her eyes away from Maggie as she breaks poorly. M’gann is there, leaning with her arms folded on the bartop, nudging two fresh bottles towards Alex. “Take these and make amends. And for the love of God, teach that girl how to play pool, it’s
M’gann moves down the other end of the bar, giving Alex a pointed stare until she musters up the courage to grab the drinks and head over to the pool tables. She stands far enough away for Maggie not to notice her, watching as Maggie strikes the cue ball which misses the stripe she was aiming for completely. She takes a deep breath and strides forward so she’s standing next to the table; no chance of turning back.

“You… uh, you’re holding the cue wrong,” Alex says but Maggie doesn’t look up, hitting the ball but sending it bouncing off the edge of the pocket.

“So it’s not enough for you to tell me what I’m doing wrong on the pitch, but now you have to come to the bar?” Maggie says coolly, straightening up and moving around the table. “Are you going to yell at me in front of everyone for this, too?”

“I’m sorry,” Alex says, flinching at Maggie’s words; somehow the soft anger is even worse than if Maggie were shouting at her. “I didn’t mean… here,” she says, offering one of the bottles to Maggie. She glances up, carefully eyeing the bottle as if this is all some kind of ploy.

“Is this pity alcohol?” she asks, taking the bottle but not drinking from it.

“No,” Alex says quickly; the last thing she wants is for Maggie to think she’s pitying her. “This is ‘I’m sorry for being such a jerk and I’d like to talk to you about it’ alcohol.”

Maggie stares at her for a long second, considering, before she takes a sip of the beer and moves to set it down on the table. Alex just stands there awkwardly, unsure of where to go from here except blurting out an apology with no build up. She’s saved by Maggie handing her a pool cue.

“Okay then, talk,” Maggie says, offering Alex the chalk and resetting the balls into the triangle. Alex waits until she’s broken to start.

“I’m sorry for how I’ve acted this week,” Alex says. “It was… uncalled for, completely unfair. I don’t know why I passed the blame onto you but I did, and I can’t take that back. But I’m sorry. You didn’t deserve any of that, you’re a great catcher and we’re lucky to have you on the team.”

She moves around the other side of the table, aware of Maggie staring at her as she lines up her shot. She rests the cue gently on her still-bruised hand but manages knocks the stripe into the left corner pocket with practiced ease. The silence drags for longer than Alex ever remembers a silence dragging before. She’s blown it, she’s sure she has, Maggie’s only not saying anything because she doesn’t want to accept the apology -

“It’s okay.”

Alex slips and sends the cue ball careering down the table, missing everything. She jolts upright, dumbfounded. Maggie smiles softly, her head tilted to one side.

“What?”

“I forgive you,” Maggie says as if she hadn’t made it clear enough before. “You messed up, and yeah, I won’t lie, what you said hurt. But I knew you were only saying it because you were hurt, too.”

“But that’s not an excuse -”
“I know, I’m not trying to give you an excuse,” Maggie says, shrugging. “But whatever happened was bad enough that you had to convince yourself you were stronger than you felt. I get that, and maybe I don’t take it out on my friends, but you weren’t pitching well and you were frustrated. You lashed out. Just… try to be honest next time.”

“I will,” Alex says, still slightly shocked at how understanding Maggie is being. “I’m sorry.”

“It’s fine,” Maggie says, moving around the table so she’s standing shoulder to shoulder with Alex, leaning on her cue. “We’re a team, you and me. We need to trust each other on the pitch. I trust you, so the question is, do you trust me?”

“I do,” Alex says without pause. “You’re a brilliant catcher, Maggie. Don’t let anyone take that away from you. Especially pitchers who give you a hard time for no reason at all,” she adds with a nervous smile.

“Well, thanks Danvers, that means a lot,” Maggie says, beaming. “How about you make it up to me and show me how to play?” she adds, gesturing at the half-finished game.

“Deal,” Alex says, offering her hand to Maggie who takes it with a laugh, firmly shaking it.

It ignites something in the pit of Alex’s stomach as soon as she drops Maggie’s hand. It’s a mix of both relief and disbelief that Maggie has accepted her apology with a joke and a handshake. She’s not naive enough to think that this has completely fixed things, she knows Maggie is still hurt underneath, but their conversation has gone some way to repairing their new friendship. By the time the first game comes around, Alex is sure this will all be in the past.

“This is more like it,” Lucy says, appearing out of nowhere and making Alex jump. She pushes her way between Alex and Maggie, throwing her arms around their shoulders. “All’s well that ends well, now kiss and make up and then I can kick both your asses at pool, okay?”

Alex can’t maintain her glare with Lucy flashing her that winning smile as she hugs them both before stepping out between them.

“You couldn’t beat me at pool even if I had my hands tied behind my back,” Alex says, regretting her phrasing immediately at the way Lucy smirks.

“If you had your hands tied behind your back, we certainly wouldn’t be playing pool,” Lucy says and Maggie nearly spits out her drink, laughing at the blush Alex can feel creeping up her neck.

“Do you two need a minute?” Maggie asks, grinning. “I can go talk to James instead, or guard the restroom door.”

Alex holds up a hand to stop Lucy from saying anything else, but instead Lucy high-fives Maggie. She has a feeling this sort of thing is going to happen a lot over the coming season, but as Maggie restarts the game and Lucy takes Alex’s cue with a wink, she thinks she can handle the teasing if it means this is going to be a permanent part of her life.

Chapter End Notes

Up next... the first game of the season! I know some people are worried they won't be able to follow the baseball stuff, but I will keep it brief and uncomplicated. It'll set up
some good interactions between our three girls though! Hope you all liked the chapter, I'm sorry it's not my best but I wanted to give y'all something. As always, thank you for all the comments and support, I appreciate it no end.
right off the bat

Chapter Notes

as i mentioned at the end of last chapter, there is some baseball action here. i've kept it simple and more character driven rather than... baseball driven? but the terminology is pretty basic so i hope you can all follow it okay! just a psa, i have never played college baseball and my knowledge only comes from MLB... i presume most of the rules are the same. anyways, its not super detailed so it shouldn't matter too much! enough of that, enjoy everyone :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Maggie wakes up on the morning of their first game (her first game) with her stomach twisted into knots. She lies there, staring up at the ceiling of her bedroom as her nerves sit heavy in her stomach. She’s never usually one to be fazed by things like this; not even moving on her own to National City had caused her this much trouble. Starting as catcher for the National City Panthers was something she had been building towards for weeks now, itching to put on her gear and just get out and play. Now the day has finally arrived, well... she’s pretty much terrified of letting her new teammates and friends down.

Eventually, the anxiety becomes too sickening to lie in bed any longer and she forces herself to get up. She stands under her shower for nearly half an hour, the water pounding at the same rate as her heart. As she sits in her kitchen, attempting to eat a bagel, she tries to convince herself that she has no reason to be nervous.

The final week of practices had been nearly flawless. Alex’s hand was back to full function after she’d taken a couple of days off to rest it and now she was throwing better than ever, clearly determined to prove a point. The whole team was working effortlessly together; Maggie had not only caught well with Alex, but the other pitchers too.

Things had improved off the pitch as well. Alex seemed so determined to make up for her mistakes that she was spending most of her free time with Maggie. Initially, Maggie had thought Alex was just hanging out with her as some kind of apology but the more time they spent together, the more Maggie believes that Alex actually enjoys her company. When Alex had apologised to her, Maggie couldn’t stand there and pretend she wasn’t still hurt by what Alex had said, but she had forgiven her. Life was too short for her to hold a grudge, especially on someone who had lashed out in a moment of weakness.

She rides her bike to the ballpark to try and clear her head of her remaining nerves. It seems to do the trick as the wind rushes past her, but as soon as she steps onto the tarmac, her stomach starts to feel like a dead weight again. She takes her time grabbing her kit and is so in her own world that she doesn’t register who has just pulled up a few spaces away.

“You didn’t have to come, I know you’re busy at the lab.”

When Maggie looks up, she sees Alex pulling her own kit out the back of a car which must belong to Kara who is climbing out of the driver’s side. It doesn’t take much to figure out who the woman is that Alex is talking to.
“You say this every time, Alex,” her mother says and Maggie doesn’t miss the way Alex deflates slightly. “And every time I remind you that my daughter is the star pitcher for National City University and I am more than proud to come and watch her play.”

Maggie smiles to herself as she shoulders her bag; she feels as if she’s intruded on a private family moment, but the way Alex had stood up just a little straighter after what her mother had said made it worth the accidental eavesdropping. After the knock to her confidence from her injury, Maggie thinks Alex deserves all the support she can get. For a moment, she wishes she had that same support from her family but then shakes the thought away; the wounds are still healing and she’s not going to let it affect her today of all days.

“Maggie!”

She’s halfway across the parking lot, deep in her own thoughts, when she hears Kara’s voice. She stops and turns back, waiting for the younger Danvers sister to catch up with her. Alex has heard Kara call her name and looks over her shoulder, raising a hand in greeting to Maggie.

“Hey, Kara.”

“Are you excited?” Kara asks.

She’s wearing the same type of jersey Maggie’s carrying in her bag and when Kara turns back to wave Alex and her mother over, Maggie sees the ‘Danvers’ stitched on the back along with the number 01 in yellow.

“Nice jersey,” Maggie says and Kara smiles, glancing down at it.

“Alex had it made for me,” she says. “She said that even though I can’t play, I should still be part of the team.”

“Why can’t you play?” Maggie asks and Kara looks like a rabbit caught in the headlights for a second before Alex and her mother appear by her side.

“Because she’s got to let me be better than her at something,” Alex says, nudging Kara with her elbow.

“You must be Maggie,” Alex’s mother says, and before Maggie can say anything, she’s pulled into a warm hug. “It’s nice to finally meet you. Kara’s spoken about you a lot, and of course, Alex has kept mentioning the team’s new catcher.”

“All good things I hope,” Maggie says but looks at Alex, the tips of her ears turning red as she avoids Maggie’s eyes. “It’s nice to meet you, Mrs Danvers.”

“Call me Eliza, everyone on the team does,” she says with a wave of her hand. “Now, you and Alex better go and get ready, I wouldn’t want to keep you and have J’onn wondering where you’ve got to.”

“Good luck,” Kara says, hugging Alex and then to her surprise, Maggie, before walking towards the stands. Eliza kisses Alex on the cheek, her daughter squirming away and follows Kara.

“Sorry about that, she’s never usually much of a hugger,” Alex says as they head to the players’ entrance. “She gets a bit over the top on game days.”

“It’s nice she cares,” Maggie says. “You wouldn’t catch my parents in a hundred miles of this place.”
She can tell Alex wants to ask why, but she’s giving Maggie the lead of the conversation which she appreciates. But she has no reason to keep it from her friend, even if she’s not going to disclose exactly why she’s all alone in National City.

“I haven’t spoken to them in two years,” she says and Alex’s eyes widen. “It’s not a big deal and it’s a long story. I’d rather they stayed away.”

In an ideal world, she would love for her parents to be a part of this. But she doesn’t live in an ideal world and if she did, she wouldn’t be in National City in the first place. And right now, as she’s walking to the locker room with Alex to find the rest of her friends, about to start as catcher for one of the best college sides out there, she finds that she’s got all the support she needs.

“I’m sorry about your parents,” Alex says as they reach the locker room. “For what it’s worth, I know Eliza and Kara will be cheering for you, too.”

“Let’s just make sure we give them something to cheer about.”

***

The stands start to fill as they get ready to play. Maggie had known just how popular the Panthers were from last year when she had only really known James; people would often come up to him in the corridor and congratulate him on a win or wish him good luck. Over the past few days, that had started happening to her, too.

She sits on the bench, catcher’s gear firmly in place. The hum of anticipation had followed the team into the dugout from the locker room, even more hyped up from J’onn’s small speech where they had hung onto his every word.

“Nervous?”

Maggie glances up and sees Lucy standing there, rearing to go.

“A little.”

“Don’t be,” Lucy says as Alex joins them, sitting down on the bench beside Maggie. “This Seattle team is the worst they’ve had in years. Apparently, they’ve struggled to even get a team together, let alone a good one.”

“Doesn’t mean we can take it easy, though,” Alex says and Maggie has to agree even when Lucy rolls her eyes and mutters ‘killjoy’ loud enough for Alex to hear. “Anyway, it won’t be as bad as my first game.”

Lucy snorts a laugh, shaking her head slightly and Maggie looks between them.

“What happened?”

“Don’t get her started, she’s never been able to let it go,” Lucy says and Alex glares at her.

“It was only the first inning and the other team had a runner on first,” Alex says, ignoring Lucy’s pointed yawn and Maggie laughs. “I pitched a strike straight into Lord’s glove and he decided to throw it to second when the runner decided to go,” she says. “And the ball would’ve reached Vasquez too, if he had thrown it on target and not right at my head.”

“You’re kidding,” Maggie says as Lucy starts laughing.
“Next thing I knew I was in the hospital with a mild concussion,” Alex says. “So, just don’t hit me and I’ll consider it a success.”

“I’ll just yell at you to duck,” Maggie says, grinning.

James jogs down into the dugout, cap in hand.

“You guys ready?” he asks, putting his cap on and picking up his glove from next to Maggie.

“Always,” Lucy says, punching him on the arm and leading the way up out of the dugout and onto the field.

Maggie’s legs feel like lead as she stands, grabbing her helmet. Alex hesitates at the steps, waiting for her and flashes her a reassuring smile which helps to settle the nerves in Maggie’s stomach. She grips her helmet tightly, the crowd cheering as the team make their way onto the pitch and something clicks inside her; it’s a sense of belonging, an anticipation for what’s to come.

She blocks out the noise of the crowd as she stands behind home plate, crouching as Alex throws some warmup pitches. Maggie takes note of where everyone else is standing, almost subconsciously catching and throwing the ball back to Alex. In what seems like no time at all, the first batter for the Seattle team steps up to the plate.

Maggie lowers her face guard, crouching down behind the batter. The world around her is silent but only to her own ears. Alex stands there, watching, waiting. There’s no turning back now.

She’s completely focussed on the game. Nothing can break through her concentration, she’s not even thinking about anything else, her nerves forgotten. She signals to Alex to throw a curveball and gets a nod from her. In a flash, Alex has wound up and propelled the ball towards the batter who swings and misses, the ball landing with a soft thump into Maggie’s glove.

She lets out the breath she had been holding when the umpire behind her calls a strike. She catches Alex’s smile as she throws the ball back to her, turning around to wind up again.

Game on.

***

As it turns out, Lucy had been right about the Seattle team. Alex had pitched a near perfect game, only allowing them to hit one run when the batter had somehow connected with a fastball and sent it sailing over the head of even James in the outfield for a home run. The next inning, Lucy had countered with a home run of her own while both Maggie and Dunagan were on second and third, taking their lead to seven to one.

Alex was now out of the game and resting her shoulder in the locker room. She’d thrown a phenomenal game, even better than Maggie had expected. She hadn’t seen Alex pitch that well in practice so clearly she had been holding back her true power for the first game.

Maggie leans on the edge of the dugout, watching as James gets ready to bat. The starting pitcher for Seattle had been drawn from the game by their coach in only the fourth inning, having allowed them to get an eight to one lead. The eighth run had been scored by Maggie when she’d hit the ball to drop down between centre and right field. The cheer that had gone up from the crowd had carried to second base, allowing her teammate to get home safely.

The score now sat at eleven to two, and with only one more inning of the nine to play, the team are definitely feeling confident.
“Come on, Olsen!” Lucy shouts from next to Maggie.

James’ bat connects with the pitch with a crack but it loops up and then back down into the glove of the player in right field and Lucy groans.

“Bad luck,” Maggie says when James comes back to the dugout, taking off his helmet.

“It happens,” James shrugs as they get ready to head back out onto the field. “Only three outs to get and this game’s ours. Ready for your first win?”

“Oh, did you really have to say that?” Alex says, having just returned, her shoulder strapped up. “That’s tempting fate.”

“Lighten up, Danvers,” Lucy says. “We’re nine runs up and Riley’s pitching. We’re gonna be fine.”

“You two are the worst,” Alex grumbles, sitting down on the bench.

“Ignore her, she gets all superstitious near the end of a game,” James says as they head back out onto the field. “Always assumes the worst.”

“Well, let’s win this and prove her wrong.”

***

“Drinks at M’gann’s to celebrate?” Vasquez asks Maggie as they get changed out of their kit, the locker room full of talk and celebration. “You’ve gotta come, it’s your first win.”

“Count me in,” Maggie says and Vasquez zips up their bag and tells Maggie they’ll see her there.

Three swift strikeouts from Riley had done the job and the Panthers had scored their first win of the season. It had been met with loud cheers from the NCU crowd and Maggie had spotted Kara and Eliza in the stands, along with Winn, waving at Alex as she’d joined the team on the pitch to celebrate.

The chants had carried the team back to the locker room and even J’onn had cracked a rare smile as he congratulated his team. Everyone was riding the high from the win, Maggie included. But, as she stands by her locker, taking off her protective gear, she’s bothered by a recurring thought.

She is, of course, elated that they won. To be part of a great team like this and win their opening game… the feeling doesn’t quite compare to anything else Maggie has experienced. She can hear indistinct talk about some of the plays they had made today, and of course Lucy was getting a lot of praise for her three-run home run. Surprisingly, she was being rather modest about the whole thing, a far cry from how loud she could usually be.

As people start to leave the locker room, the feeling Maggie can’t quite shake grows, lost in her thoughts. She isn’t even sure what to make of it and is about to try and forget about it before she sees the person she wants to talk to come to stand next to her.

“You know, for someone who just won their opening game, you don’t look as happy as I expected,” Alex says, tilting her head. “Is everything okay?”

“Yeah, it’s fine, it’s just…” Maggie trails off, regarding Alex carefully. “You never questioned any of my signals. Everything I thought you should pitch, you did.”

“Well, yeah, you’re the catcher,” Alex shrugs as though it’s the most normal thing in the world.
“But that never happens,” Maggie says. “You don’t just agree all the time, it’s…”

“I do,” Alex says. “I agree with you because I trust you to make the right calls. I agree with you because you’re the best catcher I’ve ever seen and you know exactly what you’re doing behind that plate. If you made the wrong move, I’d shake my head. But I didn’t, because you’re good and you’re so in the zone I don’t even think you realise just how good you are.”

Maggie has no idea what to say to that. She just stands there, her locker still open as she watches Alex pull on her boots and put her cleats back into her bag. She closes her locker and turns back to Maggie, smiling.

“You were my choice for catcher for a reason,” Alex says. “I knew you were the only person at that try-out who would go into this season with as much passion as they had talent. I knew you would be the only person I could work with, and I’m sure the other pitchers would say the same.”

Maggie glances at the floor, running her jersey through her fingers. To be told all of this is pretty overwhelming; thinking back, she’s never received this kind of support from anyone. It’s new and it’s something she could definitely get used to.

“You earned that jersey,” Alex says.

“Thank you, Alex.”

It’s all she can think to say but she wants to say so much more; she just doesn’t know how to get the words out. Before she can even try to come up with something better than a thank you, the door to the locker room opens and Lucy walks back in, impatience etched on her face.

“Are you two done having a celebratory make out?”

Alex rolls her eyes for Maggie’s benefit, although her cheeks tinge red. Maggie isn’t quite sure what to make of it, but if that had been Alex’s intention then, under the circumstances, she doesn’t think she’d have had the strength to turn her down.

“Still running on a high from that win, it’s a good way to get all that energy out,” Lucy says. “Are you offering?” Maggie says as she closes her locker and shoulders her bag, not missing the eyebrow raise from Alex.

“No, merely offering words of wisdom,” Lucy says with a wink. “Anyway, hurry up, everyone else is already heading to the bar.”

Alex zips up her bike jacket, holding the door open for both Lucy and Maggie.

“Yeah, and you’re buying, Lane.”

“Why me? I hit that three-run homer, it should be you guys buying me drinks!” Lucy says as they start to walk towards the parking lot. “If anyone should be buying, it’s the rookie,” she adds, throwing an arm around Maggie’s shoulder.

“Fine by me,” Alex grins.

“Don’t think you’re celebrating in style with M’gann’s most expensive scotch,” Maggie says.

“Sawyer, if we celebrated every win with the finest scotch, we’d never get anything done,” Alex says and Lucy’s laugh stops abruptly when they reach the parking lot.
Alex throws an arm out to stop Lucy from moving and Maggie glances between them, frowning.

“What -”

“Don’t bother, Lucy,” Alex says, ignoring Maggie. “Just leave it.”

Maggie follows their gaze over to where a group of boys are waiting by one of the cars, watching the three of them. She recognises one of them as Max Lord and a couple of the others were at the tryouts. Her stomach churns slightly when she thinks about how she had beaten all of them to the position as catcher; she has a feeling they’re not too happy about it.

“Come on,” Lucy says, seething. “Let’s go.”

***

“So, are you going to tell me what the hell that was all about?” Maggie asks, leaning against the pool table as they wait for Lucy to return with their drinks; Alex has a sneaking suspicion Lucy is deliberately taking her time after her comment in the locker room.

The walk to M’gann’s had been virtually silent; seeing Rick again, waiting for her like that, had shaken her. She was angry that it had because she had just pitched a great game and the team had won; now her hand was tingling. All she had wanted was to celebrate their first win, Maggie’s first win, not have to deal with seeing Rick.

“Is this part of our new honesty is the best policy thing?” Alex asks, deflecting slightly.

“You don’t have to,” Maggie shrugs but Alex shakes her head; she’s comfortable talking to Maggie about this, she’s her friend.

“No, it’s fine, it’s just… awkward to talk to you about it,” Alex says and Maggie’s brow furrows questioningly. “Someone wasn’t happy that they weren’t our new catcher,” she explains and Maggie’s eyes widen. “I think they were hoping we’d lose so they’d have something to shout about.”

“You mean those guys in the parking lot?” Maggie asks and Alex can practically see the cogs turning in her brain. “Is that… wait, is that what happened to your hand?” Maggie says, her eyes wide.

Alex looks towards the bar where Lucy is still standing, clearly preoccupied with the same thoughts as Alex.

“You mean someone did all that just because they’re not good enough for the team?” Maggie says, astonished. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“’Cause I was embarrassed, I guess,” Alex shrugs, folding her arms. “It was hard enough to admit that my hand was hurting, let alone how it had happened. Lucy guessed and gave him a talking to. But it’s fine, he’s a homophobic asshole who felt the need to take his anger out on unsuspecting women in the alleyway behind bars, he doesn’t deserve to be on any team. He won’t do it again.”

“It’s not exactly fine,” Maggie says. “You know he deserves more than whatever Lucy said to him.”

“Kara punched him, too,” Alex says and Maggie laughs. “I think I’m a bad influence on her. But you make a valid point,” she says as Lucy rejoins them. “What exactly did you say to Rick? He’s not
someone who seems easily threatened.”

“Told him I was related to one of the most powerful men in the army,” Lucy shrugs, handing Maggie her drink. “He shut up pretty quickly after that.”

“Lucy, you didn’t,” Alex says, taken aback.

“It’s fine, I knew I wouldn’t have to actually follow through with it,” she says.

“How did you know? What if Rick had turned around and laughed in your face?”

“Then I’d have spoken to my father for the first time in two years,” Lucy says simply and Alex notices Maggie raising her eyebrows. “If Rick was a threat to the team he’s poured a load of money into, I don’t think he’d have a problem helping me out.”

“You didn’t have to say that,” Alex says softly.

“It’s okay, it didn’t come down to that, did it?” Lucy says. “That means we can maintain a mutual silence which suits me just fine.”

They don’t say anything as Lucy lines up her shot, taking her time. Alex knows it hadn’t been an easy thing to say, and yet Lucy is talking about it like it’s the simplest thing in the world. She hasn’t spoken to her father in years, Alex had been there when she had effectively said goodbye to her father just before they had started at NCU. But Lucy had risked breaking that silence just for the sake of the team, because of something that had happened to Alex. She wasn’t just going to let that go; she wouldn’t push Lucy about it, but the deep sense of gratitude Alex felt wasn’t going to be kept inside.

“If it makes you feel better, I don’t talk to my father either,” Maggie says as Lucy pots the stripe.

“So I’m busy feeling sorry for myself, now I’ve got to feel sorry for you, too?” Lucy says, grinning.

“Don’t bother, my dad’s a dick,” Maggie says, walking around the table.

“I’ll drink to that,” Lucy mutters, taking her glass from Alex. “Anyway, enough about shitty parents. This team’s more of a family now. So, here’s to our first, of many, wins.”

“Here, here,” Maggie says, knocking her glass against Alex and Lucy’s. “Although, at least you’re better at baseball than you are at pool, Lane. Or we wouldn’t stand a chance.”

Lucy steps back up to the table, not missing Maggie’s foot on the way and Alex laughs at the string of curses that erupt from Maggie’s mouth. Lucy was right; this team was definitely like family to her.

Chapter End Notes

do y'all remember the Wii Sports baseball? i kept thinking about the sound effects writing this chapter.... anyhow, as some of you may be aware, i'm moving to america at the end of the month. i will try my best to get another chapter up before i move, but i can't promise anything i'm afraid. luckily an 8 hour plane flight will give me time to write a lot! hopefully my writing standard will pick up by then too.... as always, thank you so much for all your support! your comments and asks on tumblr always make me smile. until next time!
Ten games into the season and the National City Panthers are flying high. Top of their league with eight wins and two losses, and the team shows no signs of slowing down. Their wins were backed by strong performances from all of the pitchers on the team as well as a great batting start, especially from Vasquez and Lucy, the latter leading the league in home runs.

Their first loss had been rough on everyone. It was a wake up call, a reminder that even though on paper they had a strong team, not everything would always go their way. The team had been quietly disappointed, almost somber, but as James had pointed out to an equally quiet locker room, there was nothing more they could have done; they had simply been outplayed.

And in those eight wins and two losses, Alex already had twenty-four strikeouts under her belt from the three games she had pitched. By all accounts, she should be feeling over the moon at how well the season was going. And yet, there’s something eating away at her that’s not only curbing her elation, but also making her angry for even letting her thoughts get to her.

It’s no secret to everyone at NCU that the Panthers are not just a team, but all close friends. Sure, Alex has known Lucy, James and Vasquez the longest, but she still makes a point of having strong friendships with everyone else on the team.

And now, that includes Maggie.

The change from disliking her at their first meeting to being her friend was one Alex had been determined to make. To her surprise, she had succeeded easily enough because Maggie was… well, Maggie was great. She’d broken down the stubborn walls Alex had put up, battled her way with wit and forgiveness and passion to fight by Alex’s side. Now Alex can’t imagine not being her friend.

And she’s not alone in thinking that.

Lucy and Maggie spend a lot of their free time together as far as Alex is aware. Sometimes she was with them, but her life is split into baseball, the lab and her research project so she doesn’t have much time to spare. Combined with Maggie and Lucy’s near constant flirting both on and off the pitch, she has to admit that she’s jealous. And Alex hates being jealous, it’s exhausting, it’s… irrational.

That’s what’s bothering her. Not that Lucy has more in common with Maggie, or spends more time with her outside of the ballpark. It’s the fact that she’s even feeling jealous in the first place.

It’s irrational. Completely and utterly irrational. And yet it’s there. Everpresent, pressing like an anvil on her chest, weighing her down and she’s just waiting for the hammer to fall.
She’s experienced this feeling before, this feeling of tilting on the edge of something and not knowing what’s going to be on the other side except for pain. Her old best friend, long before Lucy had turned up with her no nonsense attitude, had been Vickie. And then Vickie had gotten a boyfriend and decided that Alex wasn’t worth her time anymore.

At the time, she had been devastated by the feeling of being pushed aside, tossed out like garbage. So, it’s not that she’s scared Lucy is going to leave her behind, but more that she… well, she expects it. At some point, the harmless flirting could turn into something more and even if it doesn’t, Alex can’t help but feel that at some point, she will fade away. And however much she expects it to happen, however much she tries to prepare for that, it would hurt her probably beyond repair.

And she’s so angry at herself for even thinking this in the dead of night, staring up at her bedroom ceiling, all kinds of stressed out and unable to shut off her mind. It’s ridiculous because she knows, she knows without hesitation, that Lucy would never, ever leave her behind. It would never cross her mind. And she’s not fourteen anymore, she’s an adult and it’s not like she’s Lucy’s only friend. But Alex has gone through this before and it’s a fear that has never really left her.

For now, the best thing she can do is tell herself that she’s being stupid and try to get a decent night’s sleep. With their eleventh game of the season the next day, she has a feeling sleep won’t come easily.

Tomorrow isn’t her game to start which means being sat in the dugout with the relief pitchers. Sat on the bench while the others were out on the field, while Maggie and Lucy get closer.

“Stop being an idiot,” she mutters into the darkness, turning over onto her side and closing her eyes, trying to convince herself that what she once experienced nearly eight years ago wouldn’t come back and hurt her again.

***

They lose the game.

It’s close, they lose by only one run but in some ways, that makes it even harder to swallow. They had been so close and just fallen short. To be on top for so long and then to fall behind… well, Alex can’t say she isn’t used to it.

The loss, unsurprisingly, knocks the team’s morale. As they walk out of the ballpark, the loss sits heavy on their shoulders, the what-could-have-beens and the ‘if only we had scored another run’ echoing around everyone’s heads.

They need a boost. A break. Time to decompress, get over the loss and move on to the next game.

Luckily, Alex knows just the people for the job.

And two hours later, she finds herself standing outside Maggie’s apartment, waiting for her to answer the door.

“Sawyer, open up!”

She knocks for a second time and finally hears movement on the other side. The door unlocks and swings open to reveal Maggie, still in her jersey but changed into her sweatpants which are rolled three times over at the ankles.
“Alex? What’re you doing here?”

But Alex has just noticed the baseball bat leaning quite out of place against Maggie’s wall next to the door.

“What the hell is that for?” Alex asks, pointing to the bat.

“I like to be prepared,” Maggie says, turning her back to Alex but leaving the door open in invitation to enter. “You could’ve been anyone.”

“Too small to check through the peephole?” Alex jokes but her laugh falls flat at Maggie’s frown. “Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Maggie says, but her eyes are dull and her smile fails to make her dimples appear, dimples which Alex has noticed every time Maggie has smiled.

“You’re lying,” Alex says, standing next to the kitchen island as Maggie goes to the fridge and pulls out two bottles of water. “Is it the game?”

Maggie just shrugs, twisting the cap off one of the bottles and tossing the other to Alex.

“Look, it’s just what happens,” Alex says, setting the water down. “We can’t predict these things. Sometimes the other team is just better.”

“Yeah, I know, I don’t need another lecture from you,” Maggie snaps and then realises what she’s said and looks away.

Embarrassed heat rises up Alex’s neck and the silence that fills the space between them is almost suffocating for her; she hates that how she treated Maggie is still clearly bothering her and more than anything, she wants to take it back.

“I’m sorry, that wasn’t fair,” Maggie says softly. “I don’t know why I said that.”

“Because you’re angry,” Alex shrugs. “And you let your anger get the better of you. Trust me, I think we both know that I’ve been there before.”

Maggie’s laugh is almost a whisper but it snaps the tension.

“I get that losing is frustrating,” Alex says carefully. “But don’t beat yourself up about it, okay? I know that’s easier said than done,” she adds when Maggie opens her mouth. “But the sooner you get used to realising that sometimes the game is just out of your hands, the better you’ll be for it.”

Maggie sighs, resting the back of her head against the fridge door, closing her eyes. The other losses hadn’t affected Maggie this much, not that Alex had noticed anyway.

“Is there something else you wanna talk about?” she asks, unscrewing her own water.

“It just… it sucks that we lost,” Maggie says, folding her arms. “I don’t know, I feel like… like I could have done more? What if I’d signalled for a different pitch? What if I hadn’t struck out twice and not even reached a freaking base?”

Alex puts the bottle of water down and walks around the other side of the island, standing far away enough to give Maggie her space.

“If I had a dollar for every time I thought about what I could have done differently in a game, I could buy the LA Angels,” Alex says and the corners of Maggie’s mouth turn up. “Everyone has off days.
But you can’t change what’s been and gone, all you can do is work to make sure that it doesn’t happen again. And don’t let it stop your fire because if you do, in the end you’ll just burn out.”

“Poetic,” Maggie says with a trace of that familiar grin and Alex reaches over to shove her shoulder.

“I mean it,” she says. “Just keep doing what you’re doing and don’t slow down for anything. You’re still the best catcher we’ve ever had, everyone on the team knows it.”

“They still think that?” Maggie asks, glancing up and meeting Alex’s eyes.

“Of course they do,” Alex says. “They’re all sat on their own couches blaming themselves.”

Maggie exhales a laugh and pushes herself away from the fridge.

“Is that why you’re here? To make sure I’m not just wallowing on my couch?”

“Kind of,” Alex says. “I’m here to take you somewhere so you don’t do that.”

“Well, thanks for the offer, but I really don’t feel like going out,” Maggie says, walking over to her couch but not sitting down, like she’s debating with herself what to do with Alex still standing in her kitchen.

Alex follows her, standing between the coffee table and the television which currently has an episode of Brooklyn Nine-Nine paused on it.

“Neither did the rest of the team but you’ll find I can be very persuasive,” Alex says, folding her arms. “You’re lucky it’s not Lucy here, she’d be carrying you out of that door.”

“Lucy couldn’t pick me up if she tried,” Maggie says, amused.

“I’ll tell her you said that,” Alex says and laughs at the glare from Maggie. “I’ll also tell her you’re scared of her.”

“I’m not scared of Lucy,” Maggie mutters. “And I’m not going anywhere tonight.”

“Come on, I promise it’ll be worth it,” Alex says. “Plus, James has been waiting downstairs for fifteen minutes not and I bet Lucy ten bucks I could make you come in fifteen.”

At that, Maggie raises her eyebrows, a smirk etched on her face and Alex realises what she’s just said.

“I-I didn’t mean…” she stammers, feeling her neck go red and hot.

Damn Maggie and that smirk because if she wasn’t thinking about her words in that way before, she most definitely is putting all her effort into not having that mental image cross her mind.

“Really? As long as that?” Maggie says, taking a step forward, the spark back in her eyes. “I doubt it, Danvers. If you want, I’d be more than willing to try and help you win ten bucks. I’m sure it’d be more fun than just sitting on my couch.”

“You know that’s not what I meant,” Alex says, looking anywhere but at Maggie.

“Is that why you’re so sure tonight will be worth me leaving my Netflix marathon?”

“Fine, stay here,” Alex says. “Sit here with your stupid jokes and don’t come hang out with your friends and have a few beers. See if I care.”
That’s the whole reason she’s at Maggie’s in the first place; she does care. Maggie eyes her carefully, still standing so close to Alex that she can smell her shampoo.

*Apple, just like Lucy’s.*

The thought jolts her out of her trance-like state and she takes a step back.

“So, you in?”

“I’m in.”

“About damn time, Danvers,” Lucy grumbles from the passenger seat when Alex and Maggie make their way to James’ car. “I’ve been forced to sit here listening to James’ shitty old school hip-hop on my own with no one to complain to about it.”

“Sorry, that’s my fault,” Maggie says, looking pointedly at Alex. “Took me longer to come than Alex expected.”

“Yeah, not the first time she’s heard that,” Lucy laughs and Alex is seriously considering making Maggie stay behind with her pizza and Netflix.

“Can you two stop for just one second?” Alex says and the two of them laugh. “I know it’s hard enough for you to keep your mind out of the gutter long enough to hit a homerun, but at least try.”

Lucy raises her hands in mock surrender as Alex and Maggie climb into the back of James’ car, his music now turned down to a more respectable volume.

“So, can you tell me where we’re going this time?” Maggie asks.

Since the last time James had driven her somewhere at night it had been to a tattoo parlour, Alex can’t really blame her for asking.

“It’s a surprise,” Lucy sing-songs from the front.

“But no one will stab you with a needle this time,” James says as they pull up to a red light.

“Good to know,” Maggie laughs.

They sit in silence for the rest of the short ride, James’ music providing a bass line hiss through the car. Five minutes later, they pull up to a familiar sight for them all.

“Er, are we allowed to be here?” Maggie asks as they climb out of the car, the slam of the doors echoing around the empty parking lot.

“No,” comes the resounding chorus from the others.

“That’s what I like about you guys,” Maggie says as James pulls a cooler from the trunk. “You’re always so reassuring.”

“Would we ever get you into trouble?” Lucy says, pulling her purple Panthers jacket on to combat the chill whistling through the parking lot.

“Yes,” Alex deadpans. “At least you would. I should know, I’ve been scraping my way out of trouble for five years by your side.”
“And yet you’ve never complained,” Lucy says wistfully and Alex shrugs; being best friends with Lucy Lane was certainly never boring.

Maggie still looks apprehensive, staring at the back of the stand. The gates have been locked and the lights switched off. Luckily, Alex has a way of solving that. This isn’t her first, and probably won’t be her last, rodeo.

‘Let’s get in before the others arrive,” she says, leading the way to the padlocked gate.

She feels like she’s in some kind of trashy spy movie when Lucy hands her a hairpin. She sticks it in the lock and after a few seconds, it clicks open.

“Nicely done, Agent Danvers,” Lucy says and Alex hands her back her bent hairpin. “If the baseball career doesn’t work out, there’s a place with some top secret government agency with your name on it.”

“I’ll take that into consideration,” Alex says, pocketing the padlock and opening the gate.

Lucy goes first, followed by James and Alex holds it open for Maggie who has been standing watching the scene unfold silently.

“It’s always going to be like this, isn’t it?” she says.

“Like what?”

“Breaking the rules for a kick, who cares about the consequences?” Maggie says but then the dimples appear and Alex finds herself grinning back.

“Pretty much, yeah. Think you can keep up?”

“Not try and get left in the dirt?” Maggie says, walking through the gate and over some kind of invisible threshold. “Not a chance, Danvers.”

Alex watches her go to catch up with Lucy and James. It’s not hard to see why her and Lucy had become such firm friends so fast. Unlike Lucy, Maggie’s streak of recklessness was controlled, hidden beneath a cool and calm exterior. Compared to Lucy’s fire and energy, they balance each other out perfectly.

Stuck somewhere between the two, Alex struggles to see where she might fit into this new dynamic. But tonight is not the night to think about that. She would do what she had for the past couple of weeks; push it to the back of her mind and hope, over time, the thoughts would just fade away.

She lets the others go over to the diamond while she heads up the stands and walks around the top row of seats to the switch box. She pulls the lever down and the ballpark lights illuminate the field. She blinks away the sudden intrusion of light against the dark sky and when she looks down, she can see the other three huddled around one of the ball machines.

As she hops down to ground level, she nearly bumps into Vasquez and Dunagan.

“You know, you could try not sending such mysterious texts,” Vasquez says. “Ballpark, 8pm” leaves a lot to the imagination. I feel like I’m going undercover.”

“Funny, Lucy said nearly the same thing,” Alex says, walking with them to the pitching mound.

“Who are we waiting on?” Vasquez asks as James hands them a beer.
“Just the others and Kara,” Alex says, pulling the tab open on her own can.

“And what exactly are we waiting on them for?” Maggie asks, her jacket tied around her waist, more used to the cold weather unlike the rest of them.

“Batting practice,” James says, leaning up against the ball machine. “An excuse to take our anger out on the baseballs by hitting them as far as we can.”

“I won last time,” Lucy says.

“You didn’t win, it wasn’t a competition,” Alex says, rolling her eyes.

“I hit the most home runs,” Lucy says. “Ergo, I won.”

“You keep believing that,” Alex says. “Now make yourself useful and get a bat and helmet before the others show up.”

***

By the time the rest of the team, plus a very enthusiastic Kara, have turned up, the temperature has dropped considerably. No one seems to care, too preoccupied with trying to win Lucy’s competition of who could hit the most home runs.

Kara hugs James’ side for most of the time, cheering him on as loudly as she does during games when he takes the bat and the helmet and steps up to the plate. When he smacks a ball just short of the fence, Kara runs up and kisses him, clearly oblivious to the fact that everyone is watching them.

Alex shivers as a gust of wind blows through the ballpark and up into the stands she’s sitting in, slightly apart from the others. It’s the perfect place to clear her head when hitting baseballs as hard as she can isn’t doing enough. She puts her empty beer can down on the stone step and zips up her jacket, folding her arms to contain some of the warmth.

“You okay there?”

She jumps at the sound of Maggie’s voice, too focussed on her own empty thoughts to hear her coming up the steps.

“All good.”

“You sure? You look lonely sat all the way up here on your own,” Maggie says, tilting her head and frowning slightly. “Not to mention cold. Here.”

She hands Alex another beer which she takes with a grateful nod. Maggie hesitates for a few seconds, waiting either for Alex to say something or for an invitation to sit down. When Alex doesn’t speak, she sits down anyway but leaves a seat free between them.

“Nice view.”

Before Alex can even think of something to say to that, a loud cheer erupts from down below as Lucy sends a ball flying over the right field fence. Lucy takes off her helmet and glances up at the stands, raising the bat in salute to Alex and Maggie. She hands it over to another team member and runs up the steps.

“If only you hit like that every time,” Alex says as Lucy climbs over Maggie’s outstretched legs to sit
in the empty seat; her comment earns her a light kick to the shin.

“Setting my aim high this year,” Lucy says, grabbing Alex’s beer. “Most home runs in the league.”

“Winning the league won’t be enough for you?” Maggie says and Alex shoots her a look. “Sorry, forgot we’re not supposed to talk about that.”

“Hey, I want to believe it,” Alex shrugs. “But I don’t want everyone to be disappointed if we don’t and we’ve been preaching that we’re league winners when we’re only eleven games in.”

Lucy takes a hip flask out of her inside jacket pocket and hands it to Alex.

“Drink this and shut up,” she says. “Or I will come into your room tonight and yell ‘league winners’ in your ear.”

Alex doesn’t doubt Lucy would follow through with that threat. She flips open the flask and gingerly sniffs at whatever’s inside.

“Whiskey? Seriously?”

“It’ll warm you up.”

“So thoughtful.”

She winces at the burn at the back of her throat when she takes a sip, handing the flask over Lucy’s head to Maggie. Another crack punctures the air as someone else manages to connect with the ball and Lucy cheers.

“I have to say, this is more fun than sitting alone in my apartment feeling sorry for myself,” Maggie says, leaning back in her seat.

“Not the same kind of fun Kara and James are probably having right now,” Lucy says, taking the flask which Alex instantly takes from her.

“Can we not?”

“Your sister isn’t a thirteen year old kid anymore,” Lucy says, tugging the whiskey back. “She’s in love and James is hot. I’m surprised she’s not yelling it from the rooftops. You’d rather that than her sitting eating ice cream and pining after him every second of the day.”

“No more alcohol for you,” Alex mutters. “You get way too philosophical and clever when you’re drunk.”

“She’s right,” Maggie says, putting her feet up on the back of the seat in front, tucking her hands into her jacket pockets. “They’re happy. Let them go off and have secret sex and be together unlike the rest of us.”

Lucy hands the flask over to Maggie with a laugh. “Is that a hint of bitterness I detect, Sawyer?”

“If you’re single, aren’t you automatically bitter?” Maggie counters, taking a sip from the flask and keeping hold of it.

“You won’t be bitter for long,” Lucy says. “You’re a catch.”

“Are you trying to tell me something?” Maggie says and suddenly the wind isn’t the only thing making Alex feel cold.
“Oh, you couldn’t handle me,” Lucy says.

“Danvers can certainly handle you from what I’ve been told,” Maggie says, leaning forward to look at Alex, barely concealing a grin.

“And what is it that you’ve been told?” Lucy asks, stealing her flask back from Maggie who has the decency to not just drain the whole thing.

“This and that,” Maggie shrugs. “And I never reveal my sources.”

“Okay, can we move on?” Alex says.

“Ashamed?”

“No, I just don’t want Sawyer feeling even more jealous of people having secret sex because then her head might explode,” Alex teases and Maggie flips her off. “And for what it’s worth, I like having her around.”

“You and me both,” Lucy says, punching Maggie not too lightly on the shoulder. “And this is the part where you say that you like being around us,” she says, gesturing for Maggie to repeat her.

“It depends, are you still going to let me be lonely and bitter?” Maggie says.

“Nope,” Lucy says and before Maggie can respond, in true Lucy fashion, she nearly jumps out of her seat to awkwardly wrap her arms around Maggie’s shoulder, and pull her close.

“Ow, get off me you lunatic,” Maggie says, her voice muffled against Lucy’s shoulder as she struggles to get out of Lucy’s hold.

“No, not until you say you’re our friend and you’ll stop being bitter,” Lucy says.

Alex hears a strangled curse from Maggie and takes the opportunity to steal the flask from by Lucy’s feet. She can’t hold back her laughter at the sight nor can she ignore the light sensation in her chest; our friend. The three of them, together.

Maybe she was wrong. Maybe she really was being an idiot. And maybe, just maybe, she really would always have a place with the two of them.

Chapter End Notes

your support in the comments for this fic and the best wishes for my move have been amazing. i appreciate every single one of them and the kudos you guys leave on this fantastically great to write fic. hopefully my update schedule will get back on track again so i won’t leave you waiting too long. i’m so excited to get stuck into the next few chapters and i hope you guys stick with me on this journey!
two quarters and a heart down

Chapter Notes

So I changed a few things in the plan to get to where everyone wants our girls to be that little bit faster... let's get to it, shall we?

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Their last game before Christmas break creeps up so fast that Alex can’t be sure where the time has gone. It’s lost in a haze of classes, research in the labs, baseball games and spending whatever time she had left with her friends. Her life has reached a comfortable, enjoyable monotony where nothing has really changed from the start of the baseball season.

She can’t ask for much more. She doesn’t think she wants to ask for more, let alone what to ask for, until it feels like it’s too late. When it happens, she realises just what she should have asked for; everything to stay the same. And, of course, everything starts to change.

***

How Alex is feeling right now is a far cry from how she had felt this time last year. The Panthers had been bottom of the league, in the middle of a long losing streak and their final game before the break had been against the league leaders. This time, it’s the total opposite. By all accounts, the Panthers should be able to go home to their families and see their friends without a loss sitting on their shoulders.

The stands are packed out with students from NCU, their classes finished for the break, the crowd as large as it had been for their first game of the season. Still, when Alex steps out onto the pitch and turns around to face the stand, she spots Kara and Eliza sitting a few rows back from the dugout, her sister waving enthusiastically at her.

Alex waves back and then bends down, picking up a handful of rust-coloured dirt and letting it fall through her fingers. She puts her glove back on and takes a breath, standing on the marker. She looks up, her cap shielding her from the sun’s glare, and glances at Maggie, waiting for her signal. She gives her nod, adjusts her cap and lets the game take over.

In what feels like no time at all, the Panthers are winning the game by five runs to one at the end of the sixth inning. An excited hum echoes around the stands as everyone anticipates a win for the home side, eager to see their off on their break with something to cheer about.

Alex gets the nod from J’onn to continue pitching for the seventh inning after they’ve batted; after holding the other team to only one run, she’d have been a bit annoyed if she’d been taken out of the game. She barely even has time to grab her helmet and bat before a loud cheer erupts from the crowd and she glances up just in time to see James rounding third base, the ball nowhere in sight.

At that, the other team’s starting pitcher gets pulled out of the game and they wait around, trying not to celebrate too soon, while the relief pitcher comes on. Lucy stands outside the dugout, practicing her swing and Alex knows at this point, Lucy’s just going to go for it.
“Hey, Lane!”

Lucy turns around mid-swing at Maggie’s shout, resting her bat casually over her shoulder.

“If you hit this out of the park, I’ll buy you a drink,” Maggie calls out, standing on her tiptoes to lean over the edge of the dugout.

“Sawyer, if I hit this out of the park, you’re buying me dinner,” Lucy says with a wink that makes Alex’s stomach twist in a convoluted knot.

It’s been weeks since she had let feel a surge of jealousy, all the thoughts pushed to the back of her mind, convinced that she had of course been worrying over nothing, that there was no way something would happen and she would be left behind.

And it doesn’t mean anything, it doesn’t have to mean anything, it’s just friendly banter, a challenge and God, does Alex know Lucy likes a challenge -

“Deal,” Maggie says and Lucy blows a kiss at her and Alex’s stomach drops.

Alex barely takes notice of what happens until Lucy steps up to the plate and adjusts the straps of her gloves. She catches Maggie stepping out onto the deck out of the corner of her eye but she’s more focussed on Lucy and there’s a small, annoying voice in the back of her mind that’s willing her not to hit it out of the park.

If she does, it would give the Panthers an almost unassailable lead and it should be what Alex wants. It’s what she forces herself to want, despite the implications if it does happen because this is her team and she can put her irrational, stomach churning jealousy behind her as she has done every other time.

Lucy taps the ground twice with her bat before bringing it behind her head. The pitcher releases the ball and Lucy swings hard at it and misses. Alex can’t help but smile at the power Lucy had put behind that swing; she’s always been underestimated by other teams, whether it’s because she’s a girl or because of her height but in typical Lucy Lane fashion, she’s managed to prove them all wrong by having one of the most powerful swings in the league.

And on the next pitch, she proves it again.

It’s a hard, if mistimed, hit which goes running past second base to reach the centre-fielder who scoops it up and throws it to first base too late. The crowd cheers but Alex is more focussed on the gesture Lucy is making towards Maggie, raising an invisible glass. Apparently, it was good enough for drinks, even if it wasn’t out of the park.

Alex takes Maggie’s spot, trying to shake her thoughts back into the game at hand as she warms up her swing. They’re leading by six runs, but in Alex’s experience, that didn’t mean the game was going to end in their favour. She has to concentrate. She probably has only one more inning left to pitch and thinking about Maggie and Lucy going on a date would not help guarantee the team a victory.

Then, the world seems to shift into slow motion.

Before Maggie has even swung at the ball, Lucy is running, propelling herself towards second base. The ball lands in the glove of the catcher, thrown over to the second baseman in what feels like the longest few seconds of the game. The throw is off, but still Lucy dives headfirst, totally focussed on reaching safely.
But the momentum from her sprinting carries her too far forward and Alex doesn’t need to hear the
cry of pain even from all the way near the dugout to know that Lucy’s knee has hit the solid plastic
of the base with such force that she’s sent sprawling to her right.

Alex stands there, her bat touching the ground, and by the time her brain as caught up with her body
and told her legs to start moving, Maggie is already running past the pitcher to Lucy, bat and helmet
discarded at home plate. Lucy’s still on the floor, clutching her right knee, the second baseman by
her side as Alex reaches them.

“I’m fine,” is the first thing she says, through gritted teeth. “Just give me a second.”

“You nearly broke the base with your knee, Luce,” Maggie says, kneeling down next to her and
turning around as if to wave Dr Hamilton, the team medic, over.

“No, no,” Lucy says, catching Maggie’s arm as she lets go of her knee. “I’ll be okay, don’t waste
time.”

“Lucy, you’re hurt,” Alex says, adjusting her helmet from where it had shifted when she’d sprinted
over. “Let Dr Hamilton take a look.”

“It’s just a bruise,” Lucy says, putting pressure on her left leg as she goes to push herself up.

Alex reaches out but Maggie gets there first, grabbing her under the arm and helping Lucy to her
feet. Gingerly, Lucy puts weight on her right knee, wincing as her heel hits the ground. Maggie still
has a hold of her arm and Alex can only stand there, feeling useless in the face of her best friend
being injured.

“You don’t have to stay in,” Maggie says, her grip tightening briefly on Lucy’s arm before Lucy
nods her okay for Maggie to let go.

The second baseman hands Lucy her helmet and she holds onto it as she tests her knee, bouncing
gently on the balls of her feet. She puts her helmet back on and brushes some of the red dust off her
jersey.

“All good,” she says with a grin.

Alex watches as Maggie’s eyes narrow, looking her up and down as if she’s trying to find some
excuse to pull Lucy out of the game for her own good. Alex, however, knows better than to go
against Lucy’s judgement; she’s someone who has to make mistakes to learn and Alex has never
gotten anywhere by pressing Lucy in a direction she didn’t want to go, even if it was the better
option.

“Are we good here?” the umpire asks and Alex has half a mind to snap at him and say that they’re
clearly not okay because her teammate is injured.

But for the sake of staying in the game, she just gives Lucy a concerned look and turns to walk back
to the deck.

“Is she okay?” J’onn asks, halfway out of the dugout, brow furrowed.

“Bruised knee, I think,” Alex says, picking up her bat. “Probably nothing to worry about, and you
know what Lucy’s like.”

J’onn huffs his agreement and goes to sit back down with the rest of the team still looking concerned,
but not surprised that Lucy wasn’t limping her way back to the locker rooms for medical attention.
It’s not the first time Lucy has pulled a stunt like this; once she had crashed hard to the dirt making an incredible catch at shortstop and pushed herself to stay on until the end of the game.

The next ball Maggie fires up the middle to reach first base but Lucy makes no attempt to run to third. Alex steps up to the plate and doesn’t miss how Maggie is carefully watching Lucy from first. She tries to focus, but it’s incredibly difficult when she knows Lucy is standing there, injured and that Maggie’s head isn’t in the game either. Still, she kicks the middle of the bat with her cleats as she always does, swings the bat around once before gripping it and watching as the pitcher winds up.

She misjudges the pitch, swinging and missing and neither Lucy or Maggie run. She goes through the motions again, watching, waiting and this time she connects with a fastball, driving it hard past the shortstop.

Alex is so focussed on getting to first base that she doesn’t realise what has happened until she looks to her left to confirm that the other two had advanced. But Maggie isn’t on second. Instead, she’s halfway to third, kneeling down next to someone who can only be Lucy.

J’onn is already making his way out onto the pitch, and Dr Hamilton beats both him and Alex to the other two. Lucy is lying on her back, her right leg stretched out into the dirt, her arm over her eyes, clearly in a lot of pain.

“What happened?” Alex asks quickly as Dr Hamilton kneels down opposite Maggie who has one hand on Lucy’s left leg and the other on her shoulder.

“I watched her take off for third but she went down right away,” Maggie says, voice etched with worry, glancing down at Lucy who’s biting back the pain. “She slowed up and the next thing I saw was her lying on the ground.”

“Talk to me, Lane,” Dr Hamilton says, rolling Lucy’s right pant leg up.

Lucy’s breathing is heavy as she takes her arm away from her eyes, lifting her head up slightly. Dr Hamilton gently touches her right knee and Lucy gasps, gripping Maggie’s hand that was on her thigh. Alex keeps her attention fixed on Dr Hamilton to stop her stomach from doing a backflip.

“Okay, you’re out of the game, Lucy,” Dr Hamilton says, pulling numbing spray out of her bag.

“No, I -”

“No arguments,” J’onn says firmly. “I’m not letting my best shortstop hurt herself even more out of sheer stubbornness.”

Dr Hamilton sprays Lucy’s knee as J’onn turns to jog back to the dugout to get a pinch runner to take Lucy’s place at third base. The only sound comes from the hum of the crowd as they look on, the other team standing by, just as concerned.

Alex steps over and picks up Lucy’s helmet, brushing some of the dirt off it and when she turns around, Lucy is being helped to her feet by Dr Hamilton and Maggie, the latter still maintaining a firm grip on her hand. Lucy puts all her weight on her left leg, supported by the other two. Maggie seems to stumble slightly as Lucy shifts her arm around her shoulder and Alex steps forward, tucking Lucy’s helmet under her arm.

“I got it,” Maggie says before Alex can even offer.

It’s not said with any intention of pushing Alex away but that doesn’t stop the words from stinging. Her best friend is injured and all she can do is stand there between second and third base, watching
as someone else takes care of her and does all the things Alex wants to do to be there for Lucy.

She can’t say anything. She can’t exactly be angry at Maggie for taking care of Lucy because that’s what really matters; Lucy’s hurt and she needs someone. It just so happens that someone is Maggie, not Alex. It shouldn’t bother her as much as it does, and as before, the anger at her jealousy comes creeping back up her spine.

But she stays silent. Hands over Lucy’s helmet to Maggie who takes it with her free hand without acknowledgement, focussing on not letting Lucy fall. The crowd applaud as Lucy limps off the field and she raises a hand to them. Alex walks in the opposite direction back to first base, her mind less focussed on the game than it had been all day. Not only were her feelings returning suddenly, with more force than before, but now Lucy is hurt and she isn’t sure how seriously.

She knows what this game means to Lucy. They know what it means to each other. And if this takes Lucy out for a long time, if she doesn’t recover over Christmas break, then it’s going to affect more than just the team. She doesn’t want to begin thinking about how this could affect Lucy.

A couple of minutes late, Maggie jogs back onto the pitch, taking her place a few paces away from second base. Alex tries to catch her eye as they wait for the pitcher to warm up, but Maggie has a look of complete determination on her face, staring straight ahead at home plate. She almost looks shaken, as if Lucy’s injury has reminded her just how easily things could change.

It’s a feeling Alex is getting used to.

***

“So, seems like Lucy’s going to fine.”

Alex sips her drink as she waits for M’gann to get her change. Maggie leans with her back against the bar, looking over their table where Lucy was sat with her right leg resting across James’ thighs.

“She’ll be fit for the first game after the break,” Alex says as M’gann comes back over. “Reminds me of the first day I met her.”

“That means you got the Lucy version where she only grazed her knee, not the one where she failed spectacularly and sprained her wrist,” Alex says and Maggie snorts. “Now you know.”

Alex grabs three of the drinks, leaving Maggie to have a word with M’gann and makes her way back to their table. She’s barely been sat down for a minute when Kara walks in, looking around and then rushing over to the table. James stands up and sets Lucy’s legs back on the seats until Maggie comes over with the rest of the drinks, sitting down and propping Lucy’s legs on her knee.

Alex sips at her drink, not sure where to look, either at her sister kissing her boyfriend or at Lucy and Maggie getting closer and closer.

“Hey, Badger,” James says and Lucy snorts into her drink but it goes unheard by Kara and James. “Let me get you a drink.”

They walk off, hand in hand, leaving the other three at the table, nursing their drinks and all probably feelings more than a bit jealous of the situation. But it’s only Lucy that voices it.
“How come I never got any of that when we were dating?” Lucy frowns, staring at James and Kara’s backs.

“Because Kara’s a lady,” Maggie says quickly and then her eyes widen almost comically when she realises what she’s just said.

“What?” Lucy says, sitting up straighter.

Maggie turns back to them, picking at the label of her beer bottle, trying to catch Alex’s eye. Alex can’t help but feel a slight vindictive pleasure at the hole Maggie’s digging.

“I’m not a lady?” Lucy demands.

“You’re… well, you’re Lucy.”

“What the fuck is that supposed to mean?”

“You’ve done it now, Sawyer,” Alex says and Maggie glares at her as she sips her drink.

“Nothing, you’re just… you know.”

“No, I don’t know, enlighten me,” Lucy says, and Maggie yelps, nearly spilling her drink when Lucy jams her heel into Maggie’s thigh.

“It’s just… well, you know, right, Alex?” Maggie says.

“No, no way,” Alex says. “Can’t help you. Enlighten her.”

There’s a beat and Alex can’t help but laugh, leaning back in her seat as she watches Maggie’s mind work to try and get out of this mess she’s found herself in.

“Well, your jersey number for starters,” Maggie says, not looking at Lucy still. “Sixty-nine, really? You’re always making jokes about hitting bases and don’t think I don’t notice you staring at Alex’s ass when you’re standing at shortstop.”

At this, Alex chokes on her drink, blinking back the tears in her eyes enough to see Lucy shrug and sip her drink.

“That doesn’t mean I’m not a lady,” Lucy says. “I can be a lady.”

“I’m sure,” Maggie says wryly. “But Kara is polite and all bright and happy. People like her.”

“People like me!” Lucy protests. “You like me, and Alex has slept with me ten times so she clearly likes me.”

“Yeah, not because you’re a lady,” Alex says and something crosses Maggie’s face that she can’t quite describe. “Told you to leave it, Sawyer, now look what you’ve done to her.”

Maggie just shrugs and sips her beer. The silence has turned suddenly uncomfortable and Alex isn’t quite sure why. She knows that Lucy isn’t pissed off at Maggie for what she had said, she just wanted to make Maggie squirm a bit. But something seems off.

“I’m gonna prove you wrong,” Lucy says after a while and Alex looks up from where she’s staring at the table and Maggie looks taken aback.

“What? How’re you going to do that?”
Lucy sets her glass down and shifts so her legs are no longer resting on Maggie’s; the effect is somewhat lost when she winces at the movement to her knee. She leans forward, swirling her drink around her glass.

“Ask me out on a date.”

It feels as though all of the warmth has been sucked out of the bar. It’s almost like a reflex. Alex’s heartbeat suddenly becomes loud in her ears, her grip tightening on her bottle.

“Excuse me?” Maggie says, exhaling a laugh.

“Ask me out,” Lucy says again. “I’ll say yes and then I’ll show you just how much of a lady I can be, which is such an outdated concept by the way. I expected better from you.”

This is not what Alex had expected when they had walked into the bar after celebrating their win and top of the league spot at the break. But, looking back at how Maggie and Lucy have always interacted, it doesn’t come as a shock that suddenly, the tide has changed and one of them has been brave enough to ask the question.

“Is this your idea of flirting?” Maggie says. “Because you’re just insulting me.”

Alex stares at her bottle, watching a drop of water run down the neck, wanting so much to just run and go back to her apartment and beat herself up about how she’s feeling. But then they would know something is wrong and she would have to try and explain that she’s so damn terrified of being left behind and feels like she’s missed a chance she didn’t know she had wanted until just now.

At that realisation, she feels like she’s going to throw up. She doesn’t know how long that feeling has been sitting there, she didn’t even know she could possibly feel jealous for a reason more than friendship and yet…

“Fine,” Maggie says and Alex’s stomach drops like she’s just missed a step going downstairs. “Prove me wrong.”

“Tomorrow, six o’clock. I’ll pick you up.”

“Fine. See you then.”

Before Alex can start to think of an excuse to leave, James and Kara come back, still hand in hand and provide her with a reason to leave. She stands up and picks her jacket up from the back of the seats, gesturing for Kara to take her spot.

“I’ve got to go,” she says and the excuse is already forming in her mind when Lucy looks up at her, frowning and asks why. “Packing to do… plus that game took it out of me, need to ice this shoulder.”

Neither James nor Kara question her but Maggie and Lucy are watching her carefully, like they’re a second away from questioning her further. But they keep their thoughts to themselves and Alex doesn’t fail to notice that Lucy’s legs are stretched back over Maggie’s lap.

“You… uh, you should be resting,” Alex says, waving a hand in Lucy’s direction. “So don’t stay out too long, okay?”

“Don’t worry, I’ll make sure she doesn’t drink too much,” Maggie says and the annoyance flares in Alex’s stomach again, unwarranted, unnecessary and she doesn’t want that feeling there.
She knows what Lucy can handle. She knows her best friend. It should be her sat there, not Maggie. But that wouldn’t be fair, and that’s not how things have worked out. It is Maggie sitting there, it is Lucy going on a date with her tomorrow night.

She doesn’t even know where to begin sorting out the mess in her head, so Alex does what she does best.

She walks away.

Chapter End Notes

I’m... not sorry? I promise you all that this is going somewhere, but it gets worse (for Alex) before it gets better I’m afraid. But when it gets better, it will be worth the wait. Thank you all so much for your support, both on this fic and my life changes, so please don’t yell at me too much haha. Have a great week everyone!
She can’t sleep.

It’s been nearly two hours since she had arrived back at their apartment and gone straight to bed and yet she’s still awake, staring at the ceiling. She needs her mind to shut the hell up. She needs to just forget about it and move on.

She was too late. Lucy had got to Maggie first. She’d been nice to Maggie since the day they’d met, accepted her into their group, their team, with open arms. Alex, on the other hand, had been… not exactly friendly. And that had all come to bite her in the ass because no wonder Maggie preferred the girl who had treated her like any of her other friends.

And now they were going on a date. All that about how she hadn’t wanted to lose Lucy or Maggie as a friend had been shattered and splintered because of course that hadn’t really been the case.

Alex pummels her pillow as she tries to get comfortable, tries to get her mind to quiet down so she can just get some sleep and get back to Midvale the day after tomorrow. She always enjoyed going home for the holidays, but now the thought left a bad taste in her mouth because instead of getting away from this situation, Lucy would be joining her.

And when she looked at Lucy, all she would see is Lucy on a date with Maggie.

A date at some nice restaurant Lucy had picked out ages ago, followed by drinks and Maggie had said she didn’t kiss people until after the first date and technically it would have been after the first date -

Okay. This wasn’t helping.

Alex huffs and throws back the cover, sitting on the edge of the bed. She runs her hands over her face, groaning in frustration. She knows she’s not going to sleep until Lucy gets home, not with her thoughts occupied with how both Maggie and Lucy were out there, probably very drunk by now. She grabs a hoodie from the end of her bed and pulls it on, making her way to the kitchen with her hands stuffed into the pouch.

She knows that Lucy keeps some crappy herbal tea around for times like these, usually when Lucy is so stressed out she can’t sleep. Alex won’t go near the stuff, not even if Lucy tried to pay her (which had of course happened). But needs must, and she finds herself rooting around in Lucy’s cupboard as she sets the kettle to boil.

She sniffs gingerly at the tea bag and pulls a face, throwing it into a mug anyway and leaning against the island, watching the kettle. She knows that she’s tired, she can’t not be after playing baseball, but
the feeling is only reinforced when she jumps out of her daze when the kettle boils.

The fact she has to drink weird smelling, gross tea to relax only makes her more frustrated at her brain. She grumbles under her breath and inhales the steam from the mug, wrinkling her nose. There’s no way she’s stomaching this.

Instead, she moves to the couch and flicks on the television, Lucy’s Netflix account appearing bright on the screen, illuminating the dark room. Alex sinks into the cushions, thinking about putting on one of Lucy’s true crime documentaries Alex always falls asleep watching and then yelps when there’s a thud against the door and she spills boiling hot shitty tea on her bare thigh.

She puts the half empty mug down on the coffee table and wipes her leg with the sleeve of her hoodie as she stands, making her way to the door. When she unlocks it and pulls open the door, she’s unsurprised to see Lucy stumble inside and lose her footing, causing Alex to catch her.

Even just the smell of the tequila burns the back of Alex’s throat.

“Couldn’t find my keys,” Lucy slurs, righting herself and wincing when she forgets she shouldn’t be putting pressure on her bad knee.

“So when I said take it easy, you thought that meant get wasted?” Alex says, still gripping Lucy’s arms just in case she loses her balance again. “I told you not to stay out too late.”

“Sir, yes sir,” Lucy says, her salute ostentatious and Alex just rolls her eyes; she can’t help the twinge of annoyance at Maggie but pushes it away. It wasn’t anyone’s fault but Lucy’s that she hadn’t taken Alex’s advice and no one could have stopped her if she had decided that tequila shots were a good idea.

“Let’s get you some water,” Alex says and maybe it’s a good thing she couldn’t sleep so she could be here to take care of a drunk Lucy Lane.

Then, as she goes to walk back to the kitchen, Lucy tugs at her arm with surprising strength and spins her around. Alex lets out a grunt when her back hits the door and her entire body tenses before Lucy grabs her shoulders which sag against the door as Lucy kisses her, hot and messy, blindsiding Alex completely.

Her reactions are immediate, instinctive, her body programmed to react to everything Lucy does, the way Lucy bites her bottom lip, pushes her tongue into her mouth, pressing herself flush against Alex who can feel the heat flooding through the thick fabric of her hoodie.

Before Alex’s brain can even get past the taste of tequila in Lucy’s mouth to realise that this is wrong and Lucy is drunk and push her away, her hips jerk forward into Lucy’s hand as she dips her fingers into the waistband of her boxers.

Somehow she manages to get enough of a grip to slide out from between the door and Lucy, taking a few steps back to give herself a second to just think about what had just happened. It wasn’t as though this had never happened before, but this is the first time only one of them has been drunk. It’s the first time this had felt wrong.
“I’m sorry,” Lucy says and Alex sighs, tucking her hands back into her pockets as her heart rate calms. “Please don’t be mad.”

Alex stares at her in surprise for a second before it occurs to her just how vulnerable Lucy can sound when alcohol has brought down her emotional barriers.

“I’m not mad, Luce,” Alex says softly. “I just didn’t expect it, I mean… what about Maggie?”

At this, Lucy lowers her gaze to the floor, running a finger up the bridge of her nose. Alex closes the gap between them again, pulling her hands out of her pocket and resting them on Lucy’s shoulders.

“I know,” Lucy says at the contact. “I just… I thought maybe she thinks I was joking or something…”

Alex’s brow furrows; she’s not used to being completely sober when Lucy is drunk and open about her feelings.

“Well… were you joking?” Alex asks, not sure if she wants to hear the answer.

“I… don’t know,” Lucy says, but the look in her eyes says it all. “Maybe? I mean, it’s Maggie. What if I mess it up? She’s a good friend, I don’t want to ruin that…”

Alex knows Lucy won’t remember any of this in the morning. But she’s still going to support her friend even if she wouldn’t remember the alternative. Alex can’t have that weight on her shoulders, of knowing she had tried to stop Lucy from dating Maggie.

That’s what hurts the most; she could stop Lucy, she could tell her that maybe for the sake of friendship, it was better if she didn’t date her. It would be easy. But she can’t betray her friend like that, she won’t let herself be that person even if it meant, at the end of the day, she would hurt.

Lucy seems to be lost in her thoughts and Alex takes the opportunity to grab her a glass of water. The sound of the tap pulls Lucy back to the apartment and she moves over to the couch, slumping down and kicking her shoes off.

“Were you drinking my tea?” she asks as Alex joins her, taking the glass. “Thank you. You hate that stuff.”

“I couldn’t sleep,” Alex shrugs.

“Oh,” is all Lucy says, sipping at the water.

Alex moves so she’s sat cross-legged on the couch facing Lucy.

“I don’t think you’ll mess it up,” Alex says. “If you like her, you should go for it. You two have something.”

“You think?”

“Sure,” Alex says, trying to keep her voice casual. “Maybe asking her out to prove a point wasn’t the best way to do it, though.”

Lucy laughs into the glass of water and sets it down on the coffee table. Alex isn’t sure how much longer she can talk about this without breaking out a bottle of scotch and joining Lucy’s state so she stands up, putting the television remote next to Lucy.

“I’m going to bed,” Alex says and Lucy’s eyes are already closed. “Drink that water and sleep. If
you need me to hold your hair back, just shout.”

Lucy lazily flips her off and Alex laughs, unable to resist teasing her. She grabs the blanket from the back of the couch and throws it over Lucy’s legs.

“You’re the best, you know that?” Lucy mumbles as Alex walks to her room.

She pauses, ignoring the sinking sensation in her stomach. She’s far from it and the world seems out to remind her of that fact at any given opportunity.

“Sleep well, Luce.”

***

The sound of movement coming from the kitchen pulls Alex from her slumber. She had been in sleep-limbo since leaving Lucy on the couch and only the slightest sound had pulled her fully into consciousness. Her entire body aches with exhaustion, her right shoulder taking the brunt of it after yesterday.

She forces herself out of bed and pulls on sweatpants so she can go and make sure Lucy isn’t going to blow something up in her undoubtedly hungover state. The smell of freshly brewed coffee fills her nostrils as she opens her bedroom door and Alex can’t wait to wash away the taste of bad tea and stale tequila.

There’s a mug already waiting on the counter for her and Alex knows exactly the reason why. Clearly, Lucy remembers more than Alex had thought she would about last night. She isn’t angry at Lucy for coming onto her last night, and yes, she’s still processing exactly what it means now she’s figured out both of their feelings for Maggie. But it’s only the former Lucy is apologising for by making pancakes and giving Alex coffee because there is no way even Lucy Lane can read Alex’s mind.

“How’re you feeling?” Alex asks, sipping the coffee.

Lucy turns around from the stove, as if she’s only just realised Alex has walked in.

“Hangovers don’t take me more than a shower to get over,” Lucy says with a bright smile, a fact Alex has always been jealous of. “Chocolate chip or plain?”

She answers her own question by scattering chocolate chips into the pan and Alex shakes her head fondly.

“What’s all this about, Luce?” Alex asks, and Lucy doesn’t turn to face her this time but shrugs.

“Look, you don’t have to do this, you’re still invited to Midvale even if you drunkenly came onto me.”

She tries to pass it off as a joke but Lucy sighs and turns around, pushing a plate of pancakes towards Alex.

“I know I don’t have to do this,” she says. “And they’re not all apology pancakes. They’re also me feeling sorry for myself pancakes.”

Alex pauses, fork halfway to her mouth.
“Thought you said you weren’t hungover?” Alex says.

“It’s not that,” Lucy says and Alex knows what’s coming. “It’s about Maggie. I cancelled our date.”

Alex hadn’t realised just how serious Lucy’s feelings were until that moment. Lucy looks crestfallen. She looks sad. And it’s definitely real because there’s no other reason she would be drowning the plate of pancakes in syrup and willingly eating it.

Alex doesn’t feel relieved. She doesn’t feel happy. It’s not even surprising. As jealous as she had been, she cannot find it in herself to feel like this is another chance. Because she would put Lucy’s happiness before hers, any day of the week.

“Why? You seemed really excited,” Alex says carefully. “And I told you last night, you won’t mess anything up.”

She starts to feel slightly uncomfortable under Lucy’s stare, and she gets the impression there’s something more underlying this than just Lucy’s own insecurities. It’s strange, to see this side of her friend who usually exudes confidence. Lucy prods at the pancakes and goes to say something but then there’s a loud knock at the door and the two of them jump, the tension snapping.

“I’ll get it,” Lucy says quickly before Alex has the chance to recover and try and think about what Lucy might have said without the interruption.

Lucy stands on her tiptoes to look through the peephole and her eyes widen when she sees who’s on the other side, unlocking and opening the door quickly.

“Maggie!”

Alex’s stomach drops. She doesn’t need to see this, she doesn’t need to feel what she had done yesterday just when she’s started to accept that whatever was going on between the two wasn’t harmless flirting.

“I brought you a present,” Maggie says, stepping inside when Lucy waves her in, pulling out a brown paper bag from behind her back. “Although it smells like you might have already cured your hangover.”

“Cinnamon buns over pancakes any day, Sawyer,” Lucy says, grabbing the bag and walking back over to the counter. It’s then Maggie notices Alex is also sat there.

“There’s one in there for you, too, Danvers,” she says, hovering by the door. “Even if you’re not disgustingly hungover like Miss ‘I can do seven tequila shots in a row just watch me’ over there.”

Alex can’t help but laugh at that; last time she checked, Lucy’s record was six. The moan drawn from the back of Lucy’s throat as she takes a bite is nothing short of pornographic and Alex snorts into her coffee at the look on Maggie’s face.

“Would you like us to leave you alone with that?” Maggie deadpans, finally moving away from the door.

“She will pay you with coffee and pancakes,” Alex says, smirking at Lucy.

“Actually, I need to go,” Maggie says. “I just came over to check you were okay,” she says to Lucy who half-glances at Alex, eyes wide.

“Oh, well… thanks,” she says somewhat lamely. “You didn’t have to.” Maggie just shrugs like it’s
no big deal. “You sure you won’t stay for coffee?”

“Meeting James for one in fifteen,” Maggie says and there’s a long pause while she stares at Lucy and Alex feels as though she might as well sink into the floor and give the two of them some privacy. “So… I guess I’ll see you after break?”

“You know I’m heading to Midvale tomorrow with Alex so…” Lucy trails off. “I’ll see you after break.”

“Okay then,” Maggie says and if she’s annoyed or sad at being blown off by Lucy, she doesn’t show it. “See you around.”

The door snaps shut behind Maggie, leaving behind a long silence. Alex watches as Lucy plays with the rest of the cinnamon bun, clearly deep in thought.

Alex doesn’t want to say what she’s going to. She really wishes she could be selfish and not but she can’t because Lucy is her best friend. And Lucy deserves to be happy. Even if it’s with Maggie.

“Go,” Alex says, nudging Lucy’s leg under the counter.

Lucy looks up at her, eyes wide and she opens her mouth to say something but Alex cuts her off.

“Ask her out, properly this time,” Alex says and she wishes her heart wasn’t contracting at the thought. “I know you, Lucy. You want to and you’ll kick yourself if you don’t.”

“Alex…”

“She came over to check you were okay and brought you food,” Alex says. “After you cancelled your date. She doesn’t strike me as someone you’re gonna lose.”

Lucy runs around the counter and kisses Alex on the cheek and breathes a “thank you” against her skin before she rushes out of the door and after Maggie.

Alex keeps her eyes fixed on the wall, suddenly finding she doesn’t have much of an appetite. She picks up the plate of pancakes and just leaves it by the sink, no motivation to even think about cleaning up. Her stomach feels tight and like it’s filled with ice.

She has to get out of the kitchen before Lucy comes back. Because of course Maggie is going to say yes. She freaking came over to the apartment to check up on Lucy, of course she likes her back. And Alex cannot be in the same room as Lucy until… well, that’s the thing: she isn’t sure when she can be in the same room.

Because this isn’t going away.

Right this second, Lucy is catching up to Maggie and asking her out on a date. And in the next second, Maggie will say yes. And then it’s game over, not for them, not for her friends who she should be happy for, but for her. Because yet again, she has pushed her feelings down and realised them all too late.

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Somehow, she finds it in herself to be happy for Lucy. Or at least she’s doing a very convincing job at pretending because Lucy doesn’t question any of Alex’s reactions when she gets back from
successfully asking Maggie out.

It’s easier because Lucy doesn’t brag. She’s actually quite humble about the whole thing which is how Alex knows she’s taking this seriously. All she tells Alex is that they’ve agreed to a date after Christmas break with no time or place set. It’s all she needs to say.

So they don’t talk about it for the rest of the day. They don’t talk about it the next morning while they wait for Kara to pick them up, they don’t talk about it on the drive back to Midvale. They think about it. But they don’t talk.

Kara talks. She talks about James and the baseball league and how her final day of classes went and some story about Winn that has Lucy laughing and probably Alex too if she had paid any attention.

But she can’t get her mind past the flashing neon sign that’s mocking her and saying she missed her chance and she should have figured it out sooner.

“Are you okay Alex?” Kara asks glancing at her in the rearview mirror.

“Just tired,” Alex says and she can feel Lucy’s eyes on her. “Didn’t get much sleep that’s all.”

She hopes she’s convincing enough because she really doesn’t feel like elaborating on the matter, especially with Lucy in the car and staying with them for a week before going to see her sister and Clark.

But Kara seems to buy it, for now. It’s not exactly a lie; Lucy stumbling in drunk at two in the morning was hardly going to help matters. She’s not been able to keep her mind silent and she’s exhausted.

And of course her mother picks up on it.

“You look tired, dear,” Eliza says when she meets them at the car.

“Not been sleeping well,” Alex says with a shrug.

“Don’t work yourself too hard,” Eliza says and pulls Alex in for a hug. “J’onn needs to give you more days off.”

“I’m the starting pitcher, mom,” Alex says, rolling her eyes. “I have plenty of days off.”

“Did you ice your shoulder properly last night?” Eliza says when she pulls back, scrutinising Alex and she can’t do anything but shrug. “I knew you’d forget. There’s ice packs in the freezer.”

“Thanks, mom.”

Lucy and Kara run up the steps to the house carrying their bags, and Alex stares over her mother’s shoulder, watching them go. Despite how she’s feeling, despite the weight of everything changing sitting heavily in her stomach, despite the memories of what she has lost here in Midvale, it feels good to be home.

Chapter End Notes

the next couple of chapters are really going to start bringing the director sanvers
dynamic and feelings to the forefront. I’m really excited to get into the next subplot of this fic because I know what’s coming haha

I just want to say thank you for all your wonderful comments, some of the things you guys say are incredibly special to me and mean the world. I love writing these characters and exploring their emotional experiences and the fact you guys are able to pick up on what I’m trying to convey is awesome. Thank you for your continued support on this, you guys continue to astound me with it!
They spend the first few days of break hanging around the house. Lucy’s knee isn’t quite healed and she doesn’t want to make things worse by wandering through Midvale or venturing further afield. But that suits Alex just fine; she isn’t exactly in the mood to be anywhere but the comfort of her childhood home with the sea on her doorstep.

Even though it’s December and cold by California standards, she surfs. Every morning she sneaks past Lucy asleep on the floor of her bedroom, grabbing her board and takes to the water. It’s surprising how easy it comes back to her, just like how her pitching does at the start of the season.

It’s familiar. It’s grounding.

So on the morning of Christmas Eve, she does the same. Grabs her board, chases the waves and sits on the beach, looking out across the sea. Breathing in time to the sound of the waves.

“IT’s freezing, Danvers!” a voice calls from behind her and Alex turns to see Lucy walking down the steps onto the sand. “Well, you’ve worn worse,” she says when she reaches Alex, unapologetically running eyes over the wetsuit.

“Thanks, I think,” Alex says dryly. “What’re you doing up this early?”

“I could ask you the same thing,” Lucy says. “You’ve been doing this every morning haven’t you?”

“I miss it,” Alex shrugs.

“What’s wrong? I know you and I know how you cope with things,” Lucy says, nudging Alex’s arm with her shoulder. “Getting up at the asscrack of dawn to surf is one of them.”

She can’t explain this to Lucy. She wants to, she wants to be able to talk to her best friend but she can’t. Lucy’s leaving that afternoon so soon, she won’t have to worry about telling her about her feelings for Maggie because she just can’t hold them inside any longer.

“I’m fine, Lucy, really,” Alex says, and she knows Lucy doesn’t believe her. She also knows Lucy won’t push her because, well, that would be hypocritical when she puts up just as many walls as Alex does.

“Okay, well, if you need to talk when I’m with Lois and Clark, just call me,” Lucy says before standing and wiping the sand off her jeans. “Eliza’s making breakfast,” she adds, turning to walk back into the house.
Alex stays on the sand for a few more minutes. She’s been waiting until Lucy leaves to talk to Kara, someone she knows she can talk to without everything blowing up in her face. It doesn’t sit right with Alex, though, not confiding in Lucy, something she’s done ever since she was sixteen.

But she doesn’t really have a choice in the matter.

She picks up her board and leaves it on the front porch before going inside. She pauses at the door, listening to Lucy laughing at something Kara is telling her.

“Alex, dear, you’re dripping seawater all over the floor,” her mother says even though she has her back turned to Alex.

Alex just rolls her eyes and heads upstairs to shower quickly and grab some clothes before she runs back downstairs to see if Kara has left her any food. Sister or not, the Kryptonian appetite didn’t stop for anyone.

When she arrives back in the kitchen, Eliza is talking to Lucy about baseball while Kara tries to sneak Lucy’s remaining waffles from under her nose. Alex grabs the plate instead, Lucy so caught up in conversation that no one but her sister notices.

“It’s nice to see everything working out with your new catcher,” Eliza says and Alex pauses momentarily before pouring syrup over Lucy’s, now her, plate.

“Maggie?” Lucy clarifies, and she sits up a little straighter. “It’s good, really good, actually. She’s great, right Alex?”

Alex nods through a mouthful of waffle, not quite meeting Lucy’s eye.

“Yeah, she is,” Alex says, swallowing. “Anyone’s better than Lord, though.”

“She’s a lot better than Lord,” Lucy says, sipping her coffee. “Easier on the eyes, too.”

“I was surprised to see her on the team, I have to say,” Eliza muses. “I always got the impression you never really liked her, Alex, especially when she came here with James in the summer.”

Alex feels her neck go red; as if she needs the reminder that she had been downright unfriendly to Maggie at the start. She knows she still probably has a lot to make up for, especially after what happened with Rick, but now her feelings for Maggie have grown… well, it complicates everything.

“I was wrong,” Alex says.

“I told you so,” Kara chimes in. “Did you know that James thought you and Maggie were going to get together?” she adds and Alex’s stomach churns.

“What?”

“Yep,” Kara says. “He thought you two would get along really well, not just because you’re both gay,” she adds quickly, pushing her glasses back up her nose. “I don’t know, I think he just wanted you both to be happy.”

Alex has no idea what to say to that. She has no excuse to bolt without it looking strange so she’s forced to sit there and imagine how different things could have been if she had only been nice to Maggie at the start.

Lucy clears her throat and looks at Kara, almost nervous.
“Actually… Maggie and I are going on a date,” Lucy says and she might as well have just taken a baseball bat to Alex’s stomach.

“You are? Lucy! That’s great!” Kara says but then she catches Alex’s eye and her face falls for a second. “I mean, that’s… that’s nice.”

“Well, it’s kinda thanks to Alex that we are,” Lucy says, and Alex gives her best fake smile. “If she hadn’t literally pushed me out of the door then I wouldn’t have gone for it.”

“You really did that?” Kara asks, staring at Alex who shrugs.

“Sure,” Alex says, suddenly finding she doesn’t have much of an appetite anymore. “It’s what friends do, right?”

Lucy just beams at her and Alex looks at her plate until Eliza takes it from her, a look in her eye that makes Alex sure that her mother isn’t going to let this go once Lucy has left.

At that thought, there’s the sound of a car pulling up and Kara at once leaps up and rushes out of the door to go and greet her cousin.

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Hours after Lucy has left Midvale, Alex finds herself still brooding, sitting on the steps of the front porch after dinner. She’d made some excuse about needing some air, taken her drink and made it two paces before sinking down on the steps and staring up at the stars.

That’s another thing she misses when she’s at college. She misses the sea, she misses the stars. It reminds her of her childhood, Kara pointing out the constellations to her, teaching her all these amazing things about the universe.

The door opens behind her. She’s been wondering how long it would take for Kara to come and check up on her, to ask her what’s wrong.

But it’s not Kara.

Her mother sits down beside her, handing Alex her sweater.

“You can talk to me, Alex, if you’d like,” Eliza says as Alex pulls the sweater over her head. She has no idea how to approach this, she’s never really had talks like this with her mother before, aside from when she had come out.

“It’s complicated,” Alex mumbles, picking at a loose thread.

“Is this about Maggie and Lucy?” Eliza says and when Alex looks up at her, startled, she says, “I’m your mother, Alex. I notice these things. I have to say, I’m surprised.”

“About what?” Alex asks, though she isn’t sure she wants to hear the answer.

“I always thought it would be you and Lucy,” Eliza says.

“What? Why? We’re just friends,” Alex says, her heart pounding somewhere in her throat.

“I just thought that maybe Lucy saw you as more than that,” Eliza says. “You were always so close, and you followed each other around everywhere, ever since you met each other. And when you told
me you were gay, it… didn’t wholly surprise me.”

“You knew?” Alex says quietly.

“I suspected,” Eliza corrects her. “And after a while, I thought that you and Lucy would come back from college to Midvale one day and tell me that you were together.”

Alex stares at her mother, swallowing the lump in her throat. She has nothing to say. Of course, she’s slept with Lucy (not that her mother will ever find out), but she hadn’t… they hadn’t ever considered taking it further. At least, Alex hadn’t. And now she thinks about it, she doesn’t exactly know why.

Because Eliza is right; it wouldn’t have been that surprising. It wouldn’t have been much of a change but… well, Alex had never felt that way. She had never let herself feel that way about Lucy beyond an alcohol-induced haze.

“I don’t like Lucy that way,” Alex says. “I… I don’t.”

“You like Maggie,” Eliza says and Alex nods. “And so does Lucy.”

“Yeah,” Alex says quietly. “I can’t tell her. I want Lucy to be happy and if she’s happy with Maggie, that’s… that’s just going to have to be okay.”

They sit there staring up at the stars in silence for a few moments before Eliza stands to go back inside.

“I don’t say this nearly often enough,” she says. “But I’m so proud of you, Alex.”

Alex’s throat closes and she shifts uncomfortably on the step. Right now, she doesn’t really feel like she has much to be proud of. But her mother was right; it wasn’t something she heard often.

She barely has time to blink back the tears before Kara comes out onto the porch and takes Eliza’s place. She wonders how long Kara has been waiting to come and talk to her after Lucy had left with Clark and her sister.

“What were you talking to Eliza about?” Kara asks, brushing some of the sand off the steps.

“She thinks that I like Lucy,” Alex says after a while.

“But I thought you liked Maggie?” Kara frowns.

“Yeah, I do,” Alex says; it’s the first time she’s said it out loud.

“And Lucy?”

“It’s… no, I don’t, it’s just…” Alex sighs, staring out across the sand. “It’s complicated. We’ve always been close, we’ve been best friends for years… Mom said that she expected Lucy and I to be a thing.”

“I mean… that’s not completely unbelievable, is it?” Kara says, brow furrowed. “Like you said, you’re close. Sometimes… I don’t know, I can see what Eliza’s saying and I kind of agree with her.”

“You… what?” Alex says, looking at her sister who just shrugs. “I don’t get it.”

“Are you sure?” Kara says quietly and the knot in Alex’s stomach tightens considerably. She doesn’t want to think about this, not when she’s already dealing with her relatively new revelation about her feelings towards Maggie. “You said that you didn’t like Maggie and now… Lucy’s going on a date
with her and you’re jealous.”

“This isn’t the same thing, Kara,” Alex says shortly.

“How do you know?” Kara says gently. “If it took you this long to figure out your feelings for Maggie, it might take you time to realise that maybe Eliza’s right. Maybe… maybe you’re choosing not to see it.”

“So you’re saying that I like Lucy?” Alex says with a shaky laugh. She really, *really*, doesn’t need this right now. “And what? I’m jealous of Maggie instead?”

“I… I’m saying maybe you’re jealous of both of them?” Kara says, dropping her gaze to the steps as if she doesn’t really want to say this and make Alex feel even worse.

“I’m not,” Alex says firmly. “I don’t like Lucy that way, I think I would know by now if I did.”

“Sometimes you don’t know,” Kara says, her voice a whisper now. “Sometimes it just hits you.”

It’s hit Alex like a fucking truck.

She stands up suddenly and wipes the sand off her jeans, staring out towards the ocean, trying to keep her mind focussed on the feeling of the ground under her feet, the sound and smell of the sea, grounding herself in the familiar and not the mess currently running around in her mind.

Kara can’t be right. Her mother can’t be right. There’s no way. She would know, she would have felt something way before now for Lucy if she ever did feel anything. She can’t have gone five years without knowing how she felt about Lucy, it was…

Apparently, not impossible.

She feels like she’s going to be sick. It’s *too much* . She’s only just got over the fact she likes Maggie, that Lucy and Maggie are going on a *date* and now this…

She can’t stay here. She can’t talk about this anymore. It’s unfair, it’s… there’s no way she can feel this much this fast and at this intensity. She can’t have anymore revelations about her feelings but she can’t stop it from happening.

Because now the thought is in her head and it’s not going away anytime soon. She likes Maggie. She knows this, she’s *dealing* with it, not very well, but she’s coping. And now Lucy. Her best friend, the person she tells *everything* to. Everything except that she’s jealous that she’s going on a date with the girl she likes. Jealous that both of the people she likes have chosen each other over her.

“Alex? Are you okay?”

Kara’s voice sounds very distant.

“Where are you going? Alex!”

But Alex doesn’t turn back, she just carries on walking towards the sea and turns to walk along the beach. She can hear Kara calling after her but she doesn’t say anything, she just walks and walks until she can no longer hear anything but her own thoughts and the sea. Kara doesn’t follow her.

She lets her legs carry her for a while, losing track of where she’s even going, before she sinks down onto the sand and pulls her knees to her chest. She’s freezing. She closes her eyes and breathes deeply, trying to calm her heart that’s pounding a furious rhythm in her chest.
The more she tries not to think about it, the more she does. There’s no real reason why she wouldn’t like Lucy. She’s slept with her, she clearly finds Lucy attractive and Lucy is… amazing. She’s always been there for Alex, through everything. And it makes this whole situation ten times harder to handle when she knows she can’t talk to Lucy about it.

How the hell she’s supposed to go back to college in a couple of weeks, Alex has no idea. How the hell she’s supposed to face both Maggie and Lucy, she doesn’t know. She knows she’ll have to deal with it, sooner or later. She can’t run this time. She can’t hide.

And that’s fucking terrifying.

She can’t keep this to herself. She knows she can’t. It wouldn’t be fair, to any of them. Telling Lucy and Maggie isn’t something she wants to do either but she can’t sit there and watch them fall in love and hope she gets over it.

Because she knows she won’t. She can’t risk Lucy or Maggie finding out, it would make things even worse. She has to be selfish this time. She has to talk to them. Because one way or another, she’s going to get hurt.

She’s accepted that nothing will change. Her telling Lucy and Maggie won’t change a single thing. But perhaps, once they know, they can all move on. No one has to feel guilty, no one has to hide. They can go back to playing baseball and hanging out.

It had been enough before. It would just have to be enough again.

Chapter End Notes

thank you all for the support and comments, this fic is so much fun to write. i hope you can kind of get the feel for where i’m going with this story, now alex has figured out some things about herself. it's not smooth sailing by any means, but in time, we'll get there. i hope you all enjoy the ride as much i do!

also if you haven't seen the music video to just another girl, do it. you will not be disappointed.
as always, your comments have blown me away, i still struggle to comprehend just how much people seem to love this fic, but it's wonderful. i'm so happy to share it with you all!

For Alex, Christmas passes at fast as one of her pitches. One second she’s standing on the beach, reeling from the realisation that she’s falling for not just one of her friends, but also her best friend of five years. Friends who are going to be dating.

The next second, she’s in Kara’s car, waving goodbye to her mother as they drive back to NCU. The journey passes just as fast as the past two weeks, and Alex’s head is filled with much the same thoughts. She has to talk to Maggie and Lucy, she doesn’t know what to say, but she has to try …

Two weeks to figure out what she’s going to say and she’s no further on. If she wasn’t already dreading going back to college, she sure as hell is when they enter the city and it hits her that this is going to change everything.

Kara drops her off outside her apartment block, making Alex promise to call her if she needs anything. She doesn’t even know if Lucy is back, but she sure as hell isn’t going to talk tonight.

Maybe she will after some liquid courage.

So she doesn’t go up to their apartment. Instead, she makes her way down the street a few blocks until she reaches the alleyway leading to M’gann’s bar. Her heart jumps in her throat when she remembers what had happened here all those weeks ago; her hand starts to tingle as she walks down and she picks up her pace.

The bar is virtually empty except for a few older students, older people. Out of the baseball season, the bar was always less busy which suited Alex just fine, especially right now. She didn’t need the noise, she just needed a drink, something to calm her nerves at the thought of even just seeing Lucy again.

“Hey, Alex.”

Alex raises her hand in greeting to M’gann and slides onto a barstool, putting her jacket on the back of the stool. She gets a glass of whiskey slid over to her and M’gann returns moments later after serving a lone man at the other end of the bar.

“Good break?”

Alex just shrugs. One thing that keeps sticking in her mind is how Eliza had talked to her; it felt like something had changed in their relationship and Alex couldn’t quite get her head around it.

“Is James back yet?” Alex asks.

“I haven’t seen him around,” M’gann says. “Why? You’re not going to kick his ass, are you? Did he
Alex laughs, shaking her head. “No, nothing like that,” Alex says. “Just wanted to talk to him but it doesn’t matter.”

“Well, you can talk to me,” M’gann says. “Bartenders, we’re great listeners.”

Alex runs her finger around the edge of the glass, staring at the amber liquid. A bottle of beer gets placed in front of it and she reaches for it.

“Maybe you shouldn’t be on the strong stuff,” M’gann says, but not taking the glass away. “But you looked like you needed it.”

Alex takes a sip of the beer, staring at the bottle before she raises her eyes to meet M’gann’s.

“Have you ever… liked two people at the same time?” she asks, knowing she’s giving everything away but she finds she doesn’t care. “Or realised you do, but it feels so wrong because they’re your friends? And when you finally realise, it’s too late because…”

“Because they like each other,” M’gann finishes and Alex nods shortly.

“And you can’t talk to them because it would… it would ruin everything,” Alex says quietly. She hadn’t come here with the intention to spill everything, but it’s a relief to talk to someone who isn’t her family.

“You can’t keep it inside forever, Alex,” M’gann says gently. “The longer you keep it hidden, the worse it will get. And yeah, I won’t lie to you, it’s probably going to suck for a little bit after you talk. But it won’t be forever. If you wait too long, it’s only going to hurt more. Both you and Maggie and Lucy.”

Alex lets out a huff, running her hand through her hair.

“I didn’t hide that very well, did I?” she says and M’gann leans over, resting a hand on her arm.

“I don’t know whether this will help, but I knew anyway,” M’gann says.

“How is it everyone knew before I did?” Alex mutters.

“Because you probably didn’t want to know,” M’gann says. “You didn’t want to see the truth about how you felt. It happens to the best of us, Alex. Don’t beat yourself up for not knowing sooner.”

“But if I had,” Alex says. “Then maybe none of this would have happened. I could have… I don’t know, dated Lucy. Or…”

“Or you could still be in the exact same position,” M’gann says. “You can’t dwell on the what if, Alex. What if you had dated Lucy, and then realised you liked Maggie? Or if Lucy had realised? What would you have done then?”

Maybe M’gann was right; this wasn’t the worst situation she could have been in. But it doesn’t make the reality easier to handle.

“Whatever situation, it fucking sucks,” Alex says and M’gann laughs.

“I’m sorry,” she says.

“You know they’re going on a date, right?” Alex says, draining her beer. “Sometime after break.
What if it goes further? I live with Lucy, I can’t... I can’t just be there when they’re dating, it’s too…

“That’s why you need to talk to them,” M’gann says. “However painful it’ll be at the start. It’s Lucy, you two are glued at the hip... sorry,” she adds when Alex raises an eyebrow. “Not like that. My point is, Lucy isn’t going to freak out or stop being your friend because you like the same person she likes. Or that you like her, too.”

“You don’t know that,” Alex says, the knot in her stomach tensing with worry. She could mess so much up by telling them and have nothing to gain from it. She’s starting to wonder if biting the bullet really is the best option. But M’gann was right; these sorts of things always had a way of coming out, and the longer she waits, the more painful it would be.

“Yeah, I do,” M’gann says. “I’ve been watching you two hang out around here for nearly three years. I didn’t even need that long to know just how close you are. If she was worried about losing you, that girl would stop at nothing to make sure you never left. And I know you’d do the same for her.”

Alex’s heart swells in her chest at that; right from the start of their friendship she had known Lucy would never let her go. And it had taken a bit of time to get used to the sheer intensity of the force that was Lucy Lane, but Alex had found it didn’t take long to feel the same way. She’d had friends before, sure, and she had Kara. But Lucy was different, someone who Alex connected with like no one else, someone Alex could trust with everything.

She sure as hell isn’t going to let all of that go just because she keeps secrets from her best friend.

She’s going to need to find some courage from somewhere. It shouldn’t be difficult when she stands and watches as batter after batter swing at her pitches, with the very real possibility that one hit off her hundred miles per hour fastball could land her in hospital, or worse.

She’d rather take the hit right now.

But, if this goes badly, she knows what she has to do. The same thing she does after every loss, after the rare times she’s pulled out less than halfway through the game. She’ll sit and brood and then the next day, she’ll get back up and carry on and fight ten times as hard.

That thought steels her more than the whiskey which she knocks back in one.

Then, out of the corner of her eye she sees movement from the staircase M’gann had carried her up after Rick had attacked her. M’gann, sensing her words have got through to Alex, has moved back down to the other end of the bar, leaving Alex wondering who the hell would be upstairs until -

“Coach?”

J’onn jumps as he hears Alex’s exclamation, turning around sharply as he reaches the bottom of the staircase.

“Alex,” he says, without a hint of surprise in his voice. “I thought you were in Midvale for Christmas break.”

“Yeah, I... I got back tonight,” Alex says, knowing full well that she’s staring and not caring. Somewhere in the periphery of her vision she sees M’gann moving back towards her. “What’re you doing here?”

J’onn exchanges a look with M’gann and a small smile appears on his otherwise stoic face.
“I live here,” he says and joins Alex at the bar. “What’s all this about?” he asks, pointing to the empty tumbler.

“Nothing you need to worry about,” M’gann says, answering for Alex who is still processing, something which is made ten times as hard when M’gann leans over the bar and presses a kiss to J’onn’s cheek.

“If my star pitcher is drinking whiskey on a Tuesday night for no apparent reason, I worry,” J’onn says, and while his concern is touching, it is definitely not a topic Alex wants to discuss.

“When… what?” is all Alex manages to get out and M’gann laughs, taking the empty bottle and glass away.

“It’s called a private life for a reason, Danvers,” J’onn says.

“But it’s M’gann! We all know M’gann!” Alex says, still wondering how she managed to miss this.

“And I suspect you will all know about M’gann and I by this time tomorrow,” J’onn says, but he doesn’t look irritated at all.

“Not if you don’t want them to,” Alex says, finally recovering from the pure shock. “It’s just a good job I’m not Lucy or else your secret would have already been out as soon as she’d seen you.”

“Well, then I’m glad my star pitcher is drinking whiskey on a Tuesday evening in my wife’s bar,” J’onn says.

“Wait, you’re married?” Alex says and J’onn leans over to kiss M’gann, zipping up his coat.

“See you at practice, Alex,” J’onn says and rests a hand on her shoulder for a moment before turning and walking out of the bar.

Alex watches him go, then turns back to M’gann who is wiping out a glass like nothing has just happened.

“Did that just happen or was that whiskey stronger than I thought?” Alex says and M’gann laughs, her cheeks tinged pink.

“No, that happened,” M’gann says. “It’s been happening for about four years. Now, instead of focussing on my love life, why don’t you go and sort out yours?”

Alex huffs, wishing she really could just focus on M’gann and J’onn and how the fuck she didn’t know about them in all the years she’s been playing baseball, been friends with M’gann. She almost feels guilty; she had never really stopped to ask anything about M’gann’s personal life.

“It’s going to be fine, Alex,” M’gann says as Alex grabs her jacket. “You’ll see.”

Alex just takes a deep breath and nods, hovering for a second before leaving the bar by the front entrance, away from the alleyway.

Her thoughts aren’t on her own situation, not directly anyway. But she saw how happy and at ease M’gann and J’onn are around each other. It all hits her like a baseball to the gut. A fear that gnaws at her stomach, heavy and consuming and overwhelming and… stupid. She goes through all of that in the space of a second.

The two people she’s fallen for like each other. And she’s missed her chance, with only herself to
blame for not seeing it sooner and for not treating Maggie with respect when they first met. And there’s no way out, there’s nothing she can do except talk to them. But whatever happens, she’s going to lose.

Maybe that’s just the way things have to be. Maybe she’s just someone who is built for loss and to take loss.

She dismisses that thought as over-dramatic and her stomach clenches. She has time, she’s barely started her twenties. But right now it feels like she’s had time and she’s let the sand run dry. The only thing she can do is wait and let time go on. And Alex Danvers isn’t someone known for her patience.

Before she realises it, she’s outside her apartment block and she drags her feet up the stone steps before fumbling with her keys to get inside. She still needs time to get her head sorted so takes the stairs in favour of the elevator.

And when she makes it to the third floor, she sees just how much the universe seems to be out to get her.

She’s frozen, watching the scene play out in front of her, her heart starting to pound furiously in her chest and she’s hit with such a strong wave of realisation that this is something real that’s happening that she is literally forced back a couple of steps, turning back around the corner to the stairwell to escape the sight of Maggie kissing Lucy.

The image is burned into her mind; the way Lucy’s eyes were closed, sinking into the kiss, the way Maggie’s hands had been cupping her face oh so gently, and she doesn’t even have the time to think about Lucy hadn’t told her tonight was her date because this is real and they were kissing outside her apartment door and God, she thinks she might throw up -

“I’ll see you around.”

And now Maggie’s leaving. Probably towards the stairs.

“Yeah… I’ll… yeah, see you around, Maggie.”

She’s never heard Lucy sound like that before, so… breathless and not from lack of oxygen.

Alex slams her hand on the elevator button and the doors open like they know she needs an escape route and fast. She hears footsteps just as the doors slide closed and she prays that Maggie decides to take the stairs as she jams the button for the fifth floor.

The doors don’t open.

Maggie takes the stairs.

Alex stands there, back against the elevator wall, breathing hard and fast like she’s just run a marathon. She doesn’t get why she’s so shocked. The whole reason she had realised her feelings was because Lucy had asked Maggie on a date.

She steps out onto the fifth floor and starts to take the stairs back down to the third, her heart still hammering. She needs for Lucy to be inside and in her room. She can’t talk to her, not now, not ever, about anything she feels. She just never thought she would be in this situation, had never hoped that she would be.

Maybe she had just been hoping that after the break, they would both just… forget.
Denial had only made this ten times worse.

And acceptance is going to be even harder because of it.

Chapter End Notes

told you it gets worse before it gets better...

despite these next few chapters being really important and i hope you stick with me through the angst. we'll be exploring more of lucy/maggie in the next few chapters as well, and yes, director sanvers is around a very winding corner full of things i'm excited to share with you all!
Alex had eventually fallen to sleep out of sheer exhaustion in the early hours of the morning. Somehow, she had managed to sneak back inside the apartment and rush to her room without Lucy coming out of her own room to check on her.

All she can think about is the kiss. She’s pretty sure she’s not the only person who can’t stop thinking about it either. And sooner or later, Lucy is going to talk to her about it and there is nothing Alex can do to stop her. There’s no way she can come out with it now, about how she too has fallen for Maggie, and for Lucy. All the fight has left her.

A large part of her doesn’t want to get out of bed and run into Lucy, but there’s no way she can avoid her forever. Sooner or later, she’s going to have to talk to Lucy and hear all about the date the kiss that Lucy doesn’t know Alex had seen. If all the pain could come at once, it would be easier to get over it rather than be hit again and again.

Still, she takes her time getting ready, listening to the sound of Lucy making breakfast and singing along to whatever’s playing on the radio.

“Hey! What time did you get back last night?” Lucy says when Alex makes her way to the kitchen, taking the mug of coffee Lucy hands her. “I thought I heard you come in.”

“Not sure,” Alex says, pleased her voice sounds relatively normal and not like someone who feels like her heart has been pulled out her chest and stepped on. “Must’ve been pretty late.”

Lucy doesn’t say anything but turns back to the bacon she’s frying.

“When did you get back?” Alex asks but Lucy doesn’t seem to hear her, the question only registering a few seconds later when she turns back to Alex like she’s only just realising she’s there.

She’s distracted, obviously. Alex can’t blame her. If she had been kissing Maggie or Lucy outside their apartment… no, she can’t think like that. It hadn’t been her.

“A couple of days ago,” Lucy says, sliding a plate of bacon and eggs over to Alex. “I had some things to do,” she adds and for a moment, Alex thinks she’s going to go on about how one of those things was go on a date with Maggie, but she doesn’t say anything else.

Alex isn’t sure she has the appetite to stomach breakfast but she doesn’t want to do anything that might look suspicious in front of Lucy. She doesn’t notice Alex watching her carefully out of the corner of her eye, focussed on something Alex wishes she couldn’t see as clearly as Lucy can. Their feelings, however, are exact opposites.
But as she watches the way Lucy stares into space, her hands curled around her mug of crappy herbal tea, there’s something that doesn’t quite add up. Lucy’s frowning. It’s very slight, probably only something her closest friends would notice, but she’s definitely frowning, her eyebrows pinched together slightly, her bottom lip pulled between her teeth like she’s deep in thought.

It can’t be about last night, unless it was a very bad kiss and from where Alex was standing, she’s pretty certain that isn’t the case. Maybe she’s just stressed, or something happened while Lucy was at her sister’s.

“Everything okay?” she asks and her voice startles Lucy out of her reverie. “You look distracted.”

“I’m fine,” Lucy says, with a fake smile.

“You sure?” Alex says. “You can tell me anything.”

Just because she might not want to hear it, doesn’t mean she isn’t going to be there for her friend.

“I’m sure,” Lucy says and Alex holds her gaze for a few seconds before Lucy looks away. “I have to go meet my advisor but meet me for lunch? I’ve got some great Lois stories to tell.”

It’s so clearly a deflection and a lie that Alex is tempted to force Lucy to stay and talk. But she knows that getting Lucy to talk when she doesn’t want to is an impossible task; they’ve often joked that she would hold out well in interrogations.

“Sure. Text me?”

Lucy just smiles and dumps her mug in the sink before grabbing her bag and leaving without another word. Alex definitely has no appetite now. She pushes her plate away, staring at the mug Lucy had left on the side, her stomach churning.

They had never kept secrets before. They were honest with each other about so much but all of that had changed in the past few months. Alex had kept her feelings secret not only from herself, but from Lucy, too. And now she couldn’t even talk to her.

Lucy hadn’t mentioned the date, the kiss, nothing to suggest that she wanted to talk to Alex about what had happened. Even if Alex would rather not, that’s not really the point. The fact is, Lucy, for the first time in their friendship, is keeping things from Alex. That, more than anything, is what hurts.

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She’s not really rushing to a meeting with her professor. She’s not rushing to meet anyone.

Instead, she’s just sat in the coffee shop outside the library, her textbooks spread out in front of her, trying to concentrate on her work. It’s pointless, there’s no way she can focus when she’s thinking about ten different things at once.

What’s even worse is that she can’t talk to Alex about anything that had happened on her date with Maggie. There’s something holding her back; she knows Alex likes Maggie, and by now, she’s sure that Alex has realised how she feels. It’s the only way to explain the hurt on Alex’s face when she had practically forced Lucy out of the door to go and ask Maggie on a date.

Against her better judgement perhaps, she had believed that Alex really wanted her to be happy and talk to Maggie. But Alex hadn’t hidden the hurt as well as she might have thought. And to only add
to that hurt by talking to Alex… she can’t do that.

And she wants to. She really wants to, she needs to because there are some things she just can’t keep inside, and the only person who will understand is Alex.

She doesn’t blame Alex for this stalemate, Lucy can’t be angry at Alex for having feelings for Maggie and for making Lucy feel guilty for talking about her. It’s just the way the world is and one way or another, they would have to deal with it.

For now, she can only count on herself. Some people would say she’s just bottling everything up, but this works, she’s methodical, she always has been. And as much as her chest aches slightly at the thought of what had happened last night, it’s all she can think about.

It hadn’t been a bad date. They’d gone to a small place James had recommended to her, laughed and talked about everything and anything, nothing too deep and personal but enough to leave Lucy wanting to know more.

If it wasn’t for the fact that she couldn’t help but feel guilty for being there, it would have been perfect. Maggie had done nothing to deserve her feeling like the date was anything less than perfect, but each time she thought about why she was there, at the insistence of Alex, it made Lucy’s stomach drop just a little bit further.

She’d tried not to let it get to her, to just enjoy the time spent with Maggie, and she really had. If things were different, if Maggie wasn’t so easy to fall for like both her and Alex had done, then maybe it could be more.

But that’s an impossible scenario. There’s no way she couldn’t have fallen for Maggie.

She knew she had to make a choice. Stop before things got further with Maggie or carry on like she knows nothing about how Alex was feeling. Her mind was made up before they had even left the restaurant but when they had walked to Lucy’s apartment, she wasn’t the one who had made the call.

Tiny fireworks go off inside her when Maggie takes her hand as she walks her back to the apartment. She’s trying to find the words to say what she has to say, but she comes up empty because all she can think about is the weight of Maggie’s hand in hers.

She’s not used to this, the feeling of being taken care of, she hasn’t felt like this since James. It’s nice. And it’s going to make what she has to do about a hundred times harder.

“Walk me up?” she says when they reach the front steps.

“I don’t put out on the first date, Lane,” Maggie says and Lucy elbows her gently in the ribs.

“That makes two of us,” Lucy says. “But I wouldn’t say no to a drink.”

Maggie just gestures for her to lead the way and they walk in comfortable silence up to Lucy and Alex’s floor, her stomach churning the whole time. She feels like she’s leading Maggie on and she doesn’t want to lose her friend over this.

“Ash not back yet?” Maggie asks as she goes to sit on the couch and Lucy pauses as she grabs two beers.

“No. Not yet.”
She closes the fridge door, handing over the bottle to Maggie and sitting a reasonable distance away from her on the couch; not enough for Maggie to get the wrong idea, but enough to give them space while they talk, or rather, she talks to Maggie.

But she doesn’t get a chance to start.

“I think we should talk,” Maggie says, and Lucy can feel her heart thumping in her chest. She steels herself with a sip of beer.

“What?” Lucy asks.

“Not what, who,” Maggie says and they don’t even need to say the name. “I don’t want anyone to get hurt.”

“Me neither.”

“And if we do this, someone will,” Maggie continues. “I don’t want to be the person that hurts your friendship with Alex.”

Lucy raises her eyebrows without meaning to. She has no idea how Maggie has figured out that Alex likes her; Alex can be obvious, sure, but she’s too guarded around people she likes for them to know.

“I’ve seen the way she looks at you, Lucy.”

Well. She wasn’t expecting that.

“What?”

“Alex,” Maggie says, waving her beer around. “She likes you, I can tell.”

“You’re wrong.”

“Am I?” Maggie says, raising an eyebrow. “Come on, you mean you’ve never noticed? Alex isn’t exactly the most subtle person on the planet.”

There’s such a heavy irony in what Maggie is saying that Lucy almost laughs. Almost, if it wasn’t for the fact she felt completely stunned. This isn’t right, it’s Maggie that Alex likes, not her. It’s just Maggie doesn’t know that and Lucy isn’t going to be the one to tell her.

“I… we’ve always just been friends.”

“Who’ve slept together. I’m not judging,” she adds before Lucy can say anything. “But don’t you think that somewhere down the road the line’s been blurred?”

“It hasn’t for me,” Lucy says firmly although she’s not quite sure she believes herself. It makes her heart pound even faster. There’s no way. Alex doesn’t like her, they’re not… it was only ever sex.

“Okay, well… I still don’t feel comfortable doing this,” Maggie says softly. “I’m sorry.”

“No, it’s okay, I get it,” Lucy says, and Maggie looks so guilty that it hurts. “Don’t feel bad, you’re doing the right thing. Someone’s going to end up hurt. Neither of us want that.”

Maggie puts her empty beer bottle down on the coffee table and glances at Lucy before standing, tucking her hands into her jacket pocket. Lucy’s determined not to think about what Maggie has just said until she’s left.
They step out into the hallway, but before Maggie leaves, she turns around, standing so close to Lucy that it’s going to make it impossible for her to just walk back inside and forget this whole mess ever happened.

“You know, if things were different…”

“I know. Me too.”

“It’s the right thing to do,” Maggie says. “I wish it wasn’t but…”

“Maggie, really, it’s fine,” Lucy says, reaching out and touching her arm, trying to offer some kind of comfort. “It sucks, but it’s fine. Nothing has to be awkward between us. And I had a great time tonight.”

Maggie can’t hold back her smile.

“So did I.”

“Is James waiting up to hear all the details?” Lucy asks and Maggie looks sheepish.

“I didn’t actually tell him our date was tonight,” Maggie says. “I thought it’d be better to keep this between us, for now. Did you tell Alex?”

“No, I… no, I mean, like I said, she’s not back yet,” Lucy says.

“Are you… going to tell her everything?” Maggie asks nervously.

“I always tell her everything,” Lucy says and Maggie watches her intensely, kind eyes drawing Lucy in, making the parting even worse.

“Maybe don’t tell her about this,” Maggie says and before Lucy can process it, she’s kissing her and the world stops turning.

“Morning, Lane.”

Lucy jumps out of her memory, tuning sharply back into the coffee shop. She glances up and her heart starts to pound harder in her chest when she sees Maggie standing there, holding a cup of coffee.

“Maggie! What’re you doing here?”

“Getting coffee,” Maggie says with a grin and Lucy rolls her eyes, moving the papers on the other side of the table for Maggie to sit down, but she waves her off. “I’m not staying, I just wanted to check you were okay.”

“Okay? Yeah, I’m fine,” Lucy says in a voice that doesn’t quite sound like her own. Maggie frowns at her slightly but doesn’t seem to want to press.

“Alex home yet?” she asks, gripping the coffee cup with her other hand.

“She got back last night,” Lucy says quickly, avoiding Maggie’s eyes, the awkwardness not lost on either of them.

“Oh. Right. Well, tell her I said hey and… I guess I’ll see you around, Luce.”
“Yeah. I’ll see you.”

Maggie pauses for a second, glancing at the door and then back at Lucy before giving her a quick smile and walking out of the coffee shop. Lucy watches her pass by the window, and as soon as she’s out of sight, she slumps back in her chair, running a hand over her face.

How the hell she’s supposed to get out of this mess, she has no idea.

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Maggie pulls her jacket tighter around her as best she can while holding her coffee. She hadn’t expected to see Lucy so soon after their date and talk, and it’s knocked her off balance slightly.

It’s not the only thing that’s completely blindsided her.

She never expected to feel this way about Lucy but it was just so easy. Lucy was fun, she had always made Maggie feel welcome in their group even before she had joined the team. They worked together well, made plenty of verbal jabs at each other that were followed with a wink and maybe a comment if Lucy was trying her luck.

However natural the progression from friends to more than that felt, it still wasn’t what Maggie had expected. Or rather, it wasn’t with who she had expected.

Alex was a challenge. She had been drawn to her the second they had met, determined to wear down the walls Alex had put up for whatever reason. Alex, who had given her the cold shoulder many times, who had barely treated her like an acquaintance, let alone a friend, Alex who had passed the blame onto Maggie for her own problems because she hated to admit defeat.

It doesn’t make sense. It should be Lucy. It is Lucy. But it’s also Alex and that’s why she can’t see Lucy. And however much Lucy tries to deny it, it’s obvious that Lucy is the one Alex likes, even if Maggie has felt that sometimes, Alex is just as drawn to her as she is, that the coldness wasn’t all what it seemed.

Maggie can’t get into this knowing that it’s going to hurt someone. It hurts her, too, because finally, finally, she’s found a place where she belongs. And she sure as hell isn’t going to ruin it because of some crush that could break up the group.

What she did, she did for the best of everyone. Just friends would have to be enough.

Chapter End Notes

so, to sum up:
- alex knows she likes both lucy and maggie, but she doesn't know that they're not going to date anymore or that maggie also likes alex
- lucy knows she likes maggie but she thinks maggie likes alex and knows alex likes maggie and is now really confused because maggie thinks alex likes lucy
- maggie likes both lucy and alex, but thinks that alex likes lucy and doesn't want to get in the way of things

i hope that's kinda clear? (for us at least, those three need to sit down and talk... which
they will. soon-ish)

back with the whole team next chapter and also the appearance of an old favourite...

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