Giant

by coeurastronaute

Summary

Kara and Lena meet in high school, but then life. (not a high school AU). Lena leaves and they meet up again, this time as Supergirl and Lena Luthor.
There’s a giant leading me to God knows where
I’ve got news, I’m going my way
Fighting, and I feel I’m getting somewhere
All is right, all is right.

From high atop the water tower on the very edge of town, a shadow sat, pushing up her glasses as they fell slightly down the bridge of her nose. Just below, an entire city stretched out toward the sea, the lights bleeding into it, which then bled into the horizon, into the very sky itself. Down by the boardwalk, someone was throwing away old bread and cotton candy while the gulls gulped them down with contented caws that got lodged in their noses. The smell of the freshly cut, end-of-summer lawns wafted through the night, perfuming the last night of summer break perfectly.

Long legs kicked in the night as she leaned back on her elbows and listened to the house down on Juniper Street with the old couple who put on records and let Mr. Johnny Cooltrane wail through the open windows as the screens exhaled with each note so that the porch filled with the sound of summer and mingled with the creak of the ceiling fan that did nothing but push around the warm water. They drank mint juleps and complained about the state of the world before the rocking chair sang along.

At her own home, she could hear the way her adoptive mother hummed to herself as she washed the dishes while her sister typed another email to their father. Up in the hill, in the gated world, a family fought, down on Main Street someone got angry and argued with a parking attendant. Just a few blocks away, a tiny voice prayed for good things and a new bike.

From her spot, her tiny throne, unbeknownst to all the living souls beneath, Kara looked up at the stars and breathed in her last few breaths of summer before the inevitable prison of school came to trap her once again, one final time.

She lasted as long as she could, listening and watching, until she heard the telltale noise of her mother finishing up and letting the dog out, the final steps of her routine. With a sigh, she stood and dusted off the dirt from her thighs before taking off with almost a crack in the air. She flew so high, she could see four towns over, see the mountains, see the lakes beyond them before breaking off and lazily gliding backwards toward her home.

The thing with growing, with really coming into her powers over the past few months, since the last round of holidays, was that Kara had never experienced power like this. Gifted as she’d always been, when her cousin warned her of what was to come, she almost didn’t believe him. And then she threw a tennis ball so far, it was never seen again one evening when taking Boomer to the dog park. And then she ripped the steering wheel off in a fit of road rage. And then she ran to Alaska in under an hour.

Unpredictable surges would happen, flare up, even, and then sometimes they would dissipate to nothing at all. Which was never that big of a deal, unless she was flying, as she was on her way home.

It wasn’t like a prop plane, running out of gas like on Indiana Jones, she realized as soon as it happened. There was no sputtering and no warning light flashing on the dashboard. Instead, there was just falling, graceless and messy, limbs flailing as she bit back swearing and tried to will it back.
And then there was a wall, a thick, hearty, brick and ivy kind of wall that she landed into back first and upside down, though she didn’t do the math until she realized she was laying in the rubble and lifted her head to survey the damage.

With a cough, dust and dirt tried to leave her lungs and dry throat as she took stock of her limbs and senses as best she could.

“Mom’s going to be so mad,” she sighed, letting her head drop so that she looked upside down at the hole.

In the distance she could hear the sound of a golf cart approaching, a radio signal that referenced an alarm being tripped at the Luthor residence. With a groan, Kara winced and tried to pick herself up, stumbling slightly in the rubble.

The hole was almost ten feet wide, decimating an entire section of the tall wall outside of the newly purchased home in the most illustrious and wealthy part of the city. Rubbing her hand along the back of her head, Kara tried to adjust her eyes, grateful that her glasses were only cockeyed and not lost. Through the gap, she looked up at the mansion in the distance and coughed a bit more as footsteps approached.

“I’m in so much trouble,” she realized again before taking off once more and skating by at a much lower altitude.

She hovered just above the treeline as the flashlights and security guards arrived, scratching their heads. Blue lights arrived just a few minutes later, and quickly Kara raced home with a fresh burst of energy.

Boomer woofed outside as she slid into her window and collapsed on the bed, breaking the frame once again.

“Another one!” Alex called over the gentle music Kara left on while she snuck out for just a bit.

“When do you go back to college?” Kara groaned, rolling over and stretching out the soreness of her crash.

She made a mental note to call her cousin and see if he had any solutions for these outages and surges while she adjusted to her new found powers. Balance. She just wanted balance. Normal, honest, simple balance. And a bed that didn’t break.

“You’re going to miss me when I’m gone.”

“Distance makes the heart grow fonder,” Kara reminded her before standing up and lifting the bed and box spring. “I think this one’s a goner.”

“Fifth frame this summer,” Alex nodded, crossing her arms, furrowing her brow, pursing her lips. “What happened to you?”

“Um…I fell.”

“Looks like it.”

“I hit a wall.” With a grunt, Kara tugged the mangled wood from her bed and stacked it in a pile before putting her bed back down as if it were nothing. “Don’t tell Mom.”

“You’re not supposed to be out there… flying,” Alex whispered, her eyes growing intense and
angry and heavy. “What if someone saw you?”

“I know, I know,” Kara sighed and tugged her dirty shirt off before throwing it in the bin. “I just…” she paused and held her hands out. It was impossible to articulate, and her family loved her too much for her to make them think she did anything but love them as much, despite the ache that possessed her to do something… anything. “I feel like an animal at the zoo sometimes. I need just a few minutes to stretch my legs.”

“Kara.” It was soft and a warning at the same time. “I–”

“I’m sorry,” she interrupted. “I know I shouldn’t. I won’t.”

“I was going to say that I can’t imagine how that feels,” Alex confessed, sitting on the edge of the bed as her sister dug for a fresh shirt. “I want you to be happy, and safe. I just don’t know how to do both for you. If I did, I would, kid.”

“Hey, girls, I heard a noise,” their mother knocked softly and pressed open the door to her youngest’s room. “Another one, sweetie?”

“I didn’t mean to,” Kara offers quickly. “I just… flopped down.”

“Maybe we’ll just leave your bed like this for a while,” she smiled at her daughters.

Alex gave Kara a look, and she knew what she had to do, even without it.

“I also went out flying and hit a wall.”

“Kara…”

It was the same voice that her sister had, and Kara felt the entire weight of it on her shoulders, which felt anything but capable of bearing the burden at the moment. She could lift a bus, toss a cement mixer the length of a football field, uproot an elm like a tornado, but those familial sighs were too much.

“I don’t know what happened,” Kara explained, her hands moving quickly as she slumped into her desk chair. “I thought puberty was done and that was miserable enough, but this super power puberty is literally the worst. I can feel this new kind of power, and then… nothing. It’s like growing pains.”

“You didn’t get hurt did you?” her mother fret.

The dog came in, oblivious to the moods, wagging his tail and nudging his favorite human’s hand in search of a treat or toy. Kara smiled to herself and ran her hand along his snout before he sat beside her and used her knee as a chin rest.

“No, but you should see the wall.”

“No one saw?”

“No one saw,” she promised.

“What kind of wall?”

“Mom,” Kara groaned and let her head tilt back in defeat before her sister laughed and threw a pillow at her. “It’s not funny.”

“It was a brick fence over at the Deerbrooke.”

“Ooohh, you broke an expensive wall,” Alex teased. “Probably super old, too.”

“I crashed from very high up into the Earth, and this is what you decide to latch onto?” Kara asked, relieved and slightly happier that she wasn’t in official trouble, just the personal kind that she held herself to constantly.

“Seems to be a habit you have,” her sister laughed, tossing another pillow at her.

“It’s okay, honey,” her mother cooed and kissed her forehead. “You’ll figure it out eventually.”

“Or tear down every wall between here and the ocean,” Alex tried to help, earning the same pillow thrown back at her.

“Leave your sister alone,” Eliza pushed her oldest from the room. “She has to think of a way to pay back the damage she caused.”

“Mom! It was on the Luthor’s property! They won’t even notice what it costs to rebuild!”

“What’s the rule?” her mother paused at the door.

“I break it, I buy it,” Kara repeated the familiar motto.

“Get some sleep. Tomorrow is your last first day of school, and you can’t be late.”

“Love you.”

“I love you, too, honey.”

For a moment, Kara sat in the chair and looked at the pile of broken bed frame before turning her chair towards her laptop. Another night, another email to her father serving somewhere overseas, another veiled response about her ‘asthma’ acting up again. To be fair, Kara felt herself chuckle to herself as she told him that she hit a wall pretty hard with it.

She hit send and sat on her window ledge listening to the last night of summer. In the hall, Boomer spread out in the hall between the bedrooms, unsure of who needed him in the moment, and too tired to fight it. Alex kept packing to go back to school for her second year of med school, and that still made Kara sadder than she could admit. From downstairs, a gentle song emerged, faint and barely there, of her father’s favorites, that her mother played with a glass of wine as she read some research too late into the night.

But Kara could have guessed all of that without the gift of incredible ears. Now, she focused on the specific noise of a spot she became quite intimate with not twenty minutes prior. The cops and security guards were all puzzled and confused, at first assuming it to be a meteor or something, though nothing could be found. A man yelled and swore and said he paid too much money for these kind of shenanigans to be happening in a neighborhood like that, while a softer, gentler voice told him to calm down because of his heart. Still, fainter than that, another voice interrupted and asked if perhaps it was a crime directed at them, though they tried to assuage her fears with promises that no one could hurt them.

It hurt the worst that someone could think she was capable of pain. Never before had she so badly wanted to rush over there and tell them that, trust her, she was just incredibly clumsy, not
incredibly powerful. The truth was, she was clumsy with her powers, with herself. She just wanted to not be the cause of fear for someone. That broke her heart.

With a heavy sigh, the window froze, her breath chilling it as she stood and rolled her eyes. Kara grabbed a towel from her bathroom and placed it on the ledge to catch the inevitable dripping before crawling into bed and thinking about her final year, and how she still had no idea who she was, and if anything, was somehow farther from who she thought she was supposed to be.

School and senior year brought about its own, intense kind of distraction, which was almost a nice reprieve from the summer and her own personal fight to master her body. The questions became about the future, giving her time to dwell on anything other than her own nagging thoughts. What came was the tests and college questions, the trying out for teams and the assembling a new kind of normal routine that included homework and a part time job and flying to see her sister on weekends when she could. If she made herself busy enough, Kara didn’t have to think too hard about home and how her mother would have had answers.

There were still moments. Still nights spent sneaking out and burning off the energy, of letting herself out of the tiny cage she put herself in to protect her family. Kara felt herself getting stronger, felt it all evening out, whereas before it didn’t seem to be part of her. Now it was as if she began to grow used to it, or at least, she was trying. She took to flying over the ocean, so when she crashed it just made one heck of a splash, and that was all.

And just as she thought she was fine, she crushed a lock in her hand, mangling it completely. A pair of green eyes met hers in the hall and Kara found herself yanking it completely from her locker. Just as soon, the moment was gone, and she bumbled slightly to herself, shoving the mangled metal in her pocket.

With a sigh, Kara leaned her head against the cool metal of her locker in the hall. She shook her head and blushed, mentally kicking herself. Her nerves were her enemy.

“Did you finish that paper yet?” Janey asked as Kara took her seat beside her friend.

Short and sturdy, she was primly dressed and more polished than anyone had a right to be at seventeen. Headstrong and passionate, pulled in every direction imaginable, she was a true friend, loyal and kind, protective and sassy, despite her small demeanor. To Kara, she was closest to a Jack Russell, perhaps. Tiny, but with a terrific bark, and better bite. High strung and possibly manic, if given the chance.

“I, um, I… almost,” Kara admitted, adjusting her glasses.

“I haven’t even started. It’s only October, and I’m already behind,” she complained, surveying her very precise agenda. “I’m never going to sleep again. I’m just going to work. Debate practice, volunteering, babysitting, softball practice, art project, that article on soccer—”

“Why do you do all of that stuff?”

“Because if I’m going to be the next Cat Grant, I have to start now.”

“What can I do to help?” Kara offered genuinely, eagerly, as she was always known to do for just about anyone.

Their math teacher finally stood after surveying the attendance log and making sure his class was there. Kara sat up a bit straighter.
“You could do the soccer story,” Janey whispered, handing over an article outline. “You can have the byline.”

“I don’t want your byline,” Kara sighed. “I have an article already.”

“I will love you forever.”

“I already know this.”

“Seriously. You’re my hero.”

“Anything to keep you from a nervous breakdown before Thanksgiving,” Kara chuckled and flipped through her notebook.

“Lunch is on me. Anything you want.”

“Anything?”

“I’m going to regret this,” Janey shook her head and looked back toward the blackboard.

Kara played with her pencil and forgot about the broken lock, instead electing to dream of what her price for helping her friend would entail. She was thinking pizza. Six of them.

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From high atop the water tower on the very edge of town, a shadow sat, pushing up her glasses as they fell slightly down the bridge of her nose. There was a breeze that lazily looped through the world as autumn fell and tucked itself atop the world. For just a moment, Kara allowed herself a bit of escape. Brain, fried from school at sitting placement exams, heart, lonely and missing her adoptive father and sister, she just needed a moment to see how vast things were, and how tiny she was comparatively.

Languid, she rested there, letting her eyes drift to the stars and her legs hang from the side of the water tower.

Not until a scream ripped out in the night, did Kara hop up and search for it, closing her eyes and listening before finding some hint of it. Without a thought, she bolted to a side street just a few seconds away where a woman laid on the ground bleeding. A man in a dark jacket and hat stood above her, yanking at her arms and legs, until Kara arrived and punched him so hard, he hit the dumpster opposite the alley with a tremendous clang. The gun went off as she came in contact with his jaw.

Slumped over, he could barely breathe as a figure stood over him, fumbling with her hood.

“Try to do anything like this again, and I won’t pull my punch,” Kara growled. “I’ll find you,” she promised, grabbing the collar of his shirt so her words aren’t missed.

The assailant could barely think straight, let alone make out her face, and instead, his head lulled to the side as he passed out.

“You’re going to be okay,” she finally offered, approaching the woman who couldn’t have been any older than Alex. The woman cowered slightly, pushing dirty hair from her face.

Kara kept her hood up, ducked, stayed under it, grateful to have some kind of protection from being recognized. The woman sputtered slightly as the stranger helped her stand.
“He… he… shot you,” she pointed at the hole in the sweatshirt.

“I’ll be fine. Are you okay?” she earns a nod. “Call the police,” Kara murmured, looking at the hole and covering it with her hand. “I have to go.”

The woman clung to her slightly, thanking her, sobbing, but Kara peeled herself away and ran toward the corner before taking off once more.

Barely able to breath after her little outburst, she didn’t move her hand until she was standing in her own bedroom. Afraid at what she would see, she held her hand on the hole and pulled off her hood. No blood followed, no pain came. Instead, all that she found was a bullet, smushed as if it had hit a steel beam. Held up, close to her eyes, Kara peered at it and lifted her shirt, running her hand over her stomach where nothing but a small, purple bruise formed, already paling. She ran her hand over it a few times, as if trying to remove a stain, and then looked at the bullet again in her palm.

“Golly,” Kara whispered.

Two days after her daring rescue, Kara saw the article in the city paper. Just a small little blurb about a foiled robbery and assault. The assailant kept saying a human tornado hit him, while the woman said it was an act of fate in a red hoodie, a gift from God, her guardian angel. Kara smiled at the description and took a deep breath as she folded the paper and looked out at the soccer field where the teams practiced in the October evening.

Two pizzas, six burgers, and the promise of a milkshake had her waiting around for a sports puff piece, by far, the least favorite of the beats to cover for the paper. But she truly was worried about Janey having a breakdown before Thanksgiving at the rate she was going, and even though her mom was still there, home felt empty and different with Alex and her father, not as fun to go home to being the last one left. Any distraction was a welcomed distraction.

“Danvers, here to cover the best looking athletes at Oceanside?” Jack asked, leaning against the railing of the bleachers. His grin was the devil, and Kara knew it.

The tormenter of her until she grew boobs and about six inches, Jack Thomas had pioneered pulling pigtails and making Kara’s life pure hell since seventh grade. He coined the nickname Manvers, as well as deciding that she shed that moniker Junior year and should marry him to complete the transformation into model. It was an abrupt switch, one that Kara dreamt of as a freshman, and now that she had the attention of the quarterback, she missed being invisible.

“I actually am,” Kara smiled. “The girls’ soccer team. They might actually win a championship this year. What are you guys? Two and three?”

“Listen, whenever you want to finish up that exclusive,” he stood straighter, unbothered by her remarks. A wink came and she gagged before standing and making her way down the bleachers.

Something about stopping a bullet made her a new person, and she had an interview to finish so her friend could put off having an aneurism.

“You look really good, Kara,” Jack offered, gentler as his friends backed off slightly toward their practice. “Do you have a date to the dance next week?”

“Thank you, and no,” she blushed despite herself. “I’m probably going to visit my sister anyway.”

“Well, if not,” he offered politely. “I’ll be there.”
“Thank you, I… um… I should go.”

Kara shouldered her bag and tossed the newspaper in the trash before adjusting her glasses slightly. He ran his hand through his hair, tugging at its ends so that it defied gravity and gave her a smile that tested her resolve.

“See ya, Kara.”

It took a lot of effort to be exceptionally average. Kara had just enough friends to never be alone, her grades were just well enough to be considered smart, but not too smart. Her looks, she tried to balance out with glasses and conservatively dressing. She did a few activities, involved herself just slightly enough. It was a full time job being herself.

Being exceptionally average took a turn when she approached the sideline at the end of practice and introduced herself to the coach, who then called over a few players.

The pencil snapped in Kara’s hand when she saw those green eyes again, this time attached to an entire face and smile and sweaty, short shorts wearing soccer player. She was anything but average.

“I, uh, must have… it… I have another,” Kara supplied quickly.

“If you’re uncomfortable because I’m a…Luthor…” she pulled her shirt up and wiped her face. Kara gulped and felt her heartbeat through her chest. She looked down just to make sure it was still there and not visibly palpitating at the sign of such pale and perfect skin attached to hips and those…

“I’m sorry, that’s… no. Can I start over?” the reporter shook her head, furrowing and decidedly looking nowhere at all but her hands and the notebook they contained after tugging a pen from her pocket. “I’m Kara Danvers.”

“Lena Luthor,” she shook the hand that was held out to her. Kara’s mouth was dry and her brain was in overdrive. Too many smells distracted her, too many noises, she was stuck in overload.

“I’m just…” It lasted too long, the handshake, but Lena was good-natured enough not to notice, or at least pretend she didn’t as Kara snatched her hand away quickly and tapped her pen against the notebook. “I just have a few questions, for an upcoming article about the rest of the season, if that’s alright?”

“Of course.”

“Okay. Here it goes,” Kara willed herself to say words that made sense.

The soccer player smiled politely and took a seat on the bench as the bustle of players leaving for the day swelled around them. She tugged her socks down and tried not to stare too much at the awkward and slightly adorable reporter who pushed up her glasses as they slipped slightly with the movements of explaining.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t catch the question,” Lena asked, shoving things into her bag.

“I just… I was wondering. Just. Where you came from? You lead the team in…” Lena didn’t mean to be, but she was endeared by the furrowed brow and the flipping of pages which denoted research. “Assists and penalty shots. We were fourth last year, and now we’re sitting in first, going into an easy second half. You’ve, you’ve, you’ve made an impact.”

“I came into a very good team,” the striker disagreed politely. “It’s the team. We’ve been clicking
well, and working hard.”

“But you arrived this year?”

“We moved here from Smallville.”

“Senior year? That must stink.”

“Less of a commute for my dad. He wants to set up his west coast office, and it doesn’t really
matter. A place is a place.”

“How are you enjoying it?” Kara pressed, wanting to hear more of her.

“It’s not so bad. I have just a few classes here in the afternoon. In the morning I take classes at the
University downtown.”

“Golly, you must be smart.” The reporter earned a nod and smile.

“You haven’t written anything down,” Lena nudged her chin at the notebook with a good-natured
smile.

guess.”

The soccer player grabbed her bag and slung it over her shoulder before waving a goodbye to a few
of the remaining players.

“You’re cute,” she smirked. “Anyway we can finish this on the way to my car? I have some
homework to finish at home.”

“I’m cu-… no, I’m… what? No,” Kara stammered and shook her head quite seriously. “I’m sorry. I
have just a few more. I’ll stay on track.”

“I like the tangent. I just… I didn’t allot time for it. I would have,” Lena offered quickly, amending
her words, “If I had known it were you.”

The reporter tried to ignore the words, distracted with the implications and the small idea that
perhaps this soccer player was flirting with her, and so very well, and so very soon after meeting
her. Instead, as they made their way to the parking lot, Kara carefully went through her pre-
arranged questions, taking notes as they slowly walked. It wasn’t many, but she wished she’d had
more prepared.

“Thanks a lot. I don’t usually write sports stuff. I tried to cover it all,” Kara murmured as she
shoved her notebook in her bag.

“I think it went alright.”

“Yeah?” she practically glowed. “Good.”

Hanging against the car to her door, Lena leaned her chin on it and stared at the blue-eyed stranger
that brightened her day quite unexpectedly.

“We have a game on Tuesday. If you want to come for more notes or another article,” she offered,
unsure why, knowing only that she very much wanted to see her again.

“I don’t usually cover sports, just helping out a friend.”
“Oh,” the soccer player nodded, oddly disappointed. “Right.”

“But I’ve never been to a game, so maybe I’ll come.”

“I’m sure I’ll see you around, even if you don’t make it.”

“Definitely,” Kara smiled brightly.

Lena was certain she was the sun.

Perched in her normal spot, well after Eliza fell asleep, Kara surveyed the city and ate her second burger of the night, waiting for something to happen. She could stop a bullet. That was something. She could put out a fire, she learned that a few nights ago. She could punch people very hard and not kill them. Everything was a test, and since she began to flex her newly minted powers, she found that they were easier to control, less haywire, less bulky, more refined.

Happily, Kara surveyed her city, eating her snack, and waiting to be a hero like her cousin. Clark made her promise to never use her powers unless it was absolutely necessary. The common good seemed necessary, or so she told herself. If Clark could save a school bus and keep a plane from crashing, surely Kara could stop a fire and armed robbery. They weren’t that big of a deal.

Her pocket buzzed, and Kara nearly dropped her phone from that height getting it out so quickly. There was only one person who would text her so late, the only other night owl in her world.

*Hey, you up? Lena texted.*

*Just barely, Kara lied.*

*Is it alright if we work on your science project over here on Thursday? I have to be here when the caterers arrive, or the world will end, according to my mother.*

Kara chuckled to herself and rolled her eyes at the question.

*Sure. No biggie. You’re the one helping me, remember?*

*Oh, yeah. Right! Meeting at my house then, chump.*

After the article, Kara somehow found herself tagging along with Janey to the game. And when it was over, she didn’t think a certain green-eyed girl would wave happily and invite them both to a tiny party thrown by one of the captains. And she definitely didn’t think that she would have fun, talking and playing games with Lena. It was a new kind of friendship, and it felt good and honest. Kara had acquaintances, not friend-friends.

*You’re so good to me, Luthor. Get some sleep!*

The sound of screeching tires reached her ears, and shoving her phone in her pocket, Kara tugged down the ski mask and put up her hood before taking off toward the sound on the highway behind her.

By the time she made it home, tugging off the mask and sweatshirt, her shoulders aching with the strain they’d just been under, Kara added another thing to the list of things she can do: stop an out of control, speeding tractor trailer.

The Luthor estate was probably the biggest house she’d ever seen in her life. Kara grew up
comfortable, well enough off, never wanting anything. Back home, she was noble, she lived a life of fancy and void of strife. But the Luthor estate was more akin to the castles Kara remembered being enchanted with when the Danvers travelled through Europe sophomore summer. Nestled above the flat expanse of the city, tucked against the gentle rolling hills, beneath tall, waving Spruce trees, the house was quiet and terrifying.

The front yard and driveway was full of people in white coats, carrying in equipment and food, setting up tents and lights. It was a lot of activity to try to figure out.

It took Kara a minute to ring the bell. Standing on the steps to the large house, she felt very unsure how a girl like Lena could want to be friends with her. Lena was already taking mostly college classes. Lena, who scored a lot of soccer goals. Lena, the one who worked in the mailroom of the giant conglomerate her family owned. Lena, who didn’t bat an eye when Kara ate every single snack when they hung out. Lena, who had eyes that were—

“Kara! I thought I heard you,” that voice greeted her. “Did you find it okay?”

“Yeah, not a problem,” she offered quickly, adjusting her bag.

“Sorry all of this is happening,” she mentioned, gesturing to the staff. “My mom is hosting her first fundraiser, and she’s a little scatterbrained. Must make a good impression, save the world, and so on. Come on in.”

“It’s really not a big deal. If anything, I feel like I’m interrupting you helping. I really… we can do this… like… we don’t have to do it today.”

“You’re actually saving me,” Lena stopped her, interrupting a familiar start of a ramble, which she usually let go on a little longer, enjoying the way Kara grew nervous. “I’d have to help a lot more with all this junk.”

“You don’t like it?”

Kara followed Lena through the hall, past a lot of rooms with expensive looking furniture and flowers in every room. Tables with dark blue cloths were littering the landscape of each, but Kara could see the lived in parts before Lena had her follow up a large set of stairs.

“I’ve been a Luthor since I was five, I’ve done my share of dressing up and listening to the same stuffy stories and having to behave.”

“Since you were…” Kara furrowed and followed up the steps, her feet slowing as she thought.

“You might be the only person in Midvale to not google me,” Lena chuckled. “I’m adopted.”

“Oh! Oh, okay. Oh.”

“Come on. Are you hungry? I can call down to have some snacks brought up.”

“I’m always hungry,” Kara grinned before following Lena into a room that led into what felt like another living room.

“Just give me a second. Make yourself comfortable.”

For a moment, Lena smiled and disappeared into another room. Kara heard her pick up a phone and went about making herself comfortable in the form of surveying all she could. Opposite the door, giant windows covered the entire wall, looking out onto the back yard, all tall trees and
shadows and pool. The door was closed that led out onto a balcony. The view was spectacular, but didn’t tell her enough.

Kara moved to the bookshelves, noting the heavy lean toward science and textbooks, though a few poetry books were thrown in for good measure, to really throw her off. Pictures in frames ranged from formal events with the entire Luthor clan, to silly candids and pictures with what Kara were sure were friends. Her favorite was on the small desk behind a couch, one of a young, knobby-kneed Lena with a baseball hat on, perched atop her father’s shoulders while a preteen boy waved a foam finger, and a beautiful woman hung on her husband’s arm.

“That was my first birthday with Luthor as my last name,” Lena murmured, leaning against the door, making Kara drop the frame back on the desk. “Dad just bought the National City Hawks. Me and Lex would go to every game in the summer.”

“Sorry. I didn’t– I wasn’t trying to. I didn’t,” Kara stammered and fumbled with putting it back where she found it.

“It’s fine,” her friend promised, leaning on the back of the chair there. “I think I look quite adorable in that.”

“Yeah, definitely,” she breathed, looking at it again before blushing. “Is it weird, having a new last name?”

“I don’t think I ever had a different one,” Lena shrugged and grabbed a few books before taking a seat on the couch. “It’s kind of an honor. I remember when it was official, my mom hugged me so tight, she always wanted a daughter. And Lionel, he was harder to crack. He tucked me in one night, and told me I was a Luthor now, and that meant family above all else. I had responsibilities and I was going to change the world. Mind you, I was six when it became official,” Lena chuckled and leaned back as Kara joined her. “He said the name gave me power, only when I gave power to the name. Ever since then, he’s been my daddy. A push over. Don’t tell him I told you though.”

“Wow,” Kara sighed, leaning closer as she listened to the story.

“It’s a good name. I have a good life. A good family.”

“I feel the same, I just… never was able to put it in words.”

“What do you mean?”

“I’m adopted too.”

“It’s interesting, isn’t it? Being chosen?”

“Do you remember your real family?”

“This is the only family I’ve ever known. They are my real family.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean–”

“I understand, it’s fine.”

“I guess it’s a little different. I was eight when it happened. I still remember my family, my entire life before I became Danvers.”

“I can’t imagine.”
“Sorry, we should get started. I always seem to be on a tangent with you.”

“Kara, that’s called being friends,” Lena laughed, a genuine, relieved kind of laugh that was infectious.

“Friends?”

“I mean, I don’t have many I consider close, but yeah, I think this is how it goes.”

“Right, yeah. Of course.”

Outside, the sun began to set and the little string lights created an entire universe full of new constellations throughout the backyard. Lena was smart, too smart, Kara realized quickly, as she helped her with physics calculations. It seemed as if she could do them in her head, but was patient enough to be humble about it. Never patronizing, always ready to make Kara laugh, it was the best way to learn earth physics, which seemed like Greek compared to her home planet’s.

Snacks came in waves, which Kara was grateful. Her mother would be surprised that she only ate three platefuls for dinner. Various plates mingled with open books and notes on the coffee table.

“Lena, honey,” a voice called before entering the room. “I can’t decide.”

Lillian Luthor was beautiful. Dark, chestnut hair flowed to bare shoulders. Her jaw was slender, her features slender, though not as sharp as Kara was certain they could have been, as if she worked hard to avoid the natural pitfalls of anger. She walked into the room staring at different earrings in her palms. A set of pearls sat against the long stretch of neck.

“Oh, hello,” she finally looked up and saw that her daughter was not alone, or anywhere close to ready. “I’m sorry, I forgot you were having a friend over. It’s so rare. We tend to embarrass our daughter.”

“Mom, this is Kara,” Lena shook her head and groaned slightly.

“Kara Danvers, ma’am,” she popped up and held out her hand quickly. “It’s a pleasure to meet you.”

“Any relation to Eliza Danvers?” the mother took her hand and shook it warmly, sizing her up, critical without being, making Kara push up her glasses and look back at Lena for assurance.

“She’s my mother.”

“How is she? I used to be on the board of the Children’s Hospital with her back in National City, way, way, way back, well before either of you were born.”

“She’s doing well. She works at Tora doing medical research.”

“Wow, Eliza Danvers,” she hummed, smiling warmly. “It’s been ages. You’ll tell her I said hello, won’t you?”
“Of course.”

“I’ll have to call on her one of these days.”

“I’m sure she would love that.”

“Mom, didn’t you have to finish helping the band find the right place to set up or something?” Lena suggested.

“Which one?” she asked, holding up both earrings, alternating until her daughter picked. “Thank you.”

“We were just finishing up.”

“Lily! Lil, I can’t figure out which tie won’t clash with you!” Another voice echoed down the hall, deep and baritone. Kara heard Lena sigh and shake her head.

“I’m sorry. My parents can usually dress themselves without so much uproar,” she promised.

“I know you like the red, but I think this green one, Lena got me—”

“Lionel, please, Lena has a friend over.”

“Right,” he looked up slowly, slightly disinterested. “But which tie. You’ll end up looking at the pictures and complaining if I choose the wrong one, and I’ll hear about it for the next month.”

“Honey.”

“Lionel Luthor,” he stuck his hand out, which Kara took eagerly, shaking it too hard. “Pleasure to meet you.”

“This is Eliza’s little girl,” his wife offered.

“Eliza?”


“I’m sorry, we’re just not accustomed to Lena bringing friends over very often. It’s a little new to us,” he smiled.

“I bring people over,” his daughter argued.

“She’s embarrassed of us,” he informed Kara as his wife picked his tie and threw it around his neck, beginning to tie it for him. “I suppose we’re doing something right then.” He grinned and winked at his daughter.

“We were just finishing up,” she promised. “I’ll be ready quick.”

“Lena was tutoring me. She’s a lifesaver.”

“I would hope so, she’s been doing those equations since she was ten,” the father bragged. “Don’t be a stranger, Kara. You’re always welcome.”

“Thank you.”

“Come on, let’s let them finish up,” Lillian smoothed her husband’s shirt and jacket. “Kara, we
mean it. Don’t be a stranger, and be sure to tell your mother I’ll be stopping by.”

“Yes ma’am.”

“You look beautiful,” Lionel whispered as he was tugged from the room.

“Sorry about them,” Lena smiled and shook her head. “They mean well.”

“Danvers, you’re the one that wrote that article in the school paper about Lena,” Lionel remembered, stopping at the door.

“Yes, sir.”

“I liked it. Have a copy hanging at the office.”

“Dad,” Lena groaned, drawing it out until he relented and smiled. “I’ll be down in a bit.”

“They’re nice,” Kara supplied.

“I’ll keep them.”

With a smile, they went about cleaning up, Kara apologizing profusely for eating all of the snacks, with Lena dismissing it. Most of all, Kara could only think about how she felt like a friend who got to know Lena Luthor.

Walking down the steps, the crowds in fancy dressed already started to arrive. Grossly underdressed, Kara tried not to gape too much. Instead, at the door, she caught herself a glimpse of Mr. and Mrs. Luthor, laughing and standing very close. The look he gave her was nothing short of utter devotion, and the smile she reserved for him, even just in that instant, was all of her joy.

“You’ll get home okay?” Lena worried, observing the dark that settled. “I can have Calvin drive you if you’d like. No trouble.”

“I’ll be alright,” she said, adjusting her bag. “Thanks for the help.”

“Sure, anytime.”

With a smile, Kara took a step and paused, turning back on her heel.

“Do you want to hang out tomorrow? My mom is going to be leaving for a conference.”

“Maybe you’d want to come over and help us eat some of these post-party leftovers?”

“Yeah, I can probably help you out with that,” Kara chuckled, squinting against the light. She watched Lena put her hands in her back pockets.

“Movies and leftovers. I’ll tell my parents.”

“Awesome.”

“See you tomorrow, Kara. Text me when you get home, okay?”

“Yes ma’am,” she rolled her eyes and she loped down the steps and into the driveway.

From atop the steps, Lena leaned against the door and watched her friend with a smile on her lips. She’d been warned often to make sure she chose good people to surround herself, because her
name came with people having ulterior motives. For the first time in a long time, the youngest Luthor felt as if she’d picked well.

Never before had Lena been able to say, with such confidence and happiness, that her life was perfect. It was the best year of her life, and it was only just starting. Fresh from her holiday abroad with her family, as soon as they landed on their private airfield, Lena pulled out her phone and texted her friend to let her know she’d arrived.

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Come over now! I have great news and cookies!! Kara practically squealed through text.

With a small smile, Lena relaxed in her chair as they taxied to the gate. New school, state soccer champ, best friend, great family, perfect holiday skiing the Alps, internship at her father’s company, accepted to her dream school… the list was one that she never thought she’d ever have.

Not that her life wasn’t already perfect by other’s standards. Perfect didn’t lead to happiness, she’d learned slowly. In fact, it was usually messy and free and unexpected that led to that permanent smile. That was what Kara was teaching her.

“We should have dinner to celebrate the news,” Lionel beamed as he scrolled through his own phone. “Early admissions to your family’s alma mater is something worth celebrating. Where would you like to go, princess?”

Every Luthor since the beginning of time had gone to Kingsmont. When she got the email, Lena felt the weight lifted off her shoulders. Not a disappointment, flashed in front of her eyes as she read the words congratulating her on admission.

“Can we go tomorrow?” she ventured.

“What?”

“She’s been gone from her friends for three weeks, and forced to spend time with her family,” Lillian interpreted for her husband, giving her daughter a nod. “Let the girl go have fun.”

“But it’s Kingsmont. She’s a Scottie now. I’ve already ordered new colors and shirts and scarves and pennants for the family. I got one of those ugly stickers for the car that says Proud Kingsmont Dad.”

“And she’ll still be going there tomorrow.”

“Please, Daddy?” Lena subtly pouted, knowing between her and her mother, he was outgunned.

A look of frustrated defeat, followed by amused acceptance played across Lionel’s face as he looked between the two women of his life. He shook his head and chuckled before relenting.

“Fine. I’ll have Lynn set up something for the three of us tomorrow night. Maybe Franco’s?”

“Perfect. Thank you, Daddy,” Lena hopped up as the plane stopped and the door opened. She kissed his cheek and hugged her mother.

“Don’t stay out too late,” Lillian suggested as she earned a hug as well. “It’s been a long day.”

“I won’t.”

“Tell Kara we said hello.”
“Bye!”

In a second, Lena was down the steps and taking the car while her parents elected to wait for another. She was practically giddy by the time she pulled up to the now familiar Danver’s residence.

“Thanks, Cal. I’ll call you later.”

“Tell Ms. Danvers I said hello,” he smiled, tipping his hat as she closed the door.

Before she made it a step inside the yard, just as the gate was shutting, arms were wrapped around her neck, and it felt as if a boulder had knocked into her side. It was a familiar feeling of a big, floppy puppy that was her friend.

“It’s been too long,” Kara squealed, hugging her tightly. “I missed you. No more whisking off to Europe.”

“I’ll do my best,” Lena laughed.

It wasn’t that she was unaccustomed to hugs and such, but the degree to which Kara latched onto her was new and not entirely unwelcome.

“You have to tell me everything, and I have so much to tell you,” she began to rattle as she tugged Lena toward the house.

“Let her breathe, Kara,” her mother chided as she finished pulling something from the oven. “Hello, Lena.”

“Mrs. Danvers,” she nodded. “Happy belated Holidays.”

“Will you be joining us for dinner? I’ve made plenty.”

“Yes,” Kara answered for her.

“I don’t want to impose…”

“You’re not. We’ll be down in a bit, Mom,” her friend offered quickly, practically sprinting up the stairs. “I can’t believe you’re back. It felt like years.”

“Did you get the chocolate I sent?” Lena asked as she flopped down on Kara’s bed.

The room was not new to her. Lena grew to know it well, felt comfortable in it, just as Kara felt in her own home, grabbing snacks at will from the fridge, driving the chef’s crazy.

“Yeah, I think my mom and sister actually got more than me.”

“What!? How?” she pretended to gasp at the news.

“I may be quick, but when it comes to chocolate, they rival even me.”

“Tell me everything I missed.”

It was all the prompting Kara needed. She went through the holiday, spending time with her sister, the string of vigilante incidents happening in the city, how she got a new laptop for her birthday. It all came out so fast, Lena didn’t have time to ask questions, but she loved watching Kara talk like that. Someone so good and kind and happy, they were just… just… they were the sun, she thought
again, soaking it in as best she could.

Exhausted, she watched Kara lay down on her bed and stare at the ceiling, practically vibrating with excitement. Lena propped herself up on her elbow and laid beside her friend. She felt the soft smile on her own lips, the jittery feeling of her own stomach, that felt as if it was lined with sparklers, all going off at one time.

And when blue eyes turned to her own, she couldn’t help but smile.

The sparklers and butterflies soon turned painful, agitated and ornery as Kara told her about how Jack kissed her on New Year’s Eve, and how they’d been hanging out. Like a Luthor, Lena knew how to have a proper poker face, and pretended to smile for her friend.

“And, I just got the email today,” Kara sat up quickly. “I got into National University!”

“I got into Kingsmont!” Lena yelped in return. “Congratulations!”

A second later, Kara was hugging her tightly again, her hot breath against Lena’s neck. She felt the weight of her friend settle atop her and Lena closed her eyes, memorizing it all.

“We’re going to be in the same city, just a subway ride across it! This is great,” Kara beamed as she pulled away. “I mean, if you want.”

“Of course I want,” her friend argued. “I think you’re one of my truest friends I’ve ever had. You’re very important, Kara.”

“I’m… I’m, impor– I mean. You, too,” she nodded, serious and forceful with her words. Lena tucked a stray bit of hair behind her ear and Kara felt herself blush. She chanced a look at her lips and it was a mistake. Friends. “I bet your dad was over the moon,” Kara offered, sitting up and pulling away.

“He bought the whole campus store, I think,” Lena laughed, closing her eyes and remaining on the bed, shaking her head slightly.

“You’ll have to get me something, so I can rep it a little, too.”

“Naturally.”

“Kara, honey! Dinner!” Eliza’s voice wafted up the stairs.

“I almost forgot the best news,” Kara smiled again as she pulled Lena quite easily from the bed. “Speaking of dads, mine called on Christmas.”

“From overseas?”

“Yeah,” she sighed. “He thinks he’ll be home by June.”

“Seems we’re both ready to have an amazing year.”

“Let’s… can we just…” Kara paused at the door and turned to face her friend before she reached out and hugged Lena again.

Arms slowly wrapping around Kara’s broad shoulders, she felt her inhale and hold it for a moment. Strong biceps held her tightly. Lena all but melted right there on that spot. She would have given her entire inheritance to keep that moment forever.
“Everything is perfect right at this moment,” the blonde explained. She hovered a few inches higher, taller than Lena. It was easy to hug her neck, to hide in her hair. “I don’t want to forget it.”

“It’s only going to get better,” Lena promised.

The butterflies came back, and Lena cursed them, buried them, deep, deep, deep down. It was a selfish thing.
I wish that I had known in
That first minute we met
The unpayable debt
That I owed you.

Hovering, Kara flopped down on the water tower, her body achy from the robbery she stopped. She didn’t know how to fight, but she could overpower anyone. The problem came with guns. The little ones left a bruise. A shotgun, she learned, that could knock the wind right out of her at close range, though they were getting easier to handle, like a muscle that needed flexed. Just a few days ago, she found herself able to deflect armor piercing rounds, which was cool, to say the least.

Another sweatshirt ruined, though.

The sneaking around, the lying to her mother and sister. It was a lot, it weighed her down, but Kara felt the most like herself than she’d ever been before. Operating under a mask, she was the most Kara that ever existed.

With a groan, she sat up, the cold of the winter weather soaked tower easing her bruises. It was still early, and soon she would take a warm shower and sleep. She planned on sleeping all day the following day. That was how a weekend should work.

Back in the distance, Kara thought she heard something, something familiar, but she yawned and stretched out her arm. It took a few seconds for her brain to catch up.

“Lena,” she swallowed, the chill coming from fear, not from the cold.

Faster than lightning, she was off, frantically searching until she saw the car, swerving down the interstate, speeding and veering. From her vantage point, she x-rayed the car and saw cut wires, saw the driver stamping his foot on brakes that wouldn’t work.

Kara slammed herself down in front of the speeding car, rooting both of her hands in the bumper. The wheels kept turning, kept churning. Her ears picked up Lena’s heartbeat and Kara smashed the hood, punching a hole in the engine so it stopped. It took a few more feet for the car to skid to a stop, and quickly, Kara pulled up her hood and made sure her mask was in place before walking around the side.

The car door was ripped off. Kara hadn’t meant to do that, but it happened. She let it drop after looking at it, slightly confused at why.

“You okay?” she barked, trying to disguise her voice. The hand that came out trembled. “I’m not going to hurt you. You’re safe now.”

“Tha– Thank. Thank you,” Lena managed, surveying the damage as the driver pulled himself out. “Who are you?”

“Just a good samaritan.”

For a moment, the way the eyes stared at her, she was certain Lena knew. Green eyes bore into her own, searching for words, not believing it. Kara looked away and finally took a few steps before
disappearing with a flash, leaving Lena suddenly confused in her wake.

After the accident, Lionel upped security. He didn’t have concrete answers for his daughter, but she knew it had something to do with all of his meetings in DC and the new defense contracts. He doted on her more than usual, offering to cut her hours at work so she could have an easy summer, the guilt wearing him down. He was proud when Lena declined, happy to work, even if it was mailroom and assistant work. Her brother did it before, and he would take over the company. She did it so she could feel like a Luthor, because she was a Luthor, and she got power from the name by giving it power.

She didn’t tell anyone about the weird, mask wearing thing that saved her, except for Kara, who listened intently and fretted over if she was alright or not.

“You aren’t even pretending to study,” Lena half-heartedly complained as she looked over top of her book at the girl in her yard.

“I’m not taking college classes,” Kara grunted, smiling as she looked at the girl on the chair, carefully concentrating on her balance as she did a handstand in the grass.

“You’re distracting.”

“You’re boring.”

“Fuck me,” Lena moaned and tossed her book on the chair beside her. Kara collapsed on the ground a second after the noise. “I’m so sick of studying.”

“I can’t believe they let you into Kingsmont with a mouth like that,” she grunted, wincing as she tried to catch her breath.

Spreading her arm wide, pressing herself into the grass, Kara tried to get the memory of that noise out of her head. It echoed between her ears though.

“Kara, my head is going to explode.”

“We can’t have that, can we?” she asked, squinting her eyes and cocking her head as she peered up at the studious one of the bunch. “Come on.”

“What?”

“Come on. You need some dirt time in your life.”

“I have to study.”

“Listen, you’re one of my favorite people in the world, and I can’t have your head exploding.”

Sitting up on the ground, Kara patted it and stood again. Hands on her hips, she stood tall and demanding. Lena complained, though she relented by heaving herself off the chair.

“My mom said that burning off energy is the best way to focus,” Kara explained, toeing the spare soccer ball that rested near a shrub.

“You’re going to break your neck,” Lena objected as her friend attempted to juggle. “I’ve seen you fall walking on a flat surface.”
“If you’re so good, then take it,” she taunted, kicking it from side to side.

“Seriously?”

All Kara had to do was quirk her eyebrow and shrug. It was not difficult to distract a Luthor, and she knew her’s very well. Not even a full minute later, did Lena succeed in taking the ball back. Like the show-off she was, she juggled it a bit until she rested a foot on top of it, waiting for Kara to do her worst.

“That’s cheating!” Lena yelped, laughing too hard as Kara picked her up and swung her back so she could steal the ball.

“Says you,” she teased, trotting across the yard.

All too quickly, Lena was back on her, laughing in her ear. Kara did more than she could admit to hear a laugh like that. Even when they were in school, or with other people, it was a different laugh. This one was her’s, and she kept it to herself, happy to have it.

“Your arms are too long!”

“You’re tickling me!” Kara giggled, still failing at keeping away the person who actually knew what she was doing. “Cheater.”

“Says you,” she returned, sticking out her tongue.

“Give it back.”

“Nope.”

The game wasn’t much, was simple, had no rules at all, but simply happened. Lena chased and showed off, while Kara cheated and heaved Lena over her shoulder. The evening came in without them noticing. The lightning bugs came out and lazily drifted through the field.

She came under the pretense of study, though Kara never any intention of doing that. She just wanted to escape her mom’s cheery wake and her sister’s grumpy, over-protective streak. She just wanted to feel like she had some kind of anchor while everything swirled around. Between the paper, and school, and family and a boyfriend, Kara was missing the simplicity. Lena had that. Lena kept it for her.

“Now you’re definitely cheating,” Lena laughed, holding her chest as Kara tickled her to the ground in a heap.

“Me? No way. You started it.”

“I did not!”

Before Kara could register, she felt herself roll slightly as Lena hovered too close.

“Admit that I’m the best.”

“Best what?”

Kara pretended to struggle against Lena’s hands. She was in no particular rush to get back to physics. She was quite alright in the grass with the lightning bugs and Lena’s weight on top of her.

“Best friend slash genius slash soccer star you know.”
“You’re the best Lena I know.”

“Yeah?”

Kind of surprised by the answer, Lena found herself leaning closer. She was maddeningly beautiful on a bad day, entirely too astounding at her worst, and currently, stuck to the ground, Kara was perfect.

She wasn’t sure how it happened, just that it did. Where Kara licked her lips as she stared too long at Lena bitting her own.

With the excruciating kind of effort Kara survived only by tilting her head up slightly and met nothing. Lena pulled away and quickly dropped her hands, brushing herself with the dirt.

“Best Lena, huh?”

“Something like that,” Kara shrugged.

She remained lying in the dirt, feeling the grass that was almost warm from the almost summer day. As the night came in, the breeze picked up and the stagnant warmth disappeared with the sun. Kara didn’t mind. She just stayed there and tried to find stars that first appeared.

At first Lena thought of getting up, though it proved unappetizing. Instead, she rested her head on Kara’s hip and looked up at the same sky, both perpendicular and both locked into the moment that never happened. Because if it happened, they wouldn’t have this any more, and both needed it.

Kara toyed with Lena’s hair who just sighed and stared at the stars.

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Summer settled into a familiar kind of rhythm. Lena worked a few days per week, spent the rest lounging around with Kara, trying to train with a few girls from soccer for their prospective colleges. It was spent on days at the beach trying not to stare at her friend in a bikini. With abs. Her friend with abs. Her friend who kissed the quarterback and held his hand. Her friend. It would be selfish to think anything more. Dangerous and selfish.

Not even that was enough of a damper on the summer though. Lena had the entire world at her fingertips, and she felt great.

The crickets sang in the night as she opened the door to her balcony and toweled her hair after a particularly rewarding shower after a particularly rewarding run with another girl from her team who was going to Kingsmont. Lena felt her legs ache, that delicious kind of feeling of hard work that was rarely manifested in lingering ways.

She checked her phone, hoping to hear from Kara about plans to go see the Hawks play that weekend, though she was disappointed to see nothing there, yet again.

With a small sigh, Lena picked up a book she’d been meaning to finish and flopped on the couch. For once, she was almost mad she got out of the gala her parents and brother were going to back in the city. The house was too empty, and she was too lonely.

But a night with a good book, that wasn’t a night wasted. Lena trained herself to be alone, always taking to heart what her father said about surrounding herself with worthwhile people. She would rather there be just a few, than to fill her time with sycophants.
The slow rumble of thunder grumbled outside as a summer storm blew in from the ocean. Not a chapter later, the sky let loose and the rain whooshed to the ground, creating a quiet kind of orchestra, clacking on the railing of the balcony, plopping in the pool, tapping on leaves and window panes in rhythm.

Thunder and the storm and occasionally lightning raged outside while Lena turned her music down slightly to accommodate the new arrangement. In her opinion it was the perfect summer night.

“Lena?” Kara’s voice came like a whisper, and at first, Lena thought she dreamt it, returning to her book, until it came again, with a small tap at her window. “Lena? Can I come in?”

“What the– how did you get out here?” Lena jumped up, tossing her book to the ground in her movement.

“I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you,” her friend offered weakly, knitting her fingers together, still not entering the room, but letting the rain fall on her, weight down her clothes. “I tried calling, but I just… my phone broke.”

“Come in, hurry up, it’s storming like crazy,” her friend rushed her inside, tugging her arm and closing the door behind her as the rain kept up. “How did you get on my balcony?”

“Um, I… well. No one was answering the door…”

“You’re soaking wet, and you’re… Kara, you’re crying,” Lena observed, running her thumb along her cheek, under red eyes that was almost hidden by the weather. “What happened?”

She got sorrowful blue eyes, searching for words and unable to find or say them. Instead of them, Lena got arms hugging her tightly and a quiet kind of grief against her neck.

“If it was Jack, I swear to God, I’ll end him,” she swore, protectively wrapping her up. “Just tell me who. You don’t have to worry.”

“I just want to remember when everything was perfect.”

“Okay,” she soothed, rubbing Kara’s back. “We can do that.”

The cold of the wet clothes sunk into Lena’s, and yet she let Kara hold her as long as she needed, until they were both a shivering mess, half-dry and half-wet and unsure how it all happened. The thunder purred and rolled along, just as unaware of what was happening as Lena.

“What was that?” Lena whispered as Kara sniffled.

“My dad,” she shook her head. “They… he… we… they came to our house today…”

“What happened?”

“Ambush, he… he was… I should have… I could have… He was trying to save them… and a bomb…” Kara shook her head and Lena held her tighter again.

The thunder rolled and Kara cleared her throat before pulling away, wiping her cheek and pushing up her glasses. Someone who looked like that and enjoyed helping people that much should never look like that.

“I’m sorry. I just… I didn’t… I should get back home.”

“Let’s get you dried up,” Lena offered. “Maybe some dinner. You can tell me what’s going on, and
“I can–”

“Thanks, but I’m not hungry.”

“Are you sure?”

“I have to get home. Mom is laying down, Alex isn’t talking. I just needed a moment to not be… strong for them. I’m sorry I bothered you. I didn’t mean–”

“What can I do, Kara?” she pled.

“Nothing. I’m fine. I’ll be okay.”

“Do you want me to come–”

“I’m fine,” Kara promised again, taking a deep breath. For a moment, Lena almost believed her friend’s entire world wasn’t crumbling. “I’m sorry.”

“Stop apologizing.”

“I have to go,” she said again.

“Do you want Cal to–”

“I need to walk. The air is nice out right now.”

“Kara…” Lena tried as Kara held the doorknob to go back onto the patio. “I am so very sorry for what happened to your father.”

“He would have liked you,” Kara decided with a sad smile. “He liked smart girls.”

“Then he was over the moon for you.”

“I just wanted to remember when things were perfect. They can be perfect again, right?”

“A different kind of perfect, yeah,” Lena promised. “Nothing will ever happen that would make it impossible to feel that way again. It doesn’t seem like it now.”

There wasn’t anything she could think of saying, as much as she desperately wanted words to come out, to keep Kara there, and safe, and even if it was sad, smiling as she tried to through it. Lena just watched as Kara walked out into the storm and disappeared.

As soon as she was gone, Lena called her own father, to tell him she loved him. Her lungs constricted until he picked up.

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Five days after the storm, after the news, after it all, Kara somehow found herself sitting outside, under softly swaying branches, as the sun whined and made everyone sweat in their black and grief.

She eyed the empty casket and felt her mother’s hand squeeze her own. The world smelled like dirt, just pure dirt and salt.

The service was quick enough, the wake was too long. Kara kept quiet, helped her mother, tried to be as gracious as she could. She had to, because her sister was gone, completely useless and
grieving, and her mother was forgetful, distracted and upset. Normally, it was her father that kept
them together, kept spirits high. Kara felt that sense of duty to wear the burden. It didn’t fit quite
right on her shoulders.

“It was a nice service,” Lena offered, pausing in the doorway as Kara stood in the middle of her
own room and stared at nothing in particular.

“I don’t know what I’m supposed to do,” Kara shook her head, quite lost and unsure.

So different than the normally joyful puppy, Lena was unsure how to approach such a sad, grieving
thing. Sometimes it was so easy to forget that this was the same girl that buried her parents already
at the age of eight, that still was so full of life after an arguably terrible childhood. Even then, at the
deepest, darkest point, with the only other father she knew dead, Kara was still beautiful and full of
life, perhaps more than ever before.

“There’s nothing you can do.”

“Alex won’t talk. She’s… And Mom… how am I supposed to go to school and leave her here
alone?”

“Those are tomorrow’s problems, Kara.”

“Thank you for coming today,” she remembered her manners, her own tangential thinking taking
her far away to many regrets. “It meant a lot.”

“You couldn’t think I was going to let you do this alone.”

“I haven’t been able to think of much, actually.”

“Why don’t we change, and just… not think for a while? I’ll go steal some of those snacks you
like, because you have to eat, and we can watch happy movies.”

“You don’t have to stick around. I’m alright.”

“I know you’re not, and that’s okay. You don’t have to pretend around me, Kara.”

“It feels like I’ll never be happy again,” she finally confessed.

“I didn’t know your dad, but I can tell you one thing, he would never want that, and you’re Kara.
You are happy by nature.”

“I don’t know about that either.”

“We’ll figure it out,” Lena promised. “You’re taking the night off of babysitting your family.”

It took a little work, but finally, Lena was able to get her to change from her funeral attire, and it
took a little more work, but she snagged a few trays and actually got Kara to eat. They curled up in
bed and quietly watched movies. Lena texted her parents and told them she was staying the night.
There was no real choice in the matter. Kara held her hips so tightly with her head against Lena’s
stomach, that there was no way to escape the sleeping girl.

And so she didn’t.

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The bitter taste of death was unshakeable, no matter what Kara did. She was removed, distant,
unable to pay attention to much, unable to control herself.

Her fist connected again with the car thief’s jaw. Battered and bruised, his face was a pulp and blood covered her hands and shirt, but Kara couldn’t make herself stop until she heard sirens and looked down at what she’d done.

Unaccustomed to such monstrosities, Kara stood and stared at her fists, at the man who passed out long ago.

In an instant she was gone, and as she scrubbed her hands at home, turning the pristine white sink this soapy red and brown tint, she watched them shake and became slightly afraid of what she was capable of being.

High atop the city, two pairs of legs kicked through the railing and looked out at the world that had become their kingdom. Summer groaned and waned, ready to come to an end as schools started and an exodus of recent graduates headed off to their universities and colleges. From the water tower, the city looked so much smaller that they remembered it.

“Are you sure?” Lena asked again, taking a swig from the flask she filled from the party they bailed on to come up there.

Their final night before heading off to school, and neither wanted the sun to come up for some reason. So they chased a the night like dogs chasing cars, ambling through streets, thinking and talking about nothing and everything. It’d been a long, amazing, hard year, and they needed to catch their breath.

“I can’t leave her. I’ll just take a few classes at Tech downtown, and transfer next year,” Kara shrugged. “Alex… she…”

“Still no word from her?”

“Just that she’s back at school. Nothing else. I never thought she’d be… leave. I… we needed her, and she just…”

“Yeah,” Lena nodded, sighing slightly and watching Kara watch the word.

The liquor made her smile and stare at Kara’s profile longer than polite, made it so she couldn’t stop once she realized it.

“You can always come visit, you know?”

“You can count on it,” Kara grinned and took a swig of the drink offered to her.

“A year ago, I didn’t know you existed, now look at us.”

“One heck of a year.”

“Can’t you swear just once, Danvers?” Lena shook her head and laughed. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard someone never swear.”

“I can… I sw– I’ve sworn.”

“What, when you said darn it instead of dang it?”
“I can… what should I say then, wise guy?”

“Hmm… say fuck.”

“Lena!”

“You’re right. That’s too hardcore,” she nodded before taking another swig. “Say damn.”

“D-Damn,” Kara breathed, taking a drink from the flask and earning a slight applause from her friend.

“How much did that hurt?”

“So much,” she confessed with a laugh.

From their seats on the water tower, both leaned their chins against the railing and watched the world happen without them, as if they were spectators on the universe, as if they could control anything at all.

“I’m leaving tomorrow morning,” Lena remembered after a quiet stretch. “I just got here, and now I’m leaving.”

“That’s how it goes. A place is a place,” Kara reminded her. “Someone told me that once.”

“Yeah, that’s how it always felt, but this place feels the most like home.”

“The best thing about homes is, they’re always there, no matter what, even if they explode.”

“What?”

“Metaphorically,” Kara quickly added. “I don’t know. I’m drunk.” It was a lie, but still, she took another sip of the flask and handed it back to her friend. “You’ll come back, won’t you?”

“Without a doubt,” Lena nodded. “And I’ll be sitting right here, this day next year, and we’ll both be heading off to National City.”

“That sounds nice.”

“We don’t have to leave this place, do we?”

“The water tower? Yes. We could get arrested.”

“Oh.”

“You’re drunk,” Kara giggled as Lena moped at the news.

“I just… I know it’s not perfect yet, like it was, but this moment, between all of the other stuff, it’s kind of perfect, right?”

Big, green eyes like forests after the rain, Kara decided, stared at her and asked so innocently, she was sure she hadn’t ever heard Lena’s voice sound like that, almost unsure and more hopeful than she was surely accustomed.

“It’s kind of perfect,” Kara promised.

Kara watched her bite her lip and she swallowed hard at the image which would surely star in
many, many flashbacks over the year to come. The smell of vodka lingered on her lips, but was masked by this distinct kind of fragrance that Kara could only attribute to her. Soft and delicate, it was warm, like lavender petals left in the sun, or even a little cinnamon thrown into baking bread. It was always there, always distracting and intoxicating.

Lena’s brow furrowed, and Kara shifted slightly as fingertips moved to her cheeks. Softly, they moved along her jaw, as Lena’s eyes followed the journey. So intense was the stare, that Kara was unsure if any had ever seen her like that before, or if anyone ever would again. Tenderly, thumbs ran over her lips and she gulped.

“Perfect,” Lena whispered, almost lost to even the super-hearing.

It was her other senses that took over in that moment. Kara couldn’t hear a thing other than her heartbeat, couldn’t smell anything except that summer smell of vodka and suntan lotion and baked skin, couldn’t feel anything but tiny shivers at the base of her back.

It took a minute after, for Jack’s name to flash in her head, but Kara dismissed it with super speed. As soon as Lena’s lips touched her own, she dug her hands into the metal of the walkway they sat on, leaving handprints on the edge to keep herself from floating away.

It was tentative at first, brazen a second later, fueled by drinking and sunshine and summer and endings and beginnings. Hand slipped into her hair and Kara sighed when Lena pulled away instead of deepening it as her body betrayed that she wanted.

“I’ve always wanted to do that,” Lena smiled and let her hands drop. “Just to see how it felt.”

“Yeah?” Kara gulped and watched her friend turn her head and rest her chin on the palm of her hand before gazing out over the streetlights and streets, the headlights that glided along half-lit roads. Her smile was lazy and filled with booze, but it was victorious all the same.

“I have a boyfriend…” she finally began to ramble in the quiet. “I- I didn’t– We. You’re my best–”

“Kara, just… let it be perfect, okay? Just for tonight, just for this one minute. Sixty seconds of perfect. Don’t have an aneurism.”

“Okay.”

“Thank you,” Lena sighed and rested her head on her friend’s shoulder once more with a sigh. It was heavy and filled with the knowledge that it was worse than she thought, it wasn’t just a crush. Even worse still, she never could do anything about it.
things get worse, they graduate and are the best of gal pals.

Pack yourself a toothbrush dear
Pack yourself a favorite blouse
Take a withdrawal slip
Take all of your savings out
‘Cause if we don’t leave this town
We might never make it out.

There were still visits. Still calls, texts at all hours, weekends spent at home, weekends spent visiting. It was not as much as they’d like, but still, the friends kept in touch as much as they could, or hope. Kara didn’t regret her decision as much as she thought she would, only realizing into their first holiday without her father that she needed the time at home to fix herself and grieve properly that she wouldn’t have gotten if she’d gone away to school.

A new, simple routine developed that kept her sane, until she only felt the gentle tug of sadness on her leg every so often instead of the overbearing weight of sorrow upon her shoulders. She had more dinners with her mom, took her to movies and gets her to hang out with her friends. Kara split her time between studying and working as an assistant for one of the doctor’s offices in town, her sunny demeanor an instant hit with the kids that have to come in for shots. At night, she spent more time prowling, and hoping to help. Her sister, radio silent and upset, felt like she abandoned her, and Kara tried to hide behind her side job.

Lena didn’t regret her choice either. Her father’s alma mater became a safe haven for her, one she never knew she needed, surrounded by walls made of nothing but books and learning, with paths that stretched in millions of directions, that she could pursue to her heart’s content. She works hard and toward the second half of the season, even manages to start a few games for the soccer team. Her father and mother, even Lex make a few appearances at the games, decked out in all manner of red plaid and face paint to support her.

A new picture takes a spot next to her favorite of them when she was a kid, one where they are all dressed in the best cheering attire and she is muddy from a rather tough match. Beside it on her desk in her dorm sits one she tries not to look at too often, of Kara and herself at the beach, Lena on Kara’s shoulders, somehow able to be held up as the waves come down around them.

It’s almost holiday break, the end of the first semester, before Lena tells Kara about Bree, the pretty sophomore art student who kisses a little sloppy and smokes too much weed, but is kind and gentle. Kara takes a few extra moments to respond to the text, asking a million questions and trying to be happy for her friend.

Winter break was spent doing all of their favorite things, spent locked in Lena’s living room watching the snow fall and catch up with each other, spent with Kara dragging Lena into the snow and sledding or to look at lights as she pedals on her bike with the Luthor on her handlebars, relishing in the cold and quiet.
They exchanged gifts before Lena disappeared for a few days with her family to the cabin. She promises to wear the sweater Kara bought her, and she felt like her chest would explode when she gave Kara the new sketchbook and expensive pencils. She accepted the hug eagerly, soaked it up as best she could to hold away for when things were hard.

On New Years’ Eve, Lena looked away when Kara kissed someone else, her gut turning over into knots at the sight.

By second semester, not long after her return to school, Bree was gone, and Kara smiled when she saw the text. Lena was not as upset about it as Kara would have imagined, but she puts on her supportive face, and cheered her up anyway, promising to be there that weekend for junk food and movies.

The first sighting of Superman came just before spring break. Kara couldn’t help but stare at the blurry picture on the front page, the same one carried around the country, even the world. She called her cousin as soon as she saw it. Pacing through her room, she picked up the paper again and shook her head.

“Hey,” he coughed, his voice still tainted with sleep.

“Superman!” Kara shouted, unable to keep her voice down.

“Kara, listen–”

“Keep your powers secret, Kara,” she repeated the boring and tired lines she’d been told her entire life on earth. “Don’t you dare show yourself. Be human, forget about what you are capable of being. Those are what you told me my entire life and now you’re… you’re… you’re in a cape!”

“There were extenuating circumstances,” Clarke murmured, sitting up in his bed and stretching slightly.

“That you had an outfit laying around waiting, just in case of these circumstances?”

“The rules still apply,” he warned her. “You’re just a kid, Kara. I know what I’m doing, and I’ve seen what can happen if I sit back–”

“If you can do this, why can’t I? Why can’t we team up? I can help!” she jumped up and down, her eagerness betraying her own point.

“You have a chance at a normal life, Kara. I had to… I had to save someone. That plane held… Just. Be a kid, okay? You were supposed to protect me, but let me be the big cousin that protects you.”

“Clarke, this is ridiculous. A double standard!”

“There are bad things out there, and I’m not going to subject you to them–”

“Just yourself? So you can get killed and leave me behind.”

“I’ve never heard you yell so much. Not since I took you to that unlimited ice cream bar,” he chuckled.

“This isn’t funny, Clarke. I’m being serious. You just… you went back on everything. And then
I’m not allowed to do anything at all, when I’m just as strong as you, just as fast.”

“T’im twenty-nine, Kara. I know a few more things. And I’ve been investigating some–”

“Kal! This is not about–”

“Don’t think I don’t know about what you’ve been doing at night. Fires, accidents, robberies, I bet you even rescued a kitten from a tree. We agreed that you wouldn’t jeopardize yourself.”

“But you can?”

“Kara,” he sighed and hung his head. Kara slumped onto her bed in much the same position. “You have a family and a life. Please, just be normal, for me? Let me be the one who gives it all up to keep everything turning.”

“What if I don’t want normal?”

“Please. I don’t think Alex and Eliza could handle another loss. I don’t think I could,” he confessed. “We tell you these things to protect you.”

For a long second, Kara was quiet, feels the guilt, knew how cheap it was, that it was his last resort. It worked and she hated it. With a groan, she lays back in the bed and covers her eyes with her arm.

“What was it like?”

“Carrying a plane?”

“Yeah.”

“I smell like fuel and my shoulders hurt. Would not recommend it.”

“I’ll make a note of that.”

In Metropolis, Clark stood and stretched, surveying the new world. He smiled slightly, glad to have won, at least for the moment.

“I know it feels like you’ve stuck out your whole life, but I swear, Kara, there will be a place that makes you feel completely comfortable, and like yourself, and when you find it, you won’t want to lose it for anything. You won’t want to have this responsibility getting in the way.”

“I always thought if I just… did that, came out to the world, I could live, at least as myself, even if it was short. Hiding feels…. wrong. Like I’m lying.”

“You don’t expose yourself just because you’re sick of things. You are safest when you’re hidden.”

“I want to be normal, and not act like it.”

“You’ll find it.”

“And if not, I can help you.”

“We’ll discuss that much, much, much later.”

Part of her knew that her cousin was right, that she wanted to help just to get rid of this secret. Not long after her call, Kara threw the mask away, electing to embrace herself, as Clarke told her to try.
It wasn’t as easy as she thought it should have been, but it was well worth it.

By the time the summer came in, she was yearning for adventure, yearning to be… something, eager for it to end so she could start over in school, in a new city. Of course, summer itself was a gift and an escape.

“Finally!” Kara yelped, hugging her best friend tightly as she appeared at the front door. The dog barked and danced around the reunion. “I’ve been waiting for hours. I’m starving. Did you know that?”

“You’re always starving,” Lena laughed and hugged her back. “Mom wanted to go shopping to welcome me back, and I saw you two weeks ago anyway.”

“But now you’re back for twelve weeks. It’s going to be great.”

Lena shook her head and rubbed the belly of the other, actual, puppy who welcomed her as well.

“Let her in the house before you threaten her with fun,” Eliza chided from somewhere in the house.

Like they were still seniors, Lena made her way into the house that welcomed her eagerly. After a year away, Kara felt different, Lena felt different.

As they ate pizza and relaxed on the couch, Lena caught Kara’s face, how her cheeks changed, how her jaw looked different, how her shoulders were wider, how her legs seemed longer. Kara caught herself gazing at Lena as the movie flashed across her face. Hair up, shorts betraying soccer muscles, hips curving as she bent over to rub Boomer. It was different, they were different. They felt older.

Long after Eliza bids them goodnight, and lets them have the living room to reconnect, long after the movie is nothing but a faint murmur, Lena drapes her legs over Kara’s lap and yawns, lazy and content and almost feeling that perfect kind of feeling she often chased, but never found.

“So you and QB didn’t make it?” she observed.

“We just got really bland, really quick,” Kara shrugged. “It’s only been a few days. I think I’m sad?”

“Sounds like it.”

“It wasn’t a surprise, if that makes sense.”

“Definitely.”

“What about you? You working at LuthorCorp this summer again? Or breaking hearts like the softball team at college?” Kara teased, earning almost a blush, a rarity from a Luthor.

“I’m interning in the lab this year,” Lena smiled. “Dad was so excited when I told him I was going to go engineering for a major. Mom told me I’ll never find a husband, but I told her those were overrated anyway.”

“Which she appreciated.”

“Naturally.”
“I can’t believe you’re graduating next year. You’re going to be the youngest one of us with a degree.”

“Lex beat me by a semester, but I chalk it up to the move.”

Her hands roamed along the sleeping dog’s head just below her on the floor. Lena stretched and Kara adjusted with her, both sinking deeper in the couch.

“Any word from Alex?” It was a delicate subject, but they never shied away from each other before, and they weren’t about to start.

“She got recruited for some government agency. She’s been really busy, but she sounds a bit better. She calls more,” Kara said, happy at the small victory. “We’re... the past few weeks, we’ve been trying.”

“That’s good.”

“It’s something.”

“At least you don’t have to work with your sibling,” Lena yawned. “Lex has been my dad’s shadow lately. It’s crazy. He’s been pushing for alien research.”

“Alien?”

“Superman, to be more precise.”

“Oh?” Kara gulped and tensed.

“A creature... who looks like us, blends in, but can shoot lasers out of his eyes, fly at the speed of sound, freeze things with his breath, lift entire jumbo jets, survive buildings crumbling...” Kara found herself grinning at the list. “Take being shot, and for all we know, has no natural weakness. It’s a terrifying entity.”

“You think Superman is... could be... bad?” she asked, adjusting her glasses and sitting up straighter.

“I think he’s not human, and as good as he seems now, who is to say that he won’t decide to level a city tomorrow or next week,” Lena reasoned. “Lex just wants a contingency plan, a safeguard.”

“I don’t know, he seems to stand for hope, and righteousness, and justice. That has to be good, right?”

“I agree. It’s nice to have someone to help someone getting mugged, or a crashing plane, but I didn’t vote, did you? No one entrusted him to enact our justice.”

“Maybe he’s just trying to help.”

“He’s going to make my brother go crazy. He’s obsessed with his powers,” Lena yawned again and rolled over. “And Dad’s obsessed with fat government contracts for defense. They’re flying to DC every other day it seems like.”

Kara made a note to call Clarke as soon as she could. She furrowed and wondered what Lena would think of her, a question she never thought to ask herself, seeing as Lena had never been anything but madly supportive.

“What about aliens though? Think he’s the only one?”
“Weird things have happened forever in human history. I mean, look at that thing Superman fought a few months ago, and the things Batman catches. There has to be more. The universe is too huge to be just us.”

“That’d be kind of cool though.”

“Dangerous, but so much information. It’d be interesting.”

“So you like Superman.”

“I’d like to be able to fly,” Lena smiled and closed her eyes, the long day finally catch up with her. “That must feel…”

“Incredible,” Kara supplied, making them as cozy as possible.

While Lena dozed, the alien twisted her words around in her head and wondered if it would be possible for the girl she told all of her secrets to, to hate her and think she was a monster. It made her bones hurt at the very notion.

High atop the water tower, the two friends look out at the ocean, at the world, at the blinking lights and moving beams of the world happening below, and with little regard for their eyes at all.

Lena made sure not to even bring her flask; she wanted to be sober for it. She wanted to be the person Kara thought she could be. And so she didn’t drink and she sighed and felt her stomach flip as she attempted to build some kind of courage.

“This is my favorite night of the year,” Kara finally whispered. “You and me, and I just feel… I feel… I feel very normal.”

“Me too.”

“Maybe this year will be a good one,” she reasoned, as much for Lena as it was a wish for herself.

“Maybe,” Lena nodded, inching closer.

“Maybe things will work out.”

“Maybe.”

“Maybe we’re allowed to–”

Before she could finish the thought, lips touched her own, and Kara didn’t care about anything else in the world, let the meteor crash down and wipe out the entire concept of civilization, let the floods come, let it all just go to heck, and none of it would matter.

Lena didn’t stop when she pulled away to catch her breath. She kissed her harder just a second later.

“Maybe,” Lena nodded with a smile before Kara kissed her back.

Even though they lived in the same city, real life made them busier than ever. Kara embraced her new chance at life, her new mission, and she had a small job and classes. She rode with the chance...
she had, and took every opportunity to do anything new.

Being busy helped distract her from the last night back home, the annual drink atop the water tower. The night Kara kissed Lena so hard she thought she’d rip the entire tower down herself. Her friend patted her cheek after and smiled, whispering the word perfect before she laughed and laid back, to look at the stars.

Busy meant accepting every blind date she could find in hopes of not ruining the one relationship in her life that was stable and good and honest. Lena was Lena, was so far out of reach, was too… too important to lose over something as trivial as a crush.

Busy meant casually avoiding Lena, which proved easy, since she seemed set on avoiding Kara just as much.

It was the reason the news was so surprising, came from out of nowhere. Eliza casually mentioned what a shame it was that Lillian would come down with such an aggressive cancer, and Kara finds herself agreeing with half an ear as she juggles a bag of groceries up the steps, until the words make sense, and she pauses.

Not even the donation Lionel made to Tora and Eliza’s research could rush it, could make it arrive quicker. Kara sits at her desk as if she’d been sucker punched, and calls Lena as soon as she hangs up with her mother.

When no answer comes, she decides these are desperate times. Sneaking into a back alley, Kara took off and searched for a familiar smell, a familiar heartbeat, a familiar voice. It wasn’t until she was over their home, that she caught wind of Lena Luthor once again.

Suddenly, she found herself standing on a familiar balcony, staring at a familiar sight just beyond the window. Lena Luthor with a book in her lap. Lena Luthor, staring at the page and not reading a single word. Kara didn’t realize she was holding her breath until it came out in a fog of ice. Once, twice, by the fourth time Lena picked up her phone, Kara was curious. She watched her scroll and hover over her own name before shaking her head and throwing the phone on the coffee table. It felt like a semi right to the chest.

Kara took a step, raised her hand to knock but stopped, unable to really do it, unsure as to why. Right there sat the one person who made her feel human, normal. It was a very violent thing to confront, for anyone.

Just inside the familiar room, the one she spent the past few years getting to know, making herself at home in it, it felt foreign, unwelcoming. They were fast friends, things just clicked. Now, she couldn’t find the proper station.

There, just inside, there sat Lena, the girl who flirted with her the first time she met her, who held her hand when she broke up with her first boyfriend, who threatened to beat up one of Jack’s friends if he didn’t watch his mouth. There, just inside, book in her lap and ignored, sat the girl who was a grouch in the mornings, passionate about everything, smart as hell, and just plain quiet, when the world was so very, very loud.

And Kara ruined it with a stupid kiss.

Her cousin was a hero, who put bad guys in jail and saved busloads of kids. Kara could knock on her friends door when she was in need. That was the talk she gave herself as she squared her shoulders and knocked.
Green eyes snapped to her own, and Kara thought about her mother’s earrings back on Krypton. At first worry, then surprise, then almost resolve appears on Lena’s face as she finally sets down the book and opens the door quietly.

Kara smiled at the old high school hoodie she wore for comfort, at the Kingsmont sweats she wore to feel safe.

“How did you get here?”

“My mom told me about your mom,” Kara offered, fidgeting with her hands before she gave up and decided to be a hero. She took the few steps and wrapped Lena in a hug.

The moment it happened, Lena tensed before melting into Kara’s chest. If, in the history of the world, they offered awards for hugs, for comfort, Lena would bribe every judge to give the award to the girl that squeezed her just enough to make her feel real.

“I’m so sorry, Lee,” she whispered.

“I didn’t have time to call… It just…”

“Three months you’ve been doing this, since before Christmas.” Kara hadn’t meant it to be so accusatory, but she was hurt and not the perfect hero just yet. “You could have said something.”

“How? When? Your dad died, and your sister is barely around. You just went off to school and were so damn happy… I. I could have a not perfect little while so you could have perfection a little longer.”

“You’re frustrating, you know that?”

“I’ve heard that a few times.”

Kara finally decided she could let go after a few more minutes, though Lena suddenly clung to her tighter, hiding her head in Kara’s neck, hiding completely so she couldn’t be heard. Her hands were claws, digging into the muscle there, clinging as deep as they could. She inhaled that smell, that Kara smell, that honey and sunlight and dew and dirt and stars that slumbered in her shirt and skin. It was a salve for the wounds of the past few months.

“I’m so sorry,” Kara whispered again, cradling Lena’s head to her, resting her cheek on the top of her head. “It’s going to be okay.”

“She’s real sick, Kara.”

“Yeah.”

Neither moved.

“Dad is flying all over the world… but, I don’t think there’s a cure.”

“Yeah.”

“She’s the person I want to be when I grow up,” Lena confessed. “Everyone thinks it’s my dad, just because I like what our family does. But Mom… she’s. She picked up an ugly little kid and decided to love her. She made people with money give it away to people who needed it, and she smirked and wore heels and no one knew she did it.”

“Yeah.”
“She can’t go. I need her to show me so many things.”

“Yeah.”

“Stop saying that,” Lena growled, pushing against Kara’s chest, her anger finally coming. Kara didn’t budge, just held her tighter. “Stop!”

“It’s going to be okay. It’s going to be terrible for a while. But you will survive. I know it. You’re the strongest person I’ve ever met.”

There, with the door open and the not quite spring air breezing through, they stood and Lena did her best not to cry. Instead she just stood there and tried to get her brain to catch up with the world. Eyes wide and very tiny, she hid.

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She cried once. No one saw it, but Lena allowed herself that. Tears setting her cheeks, blotches underneath, eyes red and throat raw, she stared at herself in the mirror, putting the image of weakness to memory before running the water and letting the cold splash wash it all away.

Head held high, she clasped her mother’s pearls around her neck and smoothed the slender black dress across her hips. Her skin looked pale against the dark color.

In the end, she was almost grateful it happened so quickly. Her mother suffered long enough, and Lena couldn’t stand another day. But her mother kissed her cheeks and told her how special and good and important she was, how Lena was the best decision of her life, how she was grateful the world brought them together, how she was certain her daughter would do big things, how she should promise to fall in love every day, and that a smile was the best armor. In the last few weeks, Lillian imparted everything she could upon Lena, attempting to make up for missing so much. It was a kind of apology, the attention and advice and promises she made Lena swear to adhere. It was exhausting.

Every night that Lena listened to her mother breath in her sleep, that she’d sneak a few minutes and curl against her side and breathe in the perfume and soap, she was caught praying for two distinct and vastly different things. Either take her quick and stop the suffering, or heal her now and give her back. Lena knew which one was coming. She didn’t sleep for weeks.

The house filled with people, and even more than every other time, she hated it. The conversations were worse, now. The drinking was lonelier. The world felt empty with memories of her mother lurking around every corner. Lena half waited for her to pop out and scold a waiter with a crooked tie before fixing it for him and making him blush.

“That was a really nice speech.” Kara offered as Lena finally found her gazing at pictures, sipping her wine gently. She smiled warmly and Lena felt a heavy thud of a heart in her chest. “Eulogy, I mean. You know. At the… It was nice.”

“Thank you for coming. I thought you would miss exams or something.”

“I took them early.”

“Seems we’re even in the funeral department,” Lena sighed, looking around at the room.

“Yeah, isn’t that a shame?”

“It is,” she nodded. “Let’s not do this again.”
Somewhere upstairs, her father locked himself in a room and refused to leave. He would be pacing, she knew. He would be feral, and she didn’t know what to do to help him. Across the room, her brother emptied another scotch glass, and she didn’t know how to help him either. Lena could barely help herself, and yet she felt the weight of her blood to help them, to become the matriarch.

“

“You carry yourself like her, you know?” Kara observed. “Shoulders back, chin up. The first time I saw Lillian, she had this natural grace that me… well.. You know me…” she chuckled and earned a small smile from her friend. “I envied it. And then I saw you walk in, and it was… beauty and grace and just like your mother.”

“Thank you,” Lena sighed and swallowed a lump. It was exactly what she wanted to hear, but sometimes that is the worst kind of pain one can inflict upon themselves.

Before Kara could try something else, a voice rang out, attached to the lanky body that stood atop the baby grand in the corner. She felt Lena tense and flinch beside her, knowing full well it was nothing good to come.

“Thank you all for coming,” he lifts his overfilled tumbler of carmel brown liquid that sloshed slightly until he slurped and hissed. “I can think of no better way for you to honor my mother than by enjoying one more party thrown by the Luthors.” His smile was sardonic, angry and wrathful and pained. “Always good for a party, huh?” he asked no one in particular. “My mother was the kindest, best person, and you all just sucked her dry, took what you could, were nowhere to be seen when tumors gnawed on her organs.”

“Lex,” Lena moved through the crowd and tried to reach him. “Lex!”

Obediently, without an invitation, Kara followed.

“And my sister. My mom wanted a piece of living proof of her superhuman good will,” he sneered. “Like a shelter cat, we picked one up. And for what? For her to be killed? Do you know what killed her?” he accused the air, drinking another large gulp. “Superman. The aliens. Their alien rocks. Kryptonite exposure at the hands of my dear, old, dad’s research.”

“Lex. Come down.”

“Isn’t that great, Sis?” he shook his head and hopped down onto the bench. “Government contracts to protect us from Superman, researching weapons, it killed our mother. The first casualty of that demon from space.”

“Please, Lex, let’s go upstairs and talk.”

“I didn’t mean that shelter stuff,” he smiled, a genuine, good, smile before patting her cheek and leaning his forehead against her own. “The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb. He took our mother, Lena. I’m going to kill him.”

“Let’s get some food, okay?” she begged, fake smile and all. “I’m sorry. The day,” she gestured toward the house guests who politely pretended to ignore it.

“Nonsense. I’m fine,” he smiled brightly. “Never been better, actually.” With a flourish, he sat at the piano and ran his hands along it. “What do you say we have ourselves a real party?”

The noise that came was an off beat medley of whatever Lex could remember from his distant education in the instrument. When no one moved, he played harder and louder before slamming his fists down in a loud bang. He picked up his glass and threw it across the room, flipped the bench against the wall.
Instinctively, Kara put herself in front of Lena, not completely, but enough to help if she had to, though she didn’t know what that might mean.

“The blood of the covenant is thicker than the water of the womb,” he repeated, jamming his finger in the air. “Get the fuck out of my house!” Lex yelled, tossing his head back and bellowing it at the ceiling.

“Mom would be embarrassed by you right now,” Lena sneered as she watched her brother. “I hope you’re proud of yourself.”

“I’m going to kill him, Lena,” he repeated, laughing and grabbing the decanter.

Kara stood beside her friend as the crowds cleared out. Her brother sat in the chair in the study beside the almost broken piano, as if it were a regular day, and he was simply pondering life and literature in front of the fire.

The only other soul left, once the door shut, was the patriarch, standing in the doorway with his hands behind his back, face grim and eyes weighed down by bags.

“Lena, will you excuse your brother and I?” he asked politely. “Kara, thank you for coming. I apologize for this outburst.”

“Nothing to apologize for, Mr. Luthor,” Kara nodded. “I’m very sorry for your lost. Your wife was very kind to me.” He nodded curtly as she walked by toward the stairs.

“I’m sorry, Daddy,” Lena whispered, pausing beside him, ducking her head. He tilted her chin up and gave her a small smile.

“Your mother always said you would be one of her brightest, lasting legacies. Remember that.”

Kara watched him kiss his daughter’s forehead before she hugged him tightly, and pulled herself away just as quick.

By the time they made it to the top of the steps, the yelling began, and Lena shook her head, stomping practically toward her room, tossing her heels in the hall as she went, as they were not conducive to how she was feeling.

Kara worked in double time to keep up with the ball of rage.

“Fucking idiot,” she flared. “He thinks… It’s. It’s all about him! He’s the one hurting! I had to do all of it. I planned it all for them because that is what we do. We keep going. I didn’t get to… feel! I had to pick out the fucking casket and hor d’oeuvres.”

Kara didn’t have time to add anything, just tried to stay out of her way. She let her rant for as long as possible, wondering to herself if she were ever going tire herself out. Her brain worked in overtime to find a solution. Lena knew how to help Kara. Kara had no idea how to calm this ball of rage and grief, at least she couldn’t come up with one quick enough, until she realized she didn’t have to.

“Let’s go,” Kara decided, stopping her mid sentence in some language Kara was not too certain about its origins.

“What?”

“Let’s go,” she repeated with a smile, walking toward the door. “Let’s just go.”
“We can’t– What are you talking about?”

Hands on her hips, jaw tight and pointed, Kara knew she would have fallen in love with her if she wasn’t the most important person in her life.

“Shut up, Luthor, and let’s go,” she laughed, opening the door to the balcony.

The summer was coming, the spring was raging, and despite the fact that it was the day of a sad funeral, the sun was shining and happy to do so. Kara kicked off her heels as well and tilted her face like a flower towards the brightness of the afternoon.

“Unless you’re scared.”

“I’m not afraid,” Lena challenged, following quickly.

Kara climbed up on the railing and stood there for a moment, hands on her hips and confident. She knew how to tame a Luthor; misdirection.

“You wanted to know how I get in here, right?”

In an instant, she dropped, hands grabbing the marble before slipping off to the next. Lena yelped and sprinted toward the edge, leaning over to find a cheesy grinned girl standing in the same position as a minute ago, but on the ground.

“Come on, Lena. We’re making a break for it.”

From atop her little world, Lena looked over the edge and took a deep breath, willing to follow that voice farther than she was willing to admit.

“If I break my neck, you’ll be in trouble, Danvers,” she called as she saddled the railing, carefully working her footing to try to figure out how this kept happening.

“I can see your underwear,” Kara giggled.

“Not helping,” she huffed, moving slowly. “I don’t habitually trespass.”

“It’s only trespassing if it’s unwanted.”

“Clever thing you are.”

It takes a little longer, but Lena makes it down, and Kara is beyond impressed. It was easy when all she had to do was hover. She could barely imagine it as a human.

“Enjoy the view?”

“No… I mean… I was kidding,” Kara’s ears burned bright as she adjusted her glasses and looked away.

“Well, now what?” she asked, brushing clean her hands and smoothing her dress, adjusting her pearls.

Even after scaling a house, she was a Luthor, and it was endearing.

Barefoot and all, they start walking, out the backside of the property, through a large, ten foot hole in the wall that never got fixed. They stole bikes outside of a playground, and carelessly wove down hills toward the beach, each racing and veering as best they could.
They stole apples from the stand on the corner. They stole sandwiches from the deli. They stole a bottle of wine from a table at a restaurant as they zoomed by on their bikes, the baskets full of contraband and two women who were too old for pegs and such, in black dressed and mourning torn stockings. Kara dropped the money from her pocket at each location, apologizing as Lena rolled away with a laugh that was as carefree as she could have remembered.

By the time they made it to the sea, they were exhausted and the sun began to set. They tossed their new bikes down and loaded up their arms before finding a spot to enjoy the spoils of their heists.

Gone was the earlier morning, gone was Lex, gone was the funeral, gone was her father, gone was the idea of evil aliens and hunting them. Both ran from the world.

“Did you see that guy’s face when I swiped this bottle?” Lena laughed, popping the cork after tugging it loose with her teeth.

“You are a master thief, Lena Luthor.”

“That was… so much fun,” she decided, laughing as the sunglasses in the shape of hearts she stole from the drugstore fell back onto her face from her hair with the pop of the cork. “I wouldn’t have thought you had it in you, girl scout.”


“What do you mean?”

“When my dad… you helped. Not much, but more than anything else. I know this won’t fix anything–”

“For a minute, I forgot,” Lena smiled sadly. More and more those were her go-to smiles, and it broke Kara’s heart. “I had a thought, that I couldn’t wait to tell my mom about this afternoon, how she’d get a kick out of it.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t–”

“No, no. It’s… reality now.”


“My kind of place,” she smiled, adjusting her sunglasses like a movie star before drinking the wine straight from the bottle. “We won’t fit in well. We’re far too imperfect, far too often.”

“We’ll fake it.”

They watched the sunset and created an entire world full of perfect moments. Milk that never expired. Pizza that never burned. Technology that never failed. Parents who never died. Nights that never ended. Days that could be paused and stretched apart like the cotton candy clouds they watched over the waves.

Lena pulled her knees up and rested her chin on it while Kara stretched out, the wind rustling her sandy blond curls. Lena sighed and watched the night appear on her face.

“Let’s run, Kara,” she whispered, earning a golly kind of smile. “I mean it. Let’s just go. I have some money saved up, get on my plane, wake up in Argentina, or Dubai, or Kenya, or Nepal. Let’s just go.”
It was an earnest request, an honest wish, and Kara yearned to say yes, to hop up and take her up on the offer. It would be so simple to escape with Lena, keep running whenever someone caught a whiff of them.

“Your dad needs you. My mom… Boomer.”

“Bring Boomer, of course.”

“Of course,” Kara laughed and laid back in the sand.

“I mean it, Kara. Think about it. We don’t need it, all this, all them. You can walk dogs in Paris, and I’ll work in a café.”

“Can I scoop gelato in Venice?” Kara played along.

“I’ll be one of those boat rower people, who wears those hats and sings,” she offered, drinking again.

“In London, you can be a star on the stage, Ophelia and Cleopatra and whatever else up and coming playwrights decide you’d be perfect for.”

“And you can work in a florist, and bring home fresh flowers every day.”

“My favorite would be Buenos Aires,” Kara whispered, enjoying the cool sand on her warm skin. “You’d be a poet. Write poems on the walls and roof, fill up the world with poems. Steal my hand and write poems on it when we’re out having coffee.”

“And you’d work in a daycare, and come home exhausted from the kids climbing on you, and with flowers knit like a crown in your hair.”

“Yeah, let’s do that,” Kara laughed.

“I’m being serious, Kara,” Lena muttered, her voice quite stern. She earned a smile and deep breath from the girl who looked as if she really was dreaming right there in the sand.

Instead of answering, Kara squinted and reached up, stealing the sunglasses and slipping them on herself.

“We can’t, Lena.”

“Why can’t we? We just did. Jumped the wall, sprinted like the dogs were on us, stole some bikes. It’s that simple sometimes.”

“You know we can’t,” Kara whispered, running her hand along Lena’s forearm. “I’d give my right arm to have the ability to leave everyone, my life, and do that. You have to know that.”

Once more, Lena looked out at the ocean, at the gentle waves, at the sun and the colors that came as the night welcomed itself again with stars and a great display. She inhaled the smell and held her breath, closing her eyes, willing herself to be the person who could run, who could just go, take the easy way out of her future. A tear slid down her cheek and she let it hang there before it fell to her knee.

“Everything’s going to be fine, Lee. I swear.”

Lena smiled despite it all and slid beside her friend, lying against her side, stealing her warmth and comfort. She wrapped her arm around Kara’s ribs and rested her forehead against her cheek.
“I have a feeling, that if we don’t leave now, tonight, this minute,” Lena shook her head. “We’ll never escape it all. It’s just going to get harder.”

“Never escape?”

“If we were really brave, we’d do it.”

“Yeah,” Kara swallowed, eyes open as she stared hard at the sky. For reasons unbeknownst to her, she felt a tear fall down her temple, into her hair, gone as quick as it came.

“Thank you, for everything.”

“You don’t have to thank me for anything.”

“I really do,” Lena sighed and closed her eyes tightly.
Chapter Summary

They grow up and apart, Lena becomes a Luthor, Kara becomes Supergirl and they're hopeless, angsty gays

Chapter Notes

Hit me with prompts and read more at coeurdastronaute.tumblr.com

When you know I don’t have nowhere else to go
Does it feel good to leave me on my own?

Previously on Giant

Though it was summer, too much happened after the funeral. Lena stayed at her apartment in the city for the summer. Work kept her busy, preparing for grad school kept her exhausted, keeping an eye on her father and brother kept her borderline crazy. Long ago, her duty washed away any artifact of herself, and of that she was damn near certain.

It wasn’t anyone’s fault, but if they had to place blame, it was time and distance and life. In moments of frustration, when Kara would think about her friend, she second-guessed every step taken since that moment on the beach when they could have ran away. And as summer slipped into fall, and the year passed as it was known to do, with little regard for anyone arguing against it, Kara found herself far away from Lena, seeing her more in newspapers than in real life, getting voicemail more often than not.

Superman grew in popularity, grew in responsibilities, and reading the newspapers and seeing the toll it took on her cousin, just affirmed Kara’s mission to be normal, to have a proper, non-alien life.

There were a few lunches after school started again after the holidays. A few nights of drinks. A hang out one weekend, but other than that, everything stopped, and neither Kara nor Lena knew how or why or when to save it. Instead, they grasped at straws.

Lena felt herself getting pulled deeper into research in order to keep up with her brother, to counteract anything he came up with or tried. He worried her sick, kept her up at night with this sick feeling that her father wouldn’t listen to, despite her protests.

After the funeral, Lena pulled away. Gone was this seeming bright spot in their universe, gone was the woman who brought balance to her and kept the family rooted. She only made it into one semester of grad school before she found herself moving to Metropolis, tugging the friends even farther apart.

Eventually, a month turns into missed calls and texts, turns into just growing up and growing apart.
Every single August twentieth, without fail, no matter where they were or what was happening, they ended up on the top of the water tower back in Midvale, waiting for each other.

“I didn’t think you’d come,’’ Kara smiled as Lena crawled up the ladder behind her, her heels kicked down at the bottom in favor of bare feet and summer. She helped the youngest Luthor take her seat.

“This night has been the only thing I’ve looked forward to in months,” Lena confessed as Kara pulled her into a tight hug.

“I feel like I haven’t seen you in decades.”

“I saw you… New Years. And your graduation.”

“I guess this is what becoming an adult is like,’’ Kara sighed. “How’s Metropolis?’’

“It’s… tall. Everything is so big,” she realized. “It’s a lot of trying to do what my mom did, and also what my dad does. I don’t know. I like my little office where I get to build things.”

“How’s things going with Lex and Lionel? I’ve seen… um…” Kara fiddled with the railing. “I saw the quotes in the paper… about Superman, and weapons.”

“It’s like babysitting toddlers. But making money on people’s fears is working.”

“Did you… um. What Lex said, at the funeral? Kryptonite?’’

“I was doing some digging into it. I think… I don’t think it’s harmful to humans, but it could accelerate already malignant cells. And Dad was doing research on it in his office at home. I don’t want to think about it, honestly. She had it in her, and something happened to accelerate it. It’s that simple. She’s gone. Nothing changes that.”

“How are you?” Kara asked in a whisper.

The science and business part was easy to talk about, thinking about anything else was difficult and painful. But Kara smiled and the sun was out and Lena remembered the feeling of sand and simpler times. She became a different person near Kara, someone she wasn’t quite sure existed anymore any other time.

“I’m alright. Good as can be. How have you been?”

It was easy to trigger a ramble, and just as it started, Lena breathed a sigh of relief, welcoming it yet again, something true and honest and adorable. The only good thing about being apart, about distancing herself was the small, tiny hope that perhaps she’d be a little less in love with her best friend when she saw her again. Lena found herself always disappointed with that fact. Because she would see Kara, and listen to the flowers in her voice, and be reminded of goodness. Oblivious to it at all, Kara didn’t seem to notice the glances or sad smiles Lena had as she reminded herself of these things.

And as she talked about her sister, Kara’s hands would wave around, excited that they lived in the same place now. And when she talked about her new apartment and how nervous she was for her job, Lena promised it would be okay, and she would be magnificent.

The night rolled on, and the city looked exactly the same as they could remember from every other year. Five other nights they’d done this exact thing, looked at the exact view, were mesmerized by its exact feeling.
Lena wasn’t afraid of her answers for Kara. She might be the only person she didn’t have to be guarded from or against.

“I don’t know. I like Superman,” Kara shrugged. “Kind of nice to think of someone just trying to help people.”

“I see both sides,” Lena agreed. “But Lex has a point. What stops him from… being human? From losing control and leveling Metropolis or DC. If he’s human enough to understand justice, isn’t he human enough to be corrupted?”

“I… Well. It. He wouldn’t.”

“Can you be certain?” Kara remembered the night she beat someone raw, put him in a coma for three days, how she didn’t want to stop, how she couldn’t make herself.

“Yes,” she decided with a nod, steeling herself. “That’s part of why he’s so important. He’s the thing we get to believe in.”

“If only things were that simple.”

“They can be.”

“The last time things were simple, we were sitting on a beach and you wouldn’t run away with me. Since then, we’ve had aliens and weapons and space rocks and near disasters.”

“Were you serious that night?” Kara asked, leaning her cheek on her elbow that hung over the rail. She stared at the profile of her friend who clenched her jaw and flexed it, the telltale sign she was upset and swallowing it.

“You know I was.” It came out through gritted teeth and with a sigh.

The look was hard and honest, too honest for Kara. To help herself, she retreated to the safest form of self-denial.

“So, I saw those pictures of you and that girl,” she needled, chuckling as she nudged her friend’s shoulder with her own. “What’s her name again?”

“Veronica?”

“She looks like a model.”

“She’s… okay,” Lena shrugged with a coy grin. “We’ve had dinner a few times. You know how the tabloids read into anything.”

“I can’t imagine dating a Luthor would ever be easy.”

“Yeah,” Lena remembered. “I wouldn’t wish it on my worst enemy.”

“Your brother’s engagement got called off. Was it because of that?”

“Of what?”

“It being hard, to be in love with a Luthor.”

“My mom once said that being in love with a Luthor was like being in love with a wildfire. Beautiful and keeps you warm, gives you life and helps keep the scary things out, but if you leave
it unattended it’ll burn the world down. I guess we’re prone to being high maintenance.”

“I don’t know. If I was lucky enough to love a Luthor, it’d probably feel pretty good, to be loved
by something capable of such things. Like Superman, the power for destruction comes from the
same reserve as the power to love, you just have to pick which one you want to live by.”

“That would explain why my dad is still grieving.”

“He loved so hard it filled him up.”

“That’s a nice thought,” Lena smiled and leaned her head on her friend’s shoulder.

In the distance, the waves were crashing. Kara heard them before she focused on Lena’s breathing
and the grip her friend had on her arm.

“I told you.”

“Told me what?” Kara sighed, resting her cheek on her friend’s hair. She turned her head and dug
her nose into the crown.

“It’s too late. We should have left while we had the chance.”

“We can still go. Book a flight tonight. I’ve been enamored with Morocco lately.”

“It’s too late,” Lena simply repeated and held her bicep harder. “My brother and father need me too
much, and you are about to start your life. We missed our shot.”

“I don’t know about that.”

“I do.”

“No Morocco with me?”

“I’d leave right now if it was an option,” Lena smiled as lips kissed her head and she felt Kara take
a huge breath. “Every year we come up here, I feel a little farther away from… I don’t know
what… from just something. Like… life is pulling me like a riptide away from shore, and the more
I struggle, the worse it gets.”

“I’m a fantastic swimmer,” Kara whispered, earning a chuckle. “I get it though. I can kick and
struggle and try to figure it out, but its never simple. For me it’s like a funhouse. Where I open
every door hoping that what I’m looking for is on the other side, and the second before I swing it
open, I have all of this confidence, and then I open it and I’m just… more confused.”

“About what?”

“Life… I don’t know. I guess if I knew that’d help.”

“You were crafted for great things. I knew it the moment I met you.”

“Yeah?”

“Without a doubt.”

“I thought that you were by far the coolest thing to ever exist,” Kara confessed. “Even in that
moment, I knew you’d be important. Not just to me. But to the world.”
Far out, the sun came up behind them, the sky turned that faint kind of grey. Lena’s heart did flips and she gave up her struggle against the riptide that was her last name and duty.

“Morocco you said?”

The arrest came just after a rather lonesome holiday. Christmas spent alone in the house on the edge of Metropolis while her brother stomped around and her father retracted more within to himself, Lena was grateful to be back at work, until the arrest came.

Splashed across the news, pictures of the billionaire’s face with the title of War Profiteer smeared across it. The lawyers worked around the clock to get it dismissed, but the idea of Lionel the terrorist, creating weapons of mass destruction, it was too big. The videos were of him being led out in handcuffs, screaming against the government, against Superman, his own innocence as to how that bomb in Central Station was designed to save them all.

Hundreds of people died. Chaos reigned and more was promised. Hatred reared its head with the voice of Lionel Luthor elevating it to national discourse. The greatest threat to the world wasn’t itself, but aliens. And Lena watched it all happen, unable to form a word.

Kara tried to call, but the voicemail was full. She sent emails and texts, but got no answer. It was to be expected. Every day, she looked at the paper at the newsstand and saw Lena’s face, strong and resigned, behind her father in the orange jumpsuit.

It was fast, the fall of LuthorCorp. Even before the verdict was announced, the stocks started to plummet. When he was cast guilty and thrown in prison, Kara watched the announcement on the news, where Lex and Lena stood up and he said he was taking over the business, that his father was wrongly persecuted for trying to help the public.

That very same night, Kara decided she couldn’t wait any longer. It’d been months between using her powers, but she flew and strained to find Lena in the chaos of the world. It came as a surprise to find her back at the home in Midvale, but still, Kara smiled as she touched down on the familiar balcony.

The rest of the house was silent, but a familiar playlist echoed through the speakers, one that Kara always mocked the pristine, palaced princess for having, that no one else would ever know about, the oldest, most classic punk rock, the good stuff, as Lena had explained though Kara never appreciated it, it blared and for a second, Kara thought about the teenage girl who danced around to a similar song, with a beer in her hand and a soccer trophy in the other senior year.

She looked more relaxed than the girl on the television. Gone were the pearls and the tight dress, the perfect make up and the tight pony tail. Back again was sweatpants that had seen better days and an old college work out shirt with the name Luthor still there, despite fading from being washed so often.

This was her Lena, the Lena she knew and understood. So often, she found herself looking at her friend’s picture and seeing those dead, cold eyes, with nothing but malice behind them. So often, she was unsure if they were directed at her or the world or both.

It felt as if they grew up quickly and were being pulled apart, and Kara didn’t know how to stop it,
and then she would see Lena, and it was as if the world made sense, and that feeling was made up in her own head.

“I half-expected you to show up,” she muttered without looking up from her packing. “Like my own personal Superman, you just swoop in and out when you think I need saving. But I don’t, Kara.”

“I didn’t… I wasn’t… You… I was worried, Lee. You haven’t called, or emailed.”

Kara barely made it inside the room, deciding to stay close to the door if need be, suddenly feeling very out of place.

“I’ve been a little busy. I should have asked the judge for a recess, you know, so I could text my friend. Because nothing else important was happening.”

“I know, but… It can’t be easy. I know you weren’t–”

“Don’t try to make me feel better. That’s why I haven’t called,” Lena yelled, tossing whatever she was packing on the ground. “I don’t deserve to feel better. Not for what my family did.”

“You’re not your family.”


“Lena…”

“Vernon Hart, fifty three, just welcomed his first granddaughter. Dead. Nina Torres, seventeen, accepted to Kingsmont for the fall. Dead.”

“Lena,” Kara stood a little firmer, moving to take the notebook away from her, the one filled with tiny notes and tiny words that were her reckoning. “Please.”

“Here’s some a little closer to home. Harold “Oikbar” Peters, crashed here from Saxon 5 thirty years ago. Spent his life caring for homeless in the sewers,” Lena shrugged, not stopping. “Or Taulai, the district representative from Southside who was the first elected alien official. Or Dolov from Arawak, who you might know better as Thomas McKirk, the cop who saved a family of four from a mugging last summer.”

“Lena, you can’t–”

“I can’t what, Kara?” she screamed, throwing the notebook until it exploded against a wall. “I know their names. I count them every day, all day. I repeat them like the Rosary. It takes me eight minutes and seventeen seconds to say them all. And then I start over again.”

“You can’t do this to yourself!” Kara yelled back. “You can’t push me away, and you can’t quit.”

“I should have done more.”

“You’re not your family.”

“My father took away people’s mothers and sons and grandpas and I’m just supposed to be okay? I’m not supposed to be okay. I’m supposed to be this fucked up. Do you not get it?”

“You’re not–”
“No, I mean it. Do you not get it? Your dad died, so you’re an expert on pain? I wish my father was dead. I wish I had killed him. Do you know I thought about it? Three months ago, after a meeting.” Kara swallowed and watched the flames dance across Lena’s face and eyes. “It was late, I knew something was happening. In my gut I knew it was bad. I just knew. And I remembered holding this pair of scissors from his desk. Those old, old sharp kind. The heavy kind,” she held up her hand as if they were phantom there. “And I said to myself, ‘Do it. Just do it.’ And I wish to God I had.”

“Lena…” Kara cocked her head and knitted her brow. The amount of pity to which she looked at the Luthor was enough to stun the harshest critic. Lena felt the shame rise up like bile in her chest and cheeks and throat. “I know what it’s like to lose everything, to lose your entire world and to always feel like… like… you just don’t fit—”

“This isn’t some damn after school special, Kara,” Lena drank the last bit of Vodka from her glass and threw the empty glass against the wall. “My father wanted to kill Superman. My father lost his mind. My brother is losing his. And I lost everything.”

“Not me.”

The music finally stopped and Lena took a deep breath before running her hand over her forehead. The days caught up with her, the feeling of loss, of not knowing who her father became until she was suddenly the last one standing in their family home, packing up the remaining bits before it was potentially sold. It fell on her, and she lost both of her parents, and she didn’t know why or how or when she became this person who didn’t deserve saving.

“You’re always the one that has to come help me. I don’t need help!” she yelled.

“I know, but I thought you might need a friend anyway.”

“SuperKara, here to cheer me up once again,” Lena sighed and took a seat on the couch. The glare she gave her friend was challenging, begging her to tell her the truth. She was exhausted and weak. “Just go, please. I can’t… don’t attach yourself to me. I mean it. It’s dangerous.”

“You’re a full-time job, Luthor,” Kara smiled. “So, do you want to drink too much and dance around to this terrible music, or are you too fancy and cultured now?” She ignored her friend’s words because that was all they were. “I don’t scare easy. I’m not going anywhere, Lee.”

For too long, Lena stared at Kara from under a heavy, gloomy brow. Too much concentration went into this. She wanted to yell and kick and tell her to leave and never look back, but it was impossible and she was weak.

“Please go.”

“You’re no match for me, and I like that. Makes me feel powerful,” Kara observed. “Scotch it is.”

“Please, Kara.”

“Shut up,” she groaned and picked up one of the half empty bottles from an already packed box. “You don’t scare me.”

“That’s one of the reasons.”

The evening, they passed it commiserating and complaining, Lena upset and reeling against her father, against what her life would become, against what a mistake it all was. Kara listened, feeding her alcohol and promising it couldn’t get worse. And Lena danced and yelled, they bowled with old
vases in the hall, they slid down the bannisters and skidded around on socks and fancy floors.

Eventually, the liquor caught up and Lena fell asleep on the mattress they dragged into the living room. Kara took great pride in at least helping her friend for the night, a small drop in a large bucket of what her future held as a Luthor.

By the time the first bit of sunlight slipped through the windows, just above the trees, Lena woke with a throbbing headache and a blonde curled against her side.

“Two more hours,” Kara begged, rolling over.

For too long Lena laid there in her empty home and let the foggy thoughts of her father come back to reality. She knew what was coming and what she had to do. Though she half thought Kara would come by because of her uncanny ability to just know when Lena needed her, she full prayed that she wouldn’t. It made it a little harder, to protect her.

Lena let Kara sleep, left the note on her pillow, and said goodbye to her home. Before Kara even woke, her friend was on the plane, running as best she could.

The first summer Lena missed their standing date at the water tower, Kara didn’t want to believe it. She sat there for hours, just in case, making a million excuses. Even though she’d gone months without a glimpse or word from her friend, she had this mighty, irrevocable belief that this mattered more than anything else.

It made sense though, and she couldn’t find it in herself to hold it against Lena. Her father killed people, trafficked in dangerous weapons, waged a war against aliens. It was a lot to have attached to a name, and her brother was not shying away from the same kind of roving madness, ruthless in business and weeding himself a nice plot of future space tech, reaping the benefits of his fear that was shared by more and more people. Lena escaped because it was safer, because it was good for her, and Kara took some solace in that, or at least she tried.

Still, she sent emails and texts and called from time to time, though the voicemail stayed full and everything went unanswered. She wanted to search, to fly up and hunt her down, just to see her, to make sure she was safe and happy, but Kara respected the need Lena must have felt to escape. She’d been right, that if they didn’t leave, they’d never escape, and Lena did what she had to do.

The second summer, Kara was excited. Superman was a hero and popular beyond reproach. She had a new job, almost a dream job, working for an amazing woman, surrounded by people she thought of as friends. She had a new apartment, and a cranky neighbor, and her mother was happy, and Alex was around, sometimes, more often.

It felt like a kick in the chest, like shotgun blast at close range, like a boulder landed on her when she realized Lena wasn’t coming. It was almost perfect, and then Lena didn’t show.

The rest of the year was spent with half glimpses of eyes that were a hue off from the green she loved. The rest of the year was spent like the previous ones, occasionally searching for Lena Luthor. Her heart ached so hard, she was certain it would hurt less to yank it out completely. Those were the moments she sat on the water tower and realized she’d loved her. They were followed by the moments signaling she’d lost her.
The third year, Kara had hope again. Lex in jail, the tragedy of the battle between Superman and the metal suit wearing Luthor replayed for months after, the death toll, the fact that Clark left soon after, leaving the world without their symbol, coming back only when Lionel escaped. It all pointed to Lena coming back, taking her place as the last standing Luthor.

Supergirl existed, in the world. Kara took the night off though, knowing that Lena had to show eventually, that she had to miss her, that the mess between the Luthors and the Supers was nothing, because it didn’t have to be.

With a sigh, Kara left the little box and present she brought for her friend atop the water tower and flew home, vowing the same thing she did every year, that she would never go back.

Deep down she knew it was a lie.

The top floor of Catco was always a state of organized chaos, a fact that Kara was always in constant battle in, one that she occasionally was able to beat out, until she got her job moonlighting like her cousin. Now, she more often than not just tried to manage the chaos as best she could, a juggling act that took a lot of energy, but felt rewarding enough.

Long ago, Clark had been right, to tell her to just be normal, and finally, Kara felt as if she had the best of both worlds, she found the balance of herself.

“Didn’t you used to know her?” Winn asked, staring at one of the screens projecting one of the news channels Catco ran.

“Who?” Kara didn’t bother looking up, busy sorting Ms. Grant’s mail in the order she liked.

“Lena Luthor.”

The name felt foreign and far away, but the girl on the screen was a blast from the past, was a sight for sore eyes, reminded Kara of a part of herself that was long since gone.

“We went to school together,” she swallowed and nodded, adjusting her glasses as she watched.

The years had been kind to her, Kara realized, as she gulped and let her eyes make the trip up Lena’s profile, from her long legs, to her round hips, to her tight dress, to the same jaw and lips and nose and those eyes that Kara could never forget. She was beautiful and strong and so far away despite never being closer. There was no mistaking that Lena Luthor was beautiful, always had been, and it made Kara’s throat dry in the same way the fact always did.

It was an unfortunate realization to have, that she was still in love with her, that she still felt angry and betrayed. But there stood Lena, the girl who laid on the grass with her after letting her do handstands instead of studying, who stole heart-shaped sunglasses and drank wine that turned her lips so red they looked delicious. There stood Lena, and Kara felt her heart sink into her shoes.

“Can you imagine?”

“What?”
“Having the same last name as someone who murdered so many people in one instant?”

“She didn’t have anything to do with it though,” Kara argued, not able to move her eyes from the screen of the girl who smiled, that fake, Luthor smile, as she took a podium.

“I heard the tech at her company is miles ahead of DOJ models. Alien detection, surveillance, intelligence, bio-engineering,” he whistled appreciatively. “I’ve seen her work. She’s brilliant. Sucks that she’s a Luthor and will be put down by Supergirl.”

Kara couldn’t help it, she ripped the stack of mail in half, staring at it in her hands before coughing and trying to cover it up. On the news, Lena spoke about being a publically traded company, with full transparency, and for a second, Kara believed her, her default setting. For just the briefest, most shameful of instants, she had the thought to roll her eyes at the thought of Lena ever being transparent, even just slightly.

After the quick briefing on the news, Kara found herself unable to think of anything other than her old friend. She couldn’t even stop herself from hovering outside, watching her work, surprised to find her still there, afraid almost that she was a mirage.

Accidentally, or so she told herself, Kara found herself walking in the park during the unveiling of L Corp. The press flashed and took pictures, the board sat behind her, the day was full of morbid fascination, though for a different reason than why the alien found herself blending into the crowd.

“My mother was a force of good in the world, and before the wayward actions of my father and brother, our company was a strong name, a good, honest name that emphasized the good, that grew ideas, fostered brilliant thinkers, lived outside of the box,” Lena explained into the microphone, strong and firm.

Gone was the angry girl who complained about soccer scores and blasted terrible punk, replacing it was a demure woman who Kara saw as so much Lillian Luthor, so much perfection, it was daunting.

Kara met her eyes and remembered the feeling of crushing her lock between fourth and fifth period so, so long ago.

“From our company came good research and products that drove sales, not sales that drove our research. We traded in hope, not profited from fear. After the actions of my family, I wear my name and feel the debt it owes to this world, to our community, and we here at L Corp plan to pay it back, tenfold. I only ask that we be judged on the merit of our actions moving forward, as a whole, and not by the past outbursts by two individuals.”

She wasn’t sure if Lena saw her, or even if she did, if she recognized her, but Kara held her gaze until the youngest Luthor looked down at her notes and smiled to herself, small and different than the assuring ones she gave to the press.

“I left after my father. I wanted to get away, to be my own person, and I ignored the signs of my brother’s madness. I left because I am human and decisions are hard things to make. Not a day goes by that I don’t personally blame myself for my contribution to the horrors of my family by simply deciding to look away. We will not look away again,” she promised, finding Kara again. “L Corp will look directly in the eyes of what scares us the most and not shirk our responsibilities.”

There were a few forgiving claps, a few gentle mumbles in the crowd. Kara held her breath and disappeared into the crowd, unable to handle those eyes or that person.
One month in, and Lena was exhausted. Only just after lunch and she found herself in her office with her fingers massaging her forehead as it worried over stacks of budgets and proposals. She knew it would be a slow start, even a non-started, to rebrand, to start again. She knew no one would trust her name, but deep down, despite trying not to, she believed her father’s words, that the power her name had came when she gave power to it. It was impossible odds, but it was what she was meant to do, and despite what happened to her family, she was going to do it.

For just a moment, she sat back in her chair and turned toward the sun that streamed through her balcony windows, allowing it to warm her face and ease the tension in her jaw. She gave herself another chance, to hover of Kara’s name in her phone, to will herself to press the button. But she didn’t know how, didn’t know what to say or even if Kara would pick up. But she thought she saw those eyes at the press conference, she was certain.

With another frustrated sigh, for about the seventieth time that month, Lena tossed her phone onto her desk and went back to rubbing her forehead.

“Miss Luthor, it’s time to leave for your meeting,” Jess called over the intercom. “Shall I tell them to wait?”

“I’ll be upstairs in two minutes. Make sure you gather the prospectus from the legal team together, and the files from the pitches for small business loans. I’ll take them home with me tonight.”

“Yes ma’am. Would you like to schedule a meeting with Catco, they want a quote on the Alien Amnesty Bill. They’ve called a dozen times.”

“Not just yet.”

Lena shrugged on her coat and grabbed her bag before making her way out into the hall where her assistant was still talking to her over the intercom.

“Be sure to schedule my lobotomy and or death by firing squad for first thing in the morning. Try to get out of here early, Jess,” Lena smiled. “If the boss is away, let the mice play. Just have those things sent over to my place.”

“Yes ma’am,” she nodded with a smile, renewed with the duties of her job in the hopes of getting out so much earlier than she’d been the past few weeks.

Carefully, Lena used a side door and took the stairs until she reached the creaky thing at the top of the building where the helicopter waited, its blades lazily swinging around, waiting for her.

“Hi, Billy,” she smiled and took her seat, putting on the headphones. “Skies look lovely today.”

“Not nearly as lovely as you,” he nodded politely to her. “You break my heart, Ms. Luthor.”

“I’ll tell your wife,” she teased, glad to have friends, or people she paid that came back despite her brother and his rage firing of the entire staff she grew up beside. “Get us there in one piece this time, will you?”

“Fly me to the moon,” he crooned. “Let me play among the stars….”
His voice wasn’t terrible, and Lena liked the elderly pilot. He was reliable and made her get over her fear of flying. He was nice enough to share the banana bread his wife baked from time to time, and those were important things to Lena.

It was a short flight, just across town to a research lab on the outskirts, in the warehouse district near the port. It would save her about an hour of traffic, and it was a beautiful kind of commute, with onboard entertainment in the form of butchered Sinatra ballads.

They made it halfway before the systems started going haywire and the explosion from the back blade severed it in half. The entire carriage began spinning at a terrifying speed as it dropped and loped its way toward the ground.

Somewhere between realizing she was going to die and hitting the ground, the force made Lena pass out. Not until a familiar pair of blue eyes were staring down at her and soft hands were rubbing her cheeks did she furrow and realize she didn’t.

Her senses came back slowly, but sitting in the field where Supergirl gently placed the broken helicopter, Lena second-guessed herself. She furrowed and stared intently at her savior before she nodded and disappeared in a blink.

“James, where are the pictures?” Cat asked, not looking up from her desk as she perused the layout for next week’s magazine. “The ones of Supergirl saving her and the others.”

Kara clung to her notebook and tried to focus, while the bulk of her effort went toward figuring out who was trying to kill Lena Luthor. She caught bits and pieces of the conversation, most of it mingling somewhere with the evidence her sister has collected after the attack on the helicopter.

“It’s an effective stunt,” the editor waved her hand. “I don’t want the Heir to the Luthor Fortune with kids playing soccer. I want the harrowing helicopter attack. I want her dressed up and smirking at men’s ego, eating them for dinner. She’s a giant, and she’s either next to follow in the family footsteps or she’s going to flip it on its head. We need–”

“It’s not a stunt,” Kara murmurs, a familiar name making her ears perk up. She surveyed the image, of Lena at a soccer camp, guarding a little girl and laughing as she moved. If she hadn’t known Lena, she would have said that she was happy.

“What was that Kiera? How many times do I have to ask you to stop mumbling. If you’re going to speak,” she waved her hand disinterestedly, already bored with repeating.

“She’s… It’s. Not. She’s played since she was five. Won a state championship. Played in college. She likes the game. She set up a few camps in low income communities with her mother and Kingsmont University.”

Even without the pure silence that followed, Kara knew to be embarrassed, but she couldn’t stop once she started, and so she kept talking until it was all out there. She felt nine sets of eyes on her and she closed her eyes for longer than a blink, hoping a merciful god would let the floor envelope her.

Cat’s face betrayed nothing. Instead, she was the first to move, pulling her glasses off of her nose
and setting them on the desk.

“You, Kiera, are either an incredibly boring stalker, or perhaps happen to know Ms. Lena Luthor from your dreadfully dull childhood, and have since remembered this fact just this minute, seeing as I’ve been personally calling in every favor I could to try to get her to sit down with this publication for the last six weeks!” Her voice rose as she spoke and Kara swallowed before meeting her eyes again. “Which is it, Kiera? Are you a boring stalker or potentially fired?”

“Potentially fired,” Kara whispered.

“Out. Everyone out.”

Her eyes never left her assistant’s face as the room emptied in a shuffle. She didn’t move until the door closed, at which point Cat leaned back and gestured for her assistant to sit.

“Ms. Grant, I didn’t mean to interrupt, I just… It felt unfair to dismiss something important, or that you think would diminish her power or na–”

“You’re talking.”

“Sorry.”

“How well do you know Lena Luthor?”

“Um,” Kara thought for a second, genuinely thought about it, as it was, perhaps, more complex than Cat Grant could realize.

At one point, she might have said she knew her as well as she knew herself. Maybe she still did. But Kara was stung with the rejection of abandonment, and it clouded her. Long years, and sitting on a water tower alone, it made her think twice. And then she thought about stopping the helicopter, her heart freezing, unable to beat as she wrenched open the door and carried Lena out of it, checking for a pulse after the explosion. And just like that, sitting there with emerald eyes on her, time hadn’t passed.

“Um,” she shook her head again. “You know. Well enough.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“Since senior year. We were, um, inseparable. She was my best friend, I think, next to my sister.”

“The abridged version,” she snapped her fingers and leaned forward.

“I haven’t spoken to Lena since she disappeared before her brother’s… you know,” she shrugged, adjusting her glasses.

“Perfect. Don’t you think it’s time for a reunion?”

“I couldn’t… No. I wouldn’t. I. No,” Kara huffed slightly. “No. There’s… no way. I don’t–”

“I think it’s time for a reunion,” Cat decided. “She won’t speak to the press about anything other than that damn company. If you want an honest story, unbiased and not absolutely boring to our readers, I’d suggested you make it happen.”

“Ms. Grant I–”

“That is all.”
Drifty

Chapter Summary

the meeting, the brooding, the sulking, the reunion.

Chapter Notes

someone write a better blurb about this for me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

When you leave someone
Their love lingers on,
Like a fresh wound
With no one to love.

The paper stared at her, refusing to blink. Lena knit her fingers together and rested her cheek on them as she lingered over the words that sat there. She blew air threw her lips and prepared herself to finally read her father’s words.

Behind her, the city was covered in rain, the window covered in splotches so that it became nothing more than a blurry puddle. A record played from the unit across the room, blaring a grungy kind of punk she found for a dollar in the bottom bin of a place in Berlin. Loud kind of noise gave her calm. She needed it, to imagine her father’s first attempt at possible amends. Chaos of noise was oddly calming. Took her back to when things were simple.

The best case scenario, he was raving mad, and she could dismiss it. Worst case, he was still her father, and she would have to figure out how to have a father who murdered people and wasn’t remorseful or deserved her love, though she had little choice in the matter. She had to forget him. But it was impossible. He haunted her, following behind her name, tacked on the end with that Luthor.

She was supposed to be about twenty floors below, working in some lab. That was always her plan. Her parents knew it. Her mother used to take pride in the fact that Lena was a hands-dirty kind of girl, except when it came to her taking apart and modifying household appliances. But still, even through the anger, there was pride.

Lena wasn’t supposed to be upstairs. She was supposed to have a sector just for her where she could build things and she would leave by five every day, and she would have told Kara the truth one day, and she’d go home to her and pick up dinner on the way. She’d have friends. She’d have pride. She was supposed to have a different life.

For someone who came from absolutely nowhere, Lena sure did end up in one hell of a predicament.

She should have stayed gone. Should have changed her name.
But her mother’s name was Lillian Luthor, and she deserved better.

Instead, she looked up from the envelope that only held her first name, and she stared at the few pictures on her desk. A class ring sat there. The same one she lost at the beach on the day of her mother’s funeral. It was sitting in a box on the water tower when she returned and snuck away after buying the house for herself in Midvale. It had a note attached that was simple and sweet and broke her heart. It reminded her to be good, to be kind to the world, to accept a little sunlight on her cheek from time to time.

“Ms. Luthor, your eleven fifteen is here, the representative from CatCo,” Jess buzzed, interrupting the tiny part of the day that Lena squirreled away for herself.

She had to open the letter. She had to know. And yet, not one part of her wanted to actually do it.

With a small sigh, she turned and flicked the remote and turned down the noise coming from the speakers. The envelope got folded once more and shoved in a drawer, and Lena did not miss the sense of relief that came with avoiding it yet again, for just a moment.

“Still listening to that noise?”

She didn’t have to look up and greet the guest. Her heart skipped.

“Kara,” Lena breathed the name, the smile coming automatically, a knee-jerk response that she could never control.

Lena did research, kept tabs. Nothing compared to the girl before her though, who suddenly was very far from the gawky, lanky teenager she first met nearly a lifetime ago. Her hair was almost tamed, her eyes, this warmth. She was still the sun.

A full minute existed between them, and she took the first few steps, arms held wide as she moved to hug her friend, another reaction that was completely automatic, completely innate and purely muscle memory, that even it surprised her. The execution was different than she remembered, the body didn’t meld to her own, but instead remained rigid. Even as she pulled away and held Kara’s arms, still grinning despite the welcome, she saw a tenseness to her friend that was completely alien to her.

“Oh,” she swallowed and took a step back. “I’m sorry. I just–”

“It’s been a while,” Kara managed through a tight smile. “Thank you for seeing me.”

“Oh,” she swallowed and took a step back. “I’m sorry. I just–”

“Of course. You know you don’t need an appointment, Kara. I meant to call, I’ve tried–”

“I didn’t know, actually,” she let slip before righting herself. “And I did need one. I’m here with CatCo at the request of Ms. Grant to see if you’d agree to an interview. She found out we were friends once. Thought you’d hear me out, but I understand if you don’t–.”

Her words were rehearsed and said firmly. She worked hard not to look at Lena, though it was proving more difficult than she’d anticipated.

“I knew you’d be mad,” Lena sighed and leaned against her desk, crossing her arms and looking away from the glare that her friend could muster. “I thought maybe you’d understand. I thought you’d have moved on from National City, to be honest.”

“I thought I’d have something to say, you know, about how much it sucked, that you left me. But you’re here and I just…” Kara furrowed and shook her head, hugging her notes before she let her
hands drop in front of her hips. “Just because I understand doesn’t mean it didn’t hurt.”

It was a stalemate that Lena never saw coming. She had an eleven fifteen and now she had Kara Danvers standing in front of her like a ghost, complete with a back catalog of memories attached maliciously.

“I didn’t know how to call you,” Lena finally confessed. “I couldn’t.”

“You were my best friend.” Her voice had that sad kind of anger in it, the tired kind of sad that felt so different coming from her. Lena could have gone her whole life without hearing her sound like that.

“You were too much good, Kara. I didn’t deserve it. After my father… what my family did. How could I even look at you?”

“But it wasn’t you, and I lost the one person who was always there. I only wanted to be there for you.”

“Can you understand the weight I was under? The press around me was terrible, the threats I got, the names people around me were called. Kara, the names of the people, I still see them—”

Kara swallowed and flexed her jaw, looking at Lena once before deciding the storm outside was a safer bet. She clenched her jaw and inhaled deeply. It was already going worse and better than she imagined. Seeing Lena was torture, and she was seventeen again, fawning. Seeing Lena renewed that pit in her stomach, the deep, dark hole of a pit that lived within her where people who left her dwelled.

The worst of it was, she understood. She let Lena off the hook long ago, for all of it. But the dark part of her, the deepest, most hidden, most frequently ignored and terrifying part of her, the part of her that missed the way Lena smiled and when she would walk by and Kara would smell her, or when she would go back to school and find a lingering hint of Lena Luthor on her shirt collar. That part of her, the part that was so wounded because hearts are the hardest things to heal, the most finicky, the most stubborn, the most prone to reinjury over nothing more than a whiff of a memory, that part of Kara held a grudge. A wounded, scornful, terrified kind of grudge that begged to just go away or fixed, but nothing in between.

“Ms. Grant would like to do an in depth interview with you about your life. Really describe you, give you a voice, let you distance yourself from your family. You won’t have to answer anything that would make you uncomfortable,” Kara tried, sticking to the basics, sticking to her job.

That was what she had originally planned. If she stayed quiet and she kept to the job, she could seem aloof, seem as if she’d forgotten entirely, and maybe that would help. Because she knew that hearing Lena’s reasons, seeing her eyes so close, it would be too much, even after so much distance.

“So this meeting is strictly work then,” Lena asked, smiling unhappily to herself, retreating to the defensive parts, tucking away this Lena she thought was long gone, but fought for air and sunlight when the Sun appeared.

“Please.”

“I think I’d be uncomfortable the entire time. I like sticking to work as a topic—”

“Which people find boring, keeps them talking. I think if you just get it over with, and Ms. Grant is amazing, she’s fair,” Kara listed, her hands moving quickly.
“You, better than anyone, knows my family, knows me, knows how we feel—”

“I haven’t seen you in almost three years. I don’t know you. I thought I knew…”

It had an uncharacteristic bite to it, and Lena oddly liked it, enjoyed the way Kara had outgrown some of her timidity, only to see it still lingering as she fidgeted with her glasses and second-guessed her words.

“I don’t think it ever goes away, the way we knew each other,” Lena promised, uncrossing her arms and making her way around her desk so that she could take a seat. “You’re mad at me, and you’re hurt, and I did that. But I did what I thought was right, and I’d do it again. That’s not what you’d want to hear, and I know it.”

“And we’re just supposed to go back to how things were? If I hadn’t been forced to come here, you would have never contacted me. And I know that. You know that. Don’t patronize me, Lena. You at least owe me that.”

“I’ve tried texting you every day. For three years. I get close. I type something, I delete it. I would have reached out to you. I can’t seem to help it. You know me. I take… time.”

“The interview can be—” Kara shook her head and blurted, falling back on her reason.

“So we can’t talk about things other than work?”

“Yes,” she blurted. “I mean. No. This was for work. I mean. No. We can’t. I came here for work, and only that. I came for work,” Kara repeated for herself.

“Alright,” the CEO sighed. “I guess we can’t go back to how things were. If there isn’t anything else, I’ll consider Ms. Grant’s proposal and be in touch within the week. Thank you for stopping by Ms. Danvers.”

It was dismissive as she could be, as much as it suddenly hurt. She picked up her pen and began to open up a stack of files. The thunder rolled through against the city, the windows leaked and dripped onto the streets below. Kara stared at the woman there behind the desk, and she felt this weight settle on her shoulders.

Kara didn’t think of how it was going to end. She spent the past week rehearsing this, not acknowledging that they had been friends, asking for Ms. Grant, and then leaving, but now, here she was, and there sat her friend, her missing piece, and she wanted to be fought for, for once, she couldn’t stand to watch Lena leave again. She didn’t mean to feel it all, but there it was.

“You didn’t return my calls, not even a word to let me know what was going on with you,” Kara interrupted Lena’s carefully crafted attempt at disinterest. “You were so important to me… I… I… I was in lov—”

“Dammit, Kara! I had to stay away from you!” Lena barked. “And it killed me! If you think it hurt you alone, then maybe you don’t know me.”

“What? You had to? I know that it wasn’t you. I know that you had nothing to do with that. I tried, and I do understand parts. I just can’t wrap my head arou—”

Lena balled her fists and shook her head as she closed her eyes. Seeing her upset, Kara reverted, automatically taking a step forward, drawn to her, before she retracted as the youngest Luthor stood in all of her glory.
“Because of your powers, because you became Supergirl, because Clark Kent is your cousin and Superman, and my brother was set on murdering him and any alien he could find,” Lena yelled. “I did what I thought was right, and I ran, and I hated every day of it, but I did it for you, because from the moment I met you, you’ve been the sun to me. And I’d take a not perfect life where you at least existed and were safe, to a few more perfect moments just to lose you.”

Shoulders tight, hands gripped tighter at the papers on her desk. She stood taller, her outburst under control a second later. Her chest heaved as she stifled what she could. Kara looked at her as if she’d been slapped, as if she’d been kicked or watched someone kick a puppy.

The entire range of human emotion crossed Kara’s face. Confusion and fear, to anger and doubt and guilt. She slumped on the chair, her eyes darting back and forth as she tried to fathom what it all meant. She didn’t even begin to deny it, she wouldn’t insult Lena that way, but it was all news to her, and it changed absolutely everything.

“You… you knew?” she whispered, her fingers becoming a steeple in front of her face, holding her chin up as she tried to catch her breath. Her brow was a total furrow, a complete mountain in her shock.

“Of course I knew, Kara,” Lena scoffed as she sat back down, oddly more tired from this meeting than any other she could remember. “I told you, we knew each other. We know each other. I asked you to leave with me. I meant it. I wasn’t going to let him hurt you.”

“But… but you never… You didn’t say anything? How?”

“You were wearing a sweatshirt with your last name on it when you saved me the first time,” she shook her head and laughed. “And those eyes. I barely knew you, but I knew your eyes. You punched a hole in an engine, and you thought I’d just ignore it? That Lex would ignore it? You were his first hunt.”

“I-I–I didn’t…”

“I watched you land on my security camera. When you snuck onto my balcony. I read the articles, the accounts of someone helping. A semi that stopped, a girl plucked out of the ocean. You kept calling it ‘Earth Physics’. You snapped your phone in half and claimed it was asthma at the river that summer. You practically ripped up the water tower the night I kissed you.”

Lena almost enjoyed the way Kara’s face went pale and the realization and then blushed with the memory. It was so very her, and so very alive. It was like the sun.

“If Lex found you, if he knew, or if he figured out about your cousin, I just…” Lena confessed. “I knew he was up to something. I thought if I was out of the equation, it would help, make you less tempted to help. You stopped a speeding car, I had no doubt you’d try to stop him. So I told him it was a man that matched Superman’s description that kept saving me, and I pretended you didn’t exist. You were just a stranger, I told him. You couldn’t be the sun to me.”

Three years worth of bitter hurt and angry bubbled between them, and Kara knew all of the answers before she even heard them or asked. It all fit together too neatly, it all made sense, it all felt as if she shouldn’t be mad, and yet she was.

“You’re right.”

“How?”

“I would have gotten involved a lot sooner.”
“See?” she quirked an eyebrow, challenging with that know-it-all smile. “And then Lex got captured, and you became Supergirl. I owe the world a debt as a Luthor, so here I am. We all have our roles to play.”

“How long did you know?”

“It took me a bit to piece it together,” Lena confessed. “Maybe your sophomore year of college to be certain.”

“You left to keep me safe?” Kara realized, catching up with all of the data being input into her brain at once.

“I tried. The night you came over, I tried to push you away, and two minutes into it, I was putty in your hand. I had to make a clean getaway, because I couldn’t tell you to go. I couldn’t leave. I was in love with you.”

“I can’t… I don’t… What happened…” Kara stood and paced, her body needing some kind of activity to make it not explode. Her lungs swelled and stuttered and her eyes felt like they were full. “I wasn’t… does anyone… my sister… Lex Luthor.”

Lena watched her push her hand into her chest, to try to control her heartbeat, though she failed miserably and kept pacing through the office. Half bent over, she placed her hand on her knee and stared at the floor.

“You. I lost… you. Clark said… I could have had you… I was… This…is… my fault.”

“Kara,” Lena whispered, carefully approaching the glitching girl.

“No! Don’t!” she yelled, her arms out as a warning as she righted herself. “Just… Let me think. I just need a minute… to process, all of this.”

An entire life of possibilities was right there, and Kara didn’t know what to do with all of the information. It overwhelmed her.

“I’m sorry. I mean that. You have to know how much I–”

“I have to go.”

“Wait, Kara,” Lena took another step. “Don’t go. Just… wait. Let me explain more, apologize more. Once Lex got put away, I just didn’t know how to call you, how to tell you. I was going to be the villain to you to keep you safe. I was going to take this to my grave, you have–”

“I have to go,” she repeated, grabbing her bag and shaking her head. “I’m sorry. I… can’t… be here. Near you. Right now. Thank you. For telling me”

As much as she protested, Lena watched Kara smile quickly and nod and adjust her glasses before quickly leaving the office. She thought reading her father’s letter was going to be the most draining part of her day. Now Lena felt like the girl about to go away to college who kissed her best friend and thought she’d lost her forever.
For three hours, Kara paced. She was ready to start wearing a hole into the ground of the DEO training room. If it weren’t for her tiny breaks spent punching concrete, she might have thought herself straight into a rut so deep she’d never be able to get out.

From the window upstairs, she looked like a tiger at the zoo, all muscle and lankiness and savage fangs. J’onn watched from time to time, hoping to see his employee work off the steam of whatever was happening. But it never came. All that happened was the ornery tiger refusing to be tired out by her own antics.

By the third straight night of “training,” J’onn was convinced the hero had never been serious about something for so long, or held onto something so tightly as whatever made her go crazy and through more concrete than they allotted budget for in a month. It was a worrisome sight.

“I’m busy,” Kara grunted, jabbing slightly, breathing carefully. She didn’t look up as her boss glided into the room, though she sensed him soon enough.

“I can see that. Whatever all this concrete did to you, I’m sure it had it coming,” he nodded, nudging a block with the toe of his boot disinterestedly as he crossed his arms. “What’s going on, kid?”

“Nothing,” she shrugged, punching again.

“Nothing?” J’onn felt the way Kara felt about Lena, even without being able to read her mind. He certainly caught a glimpse of Lena’s feelings in this jumbled mess that reminded him of a tangled piece of yarn, folded over and knotted within itself over so much self-doubt and self-preservation and fear, sat this feeling of nothing but adoration for the Kryptonian. Pure, unadulterated awe and this almost peace that wavered beneath the panic of seeing her. J’onn felt it all, knew that Ms. Luthor was harmless, not like her family, knew that she had a complicated relationship with herself, knew that she left to protect Kara. He was almost in awe of her.

“I sleep.”

“Sure.”

A few more punches, and Kara debated with herself, slowing down before giving an almighty punch and rolling her shoulder blades as she turned away and put her hands over her head as she tried to catch her breath. It was exhausting, to hold so much, to think so much, exhausting and entirely impossible to sleep.

“She knows, okay?” Kara finally confessed, too guilty to look at the fatherly figure of her life. “She’s known since before I did… this… She’s known since I was in high school.”

“Knows what? That you’re an alien?”

“Yes. Kind of. I think. She knows I’m Supergirl. I didn’t get into the details with her I had a lot,” she gestures her hands in front of her face wildly. “A lot happening in my brain, with her being back and then… that.”

J’onn smiled a bit while Kara continued to pace and unwrapped her hands, tossing the binding on the ground in her annoyance. Her skin shone with sweat and her muscles were tense and angry.
There were many times in which he bore the duty of his life quite quietly. There were many times J’onn did not know what to say to someone else who lost their entire world, because when he thought about it, there was nothing anyone could tell him to make it alright.

Suddenly, he was very much out of his depth with these feelings Kara seemed to struggle with and about.

“You must feel strongly for her, for Lena,” he reasoned. “Very strongly.”

“I don’t…” Kara scoffed and shrugged and balked and shook her head. “No. I don’t. That’s not. No. We were friends. Good friends. She was my best friend, and then she just. No. She left. I was. No.”

“Right.”

“What do you mean, anyway?” she cocked her head slightly, itching her eyebrow and furrowing her entire being. “I mean. Why would you say that? That. No.”

“I just mean… Someone who does all of this to you, they must be important.”

“You barely know her. Unless you– J’onn, did you?”

“Just to see if she was a threat, like her family.”

“And?” Kara held her breath.

“What do you honestly think?”

“The girl I knew would never;” she shook her head quickly. “Never ever would Lena hurt anyone. She talked about building prosthetics. That was her senior science fair entry and Masters’ Thesis. But now… I didn’t think she’d leave either, so who knows.”

“Kara.”

“No. She couldn’t, and I don’t need you to confirm it. I know,” she sighed and pushed her hands into her damp hair.

“What’s bothering you, Kara? If you know she’s good, then–” he shook his head and crossed his arms, held his signature pose with added confusion on his face. “If you still know deep down, in your heart, then what’s the trouble? Her name doesn’t–”

“It’s not… No,” she swallowed and clenched her jaw.

Kara put her hands on her hips, her shoulders drooping slightly, her head shaking, her stomach churning, a mix of hunger and regret that bothered her immensely. When she got locked up, her boss would calmly wait for her to find words. A few different languages sometimes popped up, weird sounds that meant nothing to anyone but her. Kara was certain that there weren’t enough languages to describe what Lena had done to her head in just a short meeting after years apart. Years that didn’t feel like years at all.

Patiently, J’onn just watched, waited. Kara ran her forearm across her forehead and sighed after giving up with the attempts at verbalizing. If she said it out loud, then it would be true. But she had to say the words aloud, or else she’d demolish everything in the city.

“I was afraid to be in love with her. She was… I couldn’t lose my best friend. We made plans, we
always felt… safe together,” she explained, knitting together her fingers before looking at J’onn finally. “She liked me, for me. She liked who I was, and I felt so almost normal. I felt… I forgot who I wasn’t and I got to just exist. I was willing to swallow it for her. To keep her. And then she left, and I felt like I couldn’t breathe. For months. For years. I just… She appeared one day and everything was different.”

“I didn’t know that.”

“Yeah,” she blushed a bit and shook her head. “I wanted to be her friend. I just wanted a little feeling in my life of what she brings. This peace. And then I saw her at the trial, before she disappeared again. I just wanted to… do something. I was going to tell her what she meant. To me. But she left.”

“And now she’s here.”

“Yeah,” Kara swallowed and ran her hands over her face before spinning and pacing again.

“How did the meeting go?”

“I haven’t left the DEO in a week, if that tells you anything.”

“What do you want?”

“I don’t know.”

“She seems just as confused as you, if that helps.”

“She left to keep me safe,” Kara admonished, frowning at the implication of the words. “She left because she was afraid I’d end up hurt by her brother. She left me, when I was all she had, and it couldn’t have been easy.”

“I can’t stand to see you like this,” he continued, recognizing the ire present with the warning. “Take it from someone who has lost… someone who has lost the thing that made their heart beat,” Kara frowned at the description, meeting his eyes with a softness that hurt. “There is a time limit to happiness. You don’t get to control it, but you can fight like hell to have it as long as possible. You get to decide what you want, but you just have to decide. After that, it’s simple.”

“I don’t know.”

“I would hate for you to miss out on one second of the possibility of love like I have experienced, Kara.”

“Can you turn back time three years and give me it all over again?”

“Yes. It’s a power I just developed,” J’onn rolled his eyes. “You don’t get to change her mind. She did what she did. Now she’s back, and you have to choose. You either care for her still, or you don’t.”

“It’s not that simple.”

“It is, actually,” he argued, pushing himself up and dusting off his knee disinterestedly.

“She left me.”

“You’re an adult now, Kara. You know things are always more complicated than they look.”
“I hate it.”

She didn’t want to hear it, and stalked across the room, her shoulders growing tense once more as the weight settled atop them. It was exhausting, hating Lena. It took all of her energy just to attempt it.

“Please take it easy.”

“I’m fine,” she grunted, pushing aside more gravel.

“I meant on her.”

“Yeah,” Kara nodded and looked away once more, inhaling and filling her lungs as she closed her eyes.

As much as she didn’t want to, Lena did the interview. It was difficult and invasive, but she did it because Kara asked, and still, after years and miles and a multi-million dollar company under her belt, she was a sucker for those eyes and that face. It took an entire bottle of expensive wine to wash away some of the things that came up, but Lena muscled through in hopes that it might help. Her expensive therapist said it was a good idea, and that was something.

The flowers didn’t do anything though. The vases of every type imaginable and the boxes of chocolates and muffin baskets, stacks of take out and mountains of pizza. Kara was radio silent, and Lena deserved it. She knew it wasn’t going to be a walk in the park, she never even thought seeing Kara again was an option. Now that it was, Lena would do what she could. With her brother gone, with her attempt to save the name, it was all a second chance. She could allow herself that, at least a bit.

It was the right decision, she knew, but the right choice could still be costly.

Lena gave up debating as she finished pouring herself a glass of wine and flipped through one of the reports she would have to finish before her morning call. Leaning against the island in the kitchen, she picked at a sandwich with little interest. The news played in the living room, no one to listen to it at all, though it unobtrusively filled up the quiet.

If it weren’t winter, she would have enjoyed a boring financial statement outside. Maybe given up and picked up a better book and dozed into the early morning on the balcony that overlooked the entire city. Not another building stood taller, not another roof was near the penthouse Lena bought. Something about the view, about how it was terrifying and magnificent at the same time. It was her own little home, the first she ever bought on her own, and it was a castle.

The fire cracked in the living room. Lena shifted her bare legs, itching the back of her calf with her foot lazily. It was a familiar kind of night for her, more often than not.

“I don’t think it’s ever mattered, alien or human,” a voice read as her balcony door opened and Kara stomped in, nose in a magazine. “Why would it matter where someone is from? It’s what they do when they’re here. That’s why I fight for inclusion, and against the hate my family tried to cultivate. I never understood it. My family was made sick, picked up a weakness, and tried to exploit it. I fight against that bullying.”
“Dammit, Kara, can’t you knock? You used to at least knock, and even then that scared me half to death,” Lena scolded after she yelped. “I didn’t—”

“The night my mother died, I got so angry and I hated the world, but I had someone pull me out. I don’t think my brother and father had that, as much as I tried,” Kara continued, ignoring Lena’s objection. Her voice was irate and incredulous at the quotes pulled from the story that would hit stands in a week.

“Lena Luthor is quiet, bashful, even as she swirls the straw in her lemonade. She skirts the issue on her sudden departure, on her shunning of the family business for as long as possible. Much more introspective than one would imagine, everything seems to be internal— I read a poem once, that said the same place from which you draw your sorrow, is where you find your joy. The deeper the sorrow, the deeper the joy, and vice versa. The greatest sorrows of my life have all stemmed from the greatest, most difficult decisions I could make to save the joy. I keep hoping that if I keep digging through the sorrow, I’ll find joy one day.”

“She wasn’t a terrible interviewer. I’d never call myself bashful though,” she shrugged, but quieted as Kara held up a finger signaling a need for another moment.

“I want to be well, I want to do good. People think there’s more to it than that. I’m imperfect, and I can’t even imagine perfection anymore, just better. I’m trying to be better, and I am not my family.”

The magazine smacked against the countertop. Kara looked at her as if she was accusing her of high treason, though none of the words she read seemed especially damning. If anything, Lena had tried to be honest. She tried to be nice, like Kara always begged. She thought she’d be happy, or at least not upset. That never seemed an option, and yet, Lena was left perplexed.

“You left!” Kara yelled.

“You asked me to do that interv—”

“I’m not perfect, you know that, right?”

“I don’t know about that,” Lena smiled. “You bring perfect moments. There must be something there.”

As much as Kara watched Lena enjoying this battle, she felt nothing but exasperated anger and annoyance. And then she realized she flew to Lena’s, and she barged in, and she caught her drinking wine in nothing but an old button up pyjama top and messy bun, and she was even more angry at that realization.

Nothing about the past few weeks was going as it was supposed to go. Ever since Lena walked back into her life, she recognized that a missing piece existed. She had been able to pretend it didn’t for so long. Now it was aching and she was standing right there.

“I’m not perfect! We’re not perfect! There’s no such thing as perfect!” Kara wailed. Her shoulders moved up and down in deep, heavy waves, ebbing with a kind of anger that only could be brought about by someone she loved.

“You’re very wrong,” the CEO shook her head. “You’re perfect to me, Kar—”

Super speed. Lena never thought of it as being so literal until she found herself pushed against the cold fridge. A magnet of a Highland chief dug into her back. The chill of the front made her bare thighs shiver.
The first time she kissed Kara, it was an innocent and drunk kind of thing, the perfect mix of young and naive, tinged with absolute love. The second time Kara kissed her, it was gentle and afraid, a quiet kind of confession. As far as Lena was concerned, the third time was the charm.

Out of breath, she gasped as Kara kissed her chin, kissed the side of her mouth, rested her forehead against Lena’s because she couldn’t smother her and that was her only option. Legs wrapped around Kara’s waist, she held her there like nothing. Lena dug her fingers into the fabric of her shirt, her own half tugged and pulled in various directions in the hustle and bustle. Hearts racing, she slowed it as much as she could, kissing her again, earning a little noise as she found Lena’s mouth eager. Forever, they kissed. Kara didn’t want to stop until she couldn’t breathe.

“What’s wrong?” Lena whispered, afraid to make any noise louder than that or her heart throbbing in her chest. She ran her knuckle along Kara’s jaw and cheek, hoping it could distract her from the thoughts that were tormenting.

“I just wanted to remember this, in case things were never good again.”

“I’ve been in love with you since I was seventeen.”

It was Lena’s turn, to make the trip, to travel the distance, and so she stretched and kissed Kara, sucked on her lip, bit it, fixed it, pulled every damn second she could from it. She felt Kara push her harder, heard the crunch of metal as a hand dug into her fridge panel. It didn’t stop her one bit. If anything, it pushed her harder. To be able to do that to the reserved, gentle girl, was a sort of power that was exhilarating.

“We can’t,” Kara pulled away, dropping Lena to her feet, making her head spin wildly at the loss of contact after so much. “You’re… I kept a distance. We. We’re us. You left. I don’t even know if I like you. We were friends, never—”

“I’m not going anywhere.”

“But you did,” she shook her head and ran her thumb across her swollen lips. “I can’t… want you, and then. It’s. You. We’re friends.”

“I’ll take whatever you would give me,” Lena confessed.

“Since you were seventeen?” Kara begged, as she held herself up on the island. Blue eyes were big and afraid of the answer. Lena just nodded while the other inhabitant of the kitchen waged such a war with herself that it looked almost painful.

“I didn’t expect any of this. I just… How was I supposed to call, Kara?”

The look Kara gave her was pained and hopeful, a dangerous combination of wanting something and having it right there.

“I broke your fridge.”

“It’s mostly for show any—”

Lena didn’t get to finish, she found herself in a newly familiar position.

“You have to stop doing that,” she gasped, wrapping her legs around her hero once again. She clutched tighter, contradicting her wish.

Kara didn’t have any words because she was overloaded and the only thing she knew was this that
was what she’d wanted forever, and she’d do whatever she could to hold Lena Luthor in her hands for as long as possible. Which meant no words ever again, just kissing every bit of soft skin she’d dreamt about since she caught those eyes in the hall.

Chapter End Notes

Hit me with prompts and read more at coeurdastronaute.tumblr.com
Surrender

We drifted to survive
I needed you to stay
But I let you drift away
My love where are you?

It just happened, the flurry of it.

Kara never meant for that to happen, and she surely hadn’t counted on Lena reciprocating so eagerly. She never let herself even imagine a world in which that was a fathomable thought. But she ended up holding her against the fridge, and she left a handprint in the door because she was wound so tightly, she couldn’t figure out how to let go. She couldn’t remember ever not being able to control herself. And then Lena Luthor existed.

The noises were too much, were so encompassing that Kara couldn’t hear anything else in the world. Just Lena moaning, just Lena pleading, just Lena saying tiny promises and pleas and prayers. And Kara wanted nothing else in the universe other than to only hear that for the rest of her life. She wanted to feel nothing other than Lena grinding into her own hand, to feel her chest pressing against her, to feel nails digging into her neck and back, to feel clenching and begging and the pure wild, filthy kind of thing that she never knew Lena to be but always surely prayed to every god she would be.

Heaving and breathing, Lena groaned in complaint as her support took back her own fingers. Her forehead drooped toward Kara’s shoulder where it rooted around, perplexed as to how this was where she was now, unable to form many coherent thoughts other than how, why, and who cares.

“I didn’t… I didn’t mean to… I didn’t come over for…”

“I know,” Lena nodded, shoulders drawing large to catch her breath. “That was a lot better than the yelling. Very unexpected, too.”

“Very,” Kara nodded.

“Not in a bad way.”

“No?” she quirked her eyebrow and blushed at the admission from the rather flustered and relaxed girl who made delicious noises when she was being–

“Didn’t think you had it in you.”

Breathless and still tingling, Lena pushed her messy hair from her own face and closed her eyes again, because looking at Kara was just too much of a distraction in all honesty.

They just.

In her.

Right against the.

Her friend.

Estranged.
She.

She did that.

With her.

Lena gulped and tried to keep her head from swirling, to hold on tightly to that high despite such nagging thoughts.

“I think I’ve always wanted to be someone who could throw someone against a wall and make them... you know.” It was almost infuriating for someone to be so damn... so damn... sexy and bashful at the same time.

“Congratulations on achieving that,” Lena chuckled and finally lifted her head. Kara stared back at her, furrowed and confused and completely obsessed.

For a long beat, before she fully relaxed her grip, before Lena remembered that she had legs and that perhaps Kara would put her down eventually, she toyed with the fabric of Kara’s collar, ran her thumb along her chest. It was tiny and it was hers.

“What did we just do, Lena?” the hero sighed, worry lacing her words.

“Don’t— Just... Stop thinking.” Her hands moved to Kara’s cheeks. To her jaw. Lena’s eyes moved to Kara’s lips and she felt a palm grip her hip a bit tighter. “I just want to...”

Kara gulped because she knew what was happening. Gone was the urgency and the fear that drove her forward just moments before, and replacing it was this familiar kind of memory that made her gulp, though not turn away from the girl she held against the fridge.

Instead, she let Lena kiss her, soft and gentle and very much like she was drunk atop the water tower. But it happened, and she was sober, and it was much better than Kara could remember, which was turning to be a problem in her life more and more lately. It was the lethargic, solid kind of kiss, one that would stop her in her day, that would distract her for months to come. It felt normal. It felt regular, as if it could happen every other day for the rest of forever.

“Just what I was afraid of,” Lena sighed, smiling devilishly. “Perfect.”

“Oh Rao, what are we doing?” Kara groaned, finally dropped her hands, finally pulling away, finally reminding herself of real life enough to escape the magnet that seemed embedded in her brain with the partner somewhere in Lena’s.

She took a few steps away and refused to turn back. She ran her hands over her face and took a few breaths to try to center her thoughts and self, though neither seemed able to be calmed. She wasn’t the kind of person that just did... that. She wasn’t someone who didn’t think somewhat. She didn’t just... She didn’t... But Lena.

With a tiny bite of her lip, Lena watched it happen, almost enjoying how very different and similar Kara had turned out to be. Still a mystery that she felt like she understood and didn’t question, it was the perfect ratio of divine and human.

“Don’t look at me like that,” Kara accused, taking another step back.

She saw bruises on Lena’s neck, saw the bruises of her lips and liked it too much for her own comfort.
“Calm down.”

“I’m calm.”

“You seem it.” She earned a glare, but Kara relented, finally taking a seat on the couch. “Do you want some wine? I know it won’t take the edge off… well, it will for me.”

All she could do was shake her head and hide in her hands perched precariously atop her knees. Hunched over, she just kept shaking her head, wondering how she became this person who did this, and what in the world she was feeling. They were friends, once.

Now she just…

…against the fridge.

Lena drank the first glass quickly before refilling and finally taking a seat. She just stared at her friend and wondered if she was, wondered where she learned all of those things she’d done. There was a bit of jealousy and amazement mixed together.

“I’m sorry, Kara,” Lena finally mumbled. She fiddled with her glass. “You have no idea how much I’ve tried to… I don’t know. Make up for leaving… to try–”

“I’m sorry for… all of… that…” she gestured toward the kitchen and then at the girl who huddled on the opposite corner. “I didn’t… It just… I had a lot of feelings pulling me very thin, and I never meant to– It was just… it was honest. I wanted to be honest.”

“No, no, believe me. That was… yeah. Something I’ve… dreamt of. I mean. I think I got the point. Very honest. Yeah.”

“Yeah?”

“Definitely.”

“Oh, okay, yeah, Okay,” Kara nodded to herself, pushing her glasses up on her nose a bit against the nerves that came from Lena’s smile and her current position. “Still, I didn’t mean to be so… forceful. And I just… We were friends for a long time.”

“We were. Best friends,” Lena agreed. “But we were always a little more, weren’t we?”

There was always a time for honesty, and Kara knew it. She clenched her jaw and took a deep breath, suddenly very powerless against those eyes and those lips and the smell. She’d forgotten how Lena always smelled, like that good perfume and the smell of a breeze, of this strong gentleness over this very earthy, very real rain and grass and everything pure and nice. It made her mouth go dry as she wrung her hands.

“We were always something. You were all I had at some points. For the important stuff. The moments that mattered. You were the person I wanted around, even when I wasn’t doing anything. That was who you were to me.”

“Do you think you’ll forgive me for leaving?”

“Yeah.”

A little flutter caught her ear and Kara cocked her head slightly, catching Lena’s smile which she hurriedly hid in her glass.
“Do you think we can be friends again?” Lena tried after she stared at her wine and avoided oceanic eyes that were an awful kind of comfort.

“It’s hard.”

“Yeah,” she nodded and gulped.

“My parents, my… real parents… I don’t remember them fighting often, but when they did, I remember asking them if it meant we would lose our family. My father told me that would never happen, because everything gets difficult at parts. Just because it’s difficult doesn’t mean it’s impossible. Friends. More than friends. I don’t know. It’s been hard. Now it will be easier eventually, right?”

If there was anything impossible, Lena knew it was exactly what they were skating around. Improbable and Impossible. But Kara gave her hope, and it was cruel of her to do.

“Are you sure you don’t want wine? I need more wine,” Lena decided, sitting up quickly, afraid of those eyes and those cheeks and those words and suddenly how she felt like she was just an idiot and Kara was sitting in her apartment.

Just a few weeks ago, she resigned herself to a life, and now… The world was upside down again, just as she chained herself to the mast. Nothing was helping though. She was heading for the shore and she knew it.

“Um… no thank you. But maybe… food?” Kara ran her hands along her thighs as she stood, just as nervous. Reacquainting was foreign and hard. To know someone completely, and yet feel as if they were a stranger was daunting. She hadn’t planned on it.

“Help yourself. If I’d known you’d… you know… I would have gotten more. I don’t– I just moved in officially.”

“How could you have known I was going to swoop in and… well… that… you know…” Kara cleared her throat and stared at the fridge door before gently opening it. “Sorry.”

Sheepishly, she stood there and held the door that broke off. Lena chuckled as she tucked her legs under herself and looked over the back of the couch with a fresh glass, happy with her diet of liquid courage.

“You’re back in my life for five minutes, and breaking everything already,” she laughed as Kara took something out and then carefully put the door back in place. “You’re still cute. Did you know that?”

“I’m still? Um. No. Wait. I didn’t mean to break it… It was… your fault,” Kara stammered, grabbing two spoons as she dug through the drawers and sat on the couch again. Her chest was on fire, and the ice cream felt nice.

“My fault?”

“Here, you have to eat something.”

“Ice cream?”

“I still know you, Lena Luthor,” Kara smiled. “And no matter what, you always have a stash of ice cream. Always.”
The hero handed over a spoon and gave a confident look, knowing full well that she was right, and still knew little parts of Lena Luthor that even the owner of the name refused to acknowledge about herself.

“But how is it my fault?” she asked again, smiling at the offering and digging in herself.

“I just saw you, and I couldn’t– I felt a lot of things, and that was the first thing that popped into my head and then I remembered how nice it was to kiss you so I kept doing it and then things just… happened.”

It all came out in a blurt, but Kara rambled and waved her spoon around until she could control herself enough to take a bite and shut up. Still amused and with the faintest tips of her ears burning, Lena smiled to herself as she dug for more ice cream.

“You just saw me,” Lena nodded and smiled to herself, oddly victorious at that description.

There wasn’t time. There wasn’t anything at all. As simple as digging through the freezer and finding the ice cream, the just picked up, as if nothing had changed. It was effortless, and it was accidental, but that didn’t stop them from talking, from tiny apologies laced throughout, from tinier assurances that everything was okay, that they understood, that it was stupid, that they were quietly overjoyed with finding each other again.

It wasn’t forgotten, what happened against the fridge. It wasn’t mentioned. Instead, it just hung there, and they were stuck to the couch like friends should be. Neither objected to it, but both knew that there were many things that had to happen, things to discuss, time to be made up for now that the horizon suddenly seemed a little different.

Kara was distracted with Lena’s lips, now that she was able to properly appreciate them. She wanted to appreciate them more, and often, and she wanted to appreciate that noise she made, that deep kind of hum and purr and plea that came when she kissed Lena’s neck. And she wanted to appreciate the soft skin her fingers found just below her breast when her hands slid under Lena’s shirt. Kara was distracted with entirely unfriendly things about her newly found old friend.

Somewhere at the bottom of the pint, Lena touched Kara’s thigh. It was something she’d done a thousand times before, just a brush, a way to get her to keep telling the story, a gentle squeeze and a nod, awaiting more. This time she let her palm stay there.

“I did, I embarrassed myself pretty badly. I don’t know what I was thinking,” Kara laughed and shook her head, tossing her spoon in the empty container. “James was just nice and a good distraction at a rough time, with the whole Supergirl thing, and I didn’t know he had a girlfriend.”

“I think I’m a little hurt now,” Lena mocked. “You never even asked if I had someone else before so rudely kissing me.”

“You don’t.” Kara blanched slightly at the quick rebuttal.

“Oh? Do tell, Ms. Danvers.”

“I mean,” she gulped and looked away quickly, adjusting her glasses. “I just… I would have known You… There… I didn’t find– what I mean to say is… I don’t have anyone. I just. That was months ago.”

Lena couldn’t take it. She inched forward and took the glasses off of the hero’s face before rubbing her thumb along her cheek, over the indents they left on her nose.
“You kept tabs on me? I’ve only lived here for a month.”

“Kind of before that. Not in a weird way. I just mean. I heard things. I saw the papers. I just. You were always there… and I assumed. I hadn’t meant to. I shouldn’t have assumed. You disappeared, and then when you took over in Metropolis there were things. I tried not to see. I didn’t want to see.”

The longer her mouth moved, the more difficult it got to actually say something without saying too much, and Kara absolutely hated it. Concise. One day she would understand what that word meant, and she would be it. It probably wouldn’t be near Lena, though, she decided.

“I googled you a time or two,” Lena confessed. It was the wine. And it was Kara’s dimples. Her damn face and lips. “Usually after a few glasses of vodka and a stressful day.”

“So we’re mutually stalking each other?”

“It would appear so.”

Absently, not sure how it happened, but taking it anyway, Kara felt Lena’s hands on her shoulders, on her chin as they laughed.

“James Olsen, huh?” she ventured, a weird kind of tightness behind the words.

“I’d gotten pretty good at being an assistant, and then he showed up, and I thought he saw… me. You know. Kara, me.”

“He didn’t?”

“I don’t know. I didn’t want the real answer.” Kara played with the hem of Lena’s shirt, focusing so intently on it, to distract her fingers and her eyes.

“What about me?”

“I think you see a lot,” Kara confessed.

“Are we friends who kiss now? Because I’d like to show you how much I see you.”

“Friends that… Um. We… I mean I. You want to… Me?”

Lena bit her lip and nodded. She didn’t know what else to do, and so she waited until Kara got out all of the words and finally decided a nod would suffice. When she did, it was more than enough. She’d caught up Kara’s career and life and worries and laugh, and now she wanted more. Lena was selfish and a glutton for such things. And so she knit her eyes shut and she kissed Kara. She kissed Kara, and only Kara.

Somehow she felt the bookshelf against her back, and that was now her new favorite fact about Kara that she’d never known; her apparent love of pushing people against things and making them squirm. It was a wonderful hobby, in Lena’s opinion, though she considered herself biased, and in no way eager to share the news with anyone else.

And so she decided to try it out for herself, pushing Kara against it as well, and though a few inches taller, it was a delicious kind of feeling to have a whimper leave the indestructible being’s lips.

The sound of a vase hitting the floor made them both laugh and jump, their hearts already racing
violently, too violently for anything to startle them much more. Kare met Lena’s eyes and pushed the hair from her face before ignoring the mess, picking up her and holding her hips until her thighs clenched around her own waist to avoid the shrapnel.

“You’re a bull in a china shop,” Lena muttered, rooting her hands in Kara’s hair.

If she only got this, this one night, this moment, she wasn’t about to stop.

To accent her words, Kara’s body falling onto the couch caused a bit of a crack and creak which she looked up from sheepishly. But Lena ignored it. She could buy a dozen new couches, and she might never have Kara like this again.

“This is the water tower all over again.”

“It was always slightly crooked,” Kara tried to defend herself with a smile as her shirt disappeared.

There’d been the couch. And the cushions. And the floor. The wall, and the counter and the fridge. Lena ached in the best kind of way. She learned how to make Kara giggle, and she learned how to make her swoon. Right there in her living room, she found herself growing closer to the stranger despite her heart telling her it was crazy. It was fast and slow at the same time. It was so far removed from the real world, it was safe and welcomed. It was coming home. It was seeing the sun after years.

Each time a thought emerged, she swallowed it. Because it was Kara. That was enough to calm her. It was Kara. Years of pulling away had formed a difficult to break habit. Months of self-imposed social flagellation made her wary of good things. A lifetime of leaving made her completely unaware of how to stay. But it was Kara.

“How do you ever leave this?” Kara moaned as the water ran down her hair and shoulders.

The air to the bathroom grew muggy as they decided to wash away the past few hours, to rehabilitate themselves, when Kara destroyed everything else, when there was no more ice cream left.

“I spend more time than I will admit in here,” Lena promised, taking the other spray of warm water for herself. “Sold me on this place, honestly.”

“It wasn’t that.”

“What was it then?”

Kara tilted her head back and Lena watched her enjoy the water, watched her smile, watched her stretch slightly, all of it strictly for science.

“The balcony. You like reading outside too much. I used to find you wrapped up in huge quilts on the porch in Midvale, trying to study in winter.”

“The shower didn’t hurt though,” Lena smiled, resting her arms on Kara’s shoulders. All she wanted to ask was how they got to be naked together, but it seemed like a topic that was better left
unmentioned.

“Not at all,” she sighed, her hands moving to hips, moving to ribs.

The night kept happening, and neither took any notice. They had a warm shower with an unending supply of hot water and nice smelling soaps and nakedness. There was enough of that. Kara liked that a lot.

It was all too easy to talk to Lena. It was like picking up the phone and just talking with someone who knew, who didn’t need a guide, who knew which questions to ask, who knew when to prod and when to wait. It felt as if she’d just been collecting things to tell her.

“First Dad, which was… It’s hard to rectify the guy who played princess with you as someone who blew up a building and tried to blow up another. It just… There’s no excuse,” Lena shrugged.

There was so much honesty, that Kara knew it was real, that it was hidden from wayward reporters and the likes of National City. And she knew it would be, deep down. For about four years straight, Lena got disappointed and beaten up and she grew up quick and hard and exposed. It was not difficult math. As much as she thought she knew the girl who kept her clothes coordinated and her schedule tight, there was no denying that they had changed, that Lena was different, that the quiet, defensive girl grew into a strong, independent, and very, very skittish woman.

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“I walked into one of Lex’s meetings with the team. It was a specially trained, almost super soldier program. Mech suits and such. Plans for the future, to kill aliens.”

It’d been so long since she told the story, or thought about it. Kara’s fingers helped, massaging through her hair as they lathered the shampoo and she closed her eyes.

“I told him to stop, and he wouldn’t. First it was Superman, and then… he knew there was another Kryptonian, he knew there were more… I tried to turn him in, contacted everyone I could, but he had his fingers in every pot. I couldn’t watch it happen, and I couldn’t do anything. He started cutting me out after Dad went to jail. He got so distant.”

“I know,” Kara promised, tilting her head back slightly. All of her focus went to the words and being so gentle Lena hummed and felt good. It was a lot to balance.

“My mom, and then my dad, and then my brother. I didn’t have many friends growing up. It was hard to find a good balance, but I always had them.”

“So you left.”

“I did,” Lena nodded, her jaw flexing slightly. “I started a small, research firm, under our umbrella, and kept them out of it. Relocated, travelled for a bit. I hated them, for what they were doing, for making me powerless, for making me leave. But I had to. I had to get away. I had to be away from the planning to kill… you. He would have found out so easily. I knew that if I left, he would stop following me, stop trying to find you. He knew I was lying, I think.”

“If there’s one thing I know about Lena Luthor, it is that she is never powerless,” Kara promised, kissing her forehead after she finished.

“I don’t know about that,” Lena smiled, small and there. “The trial did a number on me.”

“My sister killed my aunt who wanted to kill everyone,” the hero shrugged and turned to face the spray. She braced her hands on the wall and let the heat and steam billow around her.
“You had an aunt?”


“That’s a bit… twisted.”

“I just mean… things do a number on all of us. It’s what comes out of the wreckage that matters.”

“Yeah?”

Kara didn’t miss the quiet hope in her friend’s voice. She didn’t miss the feeling of hands moving up her back. They mingled with the water and they faltered along the ridges of her spine, but still they tried to traverse the distance. She hung her head and let them explore because it felt better than anything anyone had ever done to her and it was just so darn simple.

“You could tell me more about it,” Lena offered.

“I will. But that feels so nice. I can’t think.”

“How about this?” she changed her method a bit, from gentle touching, exploring the contours of a rather muscular back she’d dreamt of touching, Lena ran her nails slowly down Kara’s shoulders and back. She earned a moan.

“Did you know I used to pretend things were way harder than they were, just so I could put my head down and you’d always reach over and scratch my scalp, like gentle and soft, without even looking up from your work.”

“Seriously?”

“All of the time. Like, school was hard for me, but only because I looked at things different. It wasn’t impossible. It felt like knowing calculus and being unable to do basic subtraction. But I played it up a bit, and you always just did it. It reminded me of my mom. Alex says I’m part puppy. I need ear scratches and belly rubs.”

“I can’t believe I fell for that,” Lena snorted, leaning closer. She kissed back and she kissed shoulder blade. “I know that you used to like it when I scratched your back. But I never noticed…”

“My personal record is six. The night before finals when you were writing that paper on… the North African Campaign of World War II.”

“Now I know.”

“I bet its so innate you couldn’t stop if you wanted,” Kara chuckled and swayed slightly.

“I don’t want to stop,” Lena shrugged and pushed against the naked girl in her shower. “Do you want me to?”

“No,” she breathed as Lena tortured her.

The door bent, the glass held, the tiles cracked slightly. Soon enough there were puddles on the floor and spare towels tumbling to the ground. But not one inch of it mattered. Lena wondered if this was what coming out of the wreckage looked like. She never thought it was even an option, since she was the wreckage.
“What?”

“You do this thing, in the mirror. It’s… small. Absent. You always run your ring finger along along your lip and you… you do this thing,” Kara smiled to herself and shook her head. “It sounds silly. You cock your head and you give yourself a little nod. I remember seeing your mother do it a few times. I just never thought to say anything.”

Lena met her eyes through the mirror before smiling to herself, her heart swelling a little at the memory. Kara ducked her head a bit and once more pushed her hair away, so it wouldn’t drip completely on one shoulder. Quickly, she let herself get caught up in surveying the office and library Lena put together down the hall from the bathroom.

Books were everywhere. Stacked on every inch and every corner, it was a sight, it was a place Kara wanted to spend days. Lena shifted in the mirror, stretching her neck and looking over the purpling bruises forming before sneaking a look at the cause of them.

The old shirt was almost tight on her shoulders, but Kara still gratefully accepted it and a pair of sweatpants. They dressed facing away from each other, distracted with the intimacy of it, oscillating between being brazen enough to make the other come, and suddenly remembering that they were unsure of how they felt about the other.

“You were going to tell me about the aunt, and the saving the earth,” Lena reminded her when it grew too quiet.

“Not one of my finest moments as Supergirl,” she shrugged, dragging her hand over the heavy wood of the desk by the window. “I understand the problem with family and duty though.”

“Can you at least tell me about the night you saved me? Before you were the entire city’s hero, you were mine, and just Kara.”

“Oh, um,” Kara swallowed and cleared her throat before taking a seat in the big leather chair. “It wasn’t… It was easy. I just… I was out, and I thought I heard something–”

“Because you can hear things from far away?”

“Yeah.”

“How far?” she asked, curiosity usurping any kind of polite boundaries they managed.

“I don’t know. Very far.”

“Isn’t it… loud? Distracting?” Lena worried, leaning against the desk as Kara fiddled with a pen.

“Often,” she nodded. “But I’m good at focusing, blocking it out. There are sometimes markers. Things that perk me up. Things I don’t realize I’m listening for, but then I catch a whisper and listen harder.”

“Like what?”


“Oh.”
“Yeah, um, I… I heard you scream, and then I flew and I saw you, and the brakes were cut. All I remember doing was slamming myself down and trying to make the car stop. It was the first time I lifted a speeding car.”

“Quite well, I might add,” Lena offered.

“And I broke the door off the car,” Kara remembered, blushing and hiding in her hands, embarrassed by the display. “I was so worried… I almost forgot that part.”

“You were a bit less experienced than now. Still impressive,” the CEO promised.

Antsy hands moved to hips first, to thighs second. Kara watched her fingertips against pale skin before glancing up at the eyes of the owner.

“I never meant to become Supergirl. Back then, maybe I did. But then I just… I understood what Clark would tell me when he said it was a lonely job, a lonely life.”

“Do you regret it?”

“No, of course not. I just… I’ve always wondered if what I was born to do and what I want to do are not the same things.”

“You’re asking a girl who was probably born to some teenage mother who left her the second she could sign papers who somehow, out of luck or chance or fate, got picked by a family who gave her the world, and then took it all away in an instant. Trust me,” Lena chuckled slightly. “I understand it on a very, very personal level.”

“I love being Supergirl.”

“I know.”

“I just think I get kind of lost behind her.”

Kara sighed and toyed with the edge of a tshirt. Legs slid around her as Lena sat on the desk, trapping her between them as a very willing prisoner.

“Will you tell me about Krypton?”

“If you want.”

“I really do. Does it hurt?”

“I don’t talk about it much, actually,” Kara shrugged. She ran her thumbs over Lena’s shins and held her calves before kissing her knee.

Lena ran her hand through Kara’s wet hair, scratched her scalp and earned a bit of a hum as a nose ran along the skin of her thigh.

“Whenever you do, I’d like to hear about it. Maybe learn some Kryptonian physics.”

“The tutor becomes the tutored.”

There was nothing but city outside. Night was there, the hour was late, and not a thing could have been done about it. Lena wanted to mind, to see what time it was, to see what her life should have been, and yet, when Kara kissed her other knee, she couldn’t find that urge again.
“I always wanted to tell you that I thought you were beautiful, but I never could for some reason,” Kara whispered, laying her cheek on Lena’s thigh. “I thought it every single day, and I got close. I just… I’d stop.”

“We had a lot to lose back then. Or we thought we did, or we did actually lose it despite our attempts. I don’t know. But I get it.”

It felt quiet, the words they were saying and the hour of the night. Their voices grew softer, more honest. The truth was the truth at any volume. It was more forceful at a whisper between lovers when the stars were yawning and the sun was stretching.

“Would it have changed anything? If I’d told you that? If we’d… tried?” Kara ventured.

Her answer came in the form of Lena sliding into her lap, straddling her in the office chair. It came in the way that Lena’s smile was soft and warm and altogether her’s.

“It would have been more difficult, hurt more, but I think it would have had to happen the same.”

“Yeah. I think so, too,” she nodded, quite seriously.

Lena kissed her. It was soft and warm and vaguely minty from the shared brushing of teeth and grooming and pampering. Kara chased lips and she pushed against the desk because it was the kind of kiss that someone should have chased down like a greyhound.

“What are we doing, Kara?” Lena begged, her voice becoming worried.

“I don’t know. But this has been the best running-into-an-old-friend incident that I can remember.”

It wasn’t an answer, but it was enough for the moment. Like the speeding car, like a train on the tracks with no brake, Kara placed her on the desk and heard the monitor to the computer hit the ground. When she tried to apologize, she just earned clawing hands, and forgot a second later.

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In the bed, the big bed, the large, comfy, monstrosity of a bed, where all was dark except for the faintest stars who burned bright enough to be seen through the skylight and the fire that crackled in the corner, the two found themselves wrapped up and satisfied as much as they could hope to be after going thirsty for so long, and suddenly happening upon an unending well.

Kara stretched and smiled into Lena’s stomach as her pillow shifted her hip just a bit to accommodate the stretch. Fingernails dug into her scalp in that soothing kind of way that they were known to do. She inhaled the smell of the sunlight and the stars and the bubbles from the shower that left them wrinkled and lazy.

“Where did you learn that… you know.. With your tongue. That was…” Lena purred and shifted her hips once again.

“Um… that was kind of… my… powers?”

“Sign me up for that. Twice daily. Forever.”

“I’ll try to fit you in,” Kara taunted, earning a growl of complaint.
Lena closed her eyes and ignored the stars. She focused on the hand pressed flat and palm down on her rib. She focused on the dimples from the smile against her belly button.

“I’m sorry I left.”

“I was mad. I’m still mad. But I get it. You don’t have to be sorry.”

“You can still be sorry about something you had to do.”

“You don’t have to be sorry to me though,” Kara murmured. She closed her eyes from pure exhaustion and breaking in multiple rooms in Lena’s apartment. From her entire day. From the soothing way she felt safe and at peace because Lena was there, and hadn’t felt in so long it was now a quick fix and awfully addicting. “What are we doing, Lena? We were friends.”

“I think you know what we’ve been doing. You started it.”

“I’m serious,” Kara worried, sitting up slightly. She fret with the edge of a sheet and she rested her chin on sternum.

Hair messy from the shower and being tugged in the office, light from the fire and the stars and the city making mismatched shadows on her face, Lena was certain she’d never seen anything so beautiful. It definitely didn’t help.

“We’re getting to know each other again,” Lena tried.

“We never knew each other… like this… you know.. Biblically.” Lena laughed despite herself, only adding to the blush.

“It took me exactly two hours after leaving you that morning for me to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that I was terribly, completely, ferociously in love with you, Kara.”

“Oh.”

“And you were my best friend, and I would have kept that forever. But I couldn’t. And I couldn’t watch the news because I was afraid I’d see you. I was afraid Lex would find you. And then I was afraid someone would hurt you. And then came the trial, and I was certain I looked like them, like… you would think I hated you, or helped them. And then I just wrapped myself up in my tower and hoped to never see you again because it was so much easier to not feel things like this.”

Kara listened to the words, heard the heartbeat pick up with the confession, heard the voice strain with the honesty and with the nerves that came from such notions. It was deafening, the quick drum-like quality to Lena’s heartbeat in that moment.

But Kara recognized the words as one’s she would have said. And she kissed her ribs, kissed her chest, kissed her neck, kissed her cheek and listened and desperately wanted to take away the pain and the anguish of all of the weight that the body belonging to Lena Luthor must face on a daily basis just to exist and support itself.

And the words kept coming, despite Lena’s desire to rip her own tongue out. She couldn’t help it, and Kara’s promises and quieting didn’t help. And it didn’t help when Kara confessed how much it hurt, how much she missed her, and how they felt different, new.

Perched atop Kara’s back not an hour later, after new stars moved in and the fire burned low, after they’d muddled through their worry, after they made the physical kind of reassurances that were quickly becoming necessary to breathe, Lena kissed between her shoulder blades. That part was
easy. The soothing. The touching. The honesty part was like slicing open her veins.

“You have always been the most terrifying being in my universe, Kara.”

“Me?”

“I had answers. I could run, I could buy whatever I needed. You… you just… All you want is me, and I’ve never thought that was enough.”

“You obviously haven’t met Lena Luthor then,” Kara chuckled and closed her eyes, the warmth of the girl as her blanket soothing her aches and pains away. “I don’t remember who I was before I met you.”

“What are we doing, Kara?”

“I don’t know. What do you want to do?”

“That’s the question, isn’t it?”

“Mmm,” Kara hummed.
they basically just hang out naked in their sex-fueled aftermath and bond in that way you only can when you spend a significant amount of time locked up with someone away from everything else.

“Dammit, Kara,” Lena growled from the living room as she tripped over something.

The culprit smiled to herself before taking a sip of her coffee and resumed her amused appraisal of the absolute wrath to which she’d exacted upon Lena’s poor refrigerator. She cocked her head and tried to figure out how she did, and even more impressively, how Lena survived it.

“My bed is snapped in half,” the CEO finally made it to the kitchen, carefully around the remnants of her bookshelf. “It looks like I was robbed.”

“Yeah, I have a bad track record with beds,” Kara nodded, not surprised at all.

“How do I explain this to Francine?”

“Who’s Francine?” the hero cocked her head slightly like the RCA dog.

“Well… she’s my…my housekeeper kind of.”

“Wild rhino attack?” she shrugged, handing over her coffee cup to the CEO who leaned against the counter, surveying it all as well.

“I can barely walk,” Lena muttered into the drink, not taking her eyes off of her kitchen, knowing full well what her words would do to her friend.

“I didn’t–you’re not– that–” Kara sputtered, taking a double glance at the girl beside her who so casually said such things. “You’re… not hurt?”

“The good kind of barely walk. Trust me. I think it has more to do with sheer quantity than force.” Kara blushed slightly, a little proud of herself. “Ten years of sexual tension could literally destroy my apartment,” Lena realized. “Thank goodness you didn’t wait a day longer and I try to work out occasionally.”

“I’m sorry.”

“I think it’s sexy as hell. No one’s ever wanted me enough to break my appliances.”
“Ugh I don’t know what came over me,” she groaned, hiding in her hands.

“Me. A few times.”

“Lena!” Kara blanched before a fiercer blush overtook her.

“Just give me a warning, so I can buy sturdier furniture next time.”

“Lena,” she complained again.

“If there’s going to be a next time,” Lena shrugged smiling into her cup as she took another sip, enjoying the squirming and stammering in the girl beside her.

“We’re late for work.”

Kara pushed her hair around on her head, tucking the mess of it behind an ear. She looked at Lena and saw her in much the same state. The loose shirt barely covered her hips. Her hips betrayed bruises and hickeys, marks mimicked on her neck and chest. The alien felt almost proud at the galaxy she created.

“Want to be a bit later?” Lena asked, setting down the mug and sneaking a grab of Kara’s ass. She sprinted down the hall, hurdling the mess on the ground as she giggled as the hero chased her, catching easily.

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Never before had Kara called off work. Never from both of her jobs. She never meant to, either, until she was faced with the prospect of leaving Lena’s penthouse, which proved completely impossible and utterly terrifying. If she left, she wasn’t sure she’d come back, wasn’t sure she could stay away. The past six weeks had been a flurry of feelings that left Kara oscillating between what she knew and what she thought she wanted. What felt faded in three years, was suddenly on fire.

Since the moment Lena Luthor’s face appeared on television in National City, Kara became that girl in the hall who couldn’t speak. And when she had to go to that meeting Cat set up, she felt all of the anger boil up, while at the same time, this kind of happiness just to be near her again. And then she read the article, and she realized she’d been afraid of Lena never knowing who she really was, potentially being like her brother. Hating her, and that was too much to comprehend.

But Lena wasn’t, and she was good, and despite time, they still had a comfort together, an ease, this unmistakable kind of space that felt made for them. Friends would have been acceptable. The benefits weren’t terrible though.

So Kara couldn’t leave, just let it all swirling around, so undecided and all over the place. Her brain had enough of it to last her a lifetime.

“It’s just not fair,” Lena complained. “You eat so much and yet… these.” Her hands ran over Kara’s abs, the muscles contracting slightly with the tickle her gentle fingertips gave. “I’ve never seen you work out ever. I’m in the gym every morning. I run marathons. I… I scored 3 goals in the state championships… and I don’t have a single ab. And you…”
“How long have you been waiting to do that?”

“So long.” she moaned and touched the skin there more, enjoying the feel of it.

Kara ran her hands along Lena’s thighs that now straddled her on the mattress that resided on the floor courtesy of the night before. The sheets were a tangle, half covering, half twisted around what they could. She let her own body be explored. Clenched against gentle hands.

Never before had Kara let herself imagine this moment. Or the previous moments, or any of the moments. Surely her heart would have exploded, or she would have never been able to stop running from sheer energy, if she’d thought about the way Lena felt in her hands, or the way she liked her hips kissed, or the way she tasted, or the way she giggled when Kara ran her fingers along her spine, or the way her breath would hitch just before she–

“What are you thinking about?” Lena whispered, smoothing the worried wrinkles of Kara’s forehead.

“How did we get here?”

“I did an interview…” The CEO earned a look and sigh before she realized her jokes were unappreciated for the moment.

“What are we doing?”

“I think what we were always meant to do.”

“You can’t leave again.”

“I know,” she nodded. “I did it to protect you.”

“And I get it… but, we’re… I don’t know. I can live without this… naked… things. Just…” her hands grabbed at Lena’s thighs in her nervousness. “I like having you in my life. I’ve missed having you in my life. I need you in my life, in even the smallest capacity. So I just need you to know that.”

The smile was small, but it grew. Lena watched the girl beneath her, the one who could throw a pick up truck to the moon but couldn’t swear to save her life. She leaned down and kissed her, because it was better than any promise, and it was so much easier than actual words.


“Yeah, um, yes, yeah,” Kara swallowed and tilted her chin. “That sounds… that. Yeah. We could. I mean. Yeah.”

Lena sat up again only to pull the shirt over her head. It went somewhere in the room while blue eyes grew wider and stared up at her. She bit her lip and placed her hands on Kara’s ribs, enjoying how it felt to be there, to feel the ribs expand with a deep breath, to feel the glow of a blush appear deep in Kara’s chest.

“I’m not going anywhere, Kara. I know it doesn’t mean anything now, but it will,” she promised. “Leaving was the hardest decision of my life, but I… I wasn’t me. I wasn’t anyone, and I was trying to do the right thing. I’d do it again, even without the promise of this moment.”

“Mhm,” she nodded.
“You can’t hear anything right now, can you?” Lena shook her head and rolled her eyes.

“What?”

Lena smiled and watched Kara stare at her. She felt very seen, very real, very adored, and so she smiled and ran her hands over her own chest, enjoying how much it made Kara’s eyes pop.

“Just have at it,” she chuckled.

“You can’t do it again,” Kara realized quietly. “I mean it.”

“Since I was seventeen,” Lena reminded her.

“We can handle ourselves and each other, from whatever comes up. But we don’t run away. If we do this, we do it. We’re not strangers, Lee. This isn’t new, and it isn’t old. It’s both and neither.”

“I’m not scared,” Lena lied, though it was not a lie about her fear of physical pain. She genuinely was terrified of what loving someone else could mean or do to her. That was the most terrifying force in the universe, and of that, she was certain. But she wasn’t afraid of what Kara was talking about, so it wasn’t a complete lie. One day, she would tell Kara she was afraid to love her, not because she didn’t, but because it was scary to be vulnerable and weak and to love. But for now, she knew that Kara somehow already knew, and kept her secret for her.

“I am,” Kara whispered.

“Good thing I’ll protect you then.”

“Good thing,” she chuckled and sat up slightly, kissing Lena’s sternum and melting into her.

The entire day was a mix of sex and take out and remembering and reacquainting. Never before, had Lena not gone into work, not opened her email, not wanted to check her phone, not cared about the price of a stock or the delay in the new prototype from Level Three. The entire day passed, and she fell in love again about a hundred times. Never before had she spent so many consecutive hours with one person. Never before had it felt so nice. Never before had she not wanted to leave. Never before had she spoke so many words, about so many feelings, so honestly.

Somewhere between the burgers and the chinese food, between finding that sweet spot that made Kara unable to speak and the other that made her giggle so hard she couldn’t breathe, between arguing about some memory and dreaming up some future, Lena found that little bit of herself that remained hidden after it all, after the trial, after her brother, after leaving. The littlest slice of what she remembered to be the idealistic, optimistic girl who won state.

They napped, woke up and kissed, lazed, napped, and forgot to pay attention to movies. It was a marathon of being together in the best kind of way. The only way to reconnect, in her humble opinion. She was grateful they put off separating, not because it simply delayed the inevitable, but because it was time that she needed to catch up.

By the time the early winter night rolled in, and the sun set in a quick kind of sunset that barely let anyone have time to adjust, Lena was ready to sell everything and never leave her apartment. It was
safe there, they were them, there.

Only when Lena went to order pizza, did Kara decide to go shower, citing the raging smell of sex and yesterday’s house fire that still lingered even though Lena couldn’t smell it. It was a reprieve without meaning to be, a break without trying, though both needed to catch their breath. The CEO tried to straighten up what she could, though the damage to some of the furniture was well beyond repair.

She gave up and finally opened her laptop, deciding to at least see if anything was burned to the ground or if her world could survive her absence for a day. She knew deep down, that Kara had used her shower as an excuse to check in with her sister, with her friends. It made her smile to think of the stuttering that would accompany that explanation.

“I think we broke the shower door,” Kara mentioned, as she toweled her hair and made her way back into the living room.

Lena noticed a change in her, the inevitable Kara that came out despite herself. She didn’t stay mad, couldn’t even. It was against her nature. The CEO knew it would take time to get her trust completely, but just having that, the lighthearted, the kind, the good natured person who made her smile with just her love of terrible tv and complete lack of knowledge of anything sports related, all of it was enough. It was all borrowed time she never thought she’d get.

“That one was me, I think,” Lena remembered as she scrolled. “Mmm, you smell good.”

“I feel better. Did you know you left a… there’s a… mark“ Kara stuttered slightly as she took the seat on the couch beside Lena, half leaning across it to lean her head against her arm. “On my… butt.”

“Yeah, I knew. I did it myself. You weren’t complaining–”

“Ugh, Lena,” she complained and hid in her side, burrowing against ribs. “I looked less beat up after fighting a white martian. No! Don’t! Stop looking so smug.”

“I can’t help it.”

With an exasperated huff, Kara pulled herself up and watched Lena work for a few minutes. She kissed her arm and inhaled her smell. There on the couch, they sat, Kara half flopped over, making it hard to type, but still, warm and comfortable. It was easy, it was quiet, it was like they were eighteen and Kara avoided homework while Lena let her distract her from her own.

“We have to talk about this.”

“I wasn’t going to go to this event,” Lena shook her head as she perused the email.

“I mean…us… what we’re doing.”

“Oh,” she nodded, slowly closing the laptop as the words came out.

“There’s just a lot,” Kara explained. “We are friends. Were friends. I don’t want to mess anything up, which is why this… us. You know. And between us, and you, and my job, my side job. We talked earlier… and just… Who we were, and-”

“And my name.”

“No, no, not that. I don’t… I don’t care about that.”
“It has a certain ring to it nowadays,” Lena acknowledged.

“A good one.”

“Kara, if you don’t… if this is all we get, just a day and two nights, then that’s fine. I’m not going anyw—”

“No, wait,” she sat up a bit. “I’m not saying we shouldn’t do… whatever it is we’re doing. I like it actually. I think you were right, when you said we were always something. I’m just saying that we need to talk about it. I’m not going to do this if we can’t talk about all of that stuff. It won’t work. I have to be able to tell you the truth, and you have to want to tell it to me, no more secrets to protect each other. We do it together.”

“I don’t really like talking about things,” Lena reminded her friend.

“I know. But that’s my condition.”

For a moment, Lena pondered the situation. She’d made deals before, but none felt as important as this one. She thought about her parents for some reason. Her mother would have told her to give whatever she could, fully, because that was all that she could do. Her father would have pointed to his orange jumpsuit and told her that was what love got.

“Alright,” she grit. “What do you want to talk about first?”

It was terse and layered, but it was the best effort she could make, and Kara knew it. She wasn’t going to make it difficult, to drag out everything at once, but she had to see if this was even an option. She picked herself up, unable to hold her smile in, and kissed the CEO.

“Pizza. It just got in the elevator.”

“At least I know I can distract you with food,” Lena giggled as Kara covered her in quick, sloppy, happy kisses.

“We have as long as we want to figure it out. So long as I know you want to.”

“You’re going to kill me.”

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The pillows were all warm. The bed was in shambles, with the sheets every which way from the almost two days of inhabitants, but neither seemed to notice or care too much of the state of such things. The only light came from the city and the moon, the fire and the stars. Bathed in the chill of the night and the flames that cast them orange, the bodies adjusted and ebbed together, slow and steady, quiet and very much singular.

Every action had a reaction. When Lena kissed Kara’s neck, she earned a nudge with a thigh. When Kara held Lena’s chest too rough, she earned a bite. It was simple science and it was the only kind of math either could be interested in ever learning.

“You would have really loved it,” Kara whispered, smiling softly as Lena ran her nails up and down her back lazily. She felt Lena’s breath against her shoulder and skin and tried to remember it.
“An advanced alien planet with beautiful inhabitants like the one in my bed right now? Yeah. I think I’d be a fan,” Lena promised. “I wish I would have asked about it sooner. I read some of Lex’s information on it. It sounded amazing.”

“I was always proud of my name. Your name reminded me of it. The way you would say Luthor with such pride. That was what it meant to belong to the House of El.”

“So you were like a princess?”

“No, no, we didn’t have a monarchy. It was more of a… what’s it? With the group of people ruling?”

“Oligarchy.”

“Sure,” she grinned. “Seven ancient families sat in the council. Beneath that was the… kind of like Congress. Except it was just one elected council. And then we had the tribunal for any matters that might need settled, but were not of consequence to the majority of the inhabitants.”

“Complex.”

“It was simple. We kept to ourselves, and we rarely had problems. No one needed laws. It was all about fairness and equity.”

“Tell me about the noble House of El?” Lena asked, watching the fire from the fireplace play across Kara’s face. All was peaceful, all was right with the world.

With a long inhale, Kara smiled and tried to think of when to start. She decided the beginning was apt enough. And she told Lena everything. Told her about the tribes, about her name which was as old as the stars, which meant Of the Stars, which meant that they believed she was born of dust and particles long before even Earth or the sun existed. In undefinable awe, Lena listened and laughed when Kara laughed, and made a million notes in her head, to try to memorize this history, because it was Kara’s history, and because it was important to her, because it was her’s.

Kara told Lena about her father, about the way he would let her sit on his shoulders during parade days and celebrations. About her mother, and how she had nice, warm hands when it was cold, who always told her not to eat so much fruit from the trees in their yard, and yet Kara always would, earning a stomach ache. She told her about the smell of the city, the taste of her favorite meal, the noise the kreof made when they flapped and welcomed the dawn by the lakes, the feeling of being normal, and not breaking things if she wasn’t paying enough attention. It all just came out, stored up and ready to be heard, ready to be shared so eagerly.

From her spot, Lena ran her leg up Kara’s while she spoke. She held her neck, tucked hair behind her ear, watched the way her face changed as she tried to pinpoint a moment, a sense, and share it as accurately as possible.

“Your parents would be very proud of who you became,” Lena promised. “You bring honor to the House of El.”

“There isn’t anymore House of El,” she shrugged. “Our motto was ‘Of the Stars, To the Stars,’ or at least that’s as close as I can get it. It means--”

“From our past, to our future,” the CEO offered, earning a nod.

“To the stars. That’s where I am right now. To the future. I try not to dwell, too much.”
“There’s a difference between dwelling and remembering.”

“There is,” she agreed and kissed Lena, just because she could, just because she was happy, just because Lena got it. “Now it’s my turn.”

“We’re taking turns?” Lena asked, cocking her eyebrow, humming as she leaned forward and kissed her friend yet again, wrapping her arms around her neck and into her hair. “I don’t think I signed up for that. Tell me more about the particle accelerators and the theory of interdimensional visualization.”

“I was like ten when I left,” Kara shook her head. “I only know a tiny bit of science. It’d be like asking a third grader to describe Newtonian principles.”

“Yeah, and?”

“Such a nerd,” she chuckled. “We’re getting to know each other again. I want to know all of it.”

“You already know all of it.”

“You, Lena Luthor, are a multitude of beings wrapped up in a very beautiful package. On any day, you are a thousand different thoughts and ideas and sometimes you do this thing, where you say something, out of the blue, but it’s the end of a conversation you’re having with yourself. So I’m very lost. It used to bug me, and I’d make you explain, and the trail was wild, but now I just like seeing what pops out.”

“You missed me, didn’t you?” Lena murmured, running her fingertips along Kara’s cheeks, skating over cheekbone. It was even quieter than their quiet.

“Every day,” Kara sighed, sweet and warm against Lena’s cheek as she closed her own eyes and burst apart at the seams with the feeling of hands on her, creating her, forming her.

“I missed you. I missed this.”

“We didn’t really, uh… do this. Back then.”

“I know. I mean I missed talking to you. You have a peculiar way of seeing the world. It always… it made me stop and see things a little differently as well. When I was away, I would find myself having these moments that I wanted to tell you about. Like, one evening I found myself wondering if my biological mother ever sat on a bench and read a book as I was doing. It felt like a very Kara question to ask, or think. You altered my brain, and I liked that. I called it my heart-shaped glasses view.”

“The ones from the funeral?” Lena nodded.

“You look at the world in a very interesting way. Evidently you look at me with those kind of glasses.”

“I missed you,” Kara smiled and repeated, giddy at the words. Her hands ran up Lena’s hip, toyed with her shoulder blade, stilled there.

“Even though I hurt you?”

“Anyone who could hurt me like that was going to leave a huge hole. Of course I missed you. I missed how silly you were, I missed that no one else knew it. This sounds ridiculous, but I always felt so cool to be in your club.”
“My club?” Lena snorted.

“Yeah, your club. This kind of group that always forms around you. People liked being near you. You were aloof and so darn cool. And then, you’d ask me if I wanted to leave, and you’d put on your leather jacket or sunglasses, and tug my hand, and I just felt… I don’t know. I got to know you. You picked me to be around. It was a badge of honor. Everyone knew you, but only I got to know you.”

“Well, I wanted to kiss you, duh.”

“And yet you never did.”

“You scared me.”

“I did?” Kara opened her eyes finally with the admission.

“Kara, I moved across the globe to keep you safe. I betrayed my brother. I turned my back on my father. I did those things because it was right, but also because of… because they wanted to hurt you,” Lena shook her head and adjusted her leg, lifting it higher, until it eclipsed Kara’s hip. “You are terrifying.”

“I just didn’t kiss you because you were so pretty.” Lena chuckled and let Kara roll her over, let her settle atop her and kiss her neck before lazily sliding lower. “What are we doing, Lena?”

“If we ever leave this bed, and maybe go out, I’d call it dating.”

“Can we be friends, too?”

“We can be everything,” she promised. “It’s your turn.”

“Right. My turn. The big questions.”

Pondering deeply, Kara used her time to rub her nose against Lena’s stomach. She liked the feel of it, not hard, not too muscular, soft and warm, it clenched when she breathed against it, earning an almost giggle.

“Did you ever try to find your biological parents?” Kara asked, lazily toying with the slope of Lena’s thigh and knee.

“How come you never asked me this stuff before?”

“I don’t know,” Kara shrugged. “There are things you can ask someone when you’re naked that you can’t when you’re clothed. We’re a little more bare, now, aren’t we?”

“It’s easy,” Lena realized.

“So?”

“I tried, I did,” the CEO finally confessed. “I hired a few different investigators to see if they could find anything about me, but no one could before the adoption. I don’t remember anything. Not one thing, or if I do, I guess it’s mixed in with my family.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara cooed, kissing stomach and ribs and hip, all slow and lazy and in no rush at all.

“Oh well. To the Stars, right?”
“Well, why don’t we make up a history?”

“You can’t make up history. That defies the point.”

“Trust me, sometimes the truth is the worst. But what would you want your history to be?” she asked as she sat up slightly, intrigued by her own idea.

“Kara, that’s silly.”

“Fine. I’ll give you one,” she decided. For a long while, Kara thought and debated, seriously considering it all. It was serious business, to invent someone completely.

“Your mother’s name was Evelyn. She went by Evie. She played piano and danced, and I mean danced, like if you saw her dancing, you’d think it was why music was created. She wasn’t the most perfect, but she looked like she just enjoyed life, like she figured it out. And she had your hair, and I bet when she was dancing it looked like yours when you get done running. Do you remember? Like after practice, it’d be all sweaty and curl in little spots, fly away all over the place.”

“I’m a terrible dancer,” Lena reminded her and closed her eyes as her hand moved over Kara’s temple.

“Oh yeah, you are,” she agreed. “Because you inherited your father’s two left feet and sense of rhythm. But also his green eyes. And his brain. Your mom knew how to hotwire a car, how to pick a lock, practical things. Your dad carried around a notebook in his pocket and filled it up with numbers and ideas and calculations. He was a dreamer.”

“He sounds very dorky.”

“Oh yeah, he totally was,” Kara chuckled. “That’s where you get it from.”

“Ah,” she laughed. Kara adored hearing it, listening to her diaphragm move and jostle with the amusement.

“And they met in the laundromat.”

“At the bar,” Lena decided.

“At the bar,” Kara agreed. “She was dancing, and he saw her smile, this brilliant kind of one that you get, like when you don’t realize you’re smiling. It looks like you’re breathless. And that’s how Evie looked the night Philip saw her. He was intense. And he had those eyes, and this soft kind of allure. He was a book waiting to be read.”

“She approached him.”

“Definitely. He was way too shy, though he spent the entire night trying to get some courage. He wasn’t going to miss his shot. And when she did, he was super honest. You get this honest streak. I know the Luthors taught you a lot about maintaining average and even keel, but you’re sometimes poetic, and you don’t mean to be, which is my favorite. I imagine that was Philip. Just blurting things out and not batting an eye at it while Evie marvelled and blushed.”

“He wrote poetry.”
“Oh yeah,” Kara decided, sitting up slightly, smiling as Lena joined her. “He wrote poems every day. Worked as an engineer, and his engineer buddies would call him—”

“Neruda.”

“Neruda. Because he wrote love poems non-stop. He would dream in poems, and Evie would nudge him in the middle of the night to keep him quiet. Philip would recite the entirety of Howl to her belly when she was pregnant.”

“I like them,” Lena decided, tilting her head to find Kara watching her as she dreamt of her imaginary parents. “What?”

“You’re smiling just like how I bet your dad smiled when your mom told him he was going to be a daddy.”

“Kara,” she rolled her eyes and hid her face slightly, laughing at the idea. “You’re really committing to it.”

“If you’re never going to know, why not reverse engineer them?”

“Still.”

“They had a tiny little starter house out on the edge of town. Not much of a yard, but enough for a toddler at least. She liked to drive through richer neighborhoods, and they’d dream like we’re dreaming right now, of when’s and how’s and if’s.”

“Mom taught dance and Dad hated people who put an ‘s’ on anyway.”

“Naturally.”

With a hum of approval, Lena adjusted her hips and formed a tiny picture of the people that must have created her. In all reality, they could have been something completely different, but maybe Kara was right. Maybe they were good, honest people who were madly in love and had hobbies and a home and a hope for the future.

“They were in love and happy and wanted me.”

It was a question and an answer, all rolled together. Kara swallowed and ran her thumb along hip bone.

“So in love, unbelievably happy, and they wanted you so much,” the hero promised. “Phil read all of the books he could find about babies. Evie painted a wall in the nursery and made him buy her lots of beets because she craved them all day.”

Lena grew quiet and thought hard about her question, which she had to ask, which Kara knew she had to answer.

“What happened to them?”

With a small gulp, Kara took a deep breath.

“On the night you were born there was an accident. It was no one’s fault, it was just fate. And the doctor’s saved you.”

“I knew that story wouldn’t have a happy ending, and yet it still hurts,” Lena muttered. She pressed her hand against her chest and heaved a heavy sigh out with all of the anger and worry. She had a
nice story now, and she appreciated Kara’s effort.

“What do you mean it doesn’t have a happy ending?” Kara asked as she sat up slightly and looked over at the girl who finally relaxed against the blankets. “You’re here. You overcame an accident of fate, a ridiculous IQ, a stint as the best friend of an alien, multiple degree programs, and own your own company, and are currently naked, with aforementioned alien. You have a home, you have… you had food in your cupboards,” she amended as she considered her answer, earning a chuckle. “I mean, the story isn’t over yet, but I think it’s pretty happy. It certainly has potential.”

“You’re skating over a few parts.”

“Yeah, well… My story involved a literal exploded home planet and multiple attempts on my life, but I’d like to think it’s a happy story,” she muttered, earning a tiny tug, a tiny desire for her to be closer.

Lena gave her a kiss because she didn’t want to argue, and because she knew Kara would win. Kara always won, and it was infuriating still. Instead, she kissed her because it was kinder and she was right.

“Thank you for my parent story.”

“It was alright?”

“More than alright,” she promised and kissed her hero again, because the truth was that her heart was bursting, and she didn’t know how to express it. The truth was, that even if it wasn’t true, it didn’t matter at all. She found a girl who would give her an entire history, and that was something.

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“You’ve never thought about it?”

“About what?” Lena furrowed, taking her seat on the counter as Kara went to work making them food.

“A future.”

“I can barely handle the present, let alone the past,” she shrugged and plucked a grape from the bunch Kara set out. “Haven’t gotten a jump on the future just yet, Ms. Danvers. Someone threw me against my fridge and had their way with me, and I haven’t been able to even leave my house since.”

“Everyone dreams about their future,” Kara disagreed as she managed to find something resembling food to get them through until they could decide on dinner. Or Breakfast. Or whatever eating at four in the morning was.

“I haven’t had time.”

“You have time now.”

“Why do you want to know?”

“I don’t know,” Kara shrugged, obviously lying. Lena stared at her legs that poked out, long and
lean from her own old shirt. She swallowed slightly at the sight of a recently sexed Kara Danvers in her kitchen.

“Tell me.”

“It’s a thing, people ask each other, when they date. Or go on dates. You know. What are your goals, what do you want from life, who do you want to be. Those kinds of things.”

“Oh, well. I don’t date much. And when I do, it’s usually only one or two. I guess we don’t get… to that…” Lena realized, perplexed by the answer. “Which date are we on?”

“We haven’t been on one yet.”

“Right, right. Can I have a pass until we’re on at least date number three to figure out a five year plan?”

“Think you’ll get that many?” Kara teased, slathering bread with peanut butter.

“I am very confident that I will.”

“I’m just curious.”

“You know what they say about that trait,” Lena warned with a sigh. “Honestly, Kara, I haven’t thought about it. I know we used to dream, but that was when we were kids. I got sucked into this, and you got… you reached your calling. Our plates are a little full.”

With a nod, Kara listened, but didn’t buy it. One of her favorite pastimes was to think of tomorrow, of the following year. It kept her going, it kept her reaching for something. And Lena used to be the queen of dreaming.

“I’m just curious what might have changed since we were teenagers.” With a movement, she handed over a PB & J.

“Everything,” Lena answered quite honestly.

“Yeah,” Kara nodded, oddly saddened by that news, though she instinctively knew it. “But also not much. It’s a weird balance. You wanted to start a punk band, and you wanted to run with the bulls.”

For a moment, they both chewed and thought. Lena crossed her ankles and observed the alien in her home. She earned eyes back at her and a small smile.

“Fine. What do you want to know about my future?” she relented a second later.

“Close your eyes,” Kara instructed, putting down her own sandwich. She tilted her head until Lena rolled her eyes and relented, sassing the entire time. The hero took another bite before waving her hand in front of the CEO’s face. “Okay,” she decided. “Now, I want you to actually allow yourself to think of a future.”

“I plan for the future,” Lena opened her eyes and fiddled with the crust of her sandwich.

“Close your eyes.”

“I have multiple investment accounts and retirement plans, as well as property and an exit strategy from the company, plus personal wealth accumulated through—”

“I’m not talking to you as an accountant,” Kara groaned and shook her head. “You’re so practical
sometimes.”

“Well, I have to make some adjustments to the projections if my furniture keeps getting ruined by a sex-craz–”

“Nope, stop,” the hero warned with a smile and mouth full of peanut butter and jelly. She placed her hand over Lena’s mouth until she felt the smile form in her palm.

Standing between the legs that sat on the counter, Kara gave her eyes, those eyes, the ones she knew would be super effective and wear Lena down to do whatever she wanted. She hoped they were still what she remembered.

“Fine,” Lena mumbled and closed her eyes once more.

“Okay. Alex made me do this, before I became Supergirl. I couldn’t figure out what to do after college,” Kara explained, standing up a bit straighter. Lena took another bite innocently. “You just answer the first things that pop into your head.”

“Ohay.”

Hair a mess, tossed all over, shirt hanging off a shoulder, legs bare, bruise on her neck, Lena looked perfect. Kara wanted a picture, she wanted to engrave it in her memory. Instead, she just kissed her sweetly, innocently, quietly, quickly.

“Sunshine. Sunlight. Those big fluffy clouds that make shadows but not enough to blot out the sun. Mostly, sunshine,” Lena rattled off with a grin before taking another bite, oddly proud of herself. “This is easy.”

“We haven’t started yet,” Kara giggled.

“Damn. Well, that’s my answer.”

“We’ll start simple.”

“Are you going to tell me what you want from life, too?” Lena asked, peeking slightly as she squinted up her face to keep it a secret.

“Yeah, that’s how we work.”

“Okay,” she smiled and relaxed her features. “Let’s go.”

“Where is your dream place to live in five years?”

“Hm. Right here?” Lena ventured, furrowing at the thought. She really thought about it, realizing that she honestly hadn’t thought about anything like that when she signed the papers and bought the penthouse. “I don’t know. I’d like a house one day. I like living in the city, but I miss having a yard. I’d like a yard.”

“A house with a yard,” Kara repeated, already enjoying this. She watched Lena actually think about it a little more, actually let herself want something. Her face furrowed as if she were solving logarithms.

“I really like those doors that you can open the whole way, like that leads outside, so the walls are windows that you can pull back and then it’s like your house is open outside. I’d like that. Doesn’t that sound nice on a summer evening?” she asked, opening her eyes and grinning excitedly. “I
stayed at a villa on the coast of Morocco. It had windows like that. And in the afternoon we could open them so the breeze came in. And I want lots of trees. But a lemon tree especially. And one of those with pink flowers.”

“Cherry blossom.”

“Yes, that,” she nodded eagerly. “And the one with the big white flowers.”

“Dogwood.”

“Yes. I like those a lot. Lots of flowers in this yard.”

“See? This isn’t too hard to imagine,” Kara chuckled as Lena realized she’d made up an entire future home with little effort at all. “A house that is open, a big yard, lots of flowers. Seems manageable. But I meant did you want to stay in National City.”

“Oh.” Lena swallowed and flushed slightly. “Oh! Oh. Yes. I mean. I like this city. We moved so much that no place ever felt like home. Except here. Plus, I still own the Hawks. And… I don’t know. They have yards here, right?”

“Yeah, I think so,” the hero laughed and ran her hand along Lena’s thigh, assuring her, calming her. “Close your eyes, you’re defeating the purpose.”

“Right,” she nodded eagerly, closing them again, almost enjoying Kara’s experiment.

“What about for work? What do you want to do?”

“Does it have to be what I’m doing now?”

“Of course not.”

“I love what I do. I’d kind of like to sell it though. Start over. Get rid of everything and start from the ground up. Really make something of my own, if that makes sense. I don’t know how to do it, but… I think I’d feel better. To shed away Luthor Corp, or LexCorp, or LCorp. I’d call it something not as narcissistic.”

“Sounds like you did actually think about that quite a bit. That sounds nice.”

“Yeah?” Lena asked, not opening her eyes this time. Kara kissed her again. “Sunshine. Like, when you’re underwater, and you can watch the light move and dance on the top.”

“That wasn’t part of it.”

“Right, right,” she grinned and shrugged. “I don’t know where all of that came from, my answers. Maybe I really was thinking it all along.”

“Maybe.”

“Maybe it’s you.”

“Probably,” Kara agreed easily. “So you’re going to get a house with a big yard and lots of trees. And you’re going to start your own business after saving your family’s legacy.”

“Yes.”

“What about pets?”
“Hmmm,” Lena thought about it hard, pictured her pretend house, her pretend work. “I’d like to be a boss that had a dog they brought to work, but I imagine I’m a bit of a cat person. I’ve never had one though.”

“Never?”

“Nope,” she shrugged, opening her eyes to steal another grape, missing the perplexed and oddly horrified look on Kara’s face. “What?”

“Never had a cat or a pet?”

“Pet, so both.”

“Oh, dear,” Kara breathed, shaking her head. “You can make up for it. Let’s go get a cat right now.”

“As very gay as that is, I don’t think now is the time.”

“You could get both, you know,” Kara smiled at the dismissal before taking another bite.

“They shed and lick and just… have smells. I’m not sold. Maybe I’ll start with a fish.”

“Yeah. I’m sure in five years you can work your way up.”

“Exactly.”

Kara wanted to ask her more, but she saw the furrow and the thinking that was happening with another chew of the sandwich, and so she simply waited, because oddly enough, that was all Lena needed usually.

“In my big yard, it’d be nice to have a big dog though. You know, one of those really big, massive, floppy kind of dogs that’s whole body moves when he shakes? Maybe a cat that naps on the porch in the sun. That sounds good, right?”

Kara put her hands over Lena’s eyes until she felt them close and smiled to herself when she won once again.

“It does sound nice.”

“Do they come with names, or do you get to pick? How does that work?”

“That’s an entirely different conversation,” Kara reminded her. “You know, I think it’s just a little ironic that the alien has to be the one teaching you about Earth customs.”

“Big floppy puppy. I wish you could see what’s in my head. It’s kind of nice,” Lena murmured, ignoring Kara’s jibing.

“I have an idea,” the hero promised. For a moment, she watched Lena enjoy the thoughts before she decided to close her own eyes and picture it. “Okay, so it’s a Thursday evening. You just finished a meeting at work, at your new firm that does… something brainy, and you open the door to your house with the big trees. The doors and windows are open, the lights are on, the breeze is drifting around. The big floppy dog shakes and stretches in the yard while the cat completely ignores you.”

“And the fish has no idea what’s happening on the table,” Lena interjected.
“He’s still alive?”

“Oh no, probably not. But it’s twelfth or so replacement.”

“Of course,” Kara smiled and toyed with Lena’s thighs, felt hands move to her shoulders, keeping her close. “What else is happening in your house?”

“Hmmm,” Lena takes a deep breath and really things, really pictures it all. Pictures herself petting the big dog with floppy ears that she doesn’t know the name of, pictures the cat do one of those yoga-like stretches, pictures the trees in the sunset. “Dinner is being made. And I drop off my bag. And little arms wrap around my leg and greet me, before I– Holy fuck, Kara! I want kids. Oh shit.”

With a start, Lena opened her eyes and jerked slightly. Kara gripped her legs and kept her grounded.

“That’s not the end of the world.”

“I don’t like this,” Lena decided, shaking her head quickly. She looked quite shaken at the notion, as if it was very foreign and very different than what she anticipated herself dreaming.

“Lena, it’s okay to want that.”

“Do you see what my family did to me? No way am I doing that to a kid. No way will they have to be Luthors. And I went through twelve fish!” She argued, looking away, distracting her worried fingers with picking another grape and studying it intensely before taking a bite. “You can’t give someone who killed eleven fish a kid!”

“You don’t even have a fish.”

“I don’t even have a fish!” she repeated, her shoulders tensing up in a permanent shrug. “Can’t have a kid with no experience.”

“Stop freaking out, Lena, please.”

“I’m not, I’m just saying. That should be a requirement. No fish, no kid.”

“Lena…”

“I never thought about kids, okay,” Lena lied and shook her head until Kara stilled it, lifting her chin with her knuckle, trying to find her eyes. “I don’t… You’re way more effective than my shrink I pay a lot of money for.”

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“You don’t have… you know… with her. Do you?”

“No.”

“Good.”

“This isn’t funny,” Lena complained, oddly tired from the session, emotionally exhausted from the past day. All of her shock and surprise ran down her arms as she relaxed, defeated by her own psychosis.

Kara shushed her and held her closer, gently chewed the last bite of her own sandwich and murmured through a peanut butter lisp that it was a long time away and she would be an amazing mother, that she shouldn’t worry, that she hadn’t meant to scare her, that it was a beautiful dream, that it was an attainable dream. Lena just took a deep breath, smelled the distinctly Kara smell that
made her feel at ease, the mix of sun and wildflowers that lived in her skin.

“Who was making dinner?”

“What?”

“In your future,” Kara tried, letting Lena lean forward and place her forehead on her shoulder. She ran her hands up Lena’s back, splayed them, covering as much space as she could. A head just lulled against her shoulder, hid in her neck, groaned in complaint, mumbled when lips found skin.

“Who was making dinner?”

“I don’t know,” Lena lied, her sigh making Kara’s skin turn to goose bumps.

“Tell the truth. It’s what we do.”

“Maybe it was you. Maybe it was Neil deGrasse Tyson.”

“Probably the later.”

“Probably,” she admitted quietly.

For a moment, Lena just hugged Kara’s shoulders. She closed her eyes and hid there, oddly alarmed at suddenly having an idea for the future. Just like that, Kara Danvers around for a day, and she suddenly had her dreaming and thinking and hoping, infecting her with her ideals and desire for better. It was exhausting to someone who had worked so hard to perfect the demeanor of complete nihilism. She spent the past few years working so hard to shove all of her desire and want and hope down. Now it burst like that geyser she remembered from a trip her sixth grade summer her parents decided they needed.

“Want to know a secret?” Kara smiled into Lena’s neck. “I’m an amazing cook.”

“You’re not helping my newfound anxieties about my newfound future.”

For a moment, Kara just chuckled and soothed Lena’s shoulders, enjoying the closeness, enjoying the effect she still had on her.

“A house on the corner,” she mumbled, moving her hands to hips. “A blue door. I like that. Colorful. Cozy. Very comfortable. Lived in, not too perfect. A fireplace. I like fireplaces. Maybe an old house. One that needs work so I could paint it all kinds of fun colors. A dog and a cat. I’m a reporter. But like, a real reporter. One who does work and isn’t afraid of her editor. One who has experience and integrity. And on Sundays, we don’t leave the house. We eat outside and the dog and cat beg because I like to sneak them table food. When I come home from work, little arms grab my legs too. And you have your hair up, kind of messy, and you’re wearing my old, painted up jeans, rolled up on your legs. And there are little hands clinging to your shirt while you sing some song and check something in the oven.”

“Oh,” Lena swallowed.

“It’s always been you, Lena.”

“Oh.”

“I wanted to know if we had a shot. If we had similar… you know… goals. No sense in this if… We have history. I wanted to see if we had a future.”
“Do we?”

“I could live with lots of flowers and a fish as well, if that’s all we get,” Kara grinned.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah.”

“To the Stars,” Lena realized.

“You’re not freaked out, are you?”

“So much,” she chuckled, still slightly dazed at the imagining and the idea of her life. She suddenly had to get a fish when she was only just kidding about that part. It was a lot at one time, the fish being so low on her list and yet suddenly necessary. She wanted to not fixate on it, but it was the safest place to focus.

“I don’t want it tomorrow, Lee,” she promised, pulling away enough to rest her forehead on Lena’s. “I don’t even want it next year. I just want it one day. We haven’t even been on a date yet.”

“We still have to do that?”

“Oh yeah,” she nodded, earning a smile. “A lot.”

“I don’t want a fish.”

“Okay, no fish.”

“Alright,” Lena nodded. She wound her arm around Kara’s neck and shoulders and kissed her tamely. “I might not be good at this whole five year plan thing, but I do have a one night plan right now. Do you want to know what it entails?”

“Sure.”

“Take me to bed. I’ll show you.”

Chapter End Notes

as always find me at coeurdastronaute.tumblr.com
Honey, when you kill the lights, and kiss my eyes
I feel like a person for a moment of my life

The dream ended, in a way. The balcony door opened, and Kara walked out, giving Lena another kiss before taking off and rejoining the world. It was probably the scariest moment of her life, she realized, because suddenly the future was very unfamiliar, and she found herself with very high hopes. The last time she had those pesky things, was a lifetime ago, when she was just seventeen and in love with a girl who smiled like a summer noon, who laughed at Lena’s silly ideas and dreams, who cried when she was happy because it was too much to contain. And now hope was back in her, and Lena didn’t know what to do with it.

The dream became something new, something better than thirty-six hours locked in a penthouse, which didn’t seem altogether possible, because thirty-six hours was perfect.

Flowers were waiting on Kara’s desk that morning by the time she got into the office, complete with a box of cupcakes that were beyond anything she could remember. It made her slightly giddy and it made her blush. And when she told Lena that in a text, all she got back was a polite, good, with a wink.

The dream became something different entirely. It became a reality. And suddenly, she was getting phone calls from Lena Luthor. Suddenly, she was texting her, meeting her for lunch, avoiding her sister’s questions.

Reality was even better though.

“It shouldn’t be weird, right?” Kara fret, smoothing her dress in the mirror. “This date.”

Her empty room didn’t answer her, and her reflection was less than assuring, but still, she kept repeating it. The farther she got away from that dream night just a few days ago, the more she doubted herself. But then Lena would text her, or flowers would find another surface in her easily crowding office.

“We’re friends. Who kiss,” she nodded to herself in the mirror, asserting her answers as if they made sense. “You’ve liked her since you were in high school. You know her. You… don’t want to mess this up because she’s so damn beautiful and smart and… she’s just… It’s going to be alright.”

The knock at her door made her jump. She took a moment to give herself a final once over and catch her breath.

“She’s right. You were always something more. She likes you. Likes, likes you. And you… You… you really like her.
It wasn’t much, but it was almost enough. Enough to at least push her through her apartment toward the door. She now found herself living on this thin line of constantly being blown away that Lena Luthor was around, that she liked being kissed, that she was exhumed from a graveyard of memories, and the other side being how to not mess it up.

“Goodness gracious, you look…” Kara swallowed let her sentence trail off in search of some better word than beautiful.

“No no, you look,” Lena shook her head and had the same kind of goofy grin on her own lips. It lasted just long enough for her to appreciate her friend, just long enough for her to lean in and steal a kiss to calm her own nerves. “You look amazing.”

“Thank you,” Kara blushed.

“I used to get really jealous, when I’d help you get ready to go out with that… who was he? The quarterback?”

“Jack.”

“Right,” Lena smiled.

“He’s a podiatrist now. Nice job, nice house back in Midvale.”

“And you’re going out with the likes of me,” she shook her head and earned a smile. “You missed out.”

“I’d like to think I was waiting around for a late bloomer.”

“Nothing has described me better. These are for you.”

Flowers jutted out and Kara shook her head and softened at the gesture.

“I’m running out of space to put all of these flowers,” she sighed, gesturing Lena into her apartment, a feeling she hadn’t expected to feel so bare. “You don’t have to keep sending them.”

“I know. My assistant keeps reminding me. I like your place,” she nodded, taking it all in eagerly. “It is very you.”

“Normally there aren’t this many flowers. Your assistant is the one ordering them?”

“She refuses,” Lena shook her head and smiled. “After the tenth bouquet.”

Kara dug for another vase, which she could not find and instead moved onto a pitcher, but when she found them all in use, moved on to a bowl. It was a sight to see, but she smiled and touched the petals while the water ran and Lena meandered through her apartment.

There were pictures on the walls, painted ones. There were paints and brushes in a small sink. There were windows that opened up to the entire world. Lena let her fingers trail along the soft fabric of couch cushions before she felt invasive and turned toward her date who did her best to arrange the flowers.

“Your assistant refuses your requests? I wish I’d thought of that when I worked for Cat Grant,” Kara realized. “I didn’t know that was an option.”

“Jess tries to keep me on the straight and narrow,” Lena shrugged. “Plus, I may have gone a bit overboard. Call it… sentimentality or even making up for old times.”
“You don’t have to send me flowers.”

“What about the cupcakes and take out?”

“I mean… that doesn’t hurt. I’m not going to say no to that,” she grinned. “But there’s nothing to make up for.”

“How about just because I like it?”

“That’ll work.”

“I will tone it down though. I’m afraid soon you will run out of bowls.”

“I hadn’t expected you to show up, is all,” Kara explained. “I hadn’t expected any of it.”

“That’s good, right?”

“We’ll see.”

With just a hum, Lena grinned and earned another kiss. The smell of flowers and the taste of the day lazed in the room and she didn’t care at all, because Kara laughed and kissed her before their first date, and it felt like a long time coming.

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CatCo was always a busy place, always full of life at all hours, no matter the normal schedule of the rest of the world. There wasn’t an afternoon din, there wasn’t a morning lull. Life happened quickly, the news evolved at an alarming and exponential rate. It was part of why Kara loved it so much. Everything was diverse. She got to investigate things that mattered, to give a voice to the voiceless, to help, to do it all as Kara Danvers.

With a quick check of her phone, the reporter-in-training made her way out of the midday meeting that strategized the evening stories and made notes for the editorial meeting in a few hours. Her own story seemed stalled, and she debated scrapping it, though she wasn’t there just yet, she felt it looming.

Weaving through the office, she adjusted her glasses and fired off a few texts, scrolled through a few emails, her stomach murmuring to itself in disinterest of her current career objectives.

“Mmmm, pencil and notepad, sleeves rolled up. I get the whole reporter feel,” a familiar voice interrupted Kara’s internal listing of what her day would consist of for the next few hours. “I like it.”

“Lena!” she smiled and lost her breath, her list going right through the window. “How’d you– What are you doing here?”

“I had a meeting across the street,” the CEO shrugged and smiled warmly before surveying the office. “Thought I could try to steal you for a quick lunch. Ask you on another date, if the last one went as well as I thought it did. Are you too busy? I didn’t mean to impo–”

“No! No, you didn’t,” Kara assured her. “I like the surprise of it. It’s welcomed.”
“I know you have that article, about the school system, but I figured you could save public education after some hot dogs from the park. It’s so nice out.”

Still with a little bit of unease, still slightly nervous at the display, Lena stood there before Kara and smiled. It was a sight for the reporter to take in, and it was one she very much enjoyed. Normally so purposeful, this Lena was oddly dependent on someone else, dependent on an answer, set herself up to potentially have a surprise backfire, and yet she still showed up anyway.

Gone were the sheets and sweatpants and messy hair, and in its place was the prim and proper Luthor heir. Both were Lena, though, and both lived in the single soul. Kara was eager to learn them all.

“I could use some fresh air,” she hummed, taking the few steps to her desk where she tossed her notebook and pen before grabbing her coat. “You are full of surprises, Ms. Luthor.”

“I was going to cancel that meeting, but I kept it just to come and see you,” she admitted as Kara held her arm and laughed at the admission. “That’s twenty minutes I’ll never get back. So I’m putting a lot of pressure on this lunch.”

“Just how I like my relaxing, strolls through the park.”

Lena wasn’t wrong, that the weather decided to quickly turn to spring, no longer dragging out the wait of winter. Kara stretched her neck out slightly and toward the sun, enjoying its warmth on her skin and Lena’s voice in her ear. It was a perfect day, a perfect way to spend a few stolen minutes.

Unsure of where they were in their well-undefined relationship, Kara didn’t hold her hand. She couldn’t make herself because above all, they both understood propriety and privacy. There were enough looks from strangers at the CEO, and the reporter picked up on her slight change. It was the same difference as Lena when it was just them versus the Lena at lunch in school.

But they got their food, they snagged a bench, and they became almost anonymous in the park surrounded by tall buildings and that spring sunlight that wanted to be warmer but was limited by time and space.

“I think I’m just stuck,” Kara confessed. “There’s a story somewhere there, I’m just too… I don’t know. I can’t get there. It’s the same thing as every other Problem With Public School Funding article, and I want to find some better way…”

“Maybe we could have a working dinner tonight?” Lena offered. “I have a few things to go over. You could run over what you have with me.”

“That sounds actually perfect. But I kind of have patrol tonight.”

“Oh, right. I forgot about that part,” Lena furrowed and adjusted her legs, picking at imaginary dust on her knee.

“After though. I mean. I could get done early. Pick up something good, and come over.”

“No no, it’s fine,” Lena promised. “We can do it another day.”

The sunlight wove through the tops of trees. Kara held the cone of fries between them and let Lena steal a few. For the briefest of moments, the hero wondered how many vacation days she had banked from the DEO. The 401k was lackluster enough.

With just a small tilt of her head, Kara snuck a glance at her friend and smiled despite the little bit
of lead that settled in her stomach. It wasn’t enough for her to finish eating her hotdog. Or most of Lena’s.

“You won’t get done with work til about six, right?” Kara offered, earning a wagering nod. “Why don’t I pick up some food after my first round, and then we can eat, and I can get a few things done before I head out.”

“Kara, tonight isn’t going to work.”

“No, it can,” she insisted. “I have a first round, and then Winn will be on the scanner. I can probably get two hours, and we can eat.”

“Listen,” she smiled sweetly and took a deep breath. “You have about six million things on your plate. I’m not going to be one of those things that stresses you out, or that you have to fit in. It was just a thought.”

“I do want to see you. This was the best surprise.”

“I know,” she shrugged, nonchalant. “I have a trick or two up my sleeve.”

“Are you busy this weekend?”

“I think I have an event Saturday night. Friday is dinner with some of the girls from my old team. Some, still wanted to talk to me.”

“That’s awesome!” Kara smiled widely at the news, hoping her spin would make Lena a little less apprehensive. “That’s going to be fun.”

“I am excited to see them again. Kelly has me play on her rec league team from time to time. I think I might make it official. Get me out of the office more.”

“I’m all for that.”

“I figured,” Lena rolled her eyes and pinched Kara’s side. “I do have to prepare for a trip to London next week. Start packing and go over my itinerary with Jess.”


“Yeah,” she nodded, biting her straw and distracting Kara with her lips. “I’m presenting on our new motor that will leave almost no footprint and make distance rail travel much quicker. I might stay an extra day though. There’s a firm there doing amazing work with bioengineering skin for burn victims. It’s fascinating. They’ve cut the healing time down. Do you know how?”

“No, how?” Kara grinned, enjoying the geek that shone through the expensive dress and jewelry.

“Tilapia. They use fish skin. Then, they don’t have to keep changing bandages every day. Makes it less painful and a quicker healing process. How cool is that?”

“ Seriously?”

“Yeah! And the director emailed me about coming to see. I think they need money, but I am ready to buy it sight unseen.”

Her excitement was catching. To see Lena talk about something that inspired her or amazed her was almost a rarity, but there she went, and Kara hung on and tried to keep up as best she could, instead of being attracted to the science, being completely enraptured by the way in which Lena
explained between bites of her hot dog.

“I love it when you start buying entire companies that aren’t for sale.”

“Fish skin, Kara,” she groaned, so excited about the prospect. She ran her hand along Kara’s thigh, squeezing it absently with her eagerness.

“Aquaman could be your partner,” the hero chuckled.

“Do you—” she lowered her voice. “Do you know him?” Lena’s eyes opened a little wider.

“We met in passing. Clark was working with him.”

“I have so many more questions, but I have to form them properly,” she realized, fiddling with her straw as she surveyed the park.

Kara shook her head and adjusted her glasses, knowing full well that an entire conversation about the underwater hero was looming, including especially the topic of Atlantean technology. It would probably be interesting. It would probably rival the hypothetical about who would win in a fight, Supergirl or Batman. Kara enjoyed Lena’s ramblings on the subject.

“We can’t have tonight, but how about this Sunday we do the whole work-free thing, with a little work. I want to take you to that record shop I know you’ll love, and maybe brunch. I’ll make dinner. You can impress me with your presentation. I’ll hopefully finish my article by then. You can give me an exclusive…” She rambled slightly, hoping to sell it a little, hoping to redeem that guilty feeling she had for not being able to take up that offer for tonight.

“Was that a… did you just make an innuendo?” Lena almost couldn’t believe it, unable to stop herself from laughing at the display. She earned a bashful smile and nod. The bitten lip sealed the deal for her.

“I might have.”

“Sunday it is then,” Lena decided eagerly, nodding and settling back on the bench. Her lips curled into a smile as she bit her straw again.

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Still slightly jetlagged from her trip, Lena had expected an easy night after leaving work somewhat early. The entire day had been a headache. Not enough sleep on the red eye back to the States, a few meetings, lunch with tiresome, tiny men. It was an unending trip that wore her down.

Before, before Kara, before moving to National City, Lena was able to compartmentalize, to zone out, to be a body in a room with a meeting, making important decisions about infrastructure. And then Kara appeared, and Lena realized it was spring, and that she liked when the reporter appeared and snagged for a surprise lunch, that she liked being alive and sleeping over at a studio apartment across town that was loud and full of neighbors in a shitty band. Kara snapped her out of everything, made her remember she hated her job, that she was once seventeen and had dreams.

Lena thought surely that dinner and a night at Kara’s would be some kind of relief for the day, wipe away the headache, make her forget and remember in perfect, equal measure.
Unfortunately, she was mistaken. In just the four days that she’d been gone, National City somehow opened itself up to a new vigilante, and Kara was not having it. Flustered and stuck in her head, the hero sputtered and glowered and was a general mess of animosity, something she did not wear well, or wield with any kind of grace. Hate was clumsy in her hands.

“Mnhmm,” Lena nodded again and sipped her wine, letting the hero rail once more as she paced through her apartment. “Definitely.”

“Of all the irresponsible— The absolute nerve— I bust my, my, my butt keeping this city safe from threats people don’t even know about, and what? It’s not enough? They need more?” Kara flapped her hands around, oddly defeated and upset. “And it’s not like it’s safe! James is… is… he’s human. He’s capable of being hurt!”

“So are you,” Lena piped up softly.

“I mean, what’s to stop someone from just— What?”

“You can be hurt.”

“It takes a lot to hurt me,” Kara scoffed. “All it takes is a bullet and James is…”

“Have you spoken with him about it?” Lena tried, ignoring the hubris that Kara was too innocent to doubt.

“I told him to stop,” she shrugged, crossing her arms over her chest as she hunched against herself. “It’s dumb and irresponsible and dangerous. I can’t support it. I told him that I wanted no part of it”

“But it’s his choice.”

“Wait, what?”

With a sigh, Lena ran her hand over her forehead, feeling the tired of the day seeping into her body. She wanted an easy night with making out and food from that place a few doors down from Kara’s. She wanted to talk about fish skin and all the cool things she saw and loved, and she wanted to detox from life. She was doing her best with what she had though.

“It’s his choice to do that. You have to support it.”

“No I don’t!” Kara scoffed and paced again.

“Kara.”

“People can die. Why would anyone willing put themselves in harm’s way?” Even in her diatribe, she saw the look Lena gave her. “I mean. That isn’t practically impenetrable. It just. And they lied. They lied to me, right to my face! The people who are supposed to be… my people. My family. They just—”

“Yeah, I’m sorry about that.”

“I’m just. I have been boiling about this, and I don’t want to support my friend doing something so dumb. That’d be like supporting someone’s addiction. You can’t just say okay, well good luck. I support you.”

“Do you think I’m over the moon about you running into burning buildings and getting shot at, even if it can’t hurt you?” she interjected, seeing Kara ready to argue. “Or when you fight aliens
and weapons that are made specifically to hurt you? I mean. It’s not really ideal. But I don’t have to like your choice. I support you. It’s something you have to do, and therefore it’s something I believe in, without liking.”

Quiet, Kara furrowed and thought about the word, her frown deepening on her jaw. Lena took a deep breath and finished her wine because that was the safest part of the night.

“You don’t– You don’t like me being Supergirl?”

The air went out of Kara’s lungs as she realized what Lena meant. She’d never considered such things, she just had Lena, and she had Supergirl. They just existed, and she’d never considered the implication of it.

“I didn’t say that.”

“Kind of.”

“Kara, I love that you stand up for people who can’t, that you’re this force of tangible good, you inspire people, give them hope. It’s just scary to watch the news and see you tossed across the street like a ragdoll.”

It was something the hero never considered. She felt indestructible, but there had been moments where she only realized her own mortality. It would be Lena, though, who thought so practically about such things well in advance.

“I hadn’t thought about it.”

“James may get himself killed. He may get hurt,” Lena acknowledged. “But you can’t stop him from wanting to do what he feels he must. My family tried to stop me, tried to bring me in. I had to break away. It was what I felt was right, even when it was against the people I loved.”

“The point of me though, is that no one has to get hurt. I can save them all.”

“You can’t do it alone, you can’t save them all, and you can’t do it forever.”

The stalemate was a thought Kara didn’t want to have. She stared at Lena who sat, slightly relaxed and bundled up in a comfy ball on the couch. Lena fiddled with the fluffy blanket on her lap and swirled around the last bit of her wine before leaning her cheek on her hand and looking back at her friend with a quiet kind of calm.

“You’re terrible at helping me stay angry,” Kara groaned and finally flopped down on the couch, defeated by stupid pretty green eyes and logic. “I’ve had this rant saved up for an entire day, waiting for you to agree with me.”

“I do agree with you though,” Lena promised, rubbing Kara’s knee, jostling closer. “I think it’s stupid and dangerous and you should be angry your friends lied to you.”

“Well, then– why are you– with the– Ugh!” she tossed her head back and slumped deeper into the cushions.

“Because, Kara, I have some experience dealing with hero types. And you. And I know that deep down you’re just worried, and you hate being angry at people you love.”

“I’m still going to be mad at him,” she tossed out.
“I know.”

“Alright then,” the hero nodded to herself.

With a smile of victory, Lena gave up and slid against Kara’s side, letting her put her arm around her shoulders and continuing to soothe her worry with gentle hands on her thigh. Begrudgingly, against herself, Kara kissed Lena’s hair and took a deep breath, the weight of the world drifting off of her with the contact and closeness.

“I like you.”

“I knew that,” Lena shrugged, wrapping her arm around Kara’s ribs. She felt her take a deep breath.

“You win the day for being the best girlfriend.”

“Girlfriend?” Her heart skipped a little bit.

“I’ve done nothing but complain since you got here, and I haven’t even ordered the food I promised, and I never asked you about your trip,” Kara explained. “I did have a plan to have a nice quiet night with you. I even got the night off, and then James told me that, and I–”

“Your girlfriend?”

“Well, yeah,” she wriggled slightly, antsy at the fixation. “You know. Dating and such. I mean, you’re the only one I’m dating. And we’re more than friends.”

“I’m the best one?”

“I’ve been terrible tonight,” Kara whispered, kissing Lena’s head once more, moving to her temple, whispering against it. “How was the trip? I watched your talk online.”

“At four in the morning?”

“That could be why I didn’t understand some of it. But it looked like it went well. I mean,” she nodded. “Everyone was talking about it. And you looked super nice out there. I might have dozed during the sciency part of it. But I liked watching you.”

“Thanks,” Lena beamed.

For a second, she wanted to talk, to tell Kara about the conference, and the people she met who didn’t hate her, and the things she saw, and the ideas she got, and the minds she wanted to pick, and the meetings she set, and the firm she visited, and the amazing ice cream she had that reminded her of Kara out by the river.

Instead, she tilted her head and kissed the girl that continued to fret about not being attentive enough. She meant it as a quiet kiss, a simple kiss. But then Kara called Lena her girlfriend, and that was way better. Her headache disappeared, her muscles relaxed. It was all she wanted after the marathon of the day she had.

“You had a long trip,” Kara remembered, swallowing slightly as Lena shifted into her lap.

“You had a pretty shitty week,” Lena countered, straddling her hero.

Hands slid up her back. Lena settled in Kara’s lap and played with her collar and her neck. She dipped her head and kissed her, dragging it out until it was thin and Kara wanted more. Something
about Kara touching her was enough to wipe her head clear of all worry.

“This is much better than complaining about my friends,” the hero hummed happily. “I could get used to you going on trips and then coming back. I like the coming back part.”

“Do you feel more relaxed?” Lena purred, moving to Kara’s neck, taking her time, kissing and sucking and earning moving hips. She could feel her hero melt.

“Slightly.”

“I like the coming home part, too.”

There was something that Kara would have never imagined, ever before, about her friend– her girlfriend. She was exceptionally, terrifyingly torturous, as if she enjoyed toying with her. In the precarious situation of sitting in her lap, Lena was at her prime. Slow and steady, she moved her hips, she kissed Kara’s neck, she slipped her tongue, she tugged on shirts. Kara certainly forgot about any of her problems. She forgot her own name. All that she knew was there was a very very dirty thing straddling her, and it was better than those dreams she had as a teenager where she couldn’t even imagine half of the things Lena was capable of doing.

“I do want to hear about your trip,” Kara murmured.

“I want to do girlfriend things,” Lena decided, pulling away just enough to tug off her own shirt and toss it on the floor beside the couch. “We can talk later.”

“Yeah, definitely. Sure, Okay, yes,” she nodded, wide-eyed at the skin that was now on display. “Whatever you want.”

“Good girl.”

XXXXXXXXXXXXX

There was a distinct rhythm to Lena Luthor’s day that guided it, more or less, in the way that it needed to go, to maximize her time and work. Jess, the keeper of the schedule and the last line of defense, was practically Lena’s other brain, the autonomous part that made things happen as simply as breathing or blinking. When she needed coffee, it appeared on her desk. When she tried to cut out caffeine, tea started an appearance. When Lena thought of something and called for notes or something from months ago, Jess knew what else to get with it before her boss could ask. Autonomic. The hypothalamus of LCorp.

Without missing a beat, the secretary adapted to the new rhythm that involved a certain reporter. Seamlessly, she wove together a new kind of routine, though it was her boss that surprised her often, no longer making work the priority as she had for the past few years. The secretary didn’t have to be the bad guy, cancelling appointments or rescheduling meetings, because Lena just wouldn’t schedule unnecessary ones, she would delegate. A feat her hypothalamus would have never imagined.

Jess had been there for all of it, for the attempt at rebuilding, for the move, for the rebranding. Hired immediately and brought into an office that was full of papers with a phone ringing off the hook, a very flustered Lena Luthor, and an entire list of wrongs, it was certainly more than she could handle, though Jess never admitted it. If Ms. Luthor was going to take a chance on her, then
she was going to be absolutely perfect. And she was, because working for a powerful woman, helping her, doing good, directing progress, those were important things.

The switch came though. From twelve plus hour days and nights taking home proposals and memos to emails coming in at all hours and calls to get back to the office for stock meetings with people on the other side of the world, the move to National City had been a world different for the secretary and her boss.

It’d been a welcomed change, to see her employer become a little less robotic, a lot more human. Her entire tenure with Lena gradually formed into what she would think of as an almost friendship, and to her credit, Jess found herself often worrying about the pace at which the last Luthor lived and worked, eight days a week, thirty hours per day. Her worry waned recently. Gone were the unending days and glares and frowns and short, defensive quips. In its place were orders for flowers and smiles and dreamy thoughts.

“Good afternoon, Ms. Luthor,” Jess stood from behind her desk as the elevator rang. “A good meeting with PR?”

“Utterly pointless,” the CEO groaned, leaving files on the reception desk as she kept walking into her office.

Quickly, Jess followed, ignoring the gently ringing phones. It was a perk, to her job, that she could ignore phones for as long as she wanted. People wanted to get in touch with Lena, she didn’t have to worry about them calling back and not mentioning their disapproval when they did.

“Did you order the cupcakes for Kara’s birthday?”

“Three dozen cupcakes to be delivered next Tuesday,” Jess confirmed, tapping on her tablet.

“Thank you so much for doing that,” she smiled and took her seat behind her desk. “Now is there anyway I can get you to use some of your vacation days you have banked?”

“Only if you take one.”

“Schedule yourself a nice solid chunk off sometime this summer. I mean it. I won’t forget,” Lena decided, slipping glasses on to look over papers. “HR will be all over me.” It was a lie. The boss was just worried and unable to say such things.

“Yes ma’am,” she chuckled and sat across from her. “Dr. Thorton from The Devereaux Institute called to reschedule your meeting. I penciled him for tomorrow afternoon. I know it’s soon, but he’s flying home early.”

“Sounds good.”

“I called down to Archives about your request. They said by tomorrow morning they could pull everything you wanted to look at.”

“Did you hear back from Acquisitions?” Lena tapped her pen along the file on her desk before balancing her chin on her hand as she watched her assistant shake her head. “You’ll let me know?”

“As soon as I hear something. He did say it could take a few weeks.”

For a long moment, a long stretch, Lena thought before leaning back in her desk chair and adjusting her legs. One heel hung from her toes as she tapped it against her foot. They were all telltale signs of annoyance.
“What did the lawyers in—” A noise akin to a jet engine blared past the window followed quickly by a crash on the ground below. Startled, Lena looked up and wanted to ask her assistant something, but decided against it. “Turn on the news, please.”

A second later, Lena was peering over the edge of her balcony at the cloud of dust that started to clear to reveal a large hole in the middle of Federal Avenue. The familiar crimson of a cape could be seen, even at the distance. It was the unfamiliar, garish gold and green behemoth that tugged at the cape, tossing Supergirl as if she were nothing, that made Lena’s heart sink.

“Is that—” Jess gasped as she joined her boss.

“Lock down the building,” Lena ordered, not missing a beat. “Now, Jess!”

From high in the skyscraper, Lena strained her eyes at the fight that happened too quick for anyone to really understand, even at a closer ranger. When she saw a familiar head of blonde thrown once more into the sky, in the opposite direction, she realized her knuckles were about to break from grabbing the railing.

As soon as they came, they were gone, well out of sight and away from the city. Lena hurried inside and stood in front of the television in her office, demanding answers to questions no one cared about because they didn’t know it was Kara.

The coverage was minimal at best, and could offer nothing new. Lena went into recovery mode to distract herself from thinking too much. She got rid of lockdown fifteen minutes later and told everyone to go home for the day.

Impossible to get any work done, impossible to do anything else, Lena inevitably followed once everyone cleared out. She handed over a box of files to Calvin and let him drive her home.

Hours ticked by, and the news played the same things over and over and over again. Lena found herself leaving the balcony to her apartment open, found herself lingering outside every so often, scanning the horizon, though she’d chide herself slightly for being silly. If something happened to Supergirl, the world would know quickly. There was a solace in that.

Deep into her box of files that she brought home, it was well close to midnight when a knock at her door made her jump. She tossed a look toward the empty patio and realized it was her door, her front door, and that if something happened, surely no one would come because no one knew. It was probably Benny dropping off a package, or Jess with something that came in from the office—

“Kara,” Lena breathed before launching herself at the figure at her door.

“Hey,” she sighed. “Ow, ow, ow, gentle, please.” The winces came with the hefty hug she earned for simply existing. “My powers got blown out fighting today.”

It was a different sight, one Lena never imagined. But there stood Kara, badly bruised and exceptionally paler than normal. Purple galaxies formed near her nose and around her eyes. Already, the telltale colors of a fight could be seen peeking up from under her shirt, all green and grey and blue and purple and red and angry and sad.

Sheepishly, she tried to smile, though her lip was cut, almost bleeding again. Arm in a sling and crossed over her chest, Lena was not too certain she was the victor of the fight.

“What? What happened?”

“Ouch,” Kara snorted and chuckled, her arm wrapping around her ribs as Lena touched the bruises
around her eyes.

“Sorry.”

“Sometimes I just… sometimes there’s a solar flare, and it messes with electronics. I’m kind of an electronic.”

“Here, sit,” Lena ordered as she helped guide the hero into her living room. “I’ll get some ice. Did you eat? I have some ointment in the bathroom.” She fret because she was not good at worrying.

“I’m fine,” she promised, though it didn’t stop Lena from hurrying elsewhere to keep busy. “Today there was one heck of a flare, and one heck of a rogue alien who was poisoned with a new drug we’ve been seeing a lot lately.” From the kitchen, Lena listened as she reached for an ice pack and some of the leftover pizza from dinner just two nights ago. “Sometimes, my powers just wane. It’s usually rare, only after I use them too much, or some interruption. I’ve only blown them out from using them maybe three times. Thanks,” she smiled and accepted the ice pack and a slice of cold pizza. “It’s like pulling a muscle or twisting an ankle.”

“Only you aren’t limping, you’re actually beat up.”

“Yeah, something like that,” she nodded as she took a bite and settled back against the couch. “I’m fine. It usually takes about forty-eight hours for me to be at full healthy. But by tomorrow morning I’ll be almost completely less bruised. How was your day?”

“How was my… How was my day?” Lena scoffed and put her hands on her hips, mighty heroic in Kara’s opinion though it sounded bad. She cautiously chewed and swallowed a large lump. “It was pretty boring. A few meetings. A few phone calls. And then I had to lock down my building because a raging psycho was attacking my girlfriend outside. And then I came home and had fish for dinner.”

Kara knew enough to look marginally guilty. She ran her hand along her neck and hemmed slightly, not sure what to say.

“I wasn’t in danger, you know?” Kara swallowed, fiddling with her pizza crust. “Just a solar flare at an inopportune time.”

“Well, I know that,” the CEO shook her head and sat down in a humpf on the couch. “I just didn’t like it.”

“I did intercept him before he messed up your building though,” Kara shrugged, nibbling once again. “I was sure of that. Think of how mad you’d be if he flew through your twenty-sixth floor.”

“Thanks for that. Put the ice on.”

Kara swallowed hard and waited for more yelling. She expected more yelling, she expected a lot more of everything, but Lena was constantly a curveball. But she did what she was told and placed the cold pack against her eye and nose despite the fact that she would heal quick enough.

“We’re okay? You’re okay?” the hero ventured, lifting the ice a bit to give her girlfriend a look.

“Yeah, of course,” she answered quickly. “I’m sorry. I just… I hadn’t seen you in action like that before, at least not after… us. It was different this time around.”

“Come on,” Kara sighed, wincing slightly as she adjusted and gestured Lena closer. She had broken ribs, she knew it, but none of it really mattered when Lean looked at her like that.
Gentle as she could, Lena finally relented, slipping into Kara’s lap, careful to avoid the nicks and cuts and bruises. With a stern movement, she placed the ice back on her eye and kissed her temple. “You were freaking out a bit.” “Yeah,” Lena shrugged. “Let me disappear after fighting a huge alien and let you worry for hours and see if you freak out a bit.” “I’m sorry.” Worriedly, she refused to meet Kara’s eyes. They were too bruised and pretty. “I like to be good at things, Kara,” she sighed. “I want to be good at this. The problem is that I can’t exactly find the rule book on us. So I’m making it up as I go, which I do not like. I like to be good at things. I want to be good at you. At us.” “I think we’re doing okay.” “You got thrown around the city and your powers stopped.” Hands insisted the ice stay on bruises again. Lena kissed Kara’s cheek and rubbed the back of her neck with her thumb. “For today, I call this a win. I kind of like you taking care of me,” Kara grinned and closed her sore eyes. “Let’s not make a habit of it,” Lena sighed before rubbing her nose against Kara’s neck. “I’m going to worry about you.” “I know,” Kara nodded. “But tonight I’ll just take care of you. I won’t get this option often, when you’re human like me.” Before she could ask what that might entail, Kara felt the ice pressed back to her face and smiled as lips met her forehead. Without a plan, or idea of what that truly meant, she decided to let Lena have it and relegated herself to suffering through a night of doting. “You are good at me,” the hero finally whispered. “Just so you know. I don’t want you to worry that it’s not enough. You are very, very good at me.” With a mildly satisfied smile, Lena hid in Kara’s shoulder and smelled her with a smile.

Chapter End Notes

as always come see me at coeurdastronaute.tumblr.com
Die Trying

Chapter Summary

kara tells alex, jess always knew, a wild francine appears

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Our bodies are weak,
We’re tired and hurting
Will we ever get to the other side?
Dunno but I swear I’ll die trying.

The first date was enough to prove that she was certain Kara wasn’t going to escape how she felt about Lena Luthor. And it wasn’t just the thirty six hours of talking and reacquainting. It wasn’t even the way the CEO effortlessly accepted whatever happened, becoming Kara’s number one defender and supporter. It certainly wasn’t waking up next to messy hair tickling her nose or an uptick in her take out deliveries, though all were benefits in their own little way.

Kara realized that it was real, that she had the big kind of feelings for Lena Luthor, quite quickly, and with much alarm. It was the way Lena always held her hand over her mouth when she caught herself laughing too hard, and the way that Lena’s eyes were like life itself. It was the fourth and fifth date and how they were perfectly imperfect, interrupted by a shootout, and the other by an angry investor from Hong Kong, while the date watched and let the other work before teasing them the rest of the night. It was the way Kara could flop on Lena’s couch while she worked and bug her still until she gave up work and let Kara take her to a movie. It was the way Lena got so excited about the robot knee she was building in her spare time, and how she worked on it and held screwdrivers between her teeth and tucked behind her ear, waving them as she explained and Kara feigned understanding. It was the way Kara saw all of those things and catalogued them like precious stones in her memory.

Kara gave the dream, the idea that she could shake Lena, could get her out of her system as nothing more than a gradeschool crush, until they’d had a good solid talk about their place. She knew that they skated around things, but she knew that they tackled what they could, head on, gloves off, out in the open. When she saw that happen, she knew Lena was trying, and she knew what would come next. When Lena told her she was in it, that she was very much afraid and very much out of her element, and very terrified of losing her, but still ready to try, Kara knew she was in deep as well, knew it was more than a crush.

Lena didn’t tell her to, but when Kara told her she was going to have the talk with her sister, it signaled a change, and even the CEO knew it. It wasn’t real until then, it wouldn’t be. For Kara to tell her sister, meant it was something that had a future, and that was a new kind of exhilarating, beautiful, beautiful in the way that the ocean is when waves crush shores and roar and engulf.

They had weeks of trying. They had months of deciding. Kara was in it and she didn’t care at all about anything else, because for the first time since her world imploded, since she saved that plane and became Supergirl, for the first time since her father died and the galaxy kept spinning, she felt centered again, she felt a little more in harmony with the universe, and that was what she chased
for dear life. The dream that sprouted from a simple article, was becoming reality. It had to become real and she was sick of living a triple life. She just wanted one. One where she was Supergirl, and a reporter, and had a smoking hot girlfriend.

And while the notion of telling Alex was a big deal, the execution was far more daunting, and oddly terrifying to the younger sister.

“Are you shitting me?” Alex balked, disgusted and alarmed. “Lena Luthor. Luthor as in Lex and Lionel, Luthor? Notorious alien-haters, Luthors? You. And her. I know you’ve been distracted. I thought it was just… I thought it was me being distant, off with Maggie. But Luthor!”

“Don’t be mad,” Kara offered, wringing her hands and wincing as her sister stood up from the stool across from her and began to pace through her apartment.

“Mad?” she pfft’d. “Why would I be mad? Why would I be worried about you? You’ve got it under control!”

“She’s not like her brother or father. They just–”

“Don’t you dare make excuses for those monsters,” Alex stopped her, holding up her hand decisively. “I swear, Kara, you’d forgive someone for stabbing you right in the back if they apologized.”

Her sister paced, back and forth, working it out in her head. She held her hand over her mouth as she concentrated, her nostrils flaring in consternation. It felt like a dumbbell in her gut, but Kara let her have her feelings. She knew it would be difficult, perhaps even most difficult, with the people who knew her as Supergirl. That was why she had to be sure. And she was.

She was certain about Lena, the girl who sent her take out when she was working late, and Lena, the girl who was nothing like the Luthors in the news, but more like the Luthors that Kara remembered as a far away fever dream, who pushed meetings for soccer games and focused on the family and their real life over a dollar, that Lena was so beyond set on Kara, she just didn’t know it or refused to admit it just yet. Lena, the girl who had to buy a whole new apartment’s worth of furniture and teased Kara until she was red and blushing all over before kissing her and promising that it was in need of an update anyway. Lena, the girl who had a penchant for sweet kisses, the soothing kind that came in the form of an absent peck on the nose or forehead, and it was so natural, it just happened, and she would catch herself and furrow almost, wondering who she became, and Kara would watch and kiss her back quickly to approve. Lena, the girl.

But Kara had time. She could take the first step for a girl like that.

“You can’t. It’s too dangerous,” she finally decided. “I’m sorry, Kara.”

“You can’t tell me who I see.”

“You have to be reasonable–”

“I’ve known her for years, Alex,” Kara shook her head and started to raise her voice. “She was at our father’s funeral. She was there for me when you left. I’ve… I’ve been crazy about her since I met her, but I stayed away because of who I am, when all along she already knew, and tried to protect me. But I can have it all. I can be happy. It’s not too selfish to want just… a little… something for me?”

“That was then, before–”
“She hasn’t done anything wrong!” Kara groaned, hands flailing to her side as she shook her head, already regretting the entire conversation. She understood where her nerves came from, though couldn’t place it directly. She knew what it was going to turn into before it even started.

“You’re telling me that you honestly, with your entire being, believe that Lena Luthor doesn’t have a cache of Kryptonite sitting in a vault somewhere in that fancy office downtown? Or one of her labs?”

Kara became indignant, and didn’t hide it. She stood and crossed her arms and tried to plead with her sister to just… to stop and to just trust her.

“She owns about two pounds of it. Two ounces are in a lab in Juneau for alternative energy research. A small sliver is in Mexico City for medical testing. The largest chunk is four point six ounces, and that’s in Paris, where it’s being studied as a possible reactant to cancel out nuclear waste. The rest are all smaller than an ounce, tiny vials, in different places with a list of names of which Lena has control over who has access to any of them, and then monitors all research done to them.”

“You can’t–”

“She bought and destroyed more than twenty pounds of Kryptonite, Alex,” Kara shook her head, annoyed and hurt. “When she saw what her brother did, what he had planned to do before he was caught, she cleaned it up. She’s been cleaning it up since before it happened. She tried to stop them as best she could for a scared, young, nineteen year old could.”

“How can you be sure?”

“How can I be sure the DEO doesn’t have a hundred times that locked up in a bunker somewhere, tucked inside a bullet with my name on it if I step out of line?” she retorted bitterly. “I just have to believe it. I can’t distrust everyone.”

Her sister stared at her before turning around and hunching her shoulders and shaking her head. She made it a few steps before she turned around again.

“How long?”

“About three months.”

“Three… Three months. That’s, that’s that’s. That’s… And you never thought to tell me?” Alex swallowed and floundered with the information, the sting of it surprising her.

“To tell you, my sister, or you, my handler?”

“Kara.”

“I wanted to be sure. I’m telling you now because we… it’s not just a passing thing. I want to keep seeing her. I’m going to keep seeing her. It’s… It’s… It’s serious.”

Alex took a seat on the couch and ran her hands over her cheeks before looking down at the ground as she tried to fathom the news. A hundred of the same thoughts kept raging through her head, like a river, like a storm that pounded against the windows and made itself known above all else. Kara stood in the middle of her apartment and waited, unsure of who she was speaking with, her handler or sister, though both sat before her, and both had probably the same concern.

“Is she good, Kara? I mean– honestly, genuinely, good?”
“She tries really hard,” Kara promised. “She’s not evil, if that’s something.”

“You’ll be careful?”

“Can you please just skip all of this boring worrying so I can tell you about the girl I am crazy about?” she begged, ready to cry because her sister wasn’t disowning her, jittery because all she’d wanted to do for weeks was have someone to talk to about it.

“I’ll never stop worrying,” Alex chuckled slightly as her sister hopped onto the couch. “And I’m not sure I will trust her either. But yeah. For a little while we can.”

It didn’t take much to get Kara rambling about anything, and it took even less, just a sliver of an open window, to get her to gush about Lena, even if it was to a less than willing recipient. Kara knew her sister, knew that it wouldn’t be the last time they argued about it, but she pushed that aside for the moment because she had a lot of feeling and confusion rolling around like drunk panda cubs in her gut, and had for the past few months without having her outlet to help her sort them out. Only then did Kara realize what a huge undertaking she’d commenced.

To her credit, Alex did her best to listen without a grimace every time Lena’s name was mentioned. She was mildly successful, though that might have been because a large portion of her efforts were spent creating a list of things to do when she went into work the following day. Background checks, security tapping, server hacking, a full dossier to be created.

But that was the handler side, and she tried her damndest to keep the two parts of her separate when it came to her sister. The side Kara asked for, the supportive, hopeful ear, that was always there.

And through it all, it wasn’t lost on Alex the way Kara looked when she talked about the last Luthor. The way she was jumping up and down, her smile the entire way to both ears and as big as she could remember seeing it. It was the look of someone completely enamoured. It was a look she never saw Kara have.

There was a blush when she told her sister about a broken appliance, and about staying up an entire night talking, and just talking, she promised, earning some teasing, and a blush followed the story about Lena making her ice her bruised eye when she blew her powers out, and another when she admitted she liked when Lena wore her hair down and those skirts. There was this… relief, almost, when Kara spoke about Lena, like she had an entire collection of essays written, and was just waiting to share them, as if she’d hoarded the entire Library of Alexandria and it was entirely about a girl.

“How have you told your cousin yet?” Alex chuckled to herself as she relaxed against the pillows, the fight and her day catching up with her will to be awake.

“Fudge,” Kara choked at the realization, her eyes growing wide.

“Let me know when you do. I want to watch.”

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When Lena Luthor disappeared from the collective consciousness of the entire city, and nearly the entire world, she did not dally, nor did she waste away and let her brainpower and grooming languish into nothing. While she did try her hand at completely giving up to the whims of the
world and bummed her way through a few coastal countries on the other side of the planet, it lasted just six weeks before she was opening up her own firm with the help of her father, under the guise of wanting to do it herself, so as to keep his hands off of it.

Giving up the crystal clear waters, villas, and perfect weather of the French and Italian Riviera, Lena tucked her little company away, into a place more befitting of her mood and overall demeanor. Just about a hundred miles south of Dublin, she took up in a small town and never looked back, was left alone, was not much of a spectacle.

From her warehouse, she worked and she did her best and she kept quiet about the world. It was a simple life, and she thrived in the way that one could from a kind of schedule that did not allow for reflecting on anything of consequence. She had a tiny staff, she fostered ideas, she kept her head down and tried to be happy with after what she considered her Waterloo.

When LCorp was in its fledgling status, in the process of being reborn, it did not spend much time hiring, as opposed to firing, when she held re-interviews and met with every single employee. The only hire she did make was a tiny girl who just wanted her first job in the mailroom.

Jess remembered the interview from time to time, cringing to herself when she really thought about it. Since that moment, since the move that took her out of her hometown of Metropolis and transplanted her in a new city, that brought her a new life, she thought she'd gotten close to Ms. Luthor, with close being a very relative term in the equation.

She knew the order she liked her files, the order she liked her phone calls, she knew which calls to ignore, which to hurry along, she knew which people were detested, she knew who could come and go, she knew dates and times and places, she knew credit card numbers by heart and had two rolodexes for anything she could need in the city. But despite the preparedness required for her position, Lena was not demanding, not a terrible boss. Not every boss would quietly pay for her secretary’s father’s heart surgery and give her time off to help her family. Not every boss agonized about which flowers to send a reporter.

There was a switch to things, the secretary realized, versus her first year working directly under Ms. Luthor. There were more good moods, and more days that ended earlier, some even before eight. If she wasn’t mistaken, it all had to do with the blonde who monopolized the schedule she tried so desperately to keep.

“Hi, Jess, is Lena in?” Kara asked politely as soon as the elevator dinged.

“Ms. Luthor is just finishing up a few things. She said to keep you at bay until she finished, or you’d be late for the game.”

She earned a small smile and laugh before Kara relented and gave in. Jess didn’t mind her, in fact, she really did like the spunky blonde who occasionally brought her coffee. She didn’t mind her because she was the key to having a somewhat regular life, she was the key to getting her boss out the door, and keeping her in a good mood. She was, most importantly, a well-deserved hunk of happiness that a formerly very un-happy boss once did not have, and that was something to behold.

“So it’s Lena’s birthday in a few weeks,” Kara brought up, nervously toying with the lamp before Jess stilled it as she moved it.

“Yes.”

“What do I have to do to get you to keep her weekend clear?”
“Are you trying to bribe me to alter my boss’ schedule?” the secretary eyed her cautiously. “There is only one thing that is expected of me and it is to never be disloyal to Ms. Luthor. That would include changing her schedule.”

‘I completely understand, and I will take the blame for it if she gets mad.’

“I can’t.”

“That’s why she likes you so much,” Kara smiled softly, unperturbed. “Do you think she’d like camping?”

For a moment, Jess took the compliment before the second part hit her and she couldn’t help but scoff.

“Have you met her?”

They shared a look and Kara sighed before glancing at the door.

“I’m at a loss of what to do for her birthday,” she finally confessed.

For a moment, Jess looked down at her notebook, and she smiled because she’d never seen someone so worried about their girlfriend, genuinely distressed by the prospect of not having a gift or plan.

“She doesn’t celebrate it,” Jess finally sighed. “She hasn’t celebrated it since I’ve known her.” She looked up at the blonde who now furrowed and shook her head, not wanting to believe it. “At least three years it hasn’t been mentioned. Since before Metropolis.”

“Hey,” Lena breezed into the hall, balancing a few folders. “I thought I heard you out here.”

With the smallest movement, she reached her hand out to Kara’s waist and held it there as she kissed her cheek, earning a small blush. Jess couldn’t look away if she tried. It was so innocent and natural, it didn’t almost feel as if it were something. The secretary was on board with the relationship so much that she felt voyeuristic in those moments. But it was better than cable.

“I told you to stop distracting Jess when you visited. She’s just being polite,” the CEO chided her girlfriend. “Could you please fax these, and finish scheduling the rest of my trip to DC?”

“Yes ma’am.”

“I wasn’t distracting,” Kara defended herself weakly.

“Not at all,” Jess offered.

Gone was the woman who came into work in her tight dress and heels, perfectly done makeup and not a hair out of place. In her stead was someone who smiled, with tight jeans and a jersey, ready for the game she was stealing away from work at a normal, human hour, to go see.

“See? I can behave myself.”

“I’ll see you in the morning,” Lena shook her head and pushed her girlfriend toward the elevator. “Don’t stay so late.”

“Yes ma’am. Have fun,” the secretary called.

“And make sure you keep my birthday weekend clear. I am anticipating a surprise.”
“You heard,” she smiled.

“I know Kara,” the boss smiled sympathetically. She earned a squeeze around her shoulders and a kiss on her temple as the wove themselves together. “I appreciate you, Jess. Kara is the singular exception to every rule I have regarding my schedule… and life.”

“Don’t confuse her,” Kara chuckled. “I like our back and forth.”

“Fine. Ban her forever,” Lena chuckled as she was tugged toward the elevator.

Like schoolgirls, they giggled through the empty lobby. Jess sat behind her desk and leaned back, watching them in their matching jerseys and stolen kisses. Before the doors closed, she caught sight of the taller blonde, hugging her tight and kissing Lena’s cheeks.

With a sigh, she swiveled slightly and ignored the ringing phone. Come hell or high water, she had to make sure they worked, because her boss was in a mood that made her life so much easier, and for the four years she’d worked for Lena Luthor, she’d never seen her so happy.

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The rainstorm lingered through the night, turning the streets into rivers and the gutters into waterfalls. Even when the sun tried to come up, the windows remained dark, dotted with the streetlight glow and the blur that the raindrops left splattered there. Clouds hung low, choking out buildings from the sky itself.

Soggy and oddly cold, Kara spent the night wrapped up with a DEO mission, as she’d been for the past week. It left her drained, and when it came to a head, she felt it all catch up with her; the balancing of the articles, the research, the mission, the girlfriend. It was a lot sometimes, but especially when one require more than the others. The rest then suffered.

That was why she ended up in the big bed in the penthouse instead of collecting a few extra hours of sleep in her own apartment. Her bed would have been empty. Lena’s had a decided advantage.

Even though it was late, the lights had been on. And still damp from her trip and night, Kara landed, and for just a moment, watched the CEO pace as she read from her notes, preparing for her annual shareholders meeting speech, making notes in margins, waving her hand as she fast forwarded herself. Kara was distracted with her lips when she bit her thumb absently. She was in love with the slope of her jaw.

Still darker than dark out, still sounding of rain and the low, distant grumble of thunder, Kara heard the alarm and woke for just a moment before rolling over and growling to herself at the imposition and loss of her warmth and human pillow.

Eyes shut tightly, the hero snoozed while absently hearing Lena get ready and move around the bedroom. She heard the pop of her shoulders, the crack of her knee when she stretched, she heard the shuffling of clothes and the sound of water hissing to life in the bathroom. None of it mattered. Kara couldn’t move from the cocoon she concocted in Lena’s absence. Her week and the night before caught up with her. She feigned alertness when she came in and earned kisses, she found a new kind of wakefulness when she found her head between Lena’s thighs, though it was gone when her head hit the pillow.
“Hey, honey,” Lena whispered, crouching beside the bed. She ran her hand along Kara’s temple and earned a squinted up face that dug into the pillow. “I have a conference call in an hour. Sleep, okay? I’ll be back in a bit.”

“Mmmm, okay,” Kara hummed.

Warm hands moved to her neck, to her back, to her shoulders.

“We have dinner with James later, and then we’re not doing anything today.”

“Let’s do nothing now.”

“Soon, love,” Lena promised before kissing her girlfriend’s forehead and earning a kiss on her hip as Kara dug into her without lifting her body at all.

“Do good out there.”

“Sleep well.”

It was an order that Kara took too eagerly. She didn’t even remember hearing Lena leave, just that the bed dipped and the warm palm was gone from her spine. It’d been too long since she’d had an adequate sleep, and too long since she’d had one that knocked her out completely, but she earned it and she took it because the sheets smelled like Lena and the bed was ridiculously comfortable, and far removed, up in the penthouse, she got to believe she was removed from the world and the city.

Some hours later, it was the sound of a vacuum that woke her. Coming out of nowhere, it clicked on and startled her so badly, she sat up in bed and gasped, clutching at her chest almost rough enough to do damage. It took a few minutes for her to understand what was happening. It took another few minutes for her to find pants on the floor and slip them on before groggily meandering into the living room to find the source of the racket that woke her up before ten on a perfect, rainy Saturday.

Shoulders square and about a good foot and a half shorter than Kara, the older woman pushed the vacuum precisely, rigidly, while an older model iPod hung on her hip and older headphones clung to her ears. Kara recognized the song that came out of them and smiled.

Clad in a well-worn grey sweatshirt and jeans, the little woman moved with a familiarity, and did not notice Kara at all as she turned off the machine and began fluffing pillows. Her little white sneakers squeaked against the floor as she moved.

Kara crossed her arms over her old shirt she stole from Lena’s work-out drawer, and though tight on her shoulders, she felt oddly even more out of place in it with a stranger in the apartment.

“Hello?” Kara tried, though to no avail. “Excuse me?”

It wasn’t until her third or fifth attempt that Kara got a response in the form of the woman gasping and jumping back, alarmed at the quiet addition to the room who sheepishly waved and tried to not look threatening.

Slowly, headphones were removed, and Kara cleared her throat, wrapping herself up tighter in her own arms under the quizzical eyes she was given and the swears muttered under her breath.

“Who the hell are you?” she accused.

“I’m… I’m- I’m Kara,” the hero offered, furrowing at the less than warm reception of the stranger
in her girlfriend’s apartment. “Who are you and why are you here?”

“Kara, Kara, Kara,” the woman slowly pulled the headphones down and tasted the name, racking her brain for some trigger to a memory where that name mattered. “Lena’s Kara!”

“Um. Yes?”

“Well I’ll be damned,” she chuckled, her accent coming thicker with more words. Kara tried to place it, tried to place her. “I’m Francine. I help tidy after Ms. Luthor. We haven’t had the pleasure.”

“Pleasure to meet you.”

“I didn’t wake you, did I, deary?”

“No, no. I was just getting up,” Kara lied to spare the white-haired Irish woman who turned from fierce jackal to tottering grandmother in just an instant.

“Usually, I’m not here on Saturdays. But I went to visit my son and his family in Metropolis this week, and I wanted to make up for missing,” she explained moving through the living room. “Just look at you.”

Before Kara could react, she had bony hands on her cheeks and deep brown eyes close to her own face. She felt herself bend, tugged down a good foot to the level of the housekeeper. She was suddenly aware that she hadn’t brushed her teeth and that she just woke up from a good ten hour nap, and looked it. Nothing deterred the woman though.

“Your picture doesn’t do you justice, darling.”

“Than–Thank you?” A pat rested on her cheek before she was off again and Kara was left half bent over and confused by her morning.

“Are you hungry, macushla?”

“Always.”

“Come on, come take a seat. I want to know everything. I’ll make you a good breakfast. Homemade. Lena orders out too much. I try to leave her some things. I’ve been telling her that for years now,” she prattled on as she shuffled toward the kitchen, leaving Kara little option other than to follow.

Your housekeeper is a tiny Irish elf who is cooking me a full breakfast. She typed a message to her girlfriend quickly as she took a seat at the island, no other choice, and not one to turn down a breakfast.

“I’m sorry, Francine, you said for years?” Kara caught up with the ramble of the surrogate grandmother.

“Oh yes, ever since she moved into my house in Máihle. Too thin. I made her eat every day. I don’t know what kind of cooks she had back home, but I was appalled,” she continued, digging out ingredients from the fridge. “Coffee? I’ve made some tea just a bit ago.”

“Tea is fine, thank you.”

I’m sorry! I forgot she was coming. Isn’t she great? Don’t let her scare you. She’s mostly harmless.
Never once did she stop moving. She was a freight train, and not one movement was wasted. She was efficient and did well, had done it for years. Kara liked what she was made of already.

While she cooked, Francine did her best to get to know Kara. Scraping and mixing, she asked about her work, about knowing Lena before she was the CEO, before her run away, she asked about who she was, and Kara did her best to pass whatever test it was.

By the time the plate was full and slid in front of her, Kara felt as if she was best friends with the housekeeper. By the time she took her first bite, she was in love and understood why Lena helped her move to be closer to her son.

There was something nice about being doted on. Slightly amazed, Francine cleaned up the kitchen and made a little more as the human garbage disposal almost cleared the plate. She kept up her questioning, getting Kara’s entire history, learning of her intentions, her plans, her ideas.

“It’s been a little easier, lately,” Francine wagered as she poured herself another cup of tea. “She doesn’t need as much looking after.”

“The Lena I knew never needed looking after,” Kara smiled to herself as she chewed.

“Everyone always needs someone to make them a warm cup of tea and ask them how their day was. I don’t know how, but she just became one of my own. My daughters are older, all married with their own lives. My son moved and started his family. My husband has been gone for… rest his soul, about fifteen years. I suppose I needed her to need me,” she realized, cupping her mug gingerly.

The hero took another bite of toast and surveyed her face, traced the wrinkles, the hard won lessons, the generosity, the caring. Lena mentioned in passing how much she admired the former revolutionary, how much she helped her get through starting her company, how much she hated that she thought she owed Lena. There was a kind of nice dynamic to them.

“You take good care of her, yeah?” the housekeeper turned her gaze on Kara once more, earning adjusting glasses and a clearing throat under such scrutiny. “I know you must hear what people say about her name. It’s not fair.”

“I do the best I can,” Kara promised.

“She thinks she doesn’t have a family. She does with me. She did with you.”

“I’m very glad she had you when she left.”

It was honest, but Kara earned a slight blush, one she never considered the housekeeper capable of making. So gruff and honest and kind, she just seemed beyond the ego to let something to to her head. The personification of humility and hardwork took the compliment though, because it was an important one.

“I like your appetite. Lena told me you ate a lot. I just liked that she kept her fridge stocked. Were you here that night her apartment got broken into?”

“Broke into?” Kara furrowed and pushed her plate away, finally satisfied after too much and a weird desire to break up with Lena for a tiny Irish grandmother.

“Oh yes, the apartment was torn apart,” she explained, grabbing the plate quickly.

“You don’t have to. I’ll get that–”
“You should have seen it. Couch was snapped in half! The fridge door was broken off! I even think the old vase was broken. It was an absolute mess,” Francine explained, shaking her head as she went to work cleaning up the plate.

Kara blushed ferociously into her mug. Her ears burned themselves raw when she realized what she was talking about, and her own hand in all of it.

“Oh, yes. I think she told me about it…” she lied, averting her eyes.

“Hello?” Lena called, interrupting the conversation. Her heels clicked and clacked a few times before she made it to the living room. “Hey,” she grinned, almost out of breath, when she saw Kara. “Dia duit, conas atá tú?” she turned to the housekeeper.

“Fhágann tú cailín deas mar seo i do leaba?” the Francine turned to Lena with a frown and her hand on her hip, mock demanding and shaking her head, prepared to scold with a smile. “An bhfuil mhúin mé tú rud ar bith?”

“She’d still be in my bed if you weren’t vacuuming like a crazy woman,” Lena objected, leaning down to kiss the housekeeper’s cheek, earning a pinch on her rib, measuring her weight. “I’ve told you to stop cleaning. I’ll take your key.”

“I was getting to know your girlfriend,” the grandmother defended herself, giving Kara a wink. “Is maith liom í.”

“She fed you,” Lena shook her head, turning to the hero who watched it all happen, and surveyed the pots and pans drying.

“It was really good,” Kara grinned, earning a kiss on her temple.

“Believe me. I know. Put on ten pounds living with her. Every morning, she was grabbing me for just a cup of tea which turned into a full breakfast, which turned into oh, look at that, a packed lunch, which turned into stop by my place for dinner. And then it was ‘you can’t go running in this rain, you’ll catch your death,’ which turned into dessert.”

“Oh look at you,” Francine smiled and watched the two. “Bhfuil tú sásta.”

“I am very happy,” the CEO promised with a smile. Kara looked between them quizzically. “She said I should be ashamed for leaving my bed when I had a pretty girl in it.”

“You should be!” Kara agreed.

“Sit down,” Francine ordered with her smile hiding itself as she grabbed a dishtowel and turned on the stove again. “You haven’t eaten yet. I’ll make you breakfast.”

“A family of seven, she can’t cook for one,” Lena explained, not bothering to fight. “You better still be hungry.”

“I could eat again,” Kara shrugged, earning a smile from her girlfriend.

The settled there, while the the grandmother cooked and fret and laughed and caught up with them. It’d been almost two weeks since she’d had a chance to run into her adopted daughter, cleaning quickly the week before and leaving to see her son. Lena missed her greatly, knowing full well that the excuse to clean, to be “hired” by her, was an excuse to catch up and check on her from someone who made it a habit.
Kara got caught up in it, enjoying the way Lena laughed and grew louder, the way she looked when someone cared for her. And so she sat there and let Lena rub her thigh and made a note of just another aspect of Lena that she never expected.

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It was getting more and more difficult to leave. Kara knew she had to, knew that she couldn’t spend the night, knew that they had to keep a balance, and yet it was never easy. She frankly didn’t want to leave when she had so much skin on display, and she didn’t want to miss even a second of their time. Something about midnight and the dark and just being a bubble of themselves of which the real world didn’t impinge, it was addicting.

There was a quiet truce between them, to not push, to not rush, to hold the reins and pull back because if they didn’t, if they truly just jumped in, both wouldn’t survive. Kara was grateful for it. She was convinced that part of her would lose Lena at the drop of a hat, that if she made any sudden movements, the CEO would skitter away. For Lena, it was almost the same, because regardless of the hero’s huge heart, she knew that she’d lost an entire planet and as much as she thought of her future, she did not know how to have one.

All at once, both existed in a state of fear, oscillating themselves between staying and being so afraid they couldn’t imagine it working despite it succeeding better than imagined.

“Do you remember when we were just friends?” Lena wondered in the night. She chuckled at the idea a bit, still blown away at their progress. It’d be twenty years later, if she was lucky, and she’d still wonder how she got Kara in her bed.

“I do. I’m enjoying the more though. It’s been a pretty solid six months.”

“I never even let myself imagine this, that this, that more was a possibility. It’s all like a dream.”

“Me neither, honestly,” Kara confessed.

The sheets shifted as Kara smiled and hid in Lena’s thigh, in love with her honesty in moments like that, the quiet and the dark. At night, it was easier to think that they were allowed to just be them, that they could be two kids who got a chance.

“Be honest, Kara. Do you think we’ll make it?”

From her spot on Lena’s hip, Kara adjusted her glasses before she bought herself a few moments by kissing Lena’s hip, by kissing her thigh. If she ever saw something better than a naked Lena in her bed absently running her hand over her own chest, Kara was certain it’d be in whatever construct of the afterlife that was true. Nothing would be better, and if it was, she was surely dead.

“I don’t see why not.”

“Is there anything you would change about us?”

“I’d like to never leave this bed again,” Kara smirked as she ran her fingertips through Lena, earning a shift in hips. “I want more time with you. We’re so busy and pulled all over the place. But honestly, everything is going well. I think it helps that we know each other. What about you?”
Lena couldn’t speak. Instead she just swallowed and played with herself while Kara continued to tease again. Fingers slid along her, toyed with her, slipped inside her slowly earning a broken kind of moan that hadn’t expected to exist. She didn’t have any other thoughts.

“Fuck,” Lena groaned as Kara slowly withdrew her fingers, before she kissed here there, before she smiled as she took her time.

“Do you think we’ll work?”

“Not if you kill me with sexual torture.”

That was all of the urging the hero needed.

Kara felt muscles tightening, heard heart racing, heard Lena’s tiny hum and purr. It was all music to her, all encompassing and all that she ever wanted to hear. She meant to leave. She wanted to leave. She had to leave because she already slept over Lena’s just yesterday. She couldn’t go two nights in a row. And then she was there, and Kara realized she just wanted to make Lena feel good.

“Can I… Do you want me to– I really want to–”

“I swear, Kara if you don’t– Oh God!” Her words were stifled with all manner of language.

Kara knew she had to go, but that didn’t stop her from taking her time. She liked the way Lena tasted. She liked the way her heart beat out a jazz-like beat, all unsteady and wild and like the world was on fire. It deafened her. It urged her forward.

Hands knit violently into Kara’s hair, Lena couldn’t help herself. Frantically out of breath and body unbelievably tense before relaxing into a puddle, she moaned and saw stars.

“So, do you think we’ll make it, Lena Luthor?” Kara grinned as she wiped her mouth off on her forearm.

She couldn’t think at all to say how much she wanted it to work. Her body was cold and hot all over at one time. It was too much to fathom. It took a few minutes for her hands to unclench from the sheets and Kara’s hair.

“Goodness.”

“Lena, we’re going to be fine. We’re fine,” Kara promised, kissing thigh, and hip and stomach. Gently she climbed up the bed, peppering silly, gentle kisses on exposed ribs and stomach. “I am unbelievably excited to be doing this with you.”

“I can’t think of words right now.”

“I like this,” the hero murmured, kissing her way up Lena’s chest, finding the spot in her neck that she loved to nuzzle and hid in.

Lena’s hip adjusted and she nudged Kara’s hip slightly as she tried to get comfortable. Just a bit too heavy, she loved the feeling of Kara atop her, keeping her anchored to the bed when she was certain she was flying away. And Kara softly kissed her neck and sighed as she settled there.

For a few minutes, Kara listened to Lena’s heartbeat calm itself. She yawned and curled into the nails that finally moved up and down her spine.

“You have to go to Sydney on Saturday, right?” Kara mumbled.
“Yeah.”

“Do you want to do dinner on Friday?”

“I could be persuaded,” Lena hummed, eyes closing as she tried to memorize just how relaxed she was and Kara made her.

For just a little longer, as tired began to make itself known, Kara allowed herself stolen time with Lena. She liked her girlfriend’s independence, she valued her own, she adored their pace.

“I should go.”

“Stay,” Lena hummed, already half asleep. She shifted and held onto Kara a little tighter.

“Two nights in a row?”

“You can’t just,” she yawned and shifted closer. “You can’t just give me an orgasm and go. You’ll give me a complex.”

Even tired, even losing the fight, Kara blushed and smiled, hiding deeper into Lena’s shoulder and neck. Hands played with her neck, gently soothing there, while another held her thigh close, not letting her escape.

“Wouldn’t want that.”

“I’m always afraid you’ll leave before I get a chance to leave.”

The words were true and tinged with sleep. Kara listened to Lena fight sleep, felt her kiss her forehead, and as warm as she was, as wrapped up as she felt, she couldn’t find tired again. It was honest, and Kara understood Lena better than she could express. Lena wouldn’t leave, and Kara was going to make sure she had a future.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Kara promised.

“Good.”

“You’re not going anywhere.”

“Sydney,” Lena muttered, turning slightly as she yawned and hummed her tired song against Kara’s cheek.

“Just there,” Kara grinned and closed her eyes.

Chapter End Notes

coeurdastronaute.tumblr.com
How close am I to losing you?
Tonight you just close your eyes
and I just watch you
slip away.

As a little girl, Lena never quite understood what her father did. She knew he did a lot of things, but they were all abstract, and difficult to imagine. It wasn’t like he was a cop, or a doctor, or a scientist, or a tugboat captain. He did things like mergers and acquisitions, financial planning and venture capitalism, all very unglamorous things for a nine year old who envied people who got to say that their daddy put out fires or helped people feel better.

Still, he would come home, sometimes after business trips spent around the world, probably exhausted and definitely overworked, and he would graciously accept his invitations for tea parties, tiara and all, and he would quickly change his clothes and rush Lena for a soccer game across town and pizza after, and he would let her come into the lab and solder wires beside him as he worked, taking the time to teach her things despite the unbelievable pressure he must have been under.

All of those memories came back to her as she closed her door and flopped onto the couch, unable to even muster the energy to kick off her heels or tug off her coat or drop her bag. All of it came with her as she fell like a tree in the woods when no one was around to hear its sound.

She was always meant to be a part of LuthorCorp. She wanted to wear a lab coat and make something out of nothing. She was never supposed to be a part of this side of things, never supposed to have to run it all.

And when it came to be that she would have to take over, Lena knew she would have to devote herself to it, full-heartedly. She started work months before the press conferences and the rebranding, she rebuilt it from the ground. A year’s worth of it all caught up with her, and she wondered how the hell her father managed it and two kids and a wife and a five handicap on the links.

She hadn’t factored in what dating the literal personification of a can of energy drink would mean, nor did she allot any sort of time for falling in love. She definitely didn’t reckon on the time needed for a superhero. She never counted on having Kara. Perhaps her father had it easier. He did dig a rather large hole for her to climb out of, and he wasn’t dating something that could stop a speeding train and had the stamina of a… well, a speeding train.

Exhaustion hit her hard, right there after an extremely long day of travelling, a day that started something like forty hours prior to the exact moment her phone rang. She wasn’t sure where she got the exact idea to tell Kara to come over when she got done with game night. It was definitely the reptilian side of her brain that wanted her very warm, very hot, very naked body in bed. That side was going to kill the rest of her sides.

With a groan, Lena pulled her squished face from the cushion and dug her phone from her pocket, squinting as she held it up to her eyes which were too tired to focus on anything concrete, let alone a number she didn’t recognize.

“Hello?” she rasped and cleared her throat.
“Lena Luthor?” a gruff voice rang out, clear and steady.

“How did you get this number?”

“My name is Hank Henshaw. I’m the Dir—”

“Director of the DEO,” she finished for him, her interest piquing. She grabbed the remote and turned on the television, because a call from someone like that, who wasn’t supposed to know that Lena knew that Kara was–

“An agent will be arriving at your door within the next few minutes to escort you–”

The images on the screen and the words coming from his mouth woke Lena up as much as possible. On a loop, the news showed Supergirl’s battle with what could only be described as a creature that towered over her. That wasn’t the problem, easily put down and captured by the hero. But as she finished, a singular shot rang out, and she fell, clutching her side, nothing but a heap on the ground.

“The Xichung was a diversion, as far as we can tell. The bullet came from a prototype at LuthorCorp, or now LCorp, and someone who had access to–”

“Is she alive?”

Lena didn’t bother turning off the television. She was already walking to her door.

“She’s alive.”

“I’ll see you soon, Director.”

“Ms. Luthor, the agents are for your protection, we actually just need access to–”

The phone call was ended just as quickly as another began. Lena breezed past the agents that arrived, snapping her fingers as she passed them and got into the elevator.

“Jess, have the heads of the seven facilities with ongoing K-research produce proof of their supply and schedule an audit of all those with access to those labs for– Let’s go, get the car, keep up,” she barked at the agents as her heels clacked through the lobby. “The audit needs to be done in the next four hours. I don’t care what time it is.”

They group marched through the lobby, Lena in front, the agents almost jogging to keep up with her.

“Have Peter in Archives forward me every prototype plan filed under Project Andromeda created when my brother was at LuthorCorp. Have Bishop get in touch with me at her earliest convenience, such as now. And do the thing where you pretend you’re me and reschedule what you can for tomorrow.”

Impatiently, Lena waited on the sidewalk, answering a few of her assistant’s follow up questions as the car came.

“Ms. Luthor, we’re to accompany you to LCorp to get the research–”

Lena stopped him right there and moved her phone from her ear slightly, glaring at him, tilting her head, making him feel slightly intimidated.

“There’s no way that we–” the other began.

“Let’s go,” she rolled her eyes, not bothering for a minute, sliding into the car herself. “Jess, reach out to Mr. Vanderbilt in acquisitions. I’ll be in touch as soon as I can.”

As soon as she has a moment, to breathe, to catch herself, her phone vibrated with a few emails which she scanned and ignored. In the back of the car while the agents sat quietly in the front, Lena knit her eyes together tightly and clenched her jaw in an attempt to prepare herself for what was about to happen.

Girl of Steel, indestructible, never in any real danger. Those were the things Kara had promised her in the late hours when only the lights from the city provided a small glow through the windows, so that the sky looked like it was nothing more than the dark skyscrapers, and the windows were galaxies. There were monsters and aliens and weapons that Kara beat already, and Lena trusted her. She almost felt betrayed by Kara’s morality.

It took a lot of yelling, and a lot of threatening, but once Lena got to see the Director, he listened and let her in a second after meeting with her, giving Agent Danvers a nod. Her phone vibrated in her pocket, but Lena ignored it as she is lead into a lab. She clenched her fists and jaw and tried to think of what came next.

But nothing prepared her for it. The sight of Kara in a hospital gown, Kara with the tubes and the wires and the equipment. The sight of her sleeping, or looking as if she were sleeping, but the knowledge that she was not, that something terrible happened, that her body was trying to recover, it was from a nightmare.

Alex told her about the gunshot, about how the bullet broke apart, and the Kryptonite that riddled her body. Lena listened but refused to take her eyes off of the girl who laid there. Before she knew it, and very, very quietly, almost silent, her hand slid into Kara’s and she gave her fingers a squeeze. When they were walking, Kara would do that, when Lena got distracted or excited, to show her she was listening and excited as well, she liked to squeeze her fingers. Her hand was still warm, still very soft and very Kara. That was the dissociative part of it, making it even harder to believe who was hurt and lying there. Supergirl didn’t get hurt. Kara didn’t get hurt. Not for long, not this badly.

Eventually, the sister quieted, just as upset by the situation, by the outcome, angry at the world and what it all meant. She watched the Luthor hold her sister’s hand without even moving, watched her stare at Kara and clench her jaw. She looked tired and oddly small, but Alex refused to think of anything other than her sister.

“She’s going to be alright,” Lena told her, as close to supportive as she can be with someone who obviously despised her, and even that was done just for Kara. She looked up at the agent and gave her a solemn nod and promise because she needed to hear the words, even if they came from her own mouth.

A second later, she looked back down at the girl who used to do handstands in her backyard, and willed her words to be true.
Back before she was anything, before she cared about anything other than her grade in Organic
Chem and the game against Barnett, Lena was grossly in love with a high school reporter who was
always eating something, who always tripped over her own feet, who always was grossly happy, so
happy it was contagious.

No matter where she lived, there were people who wanted to be her friend because of her name. An
irony that would soon make her laugh darkly as she grew older, but in high school it was enough to
drive her crazy.

Kara was different. She was genuine, and she was kind, traits that were oddly catching.

“‘You don’t look like you’re having much fun,’” Kara whispered, leaning close at a party thrown by
some basketball player. She knew she’d been there only because Lena told her she had to, that no
one would think of inviting Kara Danvers on their own.

“This is kind of boring,” Lena shrugged.

“There’s a double feature at the drive in tonight. Temple of Doom should be just starting.” With a
small smile, Lena dug for her phone to dial her driver before Kara stopped her. “I have a better
way.”

“Lead the way, Danvers,” she grinned conspiratorially.

On the way out, Lena grabbed a few beers and slid them in her purse beside a few snacks. She
grabbed Kara’s hand who held it behind her as they wove through the bodies, almost not missed
by anyone at all.

It was a short walk, but still, Kara let Lena climb on her back and she gave her a piggy back down
the middle of the street, out of the neighborhood toward the old field where the rotting drive-in
remained, stoic against the test of time.

Quietly, they climbed into the old box on the far side of the field. Kara pushed Lena to the roof
without anyone noticing. She tuned her phone to the station and accepted a beer from Lena’s purse,
though more eagerly took to the candy that came next.

“This is one of my favorites,” Lena murmured, watching the screen in the distance, the words a
second off due to distance.

“It gave me nightmares,” Kara remembered with a smile. “When I first moved in with the Danvers,
Alex took it upon herself to educate me, and it included classic movies. I think she forgot that I was
just a kid.”

“My dad and Lex and me have movie weekends, whenever Mom goes out of town,” the soccer
player explained. “She frowns about wasting so much time. But we order junk food and have a
theme. One weekend it was Indiana Jones. I was about ten, too. I asked for a whip for Christmas.”

Lena earned that laugh, and she didn’t care about the movie. She beamed at her friend and had to
gulp at the almost warm beer to make her mouth not so dry.

Nearly to the end, she leaned against Kara’s warm side and thought that no night could ever be
better.

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In under an hour, Lena was set up beside Kara’s bed, her phone charging, her laptop out, messengers leaving packages at the front desk. From outside the room, Winn and Alex and J’onn watched her pace and work and worry, stopping everything for quiet beside Kara, where she touched her hair, or kissed her palm.

She worked at an alarming pace, hands typing, scrolling through her phone, while at the same time, finding herself still and completely useless as she held her breath and watched the wounded girl battle the poison inside of her body.

“Ms. Luthor, you can’t have things delivered here,” the Director finally told her as he carried in a manila envelope.

“This is who you’re looking for,” Lena ignored him as she opened it and confirmed it was what she was waiting on. “Sebastian Speer.”

“We have our agents already–”

“Sebastian Speer purchased eight ounces of Kryptonite from a third party that refuses to be named, and I’ll keep it that way for now,” she continued, handing over a picture taken from a security image somewhere. “This is Speer and a mutual acquaintance exactly three weeks ago.”

“This is circumstantial at best.”

“Seems like it,” she continued, picking up more pages. “This is the membership log of District Three chapter of a group called Judgement. They are a radical, supremacy movement focused on not just hating anyone who doesn’t look like them, but are not from here.”

“We know this group. We monitor their activities.”

“Then you’ve seen this. This is taken from your own files, images of Speer and his friends having target practice with Supergirl dolls.”

“How did you ge–”

“Sebastian Speer’s Employee badge,” Lena stopped him, digging again into her envelope. “Employee at LutherCorp from June until September the following year. His military records. Sniper Team One, recruited by my brother to head up an alien strike team. The files on their composition, missions, and directives.”

“Ms. Luthor, perhaps you can talk with–”

“The shot was fired from room 1302 in the Filmore hotel. Here are security pictures of Speer entering and leaving the property.”

J’onn stood there with the evidence in his hand and looked up at the woman before him as if she were a witch.

“You did this from here?”

“Yes. How long does this normally take you?” she furrowed and cocked her head to the side. “I’m waiting to hear back from a few of my labs to account for all of our Kryptonite. I’ll be reviewing those with access and looking into the programs to see what we can cut. I just purchased a large section found in Montana last year. It’s on its way to my lab. It didn’t come from me.”
“If you have it, we will get rid of it–”

“No thank you, Director. I don’t trust the government to do anything in Kara’s best interest.” Mercifully, her phone began to ring again. “Excuse me.”

“Agent Danvers!” he called, his eyes never leaving Lena’s as she took her call.

It wasn’t a lie. Lena let Kara know about her feelings for the Kryptonite holding organization, she didn’t hold back too much on her worries and concerns, and she tried to not sound like her brother while she did it.

While Lena finished, she saw the two huddle slightly, going over information, until the director nodded to her and left. She watched Alex watch her before looking at her sister. Lena did the same before she hung up.

“You must be exhausted,” Alex whispered.

“I have a lot to take care of.”

“I can’t imagine there’s anything else you can do.”

“There’s always more.”

The quiet was stifling instead of comforting. Lena didn’t mind it though because at least someone else was feeling something that she felt. She stifled a yawn and finally closed her laptop. Well after midnight, she relegated herself to lists and her notebook and trying not to sleep.

“You thought I did this, didn’t you?” Lena asked as Alex leaned against a door. She didn’t have to lie or confirm it. “You still think I had something to do with it.”

“I’ve seen Luthors in action.”

“Your boss trusts me.”

“He let you in,” Alex corrected. “Because you’re important to Kara, and no other reason.”

“He didn’t read my mind and see the truth?”

“Oh, Kara,” she shook her head and sighed at her sister’s secret keeping ability.

Both glared at each other for no reason at all except they didn’t understand how the other arrived at their solutions. The methods were too different. Lena knew that Kara could live without her, but never without her sister. She knew where she fell, and she understood that kind of devotion, to a degree. It was overwhelming and made her jealous. She was the expandable member of the room, and all she wanted to do was fight against nothing at all.

“If you’re right, about Speer, than militant supporters of your brother’s are arming themselves and acting out against my sister.”

“Yeah,” Lena agreed and reached out to hold Kara’s hand out of habit.

“What are we going to do about it?”

For a moment, she just stared at the sleeping girl and closed her eyes before dragging Kara’s hand against her forehead, leaning closer, she cupped her own cheek with it, inhaled what she could. She couldn’t let go of it.
“I’ve spent millions to buy all of the Kryptonite I can. I’ve archived and destroyed my brother’s designs and prototypes. I’ll figure something out.”

“We can–”

“You work at an organization that employs the use of the same material that did this to your sister. There is probably an identical bullet sitting in a gun in case she moves one hair out of place, right here in this very building, so if you don’t mind, I think I’ll keep doing what I can, alone.”

Surprised by the strong words, Alex was taken aback for a moment. She swallowed slightly and regained the bristle natural to her shoulders.

“I do it to protect her.”

“I know, but it doesn’t make it right,” Lena promised, having some knowledge on the subject. “My brother thought he was protecting us. The reason doesn’t direct morality. Not completely. Not enough.”

A tap at the glass interrupted Alex’s lashing, perhaps even a war waged right there. The agent slipped into the hall without Lena lifting her head. For a moment, the battle was paused, and Lena shook her head, reminding herself that it was no way to win the other Danvers onto her side or in support of her and Kara’s relationship.

But that was tomorrow’s problem.

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Back before she was anything, before she cared about anything other than her grade in Astronomy and the game against U of M, Lena was grossly in love with a college tutor who was always ready to laugh at penguin videos, who always had a phone with a cracked screen from dropping it, who always was grossly happy, so happy it was contagious.

“You don’t want to go out with the team? That party sounded fun,” Kara worried, linking her arm with Lena’s as they made their way through the streets toward the museum.

“Seurat is one of your favorite painters. And I know this because I got the entire history of his life and a definitive ranking of his works when you found out the show was coming here,” Lena shook her head. “This is way more important.”

Kara ducked her head and adjusted her glasses at the description. It was a lot to feel important to someone like Lena Luthor, and yet she had this inexplicable way of making Kara feel like the only person in the world, and as if it was nothing at all for that to be a fact.

Right there in the museum, Lena lost the battle she was constantly having with herself, one made easier by sheer distance that she tried to keep from her best friend. Ever since the kiss, she would see how far, how long she could go without seeing Kara because it just plain hurt, plain fixed her, made her dependent on that high. And then she would fail, and she would see her and she would lose the war.

It was a pattern.
It was no different in the museum for hours, watching the way Kara stared at paintings, asked Lena’s opinion, grabbed her hand and tugged her through the exhibit.

Sitting in front of a large mural of a park Lena vaguely recognized from her trips with her family, she studied Kara’s face a little more. She wanted to ask her where she came from, she wanted to ask her about the night at the freeway, when she stopped the speeding car, and she wanted to ask her about being bulletproof. She wanted to ask about her home and how she ended up on earth. But she couldn’t.

“I just like how they all seem so peaceful, the soft colors, the light. They remind me of home, I think. As silly as that sounds,” Kara offered with a sad smile.

She couldn’t tell Lena that if she squinted, she could pretend the man in the top hat on the painting looked like her father, and that was why she was found herself staring at it. Or that one of the women had the faintest trace of her mother’s smile. She loved the nondescript look to them all, and how she could see her history in it.

“I think that’s a good reason to like something.”

For hours, they trailed through the museum, they navigated all manner of art and history and stories and jokes. Lena could never remember having a better time with anyone else. The world disappeared, and all she could do was enjoy the way Kara leaned against her on the sidewalk after they closed it down.

For hours, Lena remained in the tiny little medical room, on the hard, plastic chair, beside the coven of machines and equipment. She leaned back in her chair and dug the heel of her hands into her eyes to stay awake which seemed possible after her twelfth wind of the night, though they were getting less and less effective.

No one saw her biting her lip, worrying it to shreds. No one saw her wipe a tear from her cheek so quickly it didn’t have time to even make a proper escape. No one saw Lena Luthor there, and that exact reason was why she was in love with Kara, the girl who saw her. Everyone else did their parts to keep busy. Alex hunted, J’onn oversaw, Winn and James researched. They took up their missions to distract themselves, but it just left Lena with her job, which was to simply wait.

It was absolute torture.

Lena almost missed the first sign of movement with daydreaming of them before, before fingers gently squeezed her’s back a second time. She hopped up and hovered to see eyelids flutter, and finally those eyes that were oceans focused on her before squinting slightly in that face, that too-tired-to-get-out-of-bed, face that Kara made nearly every morning they spent together. Just like that, Lena could breathe again.

“How was New Delhi?” Kara asked with pure gravel in her throat and a wickedly sweet smile. She swallowed as best she could, the dull throb in her side gripping her muscles tightly. She blinked and squinted as she woke, unaccustomed to such pain.

Lena didn’t respond, she just hugged her tighter than probably advised before kissing her cheek. She took deep breaths and she refused to let up. It hurt, but Kara didn’t care at all because she needed it more than morphine. Tears ran down Lena’s face despite herself. Happy as they were, she chided herself from once again failing to be someone who did not cry.

“Sydney was alright,” she whispered, pushing away the hair from Kara’s face. “My talk went pretty well. How was your day?”
“Not terrible. Did you know that someone might not like Supergirl?” the faux surprise gave way to probably a bit more honesty than Kara would have cared for. She knew people disliked her alter ego, but this was just beyond.

“I’m gone for two days and you go and get into trouble. Don’t worry, I got it handled.”

“Wait, you’re… here… I’m… this is the DEO.” Kara cleared her throat and tried to swallow, nothing really making much sense to her any more. Her body ached all over, as if her bones were shivering. Pain ravaged her body. Something happened to her and she didn’t know exactly.

“Yeah.”

“How?” Kara balked.

“Agent Danvers and Director Henshaw let me in.”

“Really?”

“No, I snuck in and subdued a few guards.”

The memories passed and Lena watched Kara think everything. When she moved she winced and laid back down, gripping her side where the bandages were placed. The lingering effects of the Kryptonite made her woozy and weak and altogether miserable.

“You got it handled?” she ventured after a moment, confusion clouding her vision.

“Yeah.”

“What does that mean?”

“We’ll talk about it later,” Lena informed her, fretting over Kara’s shirt and arm, smoothing the blankets and untangling wires. “But no one’s allowed to attack my girlfriend without me having something to say about it.”

Kara grunted as she shifted slightly, tentatively testing out her body as it began to mend, the Kryptonite wearing out in her muscles, slowly losing to the lamp that supercharged her cells. She only knew a few facts: One, a Luthor was in the DEO. Two, it was on purpose. Three, someone let an alien out to shoot her. Four, she’d been shot. Five, with Kryptonite. Six, she didn’t like it and it would kill her. Seven, her girlfriend was protective and cute. Eight, and oddly terrifying, in a weirdly sexy way. Nine, she was having a very bad day. Ten, it was made better just with one person existing.

“Are you okay? Do you need something?” Lena asked, constantly touching and hovering.

“Just thinking a lot of things,” Kara decided, laying back again and looking at where a bullet had entered her body. “Ten things. I had ten thoughts.”

“That many, huh?” Lena teased.

“I’m sorry.”

“For what?” she ventured after a long, deep yawn.

“You look like you’re about to fall asleep right there.”

“You’re supposed to call me pretty. Woo a woman and such. What do they teach you in hero
school, Kara?” She earned a chuckle from the injured party who scooted slightly, as much as she could. “Let me get your sister. She’ll want to run tests—”

“Come here, beautiful.”

“Kara…” Lena fret, looking around at the windows, the openness, the potential eyes. She was not a public person, she shied from the spotlight, from being human around many people. This felt incredibly intimate.

“You’re going to collapse.”

“You’re not supposed to worry about me. I’m fine,” she promised, smoothing her girlfriend’s hair. “You’re the one that needs to rest.”

“For me then? I haven’t seen you in a week.” It didn’t work well. She tried the sad eyes, and those started the cracking. “And I got shot.”

Lena looked around and debated it before she looked at Kara’s face, at the bandage on her side, at the gizmos and lights she had making her better. With a sigh she resigned herself to her fate, finally slipping off her heels before climbing onto the stiff platform of a bed. She’d give into whatever Kara wanted, and that was a scary fact.

Even hurt, Kara held out her arm and let Lena use it as a pillow, keeping her close until their foreheads were touching, their noses bumping with the small space of the single person pod. So close, she could only see Lena’s green eyes and that one dimple she had, on her left cheek.

From the sliver of bed, Lena placed her hand on the bandage, earning a wince, but she held it there, as if she could heal it. Despite herself, her eyes closed as Kara played with her hair.

“What’d you bring me from your trip?” Kara murmured, earning a small snort.

“I left it at home. I was in a rush to leave for some reason.”

“But what’d you get me?”

“Shh.”

“I know you can boss an entire secret government organization, my boss, my sister, your assistant, every person you’ve ever met, and will meet, but you should know you can’t boss me.”

“I can, and do,” the Luthor retorted confidently.

In her hand, under the bandage, she felt Kara chuckle at her answer. She held her tighter and pressed her eyes closed tighter, as tight as she could, because it finally hit her how close this was to never existing again. How close she was to not hearing that voice, or feeling that laugh. She got complacent and spoiled by the notion of an indestructible person.

“I’m okay,” Kara promised, wiping the faintest sliver of moisture from eyes that were locked shut, as if putting up the barricade on crying. “I’m going to be healed, no worse for wear, in about three hours.”

Even with the pain in her side, even with the feeling of her bones in a vice grip, Kara promised and dried and kissed.

“I know,” she lied.
“This is the job.”

“I know.”

“I’ll always come back, too. Just like you come back to me.”

“I know,” Lena nodded as she exhaled a shaky breath.

“I’m going to toss you up against a fridge as soon as I’m healed, so you should sleep.”

“I know,” she grinned despite herself.

“Snagged myself a know-it-all. I always knew you were super smart.”

It didn’t take long, for Lena’s breaths to even out. Kara closed her eyes and listened to them accumulate. No one else in the world would know about the small snore that came every three or four breaths. That was her’s. So was the way Lena’s hand rooted in her clothes at night, not letting go, so tightly, she couldn’t escape it, so tightly knuckles turned white. So was the feeling of having someone selflessly protect them, like having their own personal superhero.

She kissed Lena’s cheek and took a deep breath before tucking her closer, under her chin, wrapping her up as much as possible because she was so very sorry for what happened and what could happen. Kara dug her nose into the crown of black hair and smiled to have something like that, something to wake up to and something to fight for, having something fight for her.
You could still be, 
what you want to, 
what you said you were, 
when I met you.

A bit of normalcy came after the shooting. As normal as either could hope to ever have once everyone knew of their relationship and a group of highly trained, well-funded operatives lingering on the fringes of their minds as an apparent constant threat.

For the life of her, Kara tried to remember a time in which she actually had this kind of normal, or better yet, that kind of happy. She couldn’t though. And as the summer approached, she looked forward to the coming of a day she once dreaded, a day she once swore she would never have to experience again. She looked forward to the water tower.

Ever since the gunshot, Kara had been careful not to push. Lena never stopped being honest with her, though she was less than forthright with the DEO when it came to her decisions. Caught somewhere between the two forces, Supergirl didn’t bother moderating, just told them to stick to their respective corners.

The summer passed in almost relative calm, or as calm as either could have hoped when their relationship reached the front page. The picture of the two, of Kara adjusting her glasses and Lena kissing her jaw in the crowd at a soccer game was grainy, probably from a cell phone somewhere in the stands close to them, emerged with an uproar. Not a day later, a better one was printed, with lots of speculation. Lena held Kara’s hand and listened to her talk about something while they drank coffee in the park. It ran for two days.

Kara took the good natured jabs from coworkers, blushing and stammering slightly when they tried to ask her questions, quickly pleading privacy. Lena bore the questions with proud avoidance when the press asked her about the blonde, notorious for her policy of having a life separate from the spotlight. When asked about Kara, Lena had a patented smirk, and that was all.

It became part of their life, the cameras and the occasional spot on a magazine cover. Kara only endured about three days of the wrath of her boss for not giving them an exclusive. It stopped when Lena picked her up for a lunch date and politely reminded everyone who she was without saying a word.

It wasn’t the worst summer, despite the attention and the hate group bent on destroying her, and as it came to an end, Kara secretly crossed off the days until their scheduled date.

“Hey, I’ll see you after work, right? I have a late meeting,” Lena explained as she held up earrings. “Which ones?”

“Those,” Kara nudged her head and earned a smile as she sat on the edge of her bed and tied her shoe.

“My place tonight, or do you anticipate any major disaster to strike our city?”

“Things have been pretty quiet.”

“Hey, what’s wrong? Are you bothered by the decrease in crime?” Lena chuckled, finishing up and standing before her girlfriend.
“No, that’s not it… I… we. There’s… Could.” Kara shook her head and let it drop before leaning forward and nudging Lena’s stomach, quietly defeated by her own head. Fingernails skated over the muscles of her back through her shirt. “I don’t know. I didn’t sleep well. I’m tired.”

It was an easy solution. Lena pulled up her dress higher on her hips. She earned a gulp as she straddled the girl in the bed before carefully taking off her useless glasses and tossed them on the bed.

“I think we can find a way to wake up a bit more;” Lena husked, running her hands up Kara’s chest, over her shoulders. She liked her shoulders. “Maybe you shouldn’t stay up dealing with corner store robberies.”

“You’re insatiable.”

“I like sending you out into the day with a smile,” she bit her lip and hovered near Kara’s. “I like you.”

“You’re good to me. I don’t want to ruin your dress again.” With a blush, Kara thought about how mad Lena got about her dress just a few nights ago that was well beyond repair. The hero couldn’t help her overzealous nature when presented with the option for sex, nor her eagerness after the busy week they had that kept them apart, and they were finally reunited.

“If you don’t mind Ms. Grant getting mad at you for being late, I won’t care about this dress.”

“Who said I’d be late?” Kara challenged, holding her hips and standing up. “I know how to go quick.”

“What if I don’t want quick?”

“Nothing at all?” she leaned forward, hovering near Lena’s lips, eyes lidded as she pressed her against the wall. She felt Lena grind against her stomach. “I like this dress.”

“Take your pants off.”

“I can’t be late for work,” Kara shook her head, slowly dropping Lena to her feet. She didn’t stop with that, but knelt and pressed her thighs apart.

“Kara,” Lena growled, though it came out as a whine, her head tilting back until it hit the wall. She felt lace sliding down her legs, she felt the fabric of her dress pushed up, she felt a strong palm holding her stomach and hips still. She felt it all.

Kara wasn’t late for work. She was almost proud of that, a little cocky mixed in for good measure. She didn’t even ruin the dress. Her pants, however, had to be changed thanks to a certain human who did her best superhero impression at very inopportune times and could not stop herself from grinding.

The good mood wavered, though, as she remembered that Lena forgot. And so she stayed late at work, knowing full well that if she tried, if she distracted herself, she could pretend it didn’t matter, could forget about the childish anniversary.

Nothing could stop her though, because even if Lena forgot, Kara liked to remember it, liked the disappearing of it. So she found herself taking off from National City in search of her hometown as the sun disappeared, chasing it toward the horizon.

From high atop the water tower, a pair of legs kicked out. Music came wafting up from a few
parties in neighborhoods while a plane slid across the sky. The night took its time in that summer kind of way, while the heat kicked up and refused to slumber.

“I was beginning to think you wouldn’t show,” Lena greeted her as she hovered close to the water tower. “There is no way I was going to be able to eat all of this take out by myself. Do you know how hard it was to climb up here? And you get to just fly like nothing.”

“You came,” Kara sighed with a smile as she climbed over the railing, dropping on the walk.

“Of course I came. You didn’t think I missed all of those hints?”

“I just… I thought… You haven’t…”

“It was so hard not coming, you can’t understand…” she shook her head. “But I’ve been planning this for a month. I have your favorite foods, and good wine.”

Lena kept listing, pulling things out of the bag that sat beside her hand handing them to Kara, who just beamed and tried to contain herself.

“Really good wine, actually,” Lena continued, “Which I know won’t have any effect on you, but that’s okay, because I’ll get nice and tipsy and you can take me home and I can repay you for that dres–”

The words were all coming out, and Kara didn’t care about them. She just kissed Lena Luthor like she did when she was in college, before the trials and arrests, before Supergirl, before LCorp. She kissed her because she was her best friend, still. She kissed her because she’d wanted to do it for a long time, and couldn’t, and wouldn’t, but now they did often and it was the best part of her day.

“Can we just agree that you won’t break anything tonight?” Lena pulled away, her hand on Kara’s chin. “I like the new bed, and the fridge–”

“I can’t promise anything like that.”

“You’re exhausting.”

“I know,” Kara smiled, kissing her again through it though it was almost impossible with how she beamed.

“I still love you.”

“Yeah?” she breathed, hands clutching at Lena’s neck and cheeks to keep her there.

“Yeah,” Lena promised with a smile, feeling both a million times lighter and a million times more afraid with the admission.

Kara kissed her again because her heart was on fire and she didn’t know what else to do with so much joy.

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Deliciously sore and lazily disinterested in moving, Kara stretched in her bed and felt the sunshine of morning on her back. The pile beside her hummed and pulled the blanket up tighter against the
cold nose that dug into her neck and shoulder.

There’d been a moment, years ago, in which Kara woke up in a similar position. Except that she was not naked, very much clothed, and very much afraid of being close to Lena. And the following night, she dug her nose into the extra pillow and forbid herself from dreaming of the moment she was currently living. She found herself smiling as she kissed bare shoulder.

There were the remnants of the night before scattered through the living room. The take out Lena brought over on her way from the office, the half-burnt candles, the trail of clothes that came from a fully drank bottle of wine.

Her first night off in a month, Kara knew only one person in the world who would be happier than her about the news. Lena didn’t disappoint.

“Do you want some coffee?”

“What time is it?”

“About eight,” Kara figured, lifting herself slightly to eye the clock on the nightstand. “You’re not going to drag Jess into the office today are you?”

“I have a few things to do,” Lena yawned.

Even with her eyes closed, Lena rolled over slightly, let Kara hold her tighter, let herself forget what the week would bring, what her reports had found, what her life would entail. She had a girl clinging to her, she had a hand roaming over her ribs in that lazy, Sunday kind of way that she was only just beginning to understand.

“I don’t have anything to do today,” Kara countered. “We could have nothing to do together.”

There was a sleepy laugh, the first one of the morning, that Kara worked hard to earn from her girlfriend. They didn’t spend every night together, but they did have mandatory, weekly sleepovers. Kara had her requirements of Lena in the relationship, and Lena, despite her family, took the better parts of them and kept it, had her own, which included nights with no work, days without going into the office, and especially sleeping with the phones in a different room. They were working it out as they went, but Kara was very much on board for sleepovers. She liked sleepovers.

“I have a few things to read over,” she argued, tilting her neck.

“I was going to let you yell at the television about sports while I baked cookies.”

“That sounds good. I can multitask.”

“Can you?” Kara taunted.

She knew Lena Luthor. And that was all it took to elicit a reaction. Any kind of challenge was enough to ensure she was to get what she secretly wanted.

It was a lethargic kind of Sunday, and so Lena took her time twisting around in the bed. The sheets moved slightly as Kara laid back and let her girl slide atop her. The sun burned up in the quiet kind of way that a Sunday morning dawn was known to do.

“Ugh, I forgot you were wearing that,” she groaned and giggled, closing her eyes tightly as Lena crawled atop her.
“It was cold and I needed water. I like it,” Lena shrugged, straddling her girlfriend, looking down at her t-shirt. “It’s like I’m wearing your jersey.”

“I’m going to incinerate it.”

“Good morning,” she chuckled, ignoring the complaints of the hero below her as she leaned over and kissed her. “Do you not like my Supergirl shirt?”

“I like it better on the floor,” Kara supplied, lifting up slightly to chase lips that kissed her and pulled away. “I never thought I’d use a line like that.” Proud of herself, she beamed, and Lena had a phantom of a thought that she was sitting on top of the sun. The smile was contagious.

For longer than a pause, Lena cocked her head and stared at the girl beneath her, hair messy and tossed around from the night and the shuffling, eyes bright, the strips of sunlights coming through the curtains and half-opened windows that cut across her skin, warming triangles there. If she wasn’t in love ever before in her life, she was damn certain of it in that moment.

“What?” Kara smiled softly and tilted her head.

Her hands moved up Lena’s thighs, held her hip, lazily ran along the smooth skin of her knee. If she were being honest, she’d say that it made her heart burst to see her in that ratty old blue shirt with her emblem on it. She understood how Lena felt to see Kara in her old soccer clothes.

“I don’t want to do anything today.”

“You have work to do. Someone has to keep me in the lifestyle to which I’ve become accustomed.”

With a grand flourish, Kara gestured to her studio apartment, earning another morning laugh. Uninhibited and real and loud, she loved them the best.

“You look very pretty, Kara Danvers,” Lena finally confessed.

That was the blush. That was all she wanted.

It was the day, it was the morning, but Kara didn’t care for the reason particularly. Lena dipped down and slowly kissed her girlfriend. She tugged at the shirt she was wearing and made it disappear in favor of naked skin and so she could rest her palms against the muscles that resided there.

“No, wait,” Kara stopped, still slightly dizzy and reeling from the course of events of her life, let alone morning. Shirt half pulled up, stomach and ribs and sternum on display, Lena paused her movement. “Leave it on.”

With a wicked kind of grin, Lena wiggled her hips slightly before letting it drop again. Hands stayed on her hips while they slowly moved.

“You like it, don’t you?”

Kara gulped and nodded. Delicious and absolute hell, Lena kissed her neck, tugged on her earlobe.

“I knew it.”

The blush could be felt and it only spurred Lena on more. It was slow going, as any kind of Sunday morning should be. The shirt lasted just a little bit longer before Kara grew sick of the obstruction
that kept her lips from more skin.

“Please,” Lena whispered, rooting her hands in Kara’s hair as her mouth moved to her chest.

“Please what?”

“Kara…” she hummed as hands tugged and fingers slid where she wanted them most. “Rao.”

“So good I make you moan other god’s names.”

“Shut up. Just keep– Oh!” Lena moaned despite herself.

“Kara! We have a lea– Oh my God!” Alex yelps as soon as she makes her way into the apartment.

“What are you doing!?”

“Alex!” Kara yelled, yanking her fingers, earning a whimper and grunt from the girl on top of her. She tugged up the blanket and tried to cover them as best she could. “What are you doing here?!”

“What are you doing here!” the sister countered, spinning around, covering her eyes, unsure of what to do.

“I think you know what we’re doing,” Lena mumbled.

“Can you just… give us a minute?” Kara asked. “Just… a minute.”

“Yeah, definitely. Just-” she turned around and regretted it immediately before stuttering her way through the door.

It might not have been blood, but there was a genetic component between the two sisters that was deeper than anything. Lena saw the resemblance in moments like that.

“Oh Rao,” Kara groaned, flopping back against the pillow and covering her face with her hands.

“You don’t lock your door?”

“I’m Supergirl.”

“For future reference, when we’re going to have sex, you lock your door,” Lena instructed, quickly dismounting and searching for her pants. Kara already knew the answer before she asked, but it didn’t stop her.

“Are you mad?”

“We had plans today.”

“I didn’t invite her!”

“Five more minutes,” she sighed, mostly to herself. “Five more minutes and I could have. I. Ugh.”

“I’m sorry.”

“Make it up to me later,” Lena instructed as she buttoned her pants and pulled on her shirt. “I’m going to go get breakfast and coffee. I’ll get an extra I guess.”

“Gladly,” Kara offered, tugging her hand back and kissing her sweetly. “Eagerly. Twentyfold.”

With a quick kiss, Lena grabbed her coat and made her way into the hall, careful to avoid an
agent’s eyes as much as the agent sought the same. Inside, Kara flopped down in her bed again and groaned, beet red and oddly disappointed in not having five more minutes.

The party was an all out affair, the best of the best, the richest of rich, the fanciest of fancy. Lights hung from every inch of roof in the ballroom, candles glittered on the tables while men in tuxes danced with beautiful women in gowns, and everyone felt as if it were the beginning of a fairytale.

It’d been in the news for weeks, the first annual charity event hosted by a Luthor, the proceeds going to Lena’s favorite cause. There’d been a divisive kind of nature to it though, despite all of her outreach and attempts at helping the city. A few news agencies called it an exercise in vanity. Others heralded in the new Princess of National City.

Weeks, she’d spent planning it herself, crafting the guest list, selecting the venue, the music, the food. Lena knew she put a lot into it, and that Kara put up with it kindly enough, supporting her the entire time, gladly helping her sample dinner options and spending the night at the penthouse while Lena organized, often falling asleep while swatches of fabric and pictures of tables and chairs covered half of the bed.

That was why Lena had a large box delivered that morning to a certain, newly minted reporter’s apartment, complete with brand new dress, meticulously picked out, and a rather simple, small necklace to go with it. It was the first grand gesture Lena could think of making, first gift she’d given Kara that was more than potstickers or a new desk after that incident on Valentine’s Day.

Though she hid it well enough, the truth was, she was a raging stack of nerves when it came time to actually go. There’d been invitations to other events, which Lena graciously decided against, opting to focus on business. She was out of practice in all the ways her mother taught her her to host, and still she had to do it.

She shook hands and smiled and thanks everyone, catching up with old friends of the family who would never admit they’d known a Luthor, let alone went to one of their parties, just two years ago. They promised to do lunch, to keep in touch, and Lena knew some of them would try, back on board after the successful quarter her growth showed and no other reason.

Nervously, Lena watched the door between conversations and small talk, surveyed the room and repeatedly asked her assistant to call her girlfriend and check when she would be arriving. Her heart sank with every passing minute.

By the time she took the stage to thank her guests for their contributions, she was certain a meteor was about to strike, or even an alien force she couldn’t fathom was about to invade. Those were the only acceptable alternatives.

“Thank you all for coming,” Lena nodded and smiled graciously as the applause died down. “I don’t want to keep you from the festivities for long, we have a lot of great things planned tonight. I just wanted to take a moment to express my gratitude.”

It was difficult. The words came out and Lena felt oddly bare with them, unaccustomed to saying things that were so personal. And then Kara showed up and made her into a person that did, despite how lucked up those words were. She wrestled them free.
“My mother was the best person I ever knew. There were a number of causes that were dear to her heart, that I’ve been able to work with, but tonight, tonight is perhaps the most important to me. I know the research won’t help her. But if we could help, just maybe save someone else’s mother, I’d feel like I did something she would have been proud of.”

The applause came up in a big wave, and Lena smiled for them.

“Tonight is a special night. My mother’s birthday. She wouldn’t want me to say her age,” she chuckled. “But she would want us to have a great time tonight. That was always the goal. Even for just a night, to make the world seem a little more happy.”

Lena raised her glass of champagne and toasted the night before telling the band to play. As soon as she stepped off the stage, her assistant was beside her, shaking her head, signifying an answer to the question before her boss had to ask it.

“Take the rest of the night off,” she finally told Jess, knowing full well that she wouldn’t be able to enjoy the rest of the party.

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It took three days to make it back. What started as a fact-finding mission turned quickly into a manhunt, which ultimately ended in a thorough ass-kicking and yet more questions than answers.

Only when she made it back to headquarters and debriefed the group did she realize how much trouble she was going to be in. It was something that nagged at her the entire time she was gone, chasing leads, but it was supposed to be worth it. But Alex told her about the storm that arrived at the DEO in the form of a certain businesswoman demanding answers, and Kara groaned, before hurriedly apologizing and taking off across the city.

It was supposed to be a trade off; she went after Lionel, and she missed the most important night of her relationship, just to say that she locked up a madman yet again. But Kara came up empty-handed and fairly badly beaten, if she were being honest, in the form of enhanced aliens and a world of terrible implications she refused to think too much about for too long.

It felt wrong, to show up on the balcony, and Kara wasn’t sure why. But the weight of the news and the fact that she missed a very important day, the sight of an ornate white box with a pretty gown inside still sitting on her bed, it made her walk.

Before she knocked, Kara heard Lena inside, listened to her pacing as she practiced some pitch, occasionally pausing to make notes in the margins. It was easier to square up to twenty foot monsters or catch missiles than face Lena Luthor when she was angry.

“Kara!” The reaction startled her slightly, but she gladly took arms tossed around her neck and a body launched at her in the hall. Lena melted into strong arms and squeezed tightly. “I’ve been worried. I tried calling, I tried the DEO. I tried–”

“I’m so sorry,” she mumbled, digging into Lena’s neck.

“You don’t!” she piped up, closing the door behind her as Lena dragged her into the penthouse. “I
wasn’t supposed to be gone that long. And I missed your party. You have no idea how sorry I am.”

“You thought I’d be mad?” Lena stopped the rambling apology as she crossed her arms and stood in the living room. “About a party?”

Bashfully, Kara shrugged and rubbed her elbow, missing the warm welcome of worry just a minute ago. She liked Lena in her dresses and heels. She loved Lena in her sweats and her own old shirt she must have left or that’d been pilfered from a night at her apartment. There was a distinct possibility that Lena was made of something more impressive than Kryptonite, because Kara felt so incredibly weak against a look like the one she got.

“You were gone for almost four days, with no word, no one would tell me anything. I’ve been going nuts because I thought you were hurt or taken or something, and you think I care about the party?”

“I know it was important, and I wanted to be there—”

“I was mad for five minutes, and then I realized something was going on. I’ve been looking for you everywhere.”

“You look mad right now.”

“Well, now I know you’re alright, so that other parts are coming back.”

“The dress was nice,” Kara tried. She took the step, stood close to Lena who remained rooted, oscillating between anger and happiness in equal measure. “I liked this. It’s beautiful.”

Lena watched her tug a chain and a diamond from under her shirt and hold it slightly. It wasn’t much, wasn’t exceptionally expensive or even shiny. It was understated and simple, classic. Kara touched it fondly before letting it drop to her chest.

“I was so worried, Kara,” she shook her head. “Let me disappear for three nights and lets see you sleep or function.”

“I’d be…” the hero shook her head, never contemplating that situation, and how she would have never rested, never stopped searching, worked herself raw. “I couldn’t do it,” she realized. “I’m so sorry, Lee.”

Despite herself, Lena couldn’t wait, and she kissed her. She held her cheeks and she held her neck, and she kissed her until she couldn’t breathe anymore, and even then for a few more seconds.

“Just tell me you had to go.”

“I had to go,” Kara promised. “All I wanted was to see you in your dress.”

It was one of Lena’s favorite things, Kara’s earnestness. When she asked a question, she got perhaps the most honest answer. It’d always been that way, and she found a certain steadiness to that fact. She also liked the feeling of hands on her hips. The gust of breath against her chin. The way Kara’s eyelashes swayed when she looked at her from under them.

“I had to go,” she promised again.

“Okay.”

“I have to tell you about it.”
“Tonight?” Lena yawned.

To her credit, Kara debated it. There were important things she wanted to say, but she was tired as well, and she was grateful to be back. Lena ran her hand along her chest and trailed along her forearm until she knotted her fingers loosely and tugged her down the hall.

She could wait the night.

The work Lena had been doing remained on the counter, her laptop left open, the papers stacked, her phone vibrated quietly. She flicked the light as she led Kara down the hallway. In the dark they moved, the relief giving way to the tired she’d kept at bay with sheer force of will and worry.

Kara didn’t do a thing. She let Lena kiss her sweetly before tugging off her shirt, let her push down her pants and make her step out of them.

“I’m so sorry,” Kara whispered as she slunk into the bed beside Lena.

“I know.”

“I felt terrible.”

“I can imagine you did,” she promised, wiggling closer in the dark, her own personal furnace in her bed.

“It bothered you.”

Kara ran her fingertips along Lena’s back, slid under the shirt and toyed with the soft, tiny hairs on her lower spine.

“Yeah,” she nodded against her pillow’s shoulder. “Right now I’m just too glad you’re back to be mad. We’ll fight in the morning.”

“I don’t want to fight. I promise it won’t happen again.”

“Sleep.”

“I can’t. I feel… bad… I deserve being yelled at or… I don’t know.”

In the quiet, Kara wondered how she thought it was going to go. It certainly wasn’t like this, but then again, there weren’t many times that Lena didn’t completely upend her predictions. She kissed her girlfriend’s forehead.

“It was my dad, wasn’t it?” Lena finally mumbled, unable to close her eyes despite the comfort and warmth and for just a few minutes, knowing exactly where Kara was, and that she was safe. “He sent me a letter. I got it the night after the party.”

“We got a lead on his location, or some associates,” Kara explained. She shifted her legs and felt Lena slide between, her hip adjusting against her own. “I was doing recon, but it turned out that he wasn’t there. We dismantled something I think he was involved in though. Alien research in the desert.”

“Just when I start making headway,” she shook her head.

“I’ll stop him.”

The bed smelled fresh, like flowers and sunshine. That brilliant kind of clean that stuck around
with each breath. Kara memorized it. Her thumb ran along Lena’s hip, rubbing it slowly. It’d been a long almost four days to get to this moment, and she took just a moment to be grateful for it. Her own, kindred sleepiness slid into her bones when she had Lena in her arms, because she was there, and she was safe.

“I know you will.”

“I’m so sorry I missed it. I’m sure it was amazing. Your mom would be so proud of you.”

“I think she’d tell me I work too much and that I’ll never produce an heir dating the likes of you.”

“She was practical.”

“She liked you a lot. Did I ever tell you that she asked me if we were dating in college?” Lena chuckled at the memory when Kara shook her head. “She said she didn’t care, of course, she just needed to know. I told her we weren’t, and I don’t know what it was that made me tell her, but I told her I was afraid of ruining it, that I wanted to date you.”

“I didn’t know that.”

“Yeah, it was easy to talk to her. I never thought of it as coming out, but I guess it was, because the next day she sat me down and told that it didn’t matter, that there were still certain things I should look for in someone, things to avoid. And then she had Dad update the HR department guidelines about sexual preference. Practical and dreamer, all rolled together.”

“I know someone like that,” Kara promised, dragging her leg against her girlfriend’s. “She was very nice. She told me she hoped one day you’d find someone like me, once. I was a mess for week thinking about it.”

“She tried her best,” Lena smiled into Kara’s chest.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t be there.”

“You have to stop apologizing.”

“I can’t help it. I know how important it was, and I don’t know how to fix it.”

There was a knee-jerk reaction, to hide it all, to stifle it. It was hard for Lena to even be mad at Kara to begin with, and with her feeling so bad, it felt like a whipped puppy, and she couldn’t feel anything but gratitude that she was back. Lena inhaled the smell of Kara’s shoulder, stretched and kissed her neck, under her chin.

“Do you know why I was most mad?” Lena whispered. “Because I had a thought, when you weren’t walking through the door, that I should get used to it. It would never matter how important something was to me. If someone was in danger, if something was happening, you’d be there, with them. And I can’t be mad at that without feeling like a terrible, selfish asshole. I wasn’t mad you weren’t there. I was mad at myself.”

“You can count on me. I can’t put everything ahead of you, and I don’t,” Kara promised, shaking her head quickly, squeezing Lena’s arm tightly, clutching at her elbow. “I—I—I don’t want you to get used to something like that.”

“Kara, you can’t tell me that a stupid party or a date is more important than your duties, and how am I supposed to live with myself if people die because you’re taking me to a movie?”
“I know it’s been hard… I know I’ve been pulled thin a bit with the–” Kara stammered, her heart beating quickly as it felt like a conversation Lena wanted to put off for a very specific reason.

“Stop, please,” she soothed, pressing her hand against her sternum. “I knew what I was getting into, Danvers. I’m not naive. I just… I have to figure it out.”

“I put you first,” Kara promised, mumbling her words into Lena’s hair that made her nose itch. She didn’t fight it though, just went with it, let it.

“I just want to know when are you going to be done? How long can you do it?”

“I don’t know,” she confessed with a long sigh.

“You’re the one that made me want a future. And now I see one, and I want you in it.”

“I want one too.”

“I’ll love you forever, Kara. You have to know that.”

Kara didn’t say anything, just smiled in the dark and closed her eyes. Her hands traced soft skin and listened for the steady kind of breathing that kept her up at night trying to memorize it. Despite how tired she was, despite the feeling of Lena burying her nose into her chest and curling tighter around her, she couldn’t sleep.
Waiting on Superman

Tell everybody waiting for Superman
That they should try to hold on the best they can
He hasn’t dropped them, forgot them or anything
It’s just too heavy for a Superman to lift

The longer that Kara worked it over in her head, the more that she realized how Lena got the opinion that she was second in Kara’s life. Never once, did the hero feel like that about Lena, and if anything, she started to see how she actually was a priority in the CEO’s day. The entire conversation from that night burrowed and infected her thoughts, and while the fight came and they moved forward, Kara lingered, mulling such things over repeatedly.

There were small things, tiny things, that didn’t seem like a big deal, but when she took a step back, saw what they all collectively said. Meetings were pushed in favor of lunches that inevitably lasted too long. Work came home or was delayed in favor of times when it was just them. Lena spent time and effort planning alien amnesty benefits, lobbying for better education and community programs, asking Kara’s opinion on all manner of everything.

She shifted her research and tech to clean energy and health, designating an infinitesimal amount to weapons to help Kara solve problems before they started. If anything, Lena was the proactive one, while Supergirl became reactive, managing whatever disasters loomed. All of it was done to keep Kara safe, to give her more days off. Lena’s life molded to Kara, and Kara wanted to do more than be someone who brought dinner or spent the night sometimes more at Lena’s. She wanted to do more.

Even something as simple as talking, Lena did it. Lena, who was mistrusted by all, who mistrusted all after the betrayal of her own family, never lied to Kara about what was happening. She told her about her father’s letters, the information she knew, told her every time her contacts, who were less than legal, found some kind of whisper of Kryptonite. From the beginning, Lena never shied away from what she did. They weren’t even small things. They were to protect the girl she loved.

“She can help us,” Kara insisted as her sister crossed her arms. “You’ve admitted she’s impressive when it comes to this kind of things. Her network is just… she has it covered.”

“We’re not giving your girlfriend classified information about her father, who already blew up one building before, and is now, we think, planning something bigger,” Alex scorned. “That’s not how it works.”

“She has a right to know, and she–”

“Or she’s involved with him.”

“Alex, are you serious?” Kara actually laughed at the notion. “There’s no way.”

“She just bought a–”

“You are serious.”

“We’ve been tracking him for weeks, and we’re not going to be in the habit of telling anyone who does not work here, about ongoing investigations,” J’onn decided. “And if that means Lena Luthor, then that is what it means, but the DEO is here to stop alien attacks.”
“And attacks on aliens,” Kara added, furrowing as she looked between her boss and her family, then to her friends who all inconspicuously looked away. “That was what you meant to add, right? Protect good, honest people making a living here, just like me? Refugees from unspeakable tragedies like yourself?”

“Of course.”

“Lionel Luthor is planning something. It’s quiet and the attacks that we’ve seen don’t make sense. The leaders we brought in from Judgement keep repeating the same message, and we know he’s working with them. The things they were doing to aliens,” Alex explained. “Lena’s letter sounds like a man who isn’t going to get caught or go easy. He’s dangerous.”

“All the more reason to have her help!”

“She doesn’t play well with others, and refuses to adhere to DEO guidelines,” J’onn shook his head before bracing himself on the table. “I can’t have someone like that compromising the integrity of this investigation.”

“You have to tell her something else, when you go to Metropolis,” Alex said.

“I can’t do many things,” Kara stood up a bit straighter. “But I won’t lie to her, Alex. I won’t do it. I don’t care what that means, but I draw the line.”

“It’s for her own safety.”

“I’m sick of secrets because we think they help,” she threw up her hands. “If I don’t tell her, then she investigates herself, and keeps things from me. She’s been nothing but honest, puts up with so much. I won’t.”

“That’s the job.”

“No,” Kara shook her head and crossed her arms defiantly. “That’s not the job I do. You’re asking me to do the only thing I can’t do. If I trust her, that’s enough.”

With a look, she clenched her teeth and shook her head before leaving them standing there, eyeing her warily, unsure of what she was going to do.

“Kara, wait!” her sister followed, jogging to catch up. “Just wait.”

“I can’t believe you would ask me to do that,” she shook her head.

“It’s for your safety.”

“If you think she’s not worried about that, then you haven’t heard her rant about my fighting style and how I should wear a thicker suit.”

“What if you’re wrong about her?”

“If I was wrong about her, she’s had plenty of chances to stab a Kryptonite knife in my chest in the middle of the night.”

“What if you’re the only one she’d save?”

“Alex, you’re being ridiculous.” Crossing her arms, Kara turned away before looking back at her sister, already so beyond disgusted with the entirety of her day.
It wasn’t an everyday battle, but it still came up enough to bother her. Most were not over the
moon about her relationship with Lena, most were kind enough to keep their mouths shut. But
when information made its way to them, and Kara was specifically asked not to tell Lena, it
reminded her of how people still saw her. It crawled under her skin.

“She works beyond us, the things she does, the people she works with. You can’t be okay with
that.”

“I’m not having this conversation,” Kara stomped a few steps.

“What are you going to do?”

“I’m going to go make dinner at my place, Lena is coming over, and we’re going to plan our
vacation.”

“What about Lionel?”

“He’s not invited,” she muttered, stepping outside and taking off a second later.

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Even from the hall, Lena could smell dinner and smiled. She nodded a hello to a neighbor who
now knew her by name, and adjusted her bag as she debated knocking. The entire day, she wanted
nothing more than to see Kara, and now, she felt those little butterflies that came when she knew
she was close. Little bits of the day disappeared, and suddenly the mask of the Luthor
disintegrated, leaving Lena behind.

“Come in, Lena!” the voice carried through the door. “What’s taking you so long?”

“I heard the banging of pots and pans, and I had to prepare myself for the inevitable mess,” she
laughed as she pushed through.

“It’s not that bad,” Kara furrowed as she surveyed the counters and stove and her mess there. “I got
you wine. I got me wine.”

“Oh you did?” she hummed, intrigued by the news of wine that would actually make her girlfriend
tipsy. “What’s the occasion?”

“Long day at work,” Kara mentioned over her shoulder as she slung a towel on it and stirred
something.

Lena tossed her bags on the couch, slipped off her coat, stretched her arms over her head as she
moved toward the island where the bottles sat, and picked them both up, comparing them as best
she could.

“Do you want to tell me about it first, or should I pour?”

“How about a little of this first?” Kara asked, leaning over, smiling softly. She earned a kiss and
struggled to pull away from more of that. “And a lot of that later, if you don’t mind.”

“Never,” she chuckled, letting her girlfriend get back to work. “So wine first then.”
Lena moved around the kitchen, grabbing the corkscrew and glasses, she stole a carrot and wrapped her arms around her girlfriend as she chopped vegetables. She kissed her shoulder through her shirt.

“You’re tense.”

“Long day at work.”

“Which work?”

“Both, actually,” Kara confessed.

“It smells good in here.”

“I got a late start, but it’ll be ready soon.”

“I’ll get the wine,” Lena promised, leaning her forehead against Kara’s spine, letting her chop and just holding her, even with her hands full. It was nice, and it was needed. “Now, what exotic place does this hail from?”

“Garion, in the Summer Galaxy. My parents would go there on vacation. It’s not exactly wine, they aren’t grapes, but it’s a similar fruit.”

“It smells… um… sweet?” she guessed as she poured and tried not to inhale it. “Bitter, maybe?”

“It’s not my favorite, but it’s not terrible.”

“Should I start with my day?” Lena asked, handing over the glass before filling up her own. Kara paused her preparing to take a large gulp, followed by another before setting it down, almost in need of a refill.

“Please. You don’t have jerk bosses and stupid non-disclosure contracts.”

The chopping got a little rougher, and Lena quirked an eyebrow as she watched the hero go at a cucumber with a slight vengeance.

“Alright, nevermind. Moratorium on the work talk. Do you want to hear what I started planning for our trip?”

“Yes please.”

It lasted all of five minutes. Lena digging in her bag and pulling out notes she’d made in a folder. She had a million ideas, but her favorite was a beach house on an island. Remote, removed, quiet, disconnected. Lena pitched it with vigor though it seemed to fall on deaf ears.

Before the plates were made, Kara was into her second glass.

“If the island doesn’t sound good, I was thinking maybe a week in an apartment in Buenos Aires. I remember we had dreams about that place,” Lena continued. “I know it’s a long shot, but I’d love to take you to actual Paris instead of your flyovers. I know someone–”

“Lena, it’s your dad,” Kara finally huffed, unable to hold it any longer. “I was asked not to tell you, but I can’t do that. I told them I wouldn’t, and I signed contracts, and he’s my boss and this weirdly parental figure in my life, which makes this even more complicated, but I am hard to love. I know that. I don’t make it easy, and you’ve never once lied to me, about even the hard stuff, and that’s where I’m at. I wanted to make dinner and have wine, and that was just in me–”
“Easy there,” Lena furrowed at the information. “What’s going on?”

“He’s planning something. We think your brother gave him plans or an idea, or helped him escape. He’s taken up with that group that attacked me a few months ago.”

“There’s no way Lex helped him,” she shook her head.

“What?”

“He blames Dad for killing our mother. He wouldn’t help him.”

“Oh,” she nodded, thinking deeply. “See,” her hands waved. “This is why I said we needed your help with this!”

“I think something is coming though,” Lena nodded.

“You-You do?”

“Do you think I haven’t been investigating my escaped convict, mass-murdering father?”

“Well, I mean,” Kara scrunched up her face and looked for an answer. “You’re a busy woman. I honestly hadn’t thought about it. I was very upset earlier.”

“I see that,” Lena smiled. “Being upset and defending me sounds like another full time job.”

“It is,” she breathed out, drinking the rest of her wine. “Wait. I didn’t mean that. I meant… that the pulling. I’m pulled in half, Lee. Three halves. Lots of pulls.”

“Alright. Hey, calm down sweetie,” the CEO soothed, pulling out a stool and patting it before ushering her to it. “If you don’t want to tell me anything about it, that’s alright.”

“I don’t like that. Telling you things is what I do.”

Lena poured a little more more into her girlfriend’s glass before sliding a plate toward her. It didn’t take much to get Kara distracted with the food.

“There you go, eat up,” she offered, grabbing her own as well. “Remember when we used to have dinner and talk about things that weren’t terrible?”

“That vacation can’t come soon enough.”

Quietly they ate and Lena complimented her girlfriend. Kara smiled shyly and clinked her glass with Lena.

“So today at work, I spent the day planning a small business forum. The idea being we look into some of the smaller business proposals that banks deem too risky. I have a few professors offering clinics for financial stability. Thinking about buying a stretch of empty shops down on Euclid, you know, West End.”

“Wow,” Kara sighed, entranced by the way Lena explained.

“It will help, I think, that part of town.”

“Definitely.”

“It felt good, to do something worthwhile all day. I’m thinking of promoting Jess. But I’ll never
find an assistant as good as her. What do you think?”

“She’s smart, good, loyal.”

“Right,” Lena agreed, picking up the plates and moving them to the sink. “I want to put her in charge of this type of thing. But I like doing it, too.”

“This is all I wanted from dinner,” Kara sighed, watching as Lena moved around, cleaning up the mess from her cooking. “Just to catch up with you.”

“How long has this been stressing you out?”

“Two weeks,” she confessed, running her hands over her face. “Ever since I was following that lead on your mom’s birthday, we’ve been putting a lot into hopefully preventing an attack on aliens by your dad. I’m so tired.”

Lena kept cleaning up, kicking her heels to the side as she ran water and opened the dishwasher.

“Go take a shower, and let me clean up.”

“You’re not worried, are you?”

“Why would I be? You told me the truth, and look at how it tore you up. I trust you, Kara,” she shook her head at the ridiculous idea. “You and me. We’re a team.”

“I meant about your dad.”

“What about him?”

“My first thought was him hurting you,” Kara confessed. “Honestly, that’s most of my motivation to catch him. I want to, soon. I can’t keep burning the candle at all ends.”

She sat at the island and swirled her wine, watching Lena’s shoulders move as she rinsed. In the morning she would have to tell Alex that she told Lena everything, and she still had to tell Lena everything.

“He won’t,” she promised. Even without looking up she could feel Kara’s eyes on her as she leaned against the counter, closer than before. “He wouldn’t.”

“He’s unhinged, Lee. You can’t be certain—”

“I’m the last thing my mother made. He wouldn’t,” she swore. “I don’t want you to tell me the things you want to tell me. I don’t want it to tear you apart. You told me you were looking for him and he’s planning something. Do I need to know anything else?”

“No,” Kara finally sighed. “I guess not.”

“Go take a shower, relax a bit.”

“Are you okay?”

“I’m fine,” Lena assured her girlfriend. “Just trying to get you naked so I can massage those shoulders and enjoy tipsy sex with my alien girlfriend.”

“You should have led with that,” she chuckled and kissed Lena’s temple. “I’ll keep you safe, you know that right?”
“That’s why I’m not worried.”

Kara put down her glass after she finished it, enjoying the feeling of static and dizzy in her blood. She wrapped her arms around Lena’s waist and kissed her neck.

“Do you know what’s better than a hot shower?”

“Clean dishes, stop distracting me,” she giggled as Kara held her tighter and snorted against her neck, causing her to squinch up her shoulders.

“I was going to say a hot shower with a naked Lena in it.”

“Kara!” Lena yelped as she was lifted quickly and slung over a shoulder, spraying water across herself and part of the counter. “You’re a caveman!”

“You’re the best thing that’s ever happened to me,” Kara countered, easily dragging her to the bathroom. She earned a few slaps as Lena laughed and wiggled. “And I’m going to show you just how grateful I am.”

Gone quickly was the idea of Lionel Luthor and his attack. But as Kara pressed against her in the shower, propped herself up on her elbows, pressed away the hair that fell on her eyes, kissed her. She couldn’t help but think about the threats she’d heard directed toward the girl in her arms.

The office was a testament to her hard work and reserved nature. Situated high atop the new LCorp building in the center of downtown, it looked out at the rest of the city with a kind of magnanimous disinterest, a quiet kind of presence.

The white walls towered, while the art was a nice mix of relaxing and beautiful, pieces from every kind of corner of the practice, it did not impose itself on the space. It was tasteful and pristine, mimicking its owner completely.

Left alone in it, the older Danvers sister was almost afraid to move, and the longer she avoided it, the more she fought against her very nature to investigate. But she wasn’t there for that, and she knew she would never hear the end of it from Kara if she tried something.

Instead, Alex tried to find things that would make her understand why her sister was so head over heels for the notorious business owner. She surveyed the few books that were there, not recognizing most of the titles. She flipped through one, only to be surprised by notes made in the margins of poems, lines underlined, corners folded over. There were different colors of ink, indicating different times it’d been read through. Casually, Alex glanced at the words, the neat little cursive in corners, attached to arrows and lines, before feeling oddly invasive when she spotted her sister’s name on a page.

The flowers were real. Alex ran her hand along some of the petals and smiled at the additions. She walked around, gazing at the diploma on the wall, looking at the awards on a shelf, at the leather chair in a corner which showed the most amount of wear, as if it were a nice quiet corner that saw Lena working late often.

The view was captivating. Alex was almost certain it rivaled the DEO. She could imagine it at
night, with the other buildings twinkling.

The office itself lacked much, was nothing but mystery, generic, unobtrusive. But still, Alex looked because she had nothing else to do while she waited. And then she looked at the desk.

The picture frame in the back was almost hidden, but still it was there. It felt like a relic from a long forgotten era, from a parallel timeline in which things would have been very different. Lena, smudged black lines on her cheeks, sweaty and dirty from a soccer game, her uniform red and dingy, with her mother kissing her cheek, a terrorist stood behind her, foam finger in place, smiling wide and warm and genuine, a mass murderer made a face in front, held up his finger to signify number one. All clad in matching red plaid, they looked like a family. Alex imagined that picture hurt to see.

Beside it sat one of Lena on her graduation day, her mother smiling proudly beside her.

The rest of the few frames were Kara. Plain and simple, just moments of their life together. A small one from high school, another that was just a photobooth slip. Another was some gala, both dressed up and smiling politely to the camera. The most recent was what looked like something personal, just a snapshot of Lena smiling so big her cheeks were inflated and Kara happily kissing her cheek. Another was them on their vacation, swim suits and sunglasses on with a beautiful beach and clear water behind them.

Alex found herself smiling as she perused the life that somehow existed in her sister that she hadn’t wanted to see. But there she was, at ease and happy. It was perfect.

“Agent,” Lena greeted her as she breezed into her office. “Not the Danvers sister I’m used to having in my office.”

“I was in the neighborhood,” she decided was the safest bet. Lena moved behind her desk and took a seat, motioning for the agent to help herself to a chair in front of it.

“I’m sorry I was running later than expected.”

“Not a problem. I know it’s last minute.”

There weren’t many times that the two found themselves face to face and without a certain buffer reminding them to be kind to the other. Lena harbored all of the ill-will Kara was too pure to know how to wield. Sitting across from her was the sister who ran away with her own grief, who worked for an organization that was just as sneaky as the tactics she accused Lena of using, who hated the name Luthor.

On the other side of the desk sat someone who witnessed the absolute brutality of the name, someone who feared for her sister.

Both were on pins and needles.

“So,” she smiled and clasped her hands together. “How may I help you?”

Firmly in place was the pseudo politeness that had been bred into her and learned over the course of numerous meetings and dinners she would rather cut her own leg off then partake it, but had to nonetheless.

Alex pursed her lips and took a deep breath. She wasn’t entirely sure anymore why she was there, just that she had to do something.
“My sister loves you very much,” she began. “You’re very important to her.”

“This isn’t one of those, don’t hurt her, talks, is it?”

“No, I don’t think so,” Alex shook her head. “I don’t think it’d be very effective on you.”

She earned a small smile, before Lena caught herself and looked down at the files she’d brought in with her. When Jess told her a Ms. Danvers scheduled an appointment, she’d assumed it’d been a nice visit with Kara, and then she realized the truth, remembering that Kara was across town doing interviews for a piece about the election, and felt a little uneasy to know which Danvers was in her office.

“I don’t remember you much, from before everything,” she continued. “I barely remember the funeral myself, but I’m very grateful that you were there for my sister when I… couldn’t be.”

“It’s ancient history.”

“You’re important to Kara, and therefore you have to be important to me.”

“Oh.”

“Yeah, let me finish,” she swallowed. “I know you’ve… I know you’ve tried to reach out, and I’ve disappointed my sister by not accepting them. And I know how hard it must have been to include me, or try to. I’m… trying to say that I–”

“We don’t have to do this,” Lena offered, after seeing how much she struggled.

“She said you asked her when she would stop being Supergirl.”

“I did,” she nodded, waiting to weigh the response.

“I’m glad she has a reason to want to stop.”

“I don’t want to change her. I couldn’t imagine it. I just–”

“No, no, it’s good,” Alex nodded. “Kara has never asked me for anything. We have to be able to be in the same room together without wanting to fight.”

“I don’t know what you think of me, but I don’t dislike you, Agent Danvers. I never have. I know what my name means to your family, to the city. But even if I granted you unlimited, unrestricted access to every single part of my company, of myself, we would still be sitting in this room, having the same conversation.”

“I don’t know. That’d be a start,” she grinned.

“I love Kara. I love her because my mother told me to open up and good things would come. I did and in waltzed Kara. Sometimes I feel like I owe the universe a debt for bringing her into my life. She’s the reason I do most of what I do here at work. She makes me a better person, and I could never do anything that would change the way she looks at me. If nothing else, I hope that makes you at least sleep a little easier.”

Alex listened to the words, and still, she could not let herself believe them, despite how much she did. It was the skeptic in her, the pessimist, the person who saw too much, who knew too much of human nature.

“We need a truce then.”
“Come have dinner with us this weekend.”

“I was thinking of slowly not looking daggers at each other whenever we’re in the same room and a joint custody agreement.”

“Saturday at seven sound good? Bring wine.”

“Oh I will. Don’t worry about that.” Alex stood after a moment, preparing to leave. She couldn’t help herself though, not if they were attempting to be civil. “On your desk, you have a picture of your family…”

“Don’t you have one on yours?” Lena quirked her head slightly, not bothered at all. She fully anticipated running a bug and surveillance scan on her office as soon as the agent disappeared.

“My brother didn’t murder hundreds of people.”

“July nineteenth. From the age of four until July nineteenth, the day my mother died, I had a family. I had twenty years of memories. Twenty Christmases, twenty birthdays, family trips, taco nights, and snow days. My entire family died that day,” she swallowed and looked at the offending frame. “I look at it every day and think of what we could have been, and what I have to be. My brother is a monster, my father is a villain. They still came to my soccer games and sang me happy birthday. I’m the last of my line. I mourn the loss of them both.”

The weight of it must have been unbearable, the agent realized, to lose an entire family, to feel as if to not know them at all, to have it taken willingly. Lena had a heavy past, not just a complicated one, and Alex realized she’d never considered it until she saw that picture and heard the CEO speak so honestly.

“Kara always had a knack for picking up strays,” Alex finally muttered. “She has a way of making everyone her family.”

“She does.”

“You don’t want to be like them?”

“I want to be like my mother,” Lena confessed. “But no. I don’t want to blow up a city or species, or people. I don’t want anyone to get hurt. I harbor no ill will toward any inhabitant of this planet or another. Honestly? I just want to be left alone, and I want to do a little good.”

For too long, Alex stared at the woman behind the desk. She wanted to find the lie, and for her entire being, she wished she had J’onn’s powers to read Lena’s truest thoughts. She fell back on her training, though she didn’t want to believe it, the words seemed true.

“Maggie is allergic to shrimp, if that makes a difference for dinner.”

“Well that is where I draw the line.”

For the briefest of seconds, Lena was sure she saw a smile.

“Thank you for taking the time.”

“We’re practically family. I’m a bit rusty, but I heard that’s what we do,” Lena tried as she walked the agent toward the door.

As quickly as she earned the smile, so too did she earn a scowl, though she found it well worth it.
As soon as the sister was gone, Lena took a few moments and sat behind her desk, careful to look at the old picture in question.

“Once an orphan, always an orphan,” she smiled sadly before tipping it down to the desk, unable to stomach much more thought. “Not too bad for one though.”

With a small movement, she picked up her phone and sent a text to her girlfriend about their new dinner plans before reclining and gazing at the other picture frames and smiling wider.

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The clouds hung heavy and low, muting the world in all grey tones. Slowly, Lena stretched and tried to open her eyes as she woke. Her body moved toward the middle of the bed until she sensed she was well past where she should have met another body. Begrudgingly, she opened her eyes finally and growled gently in complaint.

For a moment, Lena held her breath before rubbing her hands along her face in protest of the day. She’d been dreading it for weeks, ever since Kara brought up the mere idea of celebrating Lena’s birthday. All mention of it ceased when Lena reminded her that she didn’t celebrate it very much. Kara had done great the previous year, taking her away for a weekend. But the presents and doting, it just reminded her too much.

Lena wasn’t like Kara. Kara adored her party. She loved the feeling of her friends and family together. She was even actually surprised when Lena led her to the bar filled with cupcakes and everyone she loved ready to celebrate her. Lena even got her a good present, and if no one else had known, they might have guessed that the CEO was actually very good at birthdays. She didn’t care. She got to spend the night wearing a stupid hat beside Kara and she got to take her home, to get all kinds of tipsy, greedy Kara lips and hands all over her body. And she got to make Kara break her own bed, and that was a bit of victory.

But her birthday was a different story. And from just the past few days, the past few calls Kara disappeared to take, and the way she deleted texts as soon as she answered them, Lena was pretty certain that she had something in the works.

With a small groan, Lena finally pushed off her sheets and looked at the clouds outside, grateful that they mimicked her mood.

She pulled on Kara’s old shirt that lived at Lena’s house. It got well worn and many miles whenever Kara wasn’t around.

“Is that… Those are…” she smiled to herself as she looked at the spread waiting on the counter.

There was no sight of her girlfriend at all, just piles of scones and muffins from all of her favorite places. The two cups of coffee were still steaming.

“Hey! Lena, hi!” Kara sprinted through the balcony door as the CEO picked up the first coffee cup and inhaled its warmth. Fruit fell on the floor from Kara’s arms as she balanced two other cups in her hands. “You were supposed to be asleep.”

“I woke up to an empty bed.”
“I was in London, and then… Well,” Kara tried to explain as she bent over and picked up what she could. “I went to get that tea you love, and then the espresso from Rome. The jam from Lyon.”

“Kara, honey.”

“But I thought it was a sweet and heavy breakfast, so I had another thought to get some fruit. I went to get that juice you liked in Brazil, and I wanted it to be very authentic. I planned this out better, but then I kept second guessing it—”

Lena didn’t care about all of the running around. She found it astounding, but she would have been okay with toast and coffee. She fell in love with the effort, and Kara’s sheepish grin knowing full well that it was too much, and still she would have run out to other corners of the world for more if she had a few more minutes, just to make Lena smile at her like she was.

She slipped her arms around the hero’s hips and kissed her sweetly. Still slightly out of breath and antsy, Kara calmed slightly. She relaxed as Lena tied her arms around her neck and smiled at the idea of being loved so greatly by someone who was so perfect. She held onto the sun.

“Happy Birthday,” Kara smiled as she wrapped her arms around the scantily clad girl in the kitchen. “I love you so much. I’m very glad you’re my best friend.”

“Thank you so much for this. You didn’t have to…”

“Just wait until you see lunch.” Still they hung together, still Lena felt Kara’s heart beating against her own.

“You’re spoiling me.”

“Just wait until you see what I picked out to wear tonight.”

With a kind of smirk, Lena let her eyebrows peaked slightly at the information. Kara kissed her again. Picked Lena right up off the ground and set her on the counter, kissed her harder and earned a moan. She gripped her thighs and she gave her a good morning.

It was one of her favorite things to do, to just pick Lena up and have her way with her. She loved the feeling of her scalp being tugged because Lena was yanking on her head. She loved the feeling of Lena’s grinding hips. She loved the noises, and the way her heartbeat went wild, like raindrops on a tin roof, all out of rhythm and without any rhyme or reason. She loved making Lena feel so good she couldn’t speak. All of it was bonus for Kara, because at the end of the day, she just plain loved the CEO, like every silly story she gobbled up when she came to earth, about soulmates and missing pieces and romantic movie cliches.

By the time Kara finished, by the time Lena caught her breath, she didn’t want to ever leave the kitchen. It was their place. It saw more sex than most kitchens, Lena considered as she sat up on the counter.

Kara warmed their coffee and blushed as she apologized for being so eager, though Lena promised her that if she had to celebrate her birthday, that was the only acceptable way. They had their breakfast, with Lena sampling, while Kara did a great job of cleaning up after her, hungry after her morning activities.

“No, before you start complaining about your birthday, just suck it up because it is important to me that you have a good day, even if we never talk about it being your birthday,” Kara reminded her girlfriend who savored her cup of coffee from her favorite shop.
“You know I don’t care about it,” Lena shrugged, adjusting her leg under her on the stool as she watched Kara clean up the last bit of what was left.

“Just close your eyes for a second. I’ll be right back.”

“I don’t know why I have to clo–” In a whoosh, her girlfriend was gone, through the window without time for her to interrupt. “Close my eyes. You’re too fast to see.”

With a smile, the CEO shook her head and sipped her drink, sure to keep her eyes closed because Kara would pout and that was absolutely too much to handle.

Stuck there, prepared to pretend to enjoy the day for the sake of the literal child she was dating, Lena pondered her life since the year and change that Kara had made a reappearance. She had a rough patch there, of about four years where everything was just mundane and terrible, with no light, and then the sun came up, and she found humanness again.

They fought, sometimes. Small things, snippy things when both were tired or missed each other too much. They argued about Lena’s non-disclosure policy with the DEO, and they argued about the DEO itself. But it was nothing terrible, both retreating and coming back not a few hours later. Kara couldn’t handle being angry, and unfortunately could always see Lena’s points. In the end, there was that partnership, that come hell or high water, it was them against it all, and Lena was so far in love with the damn hero, she couldn’t imagine a moment without her again. The three years were a dream.

“Okay, just give me a second. Don’t peek,” Kara whooshed back into the room.

“This isn’t necessary.”

“I know it’s not, but I want to, and that should count for more than anything.”

“It does. But I think your present on the counter was more than enough. Plus, I’d like to unwrap you later. So unless you’re naked when I open my eyes–”

“Lena!”

“How can you be so prudish after you just ate m–”

“How can you be so prudish after you just ate m–”

“Lena!” Kara yelped.

“It’s my birthday. You can’t yell at me,” she taunted.

There was some movement in the kitchen, and Lena smiled to herself as she drank the last bit of her coffee, waiting for the reveal. Toying with her girlfriend might be her favorite hobby, especially when it came to explicit things.

“Okay, open them.”

The living room was filled with balloons. A Happy Birthday banner was hung haphazardly from the window where Kara hurried to slap the tape and make the one end stay as she balanced a bouquet in her hand. Abashedly, she righted herself and held out the flowers.

“I got you flowers, because I know you love them,” Kara explained. “And before you tell me I didn’t have to, know that I wanted to. And I also know you don’t like celebrating. Which is why I have a special, non-birthday, birthday planned.”
With a slight movement, she handed her girlfriend the flowers, blushing slightly because she caught green eyes and sometimes it was too much to know that Lena was her’s.

“These are gorgeous,” Lena gave in, digging her nose into the flowers.

“I also have all of the Star Wars movies. We’re going to watch them in order and pig out and make a good blanket bed on the ground.”

“That’s what you planned for my birthday?”

“Well, yeah. I know your favorite things. Nerdy, scientifically inaccurate movies,” Kara smiled at her description of the films. “Terrible food that you’ll spend too long in the gym trying to work off, even though you’re perfectly beautiful. Not putting on pants. And me. And no one else. And talking through the movies. And wine. I have wine somewhere.”

“Seriously? No party, no fancy dinner?” Lena sighed happily.

“Nope. I made too big of a deal last year. This year, is lowkey, but still celebrating. I’m trying to walk a thin line here.”

“This is perfect. My perfect day.”

“I have one more thing for tonight. But I don’t know if you’ll want to do it. And you don’t have to, just so you know. I don’t want you to feel bad if you don’t want to, and you don’t have to just for me. I just thought it’d be a great way to really–”

“Kara, take a breath,” Lena reminded her, watching her sputter and spin out slightly in the Kara way she did when she got nervous. It was too endearing. “I’m sure I’ll love it. You’ve aced the day so far.”

“Two tickets to the game tonight,” Kara breathed, holding her breath. “Hawks and Minutemen.”

“I own the team.”

“I guess I could have just given you the money,” she laughed to herself nervously, fiddling with her fingers. “But I just wanted it to be something I did for you. They’re not good seats. They’re the best I could manage. Did you know it’s a playoff game?”

“I did,” she smiled.

“I want to take all your bad memories and replace them with good ones, Lee,” Kara offered, shaking her head and professing it with such honesty, she was uncertain she knew where it came from exactly. “That’s what I want to do for your birthday.”

It was a simple move, but Lena didn’t care. It was the most she could do. She hugged her hero tightly, wrapping her arms around her, burying her nose in her shoulder, soaking up all of the warmth she could from the girl who used to laugh at cartoons on the weekends.

The day was perfect. It was real, and Lena thought it might have been her best birthday ever, if she was one to keep track of such things. Buried in the nest of pillows and blankets, she half laid on Kara, switching positions often, scratching her back or head, letting her rub her shoulders or knee while she talked through the entire thing.

The game was better than Lena could remember. She enjoyed telling Kara stats and things that she knew the hero wasn’t particularly interested in hearing. She enjoyed being on the kiss cam with her
and earning applause. She even enjoyed the fact that they won and Kara promised to take her to the next playoff game.

By the time they made it back to the penthouse, Kara made her wait, made her blow out the candle to a silly little cupcake that they shared while dreaming about the next year of the Luthor’s life, recounting the previous one.

“Well, how did I do?” Kara grinned, tugging the old jersey over Lena’s head until she appeared, brimming and beaming and less clothed. “Not a terrible way to spend a birthday, right?”

“It was my perfect day.”

“Did you get everything you wanted?”

“I didn’t want anything, but I got everything,” Lena promised, returning the favor and tugging off Kara’s jersey. “Except one thing.”

“If you say…” she lowered her voice as her girlfriend undid her jean button. “Sex… you’ll ruin the last present I have for you.”

Little bits of lace appeared and Lena cocked her head appreciatively, proud of her girlfriend’s ability to know full well what she was about.

“I wasn’t though,” she looked back at her, fingers lingering on the waist of the jeans before they moved up her sides, played with muscle and bone and lace.

“Okay, then what did I miss? You have everything. It’s impossible to shop for you, just so you know—”

“Move in with me.”

“You should make a wishlist that you can’t buy anyth—” Kara tried to rant though the words her girlfriend said made it to her ears and took a second to be analyzed and interpreted in her brain and it finally caught up with her mouth. “What?”

“You’re here or I’m at yours every other night. I have a balcony. Or we can live at yours. I don’t care. The point is, I’m in this so damn hard. I want every memory to be with you. I’m so deeply in lo—”

Kara grabbed Lena’s cheeks and kissed her through her smile, so surprised and overjoyed and unsure what to say. It was all of that rolled into one.

“Are you serious, Lee?”

“We have a future. You made me learn that,” she swallowed and shook her head, hands hanging from Kara’s biceps as hands encased her head. “I just want to sleep beside you every night. I want your stupid clothes on the floor. I want you to have more than a drawer because I want to steal all of your shirts when you get them worn in just enough. I want to put you to bed when you work too hard, and I want you to yell at me for leaving dishes in the sink. I want all of it. Good and bad. I just… I want us.”

“You’re serious,” Kara sighed, watching Lena’s eyes look everywhere but back at her because they couldn’t when she was talking about feelings.

“I’m serious,” she nodded, exhaling deeply.
“Let’s do it.”

“Yeah?”

“Of course!” Kara laughed, hugging her tightly, spinning her around. “I can’t believe I didn’t think of it. I just… we kind of already did live together. Why not condense it?”

“Practical of you, Danvers.”

“I’m so happy.”

“Me too,” Lena hummed.

For the first time, she actually felt it, felt that she’d made a good decision, felt that she’d picked right, that she actually had one of those elusive futures that Kara kept talking about constantly. She had a dream, and she had a girl, and she was happier than she’d been in her lifetime.

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The thought of Lionel Luthor and his inevitable attack gradually waned from the forefront of everyone’s collective imagination. They all knew it was coming, they just ran to the end of the road with all of their leads, and with the lack of any new information, were resigned to the helpless kind of state in which they distracted themselves as best they could.

The snow finally came after Thanksgiving. The cold and the season generally made it a quieter time of year. It wasn’t the first holiday they’d spent together, though this one felt different, more official, more real, perhaps because it wasn’t the first.

“Mmmm,” Lena hummed against Kara’s ear as lips moved along her neck. Her hips moved of their own accord, uncontrollable save for a certain alien’s will. “I like this,” she whispered, grabbing the back of the couch to keep herself steady.

“Me too,” Kara reached, following her as she moved.

Hands slid under her shirt, a thumb traced along her rib, slid under bra. A little gasp accompanied the teasing.

“But no more decorations.”

“Are you sure?” Kara asked with a smirk, squeezing and earning a tiny moan. “Just a few more.”

“Kara, I’m serious.”

“You said to make it feel like home. I like Christmas decorations.”

“We moved in together, and our first fight is going to be over tinsel,” Lena groaned as her hands knit into Kara’s hair as lips moved down her chest.

“I don’t think we’re going to fight,” she whispered, tugging the shirt off and tossing it somewhere on the floor. “I have a few other ideas.”

“Promise me, no more decorations.”
“I promise not to lie to you,” she countered with a grin. “And not promise something that I’m obviously going to break.”

The Christmas lights all twinkled while the fire crackled. Living together for three months, and Lena thought it’d been going well. Until she returned home from work to find a Christmas tree in a corner, stockings on the ledge, candy canes in a jar on the table. Every day, there seemed to be more and more, which seemed impossible considering they lived in a penthouse and had no yard, but wreaths would appear, and poinsettias would pop up. Smaller trees ended up in different rooms, while tiny little presents began to accumulate in the living room.

“Dammit, Kara,” Lena complained, half-hearted and very distracted by strong hands below her waist.

“It’s our first Christmas living together. I want it to be special.”

“No more decorations.”

“I’ll try.”

Kara’s shirt went next, tossed somewhere. She didn’t notice much other than the way the orange glow of the fire looked on Lena’s pale skin. She would have even sworn to destroy every Christmas tree in the city if Lena were to put a shirt back on now. She would never admit it, but it wasn’t far from her mind.

It was a slow kind of session, right there on the couch. Lazy and good, tentative, even. Lena kissed her hard, ground her hips into Kara’s, a slow kind of delicious rhythm that she controlled while her hands rooted in strong shoulders, ghosted over chest, skated up into the nape of her neck.

The fireplace crackled, and Lena couldn’t think of anything other than the feeling of warm lips on her skin driving her up a wall.

“Let’s go to bed,” she whispered, pressing against the girl beneath her on the couch.

“But the movie.”

They spoke with lips trailing, hovering near each other, bumping noses, countering moves like a fight ready to break out, waiting on a first punch.

“Santa won’t bring presents if you don’t go to bed,” Lena chuckled before pressing closer. “And if we don’t go to bed soon, I’m going to need another new couch.”

“But I like this,” Kara growled as her girlfriend’s hips kept moving against her. “A lot.”

“I have something you can unwrap early, since you’re so good,” Lena promised, kissing her once more before she made herself stand up.

From her spot on the couch, Kara tried to think coherently. But she watched Lena unhook her bra and toss it somewhere on her trail to the bedroom. Pants slithered down legs a second later. Kara felt her mouth go dry.

As quickly as she could, she blew out the fire and stumbled down the hall toward their bedroom, nearly tripping as she tugged off her own pants and the rest of her clothes.
Sunshine on My Back

Sunshine on my back
Is the only kind I lack
Sunshine in my brain
Is the lonely kind of pain

Come spring, the city was unrecognizable. The entirety of it was filled with people who ditched their parkas and winter garb in favor of soaking up the sun and the breeze and all manner of beautiful weather that made its way to the city. Gone was the slush and the salt, gone was the humdrum days of grey skies and chills that made bones ache and skin crack. Replacing it was that breath of life that is felt through every subway tunnel and sidewalk, that everyone has a bit of a different rhythm to their hearts again. It was the perfect kind of day.

And then Kara got the call.

Her beautiful lunch with her sister interrupted by a rogue alien, infected again. A running theme that was beginning to really mess with her schedule and enjoyment of the season.

“I’m going to be late,” Kara complained, hurtling through the air as fast as she could. She picked up the alien and hurled him away from the city as best she could.

Eyes red, mouth snarling, she thought she knew him. He looked like someone from the bar, someone who she once bumped into on her way to the bathroom or something. Now he was just like the last one, and very, very angry at her for trying to stop him from destroying buildings and hurting people.

“Are you away from the city yet?” Alex crackled in her ear. “You got tossed pretty close to downtown.”

“Working on it,” she grunted, wrapped up in a tussle with strong arms grabbing her before she broke out of it.

“Watch out for the–”

The words were cut off as Kara was tugged and thrown into a building. She flew through a few walls before standing and brushing herself off. Supergirl nodded an apology sheepishly before disappearing in a blink.

“Alright, we’re taking this to the sky,” she sighed, delivering an uppercut as he stood on a car and began tossing a mailbox.

The fourth or fifth rogue alien attack in about as many weeks, Kara was getting enough practice, and she was getting enough bad press for destroying things, despite her attempts not to, and her explicit attempts to take the fights elsewhere, she was getting enough sassy Lena’s to last her a lifetime as they always seemed to fall on date night. There wasn’t credit for trying when it racked up a bill like that for the city though or miss the third reservation in a row.

Each incident was the same, each one involved a rabid, unintelligible, enhanced creature, each one involved a public event and space, each one involved Kara blasted across the street, and with nothing to show for it except a growing sense of resentment for her kind.

Well up above the buildings, pushing farther away from any passersby and busier sections, she
circled and fought the most recent red-eyed, feral alien, doing her best to end it quickly, and hopefully with better results than the most recent ones where they finished themselves in an explosion. If she wanted answers, she needed to disarm and capture, which proved much more difficult than earlier imagined.

The sound of explosion distracted her, earning a swift elbow to the back that sent her flying across the sky in a lazy arc toward the ground. It was a far away explosion, it was not one that came from the thing attacking her, which brought about a whole new host of problems.

“What was that?” she coughed after hitting the dirt on the edge of town. Nothing but fields surrounded her while the alien approached.

“We have back up on the way to you, just make sure he–”

The second explosion was so close, Kara was knocked back down to the ground as soon as she stood, ready to finish it. It took a moment of laying on the ground for her to regain her senses and catch her breath. The divot she created molded to her frame, and for a second, she was ready to stay there and keep it as a home.

“I lost another one,” she grunted, dusting off the dirt as she stood and took off toward the other noise. “What was the other explosion? Another alien?”

“I’m not sure. We’re not picking up on any similar signatures to the ones we’ve encountered,” Alex explained. “Get down there quick. I’m on my way to the scene.”

With a burst, Kara pushed herself toward the pillar of smoke, already exhausted and sick of the day. It was one of the worst Tuesdays she could remember, in her opinion, and it wasn’t even three. It was the explosion, or the fight or the missing lunch. Mostly the missing lunch, she decided as she sped through the air. Or potentially missing dinner plans. Naked dinner plans, if Alex wanted another brainstorming session, which Lena would not be okay with. If she was late again, Lena would start without her. That was the threat, and it was a darn good one, in her own opinion.

Before she even got there, Kara could sense it was different than anything she’d ever encountered before. There were screams and crying, there was a distinct smell that was not chemical, or even alien, but rather quite plain. Smoke poured up into the sky, blocking buildings as it filled the day and made it feel like a storm.

Lena’s voice distracted her from her grumpy mood, instantly changing it to worry as she dodged through the skyscrapers toward the sirens and noise. Everything else drowned out when she heard that. Everything else was a secondary stimulus.

“You’re going to be okay,” Lena promised, quickly tying together a broken piece of bench with a sweatshirt to keep someone’s leg from moving, the break already appearing through the skin.

Kara caught a glimpse of her and lost her a second later in the tussle.

The crowd all scattered, the wounded groaned, smoke kept rising out of the community center. Kara hovered over it all and did her best to look for Lena in it. She scanned through the bombed out building, looking for bodies inside while the fire raged. There were too many faces, too many voices.

“Everyone get back!” Lena yelled from somewhere, directing others. “Let them through! We need a medic here!”

Like a finely tuned pitch fork, her voice was all Kara let herself make out in the chaos despite what
needed to be done.

The fire burst up through the roof. Kara gave up her search and hovered, blowing out the fire, diving into the hull of the explosion, putting it out quickly and with little more incident. The sirens arrived and the hectic grew more chaotic, but it didn’t stop Kara from straining her ear to find Lena. She ducked into an alley and changed before running out in her normal clothes.

In under fifteen minutes, she’d gone from fighting an alien, to coming to help an explosion, to absolutely losing her wits because of a girl she thought was supposed to be at work. It was the worst Tuesday in history, and it wasn’t even dinnertime.

“What’s going on, Supergirl?” her sister barked in her ear.

“I don’t know, but Lena is here somewhere. The fire is out, but—”

“We’re on the scene. There’s surveillance—”

“Hey, don’t worry, sweetheart,” Lena cooed. Kara tilted her head and fluttered, sprinting through the street, pushing through cops and medics and dazed civilians. “It’s going to be okay. I promise.”

“Lena!” Kara yelled, trying to hop up and find her girlfriend.

There were dead, there. There were seriously injured, and she couldn’t think of a thing except finding Lena. She wasn’t dead because she was speaking. That was something.

Soot covered her face, the sleeve of her shirt was ripped, her stockings torn to hell. Something wrapped around her arm. Blood slid down her temple and cheek, but despite it all, there stood Lena Luthor with a child on her hip, directing emergency personnel.

“Lena,” Kara breathed, running toward her.

“Kara!” she gasped as she handed over the child to her mother. “What are you—?”

“What happened? Are you hurt? What’s—”

Hands flew everywhere, checking her all over as Lena wrapped her arms around her girlfriend, diminishing her ability to do research. She inhaled deeply and refused to move, unable to do much else other than cling and try to catch her breath. All she needed was this, just Kara, and she didn’t even realize it until she got it.

“Are you okay?” Kara worried, holding Lena’s face in her hands. She fret over the cut on her head, on the dirt on her face. She never stopped moving with so much to see and fix and worry. “I was going crazy. I couldn’t find you…”

“I’m fine. I’m fine,” she mumbled.

“You’re okay. You’re okay,” Kara reassured herself as much as Lena. “What happened?”

“I was at a lunch meeting, across the street,” Lena shook her head and tried to look back at the restaurant, somewhere behind the fire trucks and SWAT vans and herd of people. “There was an explosion. I tried to help. I knew you’d come, but there was so much screaming.”

Lena hugged Kara again, wrapped her arms around her tighter, grateful that the whirlwind seemed to make sense finally, that she had an anchor. She felt Kara kiss her cheek, felt her cling to her just as tight. There, while the world churned on all sides, they rooted themselves and remained still.
Neither could pull away because the world was literally erupting, and they could stave it off with a moment of perfect. Just a second, even.

“Ouch!” the CEO hissed a few minutes later, when the real world imposed itself. “No, I’m fine. Just a… scratch.”

“A scratch?” Kara furrowed and tugged the remaining sleeve away revealing a large gash on the offending bicep. “How did you–? I thought you were at a restaurant.”

“I… went inside. I caught it on an exposed board or scaffold or something. There were people that needed help getting out, and I was there, so I–”

“You ran inside!” she yelled, eyes wide as she sputtered with her wrath. “You ran inside a… a…. A… a burning building that just blew up? You ran toward a bomb?”

“You do it all the time,” she shrugged, looking at her arm. “I doubted they were going to blow it up twice anyway.”

Nonchalant and completely ignoring the pain in her body, Lena hoped that if she played it off, she could forget the way there were fixed eyes on the first person she came to, and how amidst the fire and burning, she’d been absolutely terrified. If she pretended, she didn’t have to worry about hoping she’d done things right when it came to holding pressure on an exposed wound. She didn’t have to think about the sticky blood drying on her hands.

“I’m not even going to– you— how is it– Lena!”

“I’m okay. Just a cut.”

“We’re going to the hospital,” Kara shook her head, swallowing her anger, making a note to have a friendly conversation with her girlfriend about the difference between her steel-like skin and Lena’s very human, very weak set. As soon as Lena wasn’t bleeding, Kara was going to- going to- well she was going to give her a piece of her mind.

“I’m fine. Other people need it more. I’ll wait.”

“I’m not aski–”

Another explosion echoed from across the city. Kara quickly tucked Lena under herself out of reflex while she tried to locate the source. The screams continued despite the fact that it was a few blocks away.

“What’s going on, Kara?” Lena whispered, mouth agape as they both looked toward the pillar of smoke that began to make itself known.

“I don’t know. But it’s bad.”

“Do you think it’s…” the question paused, halfway through, caught in her teeth. Lena didn’t want to think about who was responsible, but deep down, the growing sense of dread in her gut burned dully.

Torn between the two, Kara met Lena’s eyes and looked at the blood on her arm. A very old worry crept over her, a very old fear flashed in her head as she remembered what it must look like to her girlfriend.

“Go on,” she smiled and kissed the hero. “Be safe.”
“Are you sure?”

“Go,” she nudged her slightly.

“Please go home. Don’t go anywhere else. I mean it. Home. Call your doctor for a house call. Home, Lena. I can’t– I can’t go– I can’t think if you’re… out here.”

“I’ll be fine. Go on. Don’t worry.”

“Go home. And not into another burning building,” Kara yelled and pointed at the arm as she sprinted toward an alley again. “I love you!”

With a small smile, Lena stood there in the swirling pool of people as Kara disappeared. An instant later, Supergirl flashed through the sky, off to save the world once again. Lena pressed the wound on her arm a little tighter as it bled and saw that date night might be a little postponed.

The front page picture, the one that flashed on every station was one that made Lena a little uncomfortable. She was still not unaccustomed to having pictures of herself and Kara in the paper. It was always just a thing that happened from time to time, and it was always so frivolous. Coming out of dinner, Lena yelling at a soccer match while Kara laughed at her, getting coffee, watching a show with Lena’s friends, having a beer with Kara’s. They were column inches. People were tempted to pick apart their relationship. They worked hard not to be examples, but just private, as private as they could.

This one felt more intrusive than the rest. Blood caked on her cheek, clothes torn, Lena looked like a mess. Kara held her face and let her grab at her clothes, and at once, Lena looked very human and very lost and very strong. Kara looked very relieved, as if she hadn’t breathed since she heard the noise. And there it was, captured forever, used for hope, for humanizing effects, for an example to the city, and it made Lena twist anxiously. It was very much a moment she wanted to never have to remember. It was very much a day she hoped to forget.

The picture that ran after it was the same type. Lena carrying a child with flames coming out of the building she just left. Or it was the one where Lena helped place someone’s leg. Similar taglines ran, ones about her fixing her father’s mistake, atoning for sins. They ran his pictures soon after Lena’s, showing the grainy image of him with the leader of the group taking responsibility for the attacks. Soon the news knew the truth that Lena long since knew, deep in her heart of hearts. Lionel Luthor executed a systematic attack on the Alien Safe Zones in the city. After school care for Alien children, an orphanage, a clinic, a community center. Lena knew he used the enhanced alien attack to lure away Supergirl.

Deep into her own glass of vodka, Lena worked her way through it all, following breadcrumbs while absently watching the news with nothing but a deep, deep furrow and frown.

Late, late, late into the night, Lena sat on the couch and watched it all happen over and over and over again. Different angles from cell phones, surveillance footage, news feeds from soon after. It all blurred together and boiled down to numbers. Over three hundred wounded. 172 confirmed dead. They flashed across the screen as well, haunting her more than the pictures of herself or the things they were saying about her name, that they accused her father of doing, that she knew he
probably did.

The group responsible for the attack showed themselves on a recorded video sent to the station. The pundits hypothesized about the targeting of rumored Alien-Safe Zones while Supergirl was seen doing her best to race around town and help and save everyone. Lena knew the truth with no facts at all.

It wasn’t until very late that Lena even allowed herself to get sewed up and sent home. She dialed everyone she could, set up registries, set up phones and help and tents as quickly as she could anything. It wasn’t easy, with her head swirling and arm bleeding, but she did it because Kara didn’t stop, and Lena was inspired. She did it because deep in her gut, she knew that her father had a hand in it, and the guilt was eating her alive.

The later it got, the more anxious she grew. Kara ran herself ragged with the bombs, helping, saving, failing. The coordinated attack was too well planned, too basic, too simple to fail.

Lena ran her hand over the stitches on her forehead, wincing at them slightly. She gave up on the news and opened the balcony door, stretching her legs and staring out at the city, still littered with flashing emergency lights. Candles filled one of the parks just a few blocks away, like a sea of stars in the middle of the spring night. She figured that possibly if she called, her hero would come home, but she had no voice left.

For a moment, she considered calling the Agent sister. For a moment she considered marching down to headquarters and finding Supergirl herself. For a moment she considered that nothing she could ever do would dig her name out of the hole her family seemed set on digging. For an instant, she realized her name was synonymous with death and hatred and those were heavy things for someone who just wanted to live a quiet life and do quiet, good things. It was insurmountable.

But, as she picked up her phone and paced back through the apartment, she couldn’t make herself do it. She saw her father’s picture on the news and she was both afraid and angry. Gone was the smile of the man who chased away monsters from her closet. There to stay was the visage of a monster Lena couldn’t recognize, who wanted to hurt the girl she loved.

The city was quiet, even through the open door, but quiet as it was, it almost hid the soft landing of a certain girl. It didn’t hide the collapse of her body on the floor. Lena doubled back quickly.

“Kara!” she uttered, rushing to the body that tried to pick itself up but failed. “I’ve been so worried.”

“I couldn’t save them all,” the hero confessed, hollow and defeated.

Kara’s eyes were Lena’s favorite sight. They danced, they were like life, personified, they were music and dancing and whatever laughter must look like if it could be seen. But gone was the bright sky that usually sat there, replaced instead by deep, lifeless seas, full of pain and ache. Pure ache.

“I tried… I…” she swallowed and shook her head. “I… couldn’t… “

“Shh, shh,” Lena stopped her as her head slumped slightly. She knelt beside her girlfriend and tried to hold her up. “It’s okay.”

Blood covered Kara’s hands, covered her torn suit, covered her neck and chin and hair. Lena ran her hand along her cheek as she helped her stand, holding her arm over her shoulder. Kara hissed against the jostling but tried to help anyway. Her body was spent, gone well beyond repair and
beyond use, exhausted from holding up buildings and sprinting.

“You did everything. You did what you could,” Lena promised, half carrying her girlfriend into their apartment. She groaned under the weight, but grunted them through as best she could.

She didn’t stop in the living room, she didn’t stop to turn off the television, she didn’t turn off the light, she didn’t stop until she sat Kara down on the edge of the tub in the bathroom. Neither said much more, neither knew how to fix it.

Slowly, Lena knelt and tugged off a boot, careful to avoid the cuts and bruises forming from going head to head with an alien, as well as swallowing a few bombs into her own body to shield everyone as best she could, as well as surviving a few building collapses. It’d been a long day for the hero, and her body wore the wounds.

Never before had Lena seen her so lifeless, so gone, so despondent, so… beaten. She sent about her work, tugging off the other. The cape went next, tossed on the pile before she started the shower. Even when Kara tried, she was little help, her muscles completely spent and useless, her brain just as frazzled.

Still, Lena went back to leaning between Kara’s legs, resting her hands on her thighs, keeping her rooted there while the water heated up the room. The hero could barely keep her head up, could barely stay awake despite the wide open, lifeless eyes.

“You saved hundreds, thousands of people today, Kara,” she promised, though the hero’s eyes wouldn’t meet her own. “I am so proud of you. I am in awe of you.”

She got no response, and she almost expected it, but Lena knew that words and calm and love was all she could provide, and it would have to be enough.

Kara’s hair was no longer the color of the sunshine or gold, but a dingy, grey-grit colored matted mess. Her face was all debris and dust. Lena didn’t care, she kissed her cheek and undid the suit, careful to push it from her.

Kara stood with Lena’s help, who did not flinch when the water hit her own clothes as she stood beside Kara in the shower. She ran her hands along her bare skin, over cuts and bruises that plagued her skin.

“I love you,” she whispered as she tilted Kara’s head back and washed the dirt from it, let it stain the tiles in a mess of dingy water.

It was hard work, but Lena did it because it was Kara, and she did not ask for anything, she was not weak, she was not allowed to hurt. Lena didn’t know how to fix it, but she knew how to love her wholly. Her fingertips skated along the contusions and bruises.

The water was hot, steaming up the bathroom. Kara stared at the ceiling vacantly as Lexa massaged her scalp with shampoo. She didn’t seem to notice as little kisses came to her bruises with tiny whispers and apologies. Her skin was sealed, safe and clean with prayers and thanks and graciousness, but Kara couldn’t get her mouth to work, nor did she deserve it.

Her muscles barely worked enough to hold her up for the shower. Nearly shaking with the effort, the exhausted hero could do nothing at all, completely powerless.

“You can’t save them all, Kara,” Lena reminded her as she wrapped a warm towel around her chest. “You save who you can. You try again tomorrow.”
“I can’t save them all,” she repeated, tasting the sentence, though it provided no kind of fix for her addled brain.

Somehow she realized she was sitting on the edge of their bed. She could not be sure how it happened, only that her girlfriend was shivering and soaking wet. Her arm turned pink as blood dripped and mingled with the water.

“You’re hurt,” Kara realized as Lena tugged a shirt over her head, tugging her hair out of the neck of it, squeezing it dry with the towel.

Hands kept pampering her, and through her addled brain, Kara felt them trying to heal her. Her brain didn’t keep up though. It just received all of the input, her heart was far too heavy, her cheeks wouldn’t stay dry.

“I’m fine,” she shook her head, using the same towel to fix the problem.

Kara wanted to argue, but she couldn’t. She just listened when Lena told her to lift her leg and pull on her pants.

“You’re bleeding,” she stated again, unable to look anywhere else.


The sheets swallowed her whole, and Kara welcomed it.

“I have to… I should get back— Alex needs— We were… Those people… and the— your—” She fought a second later, all of the thoughts swirling and attempting to make themselves priority.

“I know. Lean back,” she ignored the complaint.

Safely tucked into bed, Kara just stared at the roof and grew afraid to close her eyes. She listened to Lena change, listened to her turn off the television, lock the doors. She didn’t know how to breathe.

Lena took extra care to re-wrap her arm, the stitches pulled out under the effort of carrying her girlfriend, though carrying was generous. She guided forcefully and with help, but it was enough to tear them.

Quietly, she tugged off her wet clothes and slipped into something else before getting into the bed beside her girlfriend. A pile of clothes rested atop a very battered suit, all forming a puddle in the bathroom.

In the dark, she scooted closer, as close as she could and only rested her chin on Kara’s shoulder. She breathed in the smell of her body, of her safe, of her alive, of her breathing body.

“I love you so much,” she finally murmured into the bicep. “It will feel better in the morning.”

“Thank you,” Kara whispered, her voice hoarse and gravel.

“I’m so sorry.”

“You ran into a bombed building,” Kara remembered in the dark.

“Learned from the best.”

In a movement, Kara rolled to her side and stared at her girlfriend. It took all of her effort, it took
everything she had in her to do it. She felt a hand rubbing against her back, trying to soothe her, though it wasn’t a tough battle. Just being alive was tiring enough at that hour.

“You can’t do that,” she finally insisted. “You run away from danger. Do you understand me?”

“We don’t have to talk about this tonight.”

“I thought you were in it.”

“I’m fine.”

“I’m not.”

“Oh, beautiful,” Lena soothed, cupping her cheek in her palm. She ran her thumb over chin and lips which both shook as they fought against themselves. “No you aren’t. Someone bad did bad things, and you helped make it not as much of a tragedy.”

“It wasn’t good enough,” she sighed and ducked her head, closer to Lena, who just kissed her, let Kara use her as a teddybear and hold onto her tighter. Her head rocked from side to side as her back grew with deep breaths. “I tried so hard. I didn’t… I couldn’t…”

“You did more than anyone could ask.”

“I’m sorry. What if just… me, existing means that these things happen?”

“No, Kara, don’t you dare apologize. I’m here to fight for you,” Lena promised, kissing her face, kissing her temple, kissing where she could reach, holding her closer. “I’ll fight for you. Always. I’m here for you. You’re not alone.”

In the dark, Lena ran her thumb along the back of her hero’s neck as Kara dug her nose into her girlfriend’s collar. Kara hid herself away in Lena as best she could, just looking for some way to breathe, just looking for some way to exist with what she’d seen and done.

“Don’t disappear on me, please,” Lena whispered. “I’m right here. I’ll be right here.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara repeated, digging her hands into Lena’s back, keeping her closer than most nights.

Completely entwined, completely tangled, Lena finally felt the heavy body of her hero fall asleep, completely spent. She played with her back, she tried to breathe, but gave up on it in favor of Kara’s slumber. Completely on top of her, the weight was stifling, but reassuring.

“I’m right here,” she whispered once more, for good measure.
Only the sound of my back breaking
But ever since you and your arms saved me
I don’t hold the weight of the world anymore

It must have been a complete blowout, Kara realized first, above all else. Her eyes were sore and her cheeks were still moist, but she opened them anyway and took a deep, shaky breath. The day was supposed to feel different, it should have felt different, but surrounded by the familiar sheets, the familiar smell of her girlfriend, the familiar light that burst in through the familiar curtains, the familiar quiet, it felt remarkably normal.

The day that followed the terrible day, it felt too regular, and Kara couldn’t stand it. Things should have been different. She should have been different. Other people’s lives were changed forever, and she just got to wake up and see how nothing had changed despite everything changing.

For too long, Kara remained in the bed and stared at the sky through the window. She didn’t move, she just sat there and breathed. The world had a funny way of just continuing, despite anyone’s best efforts to wallow, despite anyone’s best efforts to forget.

The noise from the kitchen was quiet, and when she strained, she found she could not hear anything else. She moved her hand to touch the empty spot on Lena’s side of the bed and found it cold. For the longest she couldn’t figure out how she made her hand get there.

The night before was a blur, and when she thought about it, Kara couldn’t remember how she got home, couldn’t remember how she ended up clean, how she ended up changed, how she ended up in bed. There were flashes. That was all. Yet even beneath the fog, Kara remembered Lena’s hands and lips and whispers and it was the strongest thing she felt beneath the pain. Those parts came through the forgetting.

It wasn’t until she made it to the hall that Kara noticed the pain in her ribs, the ache in her jaw, the cuts on her body that complained when she stretched in the wrong way. It wasn’t until she made it down the hall that she realized the smell of food and the growl in her stomach that went with the difficulty in breathing and the torn tendons.

“Hey,” Lena whispered, putting down her laptop as soon as Kara appeared. “You’re awake.”

“Hi,” she swallowed, squinting slightly against the light. “I don’t have… I slept– What time is it?”

“Almost two. I don’t think I’ve ever seen you sleep so late.”

“No powers,” Kara offered, still testing out her mortal frame.

Before she could turn off the television, Lena watched Kara’s eyes drift to the quiet news coverage of the previous day’s attacks. The images, the bodies, the flash of her kissing Lena with smoke around them. It was a lot to process.

“Your sister’s stopped by three times already today,” Lena tried to distract her. “You should call her. I didn’t earn any points by not letting her wake you up.”

“I will,” she nodded, not moving from her original spot.

Warm hands moved from her chest to her neck. Lena cupped her there, used her fingertips to soothe
the base of her hair, to gently rub at the worry that sat on her jaw. Kara closed her eyes and let her head loll against it, clearly no match for Lena’s soothing. She let her forehead rest on Lena’s shoulder, she let her scratch her back, despite the bruises and cuts that struggled to heal.

“People are grateful for what you did,” Lena whispered.

“People died. Lots of people died. Because I exist.”

“The entire population of the universe is not on your shoulders, Kara. You can’t save them all.”

“I know,” she lied, earning a small kiss on her cheek.

“People died because my father is…” she swallowed roughly and stilled her movements. It didn’t stop Kara from rooting closer. “My father did this. I knew something was coming. I should have done something–”

“You couldn’t have done anything to stop this,” Kara mumbled.

They were a pair of reassurances, both fighting for the other, helping to fix their own guilt by helping to fix the other’s. It was a delicate dance. They were experts.

“I had food delivered. I didn’t know what you’d want, so I got everything. I’ll make you a plate.”

Kara pulled her back when she smiled and moved to go to the kitchen. There was a tiny little light in Kara’s heart, that was how she always thought of it. After days like the one yesterday, it felt near extinguished. And then she felt Lena, and her body relaxed, despite her brain. And she felt the light still there, as tiny and flickering as it was. Lena cupped her hand around it when the wind started blowing.

Softly, Kara ran her thumb along the tape covering the stitches on her girlfriend’s head. Her eyes roamed over it all, checking for herself, making sure she was alright.

“My worst habits are rubbing off on you,” Kara smiled, though it left her tired. “Running into burning buildings, and not away from danger.”

“I think you mean your best,” she countered. “Relentless optimism and hope. I didn’t have those until you showed up.”

“I did what I could.”

“Yeah, you did,” Lena assured her. “Gentle, it’s a little sore,” she winced as Kara ran her hand along her arm.

“I’m sorry.”

“It’s alright. I anticipated a yelling match.”

“It’ll come,” Kara promised. “Just… for today, I don’t want anything… I don’t want– I just… I want to forget. And maybe be quiet. And not exist.”

“I know,” Lena nodded, tapping her thumb against the hollow of the hero’s collarbone.

“Just for today. Unless you’re busy. I can… I should go see Alex, or the DEO,” she shook her head until Lena stilled her. “I’m sure you have stuff to do for work, to deal with all of this. That one was your building–”
“The world doesn’t need the name Luthor out there anymore. I can’t do anything but make it worse.”

“You ran into a burning building for people, I think you are loved.”

“That my father was involved in blowing up.”

“That’s not you.”

“I’m not going anywhere today,” Lena promised. “You and me. I don’t think I trust you to be alone without powers.”

That was a lie. It was a gentle way to tell her that she didn’t want to leave her alone because her eyes were still dull and her lips couldn’t hold a smile. But Lena wouldn’t say that. She needed the escape.

“Thank you,” Kara sighed. “I don’t know if anyone will every know how important you are to me, or how you’re like anti-kryptonite. You make Supergirl stronger.”

“I don’t know about the Girl of Steel. But I’m happy to be there for my girlfriend,” she smiled. “Go sit. I’ll get lunch. You haven’t eaten in too long.”

“Thank you,” she repeated.

“Please call your sister. She almost made Benjamin cry,” Lena called as she moved into the kitchen. “I had to order him his own pizza.”

It felt so normal, so familiar, that Kara didn’t know what to do. She sat on the couch and watched the news. The ache of the images echoed in her bones.

But Lena handed her food, and she turned the channel, and she put away the papers she was working on, and she pulled out the blanket that was heavy and warm, and they spent the day as they hadn’t in a long time, locked away from the world, healing. There was no Supergirl, there was no Luthor heir anymore.

It was out of necessity that Supergirl took a small hiatus. No longer could her silhouette be seen lazily drifting through the evening sky, no longer did she seek out trouble. Not the real Supergirl, at least.

The coordinated attack was the deadliest in the city’s history. The group that took credit called it a cleansing of unwanted invaders. Lena called it a cowardly attack on innocent people and clicked the channel. Everyone called her a hero. Kara agreed.

Her father did it. He planted bombs, coordinated a group to systematically break apart the fabric of their community. He promised more. They couldn’t place it just yet, but the alien attacks had to be linked, the DEO knew it. Lena and Kara avoided it as much as possible.

Getting her powers back was slow going, and the events of that day left her weak and disinterested in getting them back. But Kara had a secret weapon, and was powerless against its charms.

It was Lena who invited Kara’s friends over after work one night, and it was Lena who took the brunt of Kara’s mood with a smile and a sigh and a kiss because even it left the hero surprised. It was Lena who let Kara be Kara, and expected nothing else, and wanted no explanation.
After just a few weeks, Kara felt the shift, the easing of her burden. It was not absolute, but it was there. And from the fog that seemed to burn off every morning, she tempered what being alive was like. Time didn’t allow for the holding of grudges and guilt.

Lena made her take a few days off of work, both jobs. She insisted on it, just as Kara insisted she take a few as well. Despite the climate of the city, no one missed them, not explicitly. It was baby steps for everyone involved.

“You look good out there, Luthor,” Kara grinned wide as she leaned against the chainlink fence that separated the pitch from the street. She let out a whistle and smiled bigger.

Hair slightly curling at her neck, sweat on her forehead, Lena lifted her shirt and wiped her face with it, giving Kara a show, though she might not have realized how often that very moment played in her girlfriend’s head over the past few years. Kara was seventeen and in love with the few inches of exposed stomach she never thought she’d see again, let alone be so well acquainted with that she made her own constellations with the freckles that stretched across like haphazard stars.

With a bigger smile, the CEO squinted toward the newcomer and winked before giving her a wave while she reached for a water bottle.

“You still don’t know anything about soccer, do you?” Maggie wagered, leaning against the fence while the rec league match held its halftime. “Or sports in general? Which is astounding.”

The dusk sank and the lights shone, surrounded by the bullies of the tall buildings and trees. Lena snuck another glance before jogging back out onto the field.

“The first time I met Lena, she was at soccer practice. I fell in love with the sport right there.”

“Cute girl in short shorts, yeah, I’ve been there,” she chuckled as both watched the scene on the field, neither very interested, neither watching anyone other than number eight.

Three weeks since the bombings, and Kara felt different every day. It was the people around her, it was life, it was everything. What helped the most was the fact that she was needed. Lena needed her, though she could never admit it, though she tried to hide the bother that came when Lionel was the one promising more attacks, when her own father was responsible for so much destruction.

Lena wore a strong front, hid herself in helping make sure Kara was alright. But she ran into a burning building and the blood of people on her from that day, and Kara helped her. Kara kissed her and made her go back to her rec team, made her go have wine night with her friends. It was a good give and take.

“You don’t have to watch me, you know,” Kara muttered, toeing the dirt with the edge of her shoe. “I know Alex asked you to while she’s working.”

“She didn’t,” Maggie defended herself. “I really did just want a beer.”

“That’s all?”

“I promise,” she nodded. “And Alex is away and I miss her, so. The other Danvers it is.”

“When is she due back?”

Out on the field, the striker dribbled, nimbly spinning, concentrating fully on controlling her body, a welcomed retreat from everything else. Kara clapped a bit.
I’m not sure. She said a week.”

“Another Lionel sitting?”

“Seems so.”

“When it was happening, I thought that day was the worst day. But then Lena said something that made sense. That was just the start.”

“Not if Alex has anything to say about it,” Maggie snorted and shook her head.

“Same with Lena,” Kara chuckled slightly, the both commiserating over their stubborn girlfriends. “They’re clearly too much alike. That’s why I can’t get them in the same room.”

“I think Alex is coming around,” the cop promised. “She’s… she’s a hard nut to crack.”

“Something like that.”

From across the field, Lena held her hand over her eyes and peered at her girlfriend before earning a wave. Kara liked Maggie, liked her with her sister, liked that she was easy to talk to and that she fit so well in the family. It wasn’t hard to have her around, even when she made Kara talk about what she saw, even when she told her about the things she’d seen while in her line of work. Even with it all, Kara was grateful for her.

“Hey, Champ,” Kara greeted an almost sweaty Lena who pulled her sweatshirt over her head and kissed her kindly. “You looked like you had fun out there.”


“Kara wouldn’t shut up about your short shorts.”

“That’s how I won her over,” the CEO laughed. “Still missing the other Danvers?”

“Something like that.”

It took a few more minutes, but Lena excused herself from drinks, citing the fact that she’d left work to fit this in, and had a few things to grab from the office. In reality, she wanted Kara to spend more time with her sister’s girlfriend, out of the house, having fun. She wanted a bit of normal back. Even when Kara gave her a look, a please come, kind of look.

More than anything, Lena needed a few minutes alone to figure out how to open the letter that she’d been dragging around for three days, and hopeless staring at every chance she got. And the longer she waited, the longer it sat there and got heavier in her hands and the bottom of her gym bag, and the side of her briefcase, the more she felt as if she lied to Kara.

Lena debated it all as she made her way through the streets toward her home. She stretched her arms slightly, flexed her back and tasted that good kind of feeling she missed by not going to more of her rec team games.

Across the city, Lena knew that Kara would be adjusting her glasses as she let herself have fun with her friends. It wasn’t difficult to ease Kara out of the post-Attack world. She was naturally predisposed to happiness, as if it were her default setting, as if her batteries just needed to recharge, as if she had to remind herself that she couldn’t save the world all of the time.

Even when she got home, Lena did everything she could to avoid the letter. She showered, she
returned work emails, she pulled it out of her bag and dragged it around the apartment. It sat on the counter when she poured herself a glass of wine. It sat on the edge of the tub when she flossed. It sat on her desk when she made notes on her schedule for Jess in the morning. It sat on the couch while she ignored it and tried to watch the end of a game.

With a final grunt, Lena tore open the envelope and read it, chiding herself for letting a piece of paper have so much effect on her. She was Lena Luthor. She was the wrangler of a Kryptonian, the survivor of her family, the builder of companies, the slayer of her own demons, the captor of spiders in the apartment.

By the time Kara’s keys moved in the lock, Lena felt as if she’d read the letter about a hundred times, as if she’d memorized it completely, read it with every tone, inferred it until it was not even real words anymore, but a page with haphazard symbols on it.

“I thought you’d be asleep,” Kara realized as she shut the door, locking it behind her. Her shoulders moved as she hiccuped and blushed.

“Kara Danvers, are you drunk?” Lena grinned despite herself. She couldn’t help it.

“No…” she lied before smiling wider as she flopped onto the couch. ”Yes. Just a little.”

Head on the pillow in Lena’s lap, Kara looked up at her all goofy, and Lena kissed her forehead, earning another hiccup. Sometimes she got flashbacks of when they were teenagers and she dreamt of domestic moments like that. And then she got to live them and they were better than a dream.

“I guess you had a good time with Maggie then?”

“She asked me something important.”

“What’s that?” she pretended to be disinterested and oblivious, but she knew. She knew exactly what the detective’s intentions were for the other Danvers’.

“She asked if she could marry my sister,” Kara explained, eyes growing wide at the memory. “Well, she said she wanted to marry her, and then I got really excited and told her that was a great idea. Then I’d get another sister, and one day you’d get a sister and we’d all be sisters. Just. So great.”

“That’s a lot of sisters.”

“Not a lot. Just great,” Kara sighed dreamily. “Maggie is going to propose, and she told me first. She asked me first, if it was alright. That’s nice. Please don’t let me spoil it. I can’t keep secrets.”

“She took a big risk on that one, Supergirl,” Lena teased, kissing her again after pushing the hair from her face.

“And then we celebrated. A lot. Do you think Alex will say yes?”

“As well as I know the Agent, I’d have to say yes. Who wouldn’t want to spend forever with a Danvers?”

“Darn right,” she grinned, wrapping her arm around Lena’s leg, holding it like a stuffed animal. She kissed bare knee, nuzzled skin with her nose and smile. “I had a few drinks. We could have made out in the taxi.”

“We can do that sober.”
“But it’s so much more fun after drinks.”

“You sound happy,” Lena realized as she let Kara’s hands run along her calf, her lips drag along her thigh. “I missed that sound.”

“I feel happy. My sister is going to be so happy.”

“She really is.”

With a large stretch, Kara practically purred as Lena ran her nails along her back, under her shirt and nice against her skin. If there was any kind of feeling of perfection, it was that moment, the feeling that made her eyes roll back slightly. She kissed her girlfriend’s leg, despite the awkward position.

“How was your night?” Kara asked, squinting as she turned to find those eyes. “It was nice to watch you play again. Maybe we can go to a game this month.”

“I’ll get us tickets.”

“That was easy. Come here.”

“I’m right here, Kara,” Lena scoffed.

“I mean come down here. Near me.”

It was a good suggestion. Lena tossed her letter to the side and stood before laying herself down again beside her girlfriend who just giggled and grinned and pulled her very close.

“You are a very demanding lush,” the CEO snorted as she adjusted, shifting her hips, sliding her leg between Kara’s. “Did you know that?”

“Yeah,” she shrugged, not fazed at all with the news. “Did you get caught up on work?”

“I did. Nothing too terrible.”

“Good.”

With just a tiny shift, Lena leaned forward and kissed her girlfriend, humming contentedly to herself with the movement. She wasn’t exactly sure how it happened, but she somehow got to make out on the couch, and that was a good day in her book.

With the bravery of alcohol in her veins and the spurring of Lena’s hands under her shirt, Kara kissed her harder, deeper, longer. It was a delicious kind of torture, the same that made her head swirl and mad her dizzy. It didn’t stop her though. Nothing could stop her.

“I got a letter from my brother,” Lena finally mentioned, pulling away, earning a chase and a bitten lip.

“That’s what you’re thinking about right now?” Kara growled, wanting more, more kissing, more touching, more of those little noises made when she found a good spot.

“Yes. No. I mean. No… Yes.”

“Do you know what I’m sick of?” she complained. “I’m sick of the Luthors interrupting my sexy time. It’s always an escape, or an attack on aliens, or releasing harmful neurotoxins or something. I just want to make out, you know?” she rambled. “Just wanted sex with my girlfriend and she
can’t–"

“I’m sorry.”

“No. I mean. I don’t think… I get it. I just… I want one day.”

“I know. I’m sorry,”

With a long pause, Kara closed her eyes and leaned closer to Lena. She flexed her bicep as she adjusted, played with her hair, held her tighter. She took a deep breath and cupped Lena’s hip with her other hand.

“Do you think we’ll be like Maggie and my sister one day?” Kara whispered. She felt nose against her own and smiled.

“I think we’re cuter than them right now.”

“I want that. I want that for us.”

“I know. Me too.”

When she finally opened her eyes, Kara found Lena’s looking back at her. She earned a small smile, felt fingertips on her cheek.

“Your brother sent you a letter?”

“Yes,” she nodded.

It helped that they were close, that they were tangled up and that Kara was very long, very handsy, very soothing. It made it easier and it made it so much more real.

“Are you okay?”

“It’s maddening how I know he’s bad, I know he’s not well I know he’s… I know he is terrible. But I just remember how much I miss him. Do you know how hard it is to lose someone who is still around?”

Kara kissed her girlfriend’s forehead, kissed her hard again. She earned a hum and smile and kissed her again. It was all she could think of, and she hoped it was enough. Lena was tiny and full of feelings and always unable to understand them, so they built up inside her and weighed her down. Kara just had to navigate them as best she could.

“When I searched your father’s cell, do you know what was taped to the mirror?” she asked and earned a shake of Lena’s head. “That article I wrote the first time I met you, about the team and championships. I don’t know. It’s just… I can’t imagine how hard it must be.”

“My brother wanted to hurt you. I don’t like that.”

“Lots of people want to hurt me.”

“I don’t like that.”

“Me neither,” Kara chuckled and kissed her again. “What did your brother say?”

“He wants me to visit him. To talk.”
“Are you going to go?”

“I don’t know.”

“You’re not terrible if you want to go, to see him.”

“People will think I’m with them. I spend so much of my day not wanting to be associated with them, and I just…”

“You’re allowed to want to see him.”

Lena shut her eyes and took a big breath before she shook her head. Kara kissed her again.

“I love you, you know that right?”

“I had an idea.”

“Remind me to send Maggie flowers in the morning, for getting my girlfriend drunk.”

With a deep laugh, Kara tilted her head back. She earned a tiny kiss on her neck followed by a shift of thigh against her. Just like that, she knew Lena was thinking, processing, doing the calculations in her head over the entire letter, and she couldn’t do anything to help her, just support whatever she decided. That was how Lena worked, and Kara knew how to weather that storm.

“I got myself drunk.”

“I could thank you, then.”

“Are you going to take advantage of my state?”

“If you want,” Lena purred.

Before she could finish, Lena felt herself tugged, felt herself carried into the bedroom. She laughed the entire way as her sloppy girlfriend kissed her neck and tickled her sides.

“I want an article,” Cat said finally in the quiet of the meeting after she shut down every single suggestion that had been floated. “I want an article to put forth the energy of the city right now. The healing, the hopefulness, the future, the strength that comes despite complete assholes trying to steal the feeling of safety we normally have.”

“The people picking up where Supergirl left off,” someone suggested, make Kara glare at them slightly before hugging her notebook to her chest a little tighter.

“Supergirl didn’t leave off,” the editor rolled her eyes. “She disarmed three bombs, flew two into the sky, absorbed at least two, held up buildings, saving thousands by acting as a human jack under a skyscraper sized car, saved lives, and still, we expect more from her? She is taking it slow, and I, for one, could never hold that against her.”

Kara looked almost guilty at the explanation. She didn’t want to, but it still felt like that, that weight of not doing enough, deserved or not. With a big breath, she held it there, and she tried to sink through the floor and out of the meeting.

“We were a city before her, and we’ll be one after her. I want something to capture the idea of everyone being a hero. Kara—”
“Hmm? Yes? Me?”

“I don’t know about you, per say, but your picture has become iconic after the April Bombings.”

“I’m not. That wasn’t. No,” she shook her head and adjusted her glasses. Cat looked on, disinterested and annoyed to have to spell it out.

“Your girlfriend, Kiera. Stop having an aneurism,” she waved her hand. “Lena Luthor embodied personal sacrifice and has quietly led the way in helping stabilize our communities. Helping families, rebuilding centers, starting scholarships, paying medical bills out of her own pocket. And she does it without saying a word about it.”

“Please don’t ask me–”

“The last time I asked you to get an interview with Lena Luthor, it changed your life,” Cat shrugged, reading over a paper in front of her. “I refuse to run a Where-is-Supergirl piece like every other brainless rag in the city. I want the focus to be on our city. Ms. Luthor is strong, smart, kind, and has acted against the pain her family inflicted. But everyone needs to know if it is from guilt or from pure benevolence.”

“She doesn’t want this. She won’t,” Kara shook her head. “Not with what her family’s done.”

“I don’t want to hear what won’t happen. I want to hear that it’s done already.”

“No.”

The room went silent, more silent than it already was, if that was even possible. For a moment, Cat paused, not even looking up, completely unperturbed by the answer. If she was upset, she hid it well enough. With a small duck of her head, she slid her glasses off, folding them, before setting them on the desk. Kara swallowed hard and tried to stop her heart from racing. Her palms felt clammy, and she wasn’t sure why but she thought surely she was experiencing a stroke.

“Leave us,” Cat said in a measured tone.

Helplessly, Kara looked at everyone’s back as they left, feeling oddly trapped and oddly sure of herself. There weren’t many things she was good at. Punching things, tons of practice. Standing up to her idol, terrifying. Baking, mildly successful. But despite her shortcomings and continued need to learn, Kara was absolutely fluent in one thing, and that was protecting Lena Luthor. She didn’t have to think about it; it was second-nature.

“I don’t think we are understanding each other, Kiera.”

“The first time I asked Lena for an interview was because I needed an excuse to see her,” Kara interrupted the inevitable diatribe that would inevitably weaken her position. “I didn’t know it then, but I did, and so I took it. But I’m not going to ask her again. Not now. Not for this.”

“This is good for her. Good press, positive exposure–”

“Lena is happy, now, I think. She’s… she doesn’t need this, or to trudge it all up. She lives with it every single day. Let her live her quiet life and do her tiny deeds. She doesn’t want to be some symbol or some headline.”

“You would be wi–”

“You can ask her, but I won’t.”
There was a finality to her statement, one that Kara was unsure of how it got there, but she took it. It wasn’t much. Lena would never know, but for Kara, it was everything.

“You can go,” Cat dismissed her, not looking up at her again.

“Please don’t ask her for an interview,” the reporter softened. “Just let her be.”

“I said you could go,” the editor clenched her jaw before calmly looking up once more.

With a small nod, Kara sighed and left the office, hopeful that she’d done the right thing.
To be safe up here with you
Safe up here with you
Safe up here with you
Safe up here with you
Safe up here with you

The summer started with a gentle growl. The streets filled with people, with tables and lingering evenings that were prolonged with the slow kind of sunset that melted into the horizon in no particular hurry. There was a quiet kind of buzz to the world, when the air grew thick and humid, that the long expanse of the hot days lingered and hissed in the road.

In the months following the attacks, her nights spent moonlighting slowed. It wasn’t that Supergirl wasn’t needed, it wasn’t that she couldn’t, it was just that there was a different kind of living that she was growing to like, a different kind of life that she felt taking shape, that she very much wanted to be a part. Different entities made it possible. J’onn embraced his heroic side, while Guardian enjoyed the late nights. Alex worked hard on the preventative side, while the world kept going, even without Kara’s constant vigilance. It meant she felt like she had a life.

The gala was alive, lingering outside despite the mild heat. The lights glowed from the roof, glowed from the poles and trees in the courtyard of the museum. Summer hummed just above the quartet, and Kara soaked up the evening, hoping that a new season would mean a new her. Lena soaked in Kara like she was the sun.

“Are those the people who said your growth was too slow?” Kara whispered, sipping the champagne.

“Yeah, that’s the Steele Financial director,” Lena nodded, following her girlfriend’s eyeline. “They said that they didn’t see a quick enough return. Not that I wasn’t doing anything right.”

“Anyone who thinks you aren’t absolutely perfect and the greatest is wrong,” she disagreed, setting her jaw and staring daggers at them. “I’m going to tell them what a mistake they made by not… doing the deal thing or investing… the thing.”

“I appreciate it, but I think you’re a bit biased,” Lena chuckled as Kara continued to prowl and stare at the group.

“That’s beside the point. Anyone would agree with me.”

“Sure sure,” she chuckled. “Come on. Buy me another drink. I don’t have to go to work tomorrow.”

“I can go tell them they’re idiots.” Kara insisted as she let Lena drag her across the room. Hand on her hip, Lena guided her through the crowd, away from the temptation of fighting a battle that didn’t need fought. It was more than enough to have someone believe in her so much.

They were good at those things. Good at the parties and the music and the small talk. Lena was polished, while Kara was sweet. Lena would just smile while her girlfriend recalled birthdays and children’s ballet recitals, asking all the questions she could from people she thought as strangers. No one was a stranger to Kara for long. People actually enjoyed seeing the two, enjoyed talking with the relaxed Luthor and her adorable girlfriend. It was a new feeling, one she couldn’t
remember feeling since she was a kid and her mother dragged her to all of those things and people liked them.

It wasn’t a habit to go often. Lena would send money, send another board member in her stead, but from time to time, she enjoyed getting dressed up and taking Kara out, because she had so much fun with her. She was convinced that anything with Kara would be fun. The dentists, or taxes, or the DMV—any of it would be passably enjoyable with her Kryptonian.

“Are you sure you don’t want to come?” Kara asked as they skated through the party, smiling and muttering their hello’s. She carefully grabbed two bubbly flutes from a server’s tray as he danced through the hall.

“Maggie invited me to her party,” Lena promised. “You take your sister out for the bachelorette party. She needs it.”

“What are you all doing?” Kara asked, pretending to be innocent enough with it. She sipped her champagne and cocked her head slightly.

“Strip club and shooting range,” her girlfriend shrugged, surveying the room for possible problems. “It all seems very much like something the Detective would deem a perfect night.”

That was always the secret to a successful appearance; vigilance. If she never stopped looking, she could avoid everyone and she could remain happy and feeling the bubbles of her drink under her skin with the goofball she dated who currently gagged on her drink, sputtering and coughing at the admission.

“You’re– you’re– you’re going to– a– a strip club?”

“For a bachelorette party, yes.” Lena watched her for a moment before grinning at the blush that appeared and the adjustment made to her already straight glasses. “Is that a problem?”

“No, no, no I just… I hadn’t thought… It’s… No,” she decided quickly.

“It’s mostly for novelty. If it bothers you—”

“No, it doesn’t I just…,” Kara swallowed and looked around before leaning forward. Her cheeks were on fire, her neck was burning. “I just thought about you there and I got distracted. You know I don’t care, right? That I trust you?”

From incredibly turned on to alarmingly earnest, Lena was in love with those extremes that rested within her girlfriend. All close and right there, she smiled and nodded, not losing the eyes that were just barely rimmed in blue. With a nod, she bit her lip before deciding to kiss Kara’s.

“As long as you’re comfortable. I think we’re going mostly because Maggie’s old roommate manages the place. You could always meet us there. I think I’d like to see that, actually.”

“Oh goodness, me?” Kara swallowed and laughed nervously. “I don’t think so.”

“What are you all doing then?”

“I barely got my sister to agree to anything, so I’m not pushing it too much. Drinks and dancing and I’m thinking paintball.”

“That sounds like the kid’s version of our night,” Lena chuckled and leaned close. She only had eyes for one person at the moment, the rest of the party be damned.
“Are you… uh… are you, um, you know…?” Awkwardly, Kara cleared her throat and looked around, her fingers antsy with the stem of her champagne glass. “At the stri– At the party. Are you. Are you going to get a– you know…?”

“No,” she promised. “Not terribly appealing to me when I have everything I want, waiting for me at home.”

“Like I know that was a line,” Kara softened into Lena’s arms and let her kiss her jaw as she furrowed and debated the words, earning a chuckle and hum of lips. “But it was still super sweet.”

Constant vigilance, Lena remembered, as soon as she heard the throat clearing behind them. She blamed Kara for being perfectly kissable. She blamed her for plying her with lots of champagne. She blamed Jess for being too good at her job and scheduling her so efficiently she actually had a full Sunday off and thus freed her to drink copiously.

“If it isn’t National City’s hero and her girlfriend,” Cat Grant approached, swirling her drink absently, not giving up more than a glance.

Protectively, Kara put her hand around Lena’s waist and winced at the description. She adjusted her glasses and waited for the shoe to drop.

“Good evening, Cat,” Lena nodded, composing herself into this rigidity that Kara knew was for everyone else. Kara just nodded with a smile.

Immediately, as if someone flipped a switch, gone was the girl who giggled and made little jokes to make the reporter more at ease, to make her blush. Instead, all that remained was the CEO of a company with a building that defined the skyline of the city.

“You’re the talk of this event, you know,” the editor shamelessly sized them both up, looking between them. “The living image that’s become immortalized.”

“I don’t know about that,” Kara disagreed, shaking her head nervously. “We’re just. No. That was… months ago. Things have. There’s–” She played with her glass and she felt Lena’s hand on her back. Thumb hit the gentle bit of skin that appeared at the start of her bare shoulders.

“That was a private moment that we didn’t know everyone would take to,” Lena interrupted the flustered words of her girlfriend. “It wasn’t supposed to be so public, but the guy who took the picture is making a book. Maybe you can publish an article about the proceeds going to the Survivor’s Fund.”

“I like it,” Cat agreed. “Perhaps the issue will take a turn. Your cover could be the Healing Issue. The one moving forward. You’ll have to get me in contact with the photographer and we can do a part, linking the two–”

“I’m sorry, your cover?” Kara furrowed and caught up with the conversation.

“I thought I told you,” the CEO smiled, never letting on that she was slightly worried at Kara’s reaction. “Ms. Grant got in touch with me a few weeks ago about that Day.”

“You said yes?”

“It took some convincing, but if I can do it once, just talk about it, get it all over–”

“I asked you to leave her alone,” Kara stood a little taller and glared at Cat. She hadn’t imagined ever being able to say anything like that to the woman she idolized, but protecting Lena came as
easily as breathing, came as autonomously as blinking.

“Kara…” her girlfriend tugged her softly.

“I asked you to leave her be, and you just couldn’t.”

“You know it’s a story, and Ms. Luthor is more than capable of making her own decisions. You’re not thinking about it as a reporter in this moment, your bias is showing.” Cat disagreed. “I simply extended the offer~”

“Darn right I’m biased.”

“Kara, it’s fine,” Lena promised.

“Excuse me,” the hero shook her head and nodded to both. “I think I’m ready to go.”

Left almost surprised, Lena watched Kara politely excuse herself as best she could before kissing her cheek and telling her not to worry, she’d find a ride home. Lena looked back at the editor and felt as if she was missing something.

“Reporters,” Cat shrugged and emptied her glass.

It took a lot more effort for Lena to get out of the gala. She also knew that for Kara to be that upset, she might need her own bit of time to calm or to figure her own words out. The worst thing was trying to fight with a girl who stumbled all over herself, unsure of what she actually felt, and thus leading to a deeper fight. As endearing as Kara being unable to articulate in certain moments, Lena knew the frustration that came with not having the right words at the right time. She knew Kara. She knew how badly she wanted to be understood and what it must feel like to not be able to express the proper things in the words she grew up saying despite her tenure on Earth.

For the life of her, Lena didn’t want any fight at all, but something in the way Kara kissed her cheek, she knew what was coming. They were supposed to be over the hard part. They survived the blackest day in the city’s memory. They had each other.

The apartment was quiet though, when she entered and tossed her clutch on the table. Lena wasn’t sure why she almost expected different. She would have appreciated loud and angry because she could understand it.

“Kara, honey. I’m home,” Lena called as she kicked off her heels and began her trek down the hall, carefully taking earrings out on the journey. “I think we have something to talk about, but can I shower first? I need to get this make-up off of my face and I just feel gross after those things.”

Garnering no response, Lena paused and found their bedroom empty. She followed the stream of light coming from the office, careful to lean against the door while her girlfriend worked, ferociously typing something on her laptop.

“Hey,” Kara murmured without looking up from the screen.

“You okay?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m going to go shower real quick,” she explained, toying her fingers along the thick wood of the door jamb. It was easier to focus on that.
“Okay.”

“I love you.”

“I love you, too,” the reporter returned. “You look… you look really pretty tonight.”

“Thank you,” Lena smiled to herself, letting the broody thing brood all of her broodiness out.

Even angry, even upset, Kara was still polite and incapable of being anything but there, right there, in it all. Lena knew not to push, but she knew how to juggle, and that was what living with Kara was, for as much as she coined herself the emotionally deficient one, Kara was not that far ahead. She just handled it better.

There was a time when she would be nervous at this, but Kara was her best friend, and for better or worse, that meant she just understood things. When they were in their first year of university, Lena remembered a moment in which Kara got so frustrated and angry, she just couldn’t talk. She sputtered and bit her mouth from the inside, and this was no where near that bad. That was her girlfriend though, someone who got locked up. She didn’t pull away, she just had to untangle herself.

Halfway through rinsing her hair though, Lena heard the bathroom door open and wiped her eyes to see the outline of her girlfriend just outside the fogged up glass door.

“Hey. Do I have to go to that thing Shelly invited me to tomorrow? Is it too improper to bail the day of?”

“To a baby shower? Possibly.”

“Fine. I guess I have to—”

“Why didn’t you tell me about the cover?” Kara asked on the other side of the door.

Lena dipped her head under the water once more, rinsing and buying herself a moment once she understood what was happening.

“I thought I had. I thought you knew, honestly.”

“I didn’t. Well. Kind of. That’s not. What I mean is. You usually ask me about things…”

“Thought it might be a conflict of interest? I don’t know,” she shrugged though her girlfriend wouldn’t see it. “I don’t usually run L-Corp PR policy past my girlfriend.”

“This is Lena Luthor PR policy, that I thought remained still ‘no comment,’” the reporter reminded her.

“Can’t this wait until I’m out of the shower?”

“I’m not mad at you, you know,” Kara informed her, quietly pacing. “I’m mad at Ms. Grant for even asking. She asked me to ask you, and I told her no, and to not ask you. I explicitly asked that she not—”

“I’m almost done, sweetie.”

“I know. I just want you to know.”

“You don’t have worry about me answering a few questions,” Lena reminded her as she lathered
her shoulders.

“Yes I do.”

“No,” she chuckled. “You don’t.”

“Like heck I don’t!” Kara yelped. In the shower, Lena rinsed the suds off and let the water warm her as she tilted back her head one last time. “You still have dreams. You still wake up out of breath and upset. That day was hard on you, it was hard on all of us, and you ran into a darn building and pulled people out and I couldn’t—”

The water shut off and for a quiet moment, Lena refused to open the door though without the water, she could see Kara a bit clearer through it. The fog swirled around her as her thoughts drained.

Wrapping a towel around her waist, she finally stepped out and met an agitated Kryptonian, anxiously leaning against the counter.

“A reporter once told me that people are just going to keep talking until I get it over with and bite the bullet,” Lena reminded her.

“This is about you, being safe and healthy about this.”

“I’m fine,” she sighed, turning off the light and retreating into the bedroom.

Like a puppy, Kara carefully followed, crossing her arms and watching Lena disappear into the closet as she dug for something to sleep in. It was a fine line to walk with a Luthor. She remembered once when Lena told her that being in love with a Luthor was like loving a wildfire, and no truer words had ever been spoken.

“Lena, you’re not fine. It’s been a rough rebound for both of us. But your father is going to be brought up, and you haven’t said anything about your brother’s letters—”

“Anita Hudson, Megan Pope, Al Frazier, Elijah Mack, Elsie Porter,” she began to recall as she stepped out, back into the bedroom. “Oscar Dean, Edgar Wise, Ramona Pratt—”

“Don’t do that,” Kara’s jaw clenched with the words.

“I used to know them all, but I can’t keep up anymore, Kara,” Lena scoffed. “I’ve filled up notebooks writing their names, and I keep on going, but it’s because of my family they’re dead.”

“You didn’t do anything.”

“My family hurt people, and I can’t find my father anywhere. Lionel Luthor is a ghost that keeps haunting me, ruining my life,” she argued, shaking her head, eyes glassy over the fight she didn’t want to have. Kara took a step toward her and she recoiled. “I’ve looked everywhere. I’ve devoted hundreds of thousands of hours of resources, millions of dollars in funding to hunt down and eliminate terrorists. I’ve worked with organizations I hate like your precious DEO, and I’ve done everything in my power, but I haven’t been able to do anything right from the start of all of this!”

“You didn’t do anything wrong,” Kara reminded her gently.

“I should have stopped it.”

“You didn’t do anything wrong,” she repeated. “You didn’t do anything wrong. Your family did.
You are not guilty by association.” The hero reached for her girlfriend and held her shoulders, met her eyes, wiped away a stray tear. “You didn’t do anything wrong. You never planted a bomb, you never attacked innocent people, you never plotted to cause harm to others. You are a brave and important person, Lena.”

“I can’t get the names out of my head. And I see the things… I see the sights. I wake up with the smell of that day…”

“I know. Me too,” Kara promised, hugging her tightly.

For a while she just held her there and she knew it was a fight for another day. That Lena Luthor was very much different from the girl everyone else saw, from the one Cat wanted on the cover of CatCo for a message of hope. She kissed her head and let her root her hands in her shirt to keep herself steady.

“I don’t know how to distance myself from them,” Lena sighed. “I’m stuck.”

“You can stop blaming yourself for the destruction they’ve caused.”

“Yeah.”

“I mean it,” Kara warned. “I don’t remember much from that night… but I know I came home to you, and you cleaned me up, and I remember you telling me I couldn’t save everyone. That’s something that comes through clear. And if I have to believe, and it is a hard fact to accept, but if I have to believe that I can’t save everyone, that the universe isn’t on my shoulders. Then you have to believe that you couldn’t have done anything to stop them.”

“Easier said than done.”

“Believe me. I know.”

“I’m sorry,” Lena whispered, dragging her nails gently along Kara’s neck. She had nowhere else she ever wanted to be than right there, safe and quiet and herself.

“I’m sorry I got mad about the article. It just seemed like you were finally getting close to back, and this was… I wanted to help you,” she admitted sheepishly. “It’s just my first instinct to protect you.”

Deep into the night, deep into the city, the two remained, exhausted and barely upright, but still, together. Lena kissed Kara’s shoulder and hid her cold nose in her girlfriend’s neck, earning a little bit of a giggle at the movement.

“Do I have to go to that baby shower tomorrow?” Lena asked again, earning a laugh.

“Yes.”

“But after, we get back in pyjamas and you make me dinner.”

“Is that the plan for the day?” Kara hummed, closing her eyes and hugging Lena a bit tighter.

“It is.”

“Sounds good.”

“I’m still going to do the interview,” Lena murmured. Her arms moved with the sigh that Kara let out. “I have to get it all over with, and this is the best way to do that. We both need to move
forward. And if it helps, if us kissing around town makes everyone feel normal, then I say we do
our civic duty.”

In the embrace, Kara closed her eyes and let her head lean forward, plum exhausted from existing
at all, let alone keeping up with the embodiment of work ethic that was her girlfriend.

“This feels a little perfect, despite everything else.”

“I told you we’d find it again.”

“I really wanted to kiss you in that moment, when we were kids,” Kara informed the CEO with a
sliver of a smile. “I was very sad, and you were happiness.”

“What about now?”

“I’m not sad at all.”

“Still want to kiss me?” Lena grinned. Her fingers toyed with the collar of Kara’s shirt, tickled up
her neck.

Without a thought at all, Kara leaned forward and did what she wanted to do all those years ago
when her heart was broken and Lena was like coming up for air.

“We’re really good at fighting.”

“I actually think we’re terrible,” Kara hummed. “But I’m okay with that.”

“You’re getting married tomorrow!” Lena cheered, raising her glass high and proud. “To a
Danvers! Let the good Lord help you and provide you with unending patience. You’ve become my
sister in this trap we’ve found ourselves after meeting two very strong-willed and damn beautiful
women. I can’t think of anyone I’d rather go through the thick of it with.”

A chorus of laughs and applause erupted in the little bachelorette party in the corner of the elegant
and lushly decorated burlesque bar and strip club. Deep reds and dark woods decorated all of the
walls while the women in the giant circular booth wore all manner of sparkly and short dresses
with sashes and embarrassing hats and light up necklaces and rings.

After she drank the rest of her champagne, after her toast, Lena collapsed with a giggle beside
Maggie into the booth while the music swirled and the lights flashed and shook. The song changed
and a dancer emerged, earning a whole new level of hollering from the severely inebriated party.

“We snagged ourselves good ones, didn’t we, Luthor?” Maggie yelled in Lena’s ear as she poured
more champagne.

“They saved us.”

“You have no idea,” the detective slurred, sloshing the bottle as they both leaned back and stared at
the stage. “I was a mess before that stupidly pretty girl walked into my life.”

“Oh, believe me,” Lena nodded, eyes wide and in complete understanding. “When I walked away
from Kara… I knew I was losing my one shot. She was it. I was twenty and an idiot, but I knew in
my heart. And then she walked into my office, all mad and hurt and I was such a mess, but she
didn’t care at all.”

“I can’t fathom how you managed to walk away. Kara is perfect. She’s like. A literal golden
retriever in human form.”

“I can’t fathom how you proposed. How does that feel?” Lena laughed at the description of her girlfriend while she watched a woman do ungodly things with her body.

Both tilted their heads slightly.

“I looked at her, and I just knew,” Maggie shrugged. “It wasn’t scary. You’ll see one day.”

“Me? No. I couldn’t.”

“You and Kara have been together since you were like twelve.”

Their heads tilted the other direction as they nodded appreciatively.

“We’ve been dating two years. I just figured out that I might want a fish one day.”

“I don’t know what that means.”

“It’s a long story.”

In just a few days, another article would come out, with another cover with her face on it. Inside, there were quotes about how she struggled to deal with the aftermath of that day, about her own guilt, about how she didn’t allow herself to grieve and hurt because she knew that others felt more, lost more. She was honest and it was all Kara’s fault for making her that way.

Even before it came out, people were calling for her head on a spit. Even before, she anticipated it and gave all information to the authorities, submitted to degrading questioning, kept her air of transparency that she promised with the company. It was exhausting.

Just the thought of it all made her drink again.

“Seriously, you can’t tell me you’re not going to ask Little Danvers to marry you one day,” Maggie insisted as another performer emerged. The rest of the group went wild, stood by the stage and slid money all over.

“I’m not even allowed to think of things like that,” Lena scoffed and finally dug out her phone from her pocket.

“What do you mean?”

There was a slur to her words. Lena felt the slur in her own words, in her eyelids, in her movements, in the way her eyes had a hard time seeing and her brain had a harder time processing. She honestly couldn’t remember the last time she’d drank so much, nor that she mixed so many types of alcohol.

“I can’t give all of me to Kara until I’m free of my family and my job. I don’t know when that will be. I hate it.”

“Seems like she’s in it.”

“When did you know?”

“That Kara loved you?”

“That you wanted Alex forever,” she clarified,
“The third time she stayed over at my place,” Maggie smiled, hugging the bottle of champagne to her chest and neck dreamily. “I mean it was super early in our relationship, which scared the absolute fuck out of me.”

“Definitely.”

“But we were arguing about something stupid. She got all upset, and started to do that stuttery thing, where her shoulders—”

“Go the whole way up to her ears and her neck disappears while she does her best DeNiro impression?” Lena guessed quickly. “Kara does that!”

“Yes!” Maggie yelped. “She’s standing there, arguing with me, and she just has these eyes. They taste like maple syrup. Or. They feel like it? She feels like sitting in a jacuzzi when she looks at me. Like my whole body is made of soda.”

“And you knew?”

“I remember it distinctly. I had this thought that I was looking at the big ol’ nerd I was going to be stuck with for the rest of my life, whether I liked it or not. Deep down I knew that I liked it.”

“Wow.”

“You’ve had that though.”

“Kind of.”

“Kind of?”

“Kara’s eyes are like… being very afraid of the high dive and jumping anyway on a dare. They’re so blue. Like.”

“I don’t mean her eyes only, idiot.”

“Oh right.”

In the middle of a show, they were infinitely drunk and distracted and quite frankly exhausted from the shooting range and eating and drinking and the excitement, though they fought to find a second wind while everyone was distracted.

Maggie’s brothers hooted and hollered, enjoying themselves and the servers. A few friends blushed and watched. They slunk deeper into the huge red, velvety cushions and nursed their drinks and lamented love.

Lena held her phone close to her nose as she tried to balance her glass and type at the same time.

Your eyes are so pretty. I don’t tell you that enough. She sent it to Kara and prayed for no spelling mistakes.

“Last year,” Lena recalled with a gulp. “We were at Kara’s. It was snowing or something. Raining maybe. She was upset about having to rewrite an article for the fifth or so time. I slid into her lap at the kitchen table and kissed her neck, and she worked around me, but I just sat there until she relaxed. Being able to help, to do something like that. It just. She does this thing, where she nudges me with her forehead when she’s tired. It always falls on my shoulder or cheek or collarbone. I’m someone who takes care of someone else. And it happens so naturally, I don’t even think about it.
That moment, I sat there and knew.”

“See? She’s a labrador,” Maggie stated quite firmly.

_Your boobs are quite fun to play with_, Kara returned, earning a smile. Lena showed the future bride and earned a laugh as well.

**Are you drunk, Kara Danvers?**

“I want to go see my brother, once and for all, clear the air. Disavow him. Get out from this, escape it. I’m afraid to ask Kara to go with me.”

It was a confession that Lena had meant to keep to herself, but she was drunk and Maggie was… she really was the closest thing she had to a partner in crime. To be honest, the idea ate her up, but she fully believed she needed it.

“I think you should,” the detective decided. “Listen, when my parents disowned me, I thought I was done, washed my hands clean of them. But something ate at me, and as I got older, I realized I’d written scripts of things I had to get off of my chest.”

“Really?”

“Oh yeah. I think it’s natural. And then I decided to get married and I had to tell them. And I told them everything I’d wanted to say. Nothing changed, except I feel a million times lighter. They won’t be there tomorrow, but I will. If you want to free yourself, you have to get rid of that weight,” she promised, pointing her finger at Lena’s chest, leaning closer, all woozy and the philosophical that comes only after greatly exceeding the legal limit. “You scrub it off, hard and fast, and then you’re new. You’re someone who gets to keep a Danvers.”

*I’m very drunk. I also think about your butt more than I think normal people think about butts.*

“You are wise for a cop.”

“And you’re dumb for a genius.”

Both laughed at their descriptions and cheered for the woman on stage.

“Seriously. Don’t worry about anything. Everything will be okay. We hit the motherlode for girls.”

“Yeah. I know.”

“I like Alex a lot.”

“Do you miss them?” Lena ventured, laughing and lulling her head to the side.

“I really do. Is that lame?”

“Watch this.”

With a lot of effort, and nearly mimicking a newborn fawn, Lena walked around the table that filled with more bottles and whispered in someone’s ear before handing her phone over to someone else. Curiously, Maggie watched it unfold, unable to focus on much explicitly, though she tried hard.

“What’s going on?” she finally asked as Lena joined her again.
The night was getting very late, very old, and Lena needed to spice it up, and if that meant the Danvers sisters, then that was just what she was going to do. Mostly, it was selfish, because a drunk Kara meant that dirty kind of bruising sex that she couldn’t get enough of. But surely Maggie understood that.

“Just wait.”

Lena slipped a large bill to the server who helped her with her plan and ordered another round for the group.

“I don’t get it,” Maggie furrowed.

“Trust me. I know drunk Ka-”

“Hey why was someone else touching your butt?” an exasperated Kara ran in, a breeze trailing behind her as she barely came to a stop at the group.

“Told you,” Lena grinned. “Alex should be in here in like fifteen.”

“I take it back. You’re a genius, Luthor,” Maggie nodded appreciatively of the tactics involved.

“That’s my butt,” Kara reminded her, oblivious to the conversation happening. She looked around and pushed up her glasses, blushing wildly when she looked at the stage. “Oh goodness. How does she bend like that? She’s so… strong. Holy cow! Lena did you see this?”

“Hi, honey,” the CEO cooed, watching her transfixed by the woman on the pole, her mouth agog and brow furrowed delicately.

“Hey. Seriously though,” the hero shook her head. “Golly. She must work out. How much do you think she works out?”

“Labrador,” the two in the booth nodded with a grin to each other.

“Do you think that’s pilates? Because I can lift a lot, but I don’t think my legs bend that way. Should I do pilates?” Lena watched Kara’s head tilt with the movements. “I’m going to go ask her.”

“No! Kara, stay,” her girlfriend grabbed her hand, tugging her toward the chair. “Stay.”

“Hey, why was someone grabbing your butt. That’s only mine to grab.”

“I wanted to see how quickly I could get you here. I was very successful.”

“I’ve had a few drinks,” Kara nodded, finally smiling just because she was close to the girl she loves. “Hi Maggie. You’re getting married tomorrow! Are you freaking out? Alex is totally freaking out. In a good way. Alex! I lost her.”

“She knows where to find us,” Lena promised. “Time we spiced up your party a little anyway.”

“This is a good one, Little Danvers,” Maggie leaned across from her chair and clapped a hand on her future sister-in-law’s shoulder. “You keep her around, okay?”

“Don’t worry. We’re getting a fish,” she nodded, yelling once more over the music. Her gaze couldn’t be stolen from the girl on stage who was completely fascinating to her.

“What is it with you two and fish? I don’t get it.”
“It’s a long story,” Kara promised, smiling at her girlfriend.

“Fish are the worst. Get a cat.”

“Oh Lena! Can we?” That got her attention quite quickly, her morbid curiosity of the dancer turning to childlike eagerness at the prospect.

“Not tonight.”

“You always say that,” Kara accused.

“You never ask when you’re sober. Hush and watch.”

True to her word, Alex arrived fifteen minutes later, nearly out of breath and with the rest of her party in tow. James and Winn had very different reactions to the scenery. Alex wasn’t much better.

Lena found herself scooting to the side to let the couple sit and drink together as the whole crowd formed once more around them. Toasts happened, drunken, swirling toasts and well-wishes of friends and family. The CEO didn’t care much. She nibbled Kara’s ear and neck, she ran her nails along Kara’s back, under her shirt, devilishly slowly, just to tease her. She was very drunk and Kara was right beside her. That was her only defense.

“You should come by my room at the hotel,” Lena whispered, stealing a moment just for them.

“I’m the maid of honor. I can’t leave Alex.”

“Just for a bit,” she promised. “I’ll make it worth your while. I’ll be quick.”

Kara’s eyes were pure pupil in the dark lights of the club, after Lena spent a lot of time toying with her to untenable ends. Lena watched her lick her lips and stare at her own.

“I’ll drop her off and get her to sleep.”

“Don’t keep me waiting too long or I’ll start without you.”

“Goodness. This is the best night of my life,” Kara decided, earnest and honest.

“Just you wait.”

Despite the inevitable hangovers and jitters, the wedding party made it to the ceremony in one piece. It was actually thanks to the nerves that the hangovers took a back seat completely, nearly forgotten as the pictures were taken before the ceremony. The spring wafted along the river while the blossoms from the trees carpeted the tiny little garden they’d selected to exchange vows. It was all white and silver and cast in hues of pinks and blues and purples and all manner of the season, all earthy and muted and breathy.

Carefully, Lena accepted a seat beside James and Lucy, grateful to not be too shunned by some of the people in the room, most of whom knew her on site, knew her brother’s words, her father’s actions, and hated her name. It was getting better, but an affair laced with so many aliens was bound to make her uncomfortable.

But now she kind of had a group of mutual friends with her girlfriend, in that she knew James, and enjoyed hanging out with him, getting a coffee and chatting about the affairs of the world, often ending in heated arguments that ended in smiles and laughter.
And she absolutely loved having Winn stop by when she had something to show him that they could both geek out over, as Kara so affectionately explained one afternoon when she dropped snacks by the workshop while they toiled on some compressor and specs for some whatsit she didn’t really care to learn.

From time to time, Lena even found herself having drinks with Maggie after work while the Super Team worked a case they weren’t to be privy. There was a commiseration with the only other person who knew what it was like to be in love with a Danvers and a hero.

It wasn’t a constant or even regular occurrence, to see these friends of Kara’s. But it did happen from time to time with such regularity that it at least seemed that Lena was somewhat part of that group. It was hard for her to commit fully. She liked that Kara had her own things, never wanting to cloud that.

On the flip side, Kara remembered Lena’s friend’s birthdays and sent them cards and flowers and scheduled lunches with them fairly often, always one to outdo Lena in the ways of being human. But it was mostly double dates, things to get Lena out, as if she was a parent setting up playdates, and for the life of her, Lena was certain she wouldn’t keep in touch with most people if it weren’t for her friend wing-woman.

But she had friends. She had a life filled with them. She had soccer games on thursdays and brunch on the occasional saturday. She had a host of people that saved her a seat at a wedding, and that was something she never would have imagined just two years ago.

As the ceremony started, she couldn’t help but let her mind drift to the places anyone’s would drift in a wedding. It didn’t help that Kara was standing up there in her pretty yellow gown, with a crown of flowers woven in her hair, the literal personification of spring and life and goodness in one body. It certainly didn’t help that Lena couldn’t look anywhere else other than that slightly dimpled grin.

She wanted the house with the windows and the floppy dog and the lazy cat. She wanted the job she loved and was fulfilling. She wanted vacations on an island where phones didn’t work. She wanted to have a regular place they went to breakfast on sunday mornings. And she wanted it all with the girl who was beaming from beside her sister.

Though it came in flashes and not a coherent sentence, Lena remembered Maggie’s story about shedding all the past and being done with it. Surely there was some speck of wisdom she could glean from that. It must be true, because now the detective was standing there with dimples the size of craters, marrying the woman she loved, and she knew that she deserved to be happy. Lena wanted that feeling, like she wasn’t merely stealing happiness in bits and pieces, covertly keeping it hidden and hoarded in case someone caught on and saw her happy and decided to tell her the truth, that she didn’t earn it.

Halfway through, as Alex and Maggie repeated and slipped rings onto each other, Kara caught Lena’s eye and seemed to say the same thing with just a glance, her own thoughts echoing Lena’s yearning for a future despite not knowing quite how to get there. That part didn’t matter, she realized as Kara smiled again, blushing slightly, she gave Lena a wink and quickly looked back at the couple cementing their vows. It was more than enough.

Somehow, in a blink, ten years had passed, and they had grown up from two awkward kids on the water tower past curfew, though neither knew how. In another ten, Lena was almost certain she would remember that moment in the ceremony where Kara promised her the world with just a smile.
The only thing that Lena realized, right there at the ceremony, right there as everyone clapped and James nudged her shoulder and Lucy joked about which was next, right there, where Kara clapped and smiled so wide, Lena was certain, this time for sure, Kara was the sun, and everyone else was her’s and she was ready to fight for it and them.

The realization was new, was all-encompassing, was violent and hard and overwhelming. But there it was, nurtured deep in Lena’s heart and soul and gut. This was what her brother and father would never understand.

Kara caught her eye and gave her another wink as she joined arm with Maggie’s brother and best man as they moved down the aisle and out of the church. With a giant smile and glassy eyes, Lena returned it with a kiss.
Talking to Strangers

Be gentle with me
I might not be ready
I am learning to love
I am learning to let myself be loved
How did I miss this lesson when I was young?

The cover of CatCo magazine stared back at her in the waiting room of the federal jail. Kara squeezed her hand and flipped a page in her copy of the magazine, not trying to pay much attention to anything at all. Even though it was a few months old, it was still the newest magazine in the place, which was terrifying enough in its own right.

Entirely grey and void of any sort of emotion or joy, the waiting room was everything Lena imagined such places would be. The guard in the window looked at her from time to time, knowing exactly who she was and who she was going to see, knowing exactly what he had done and what he would love to do if given the chance. In this place, she was simply Lex’s sister, her own identity usurped.

“It’s going to be okay,” Kara reminded her girlfriend who just nodded and took a deep breath. “I really like this interview. You sound very hopeful. I really like this part about you blushing when you talk about your girlfriend.”

“Why does every interviewer feel the need to mention me blushing?” Lena groaned at the teasing.

“Because you keep blushing. You’re a powerful woman who gets bashful when she talks about kissing.”

“They always sideswipe me with questions about my personal life. I just wanted to talk about that giant ocean vaccuum that’s cleaning up the garbage pile out in the middle of the ocean. Do you know how long it took me to develop that?”

“Six years,” Kara answered, knowing full well the entire saga.

“Six years,” the CEO sighed, ignoring the correct answer.

There weren’t many tells to Lena Luthor. Kara knew them all though, memorized them. Her hands couldn’t sit still. Her words were agitated. Her jaw was tight. She wore exactly the same look as when Kara told her they had to talk about their relationship. Resigned torture.

With a small movement, Kara ducked her head and nudged her girlfriend’s shoulder with her forehead, earning a sigh and a kiss there. Nails slipped along her spine, absently scratching over her coat. For someone who was oblivious to how to have physical contact, it came almost so naturally to Lena, it was comical to the hero.

“It’s going to be okay, you know that right?” Kara stilled her girlfriend’s nervous hands. “Whatever happens, your personal life is going to be sitting right here when you come out of this meeting. Not one thing changes between us.”

“I know,” she nodded.

“Do you trust me?”
“Yes.”

“Good. Me too.”

“Luthor?” the guard interrupted.

“It’s fine,” Lena said, kissing Kara’s cheek before she stood.

For the life of her, Kara didn’t know what to do, and so she sat there and watched Lena walk through the heavy metal doors. The magazine in her hands stared back at her as the real thing kept her chin up, like she was trained to do.

As soon as the door closed, Lena felt as if she was in a different world. It was quiet, silent, and she was stuck there, willing herself to walk back through the door and right out of the jail, never to return to that place ever again. The fear prickled up her spine though she swallowed and took another step.

“I have some forms I need you to fill out. Please place all loose items from your pockets and purse in the bin,” the guard explained, monotonous and well-rehearsed. “Nothing will be allowed into the room.”

Carefully, Lena took off her watch, took off her necklace, placed her earrings and purse in the bin. As she went through the forms, initialling and scanning and signing she felt alarmingly empty and bare, when all she wanted to do was protect herself from everything.

1,168 days she’d gone without seeing her brother. Her life was nothing like she would have imagined that many days ago, but here she was. All at once, at that thought, she got angry at the imposition of even having to be there at all, at even feeling anything for the monster that waited in her brother’s skin. After a thousand days, surely that was enough distance. Surely she was free.

“I gave my background check to the woman at the front office,” she furrowed as she skimmed over the forms on the clipboard.

“That’s alright. We’ll get it. Do you have any questions?”

“I’m not allowed to touch him?”

“This visitation will be done through glass. Everything is extra precautions for high profile inmates.”

“Oh. Okay,” she nodded, almost grateful that the option for a hug was taken away from her. She spent too long fixating on it herself.

“This is your first time?” the guard ventured.

“Yes. I didn’t know what to expect. I haven’t been able to come.”

“He doesn’t get any visitors. I think this is the first.”

With a small nod, Lena handed over the papers before assenting to a very thorough pat down, followed by a very invasive scan, followed by the metal detector. As long as it took, she wanted it to take longer, because she didn’t want to be in that room, to see her brother despite the kind words in his letter, despite the compulsion she felt when he used the guilt of their blood and duty and the words their parents raised them with, echoed throughout it.
No, Lena wanted to take her time, though she found no other way to do it. Instead, she stood in front of the larger, heavier metal door and swallowed though her throat was adamantly against that, and pushed through.

It was like seeing a ghost. Surely her face went pale at the sight of the man sitting behind the thick glass window waiting for her. The pale, bright orange of his jumpsuit was the only splash of color in the dreary room. His skin was so much whiter, so much more dangerously pallid than she could ever remember seeing anyone’s. For a second, she imagined him almost translucent.

But then she met his eyes, and she saw her brother, and it nearly knocked her down, though she fought it valiantly.

Lena was strong though, stronger than she thought or knew, and so she steeled herself and took the seat across from him at her own little window. Neither moved to pick up the phone just yet. Instead, they opted to stare at each other like they were looking at people they distantly remembered and were trying to place in their memories.

The clean shave of his head was freshly done. His shoulders seemed wider. There was a kind of hollow to his eyes that made the angles of his face sharper, more pointed. It was almost impossible to pull out the bits of her brother that she recognized from before, from when they were once related.

As Lena gazed at the stranger, she wondered for the briefest of moments what he saw in her, what parts he was wondering about, what parts he clung to, to locate them to each other. Self-consciously, she sat up a bit straighter.

When he moved to pick up the phone, she nearly jumped. But he smiled and nudged his head, reminding her to answer. There was this kindness in his eyes that most people wouldn’t think to see. It was the blue of her mother’s eyes that stared back at her, slightly amused.

“It’s been a while, Weenie,” he murmured, almost fondly.

“Don’t call me that,” she huffed, the words coming out so quickly, so naturally against the childhood nickname he’d saddled her with. The truth was, the name strangled her ears.

“You look good. You’ve grown up.”

“So have you.”

That was it. Less than twenty words and they were speechless. The image made Lena feel as if she were looking into a mirror, or worse yet, into her future. She tilted her chin up, hoping it would dispel that notion.

“I saw that article, about after that attack our father was allegedly involved in.”

“That he planned.”

“You annexed six small corporations under us.”

“Slowly but surely dismantling LCorp.”

“It took years for our family to accumulate that.” There was a bite behind his words.

“I’m into redistributing the wealth. I have more money than I could spend in six lifetimes,” she explained. “Did you invite me here to criticize my business sense?”
There was a small smile there as he shook his head. He looked like a bashful kid as opposed to the towering monster that she knew him to be. He was the person who beat up boys who made fun of her and bought her a car when she turned sixteen.

“You love that girl,” he stated. “The one from the picture. She loves you, too.”

“Kara.”

“I hadn’t heard anything about you in a long time. We don’t get much entertainment here,” he motioned around at the bleak walls. “But I saw that, and I was very happy for you.”

“Thank you.”

If anyone hadn’t known who he was, the moment would have seemed like a genuine, sibling interaction. And yet, Lena knew Lex, she thought she did, and as much as she wanted to take those words, she saw the meaning, she saw him pointing out that she had a weakness now, an exploitable, glaring weakness in her defenses. It wasn’t well wishes, it was a threat, masked in the upper class politeness they were bred to uphold despite all else.

“Have you heard from Dad?” He asked, changing his tactics.

“A few letters.”

“He’s planning something,” Lex explained. “I know that at the end of the day, your duty is to the name and the company. I just had to know if you’ve been helping him at all.”

“No.”

“No one is really listening, Lena, you can tell me.”

“No,” she repeated, sterner this time. “I’ve spent the past five years fixing what you two fucked up, fixing our name, dismissing all of the worry. And then he… he killed people, Lex. Innocent people. If I had finished lunch sooner, it would have been me walking past that corner.”

“We have to get rid of the aliens.”

“Mom died because he was dealing with unstable substances. It was his fault, and you know it.”

“I can hate him and still know that he was right. You can have hate and still be devoted to your family. That’s what family is, that is how we live, now.”

For a moment, Lena dropped the phone from her ear, shaking her head, her jaw sore and tight from all of the tensing at the words.

“Why did you write to me, Lex?” she finally breathed.

Outside, in the waiting room, Kara did her best not to listen. She succeeded pretty well, though something about Lena’s voice always called her attention. She struck up a conversation with the guard, reread the magazine article, though she’d almost memorized it well before that day.

It helped to focus on her heartbeat, to hear Lena’s pick up and flutter, to hear her take a deep breath to steady herself. It was a miracle she even asked Kara to come with her, and so she tried to not use her powers, but she couldn’t, because Lena was helpless and Lex was capable of so much more than most assumed.

“I wanted to tell you that I was proud of you for what you’ve done with the company,” he softened.
slightly. Mass murderer or not, it was still his kid sister across from him.

“Cut the shit.”

“I wouldn’t have done half of the things you’ve done. But Mom would be proud of you. Renewable energy, low emission public transit, drought resistant crops. It’s impressive. I think there might have even been a few of your own ideas I remember mocking thrown in.”

“I hate the business part. I just wanted a lab,” she reminded him.

“I know,” he smiled sadly, leaning forward so his elbows rested on the countertop. He couldn’t hold her eyes. “I’m sorry for that.”

“You’re not sorry.”

“I just said I was,” he disagreed.

“You’re sorry you’re in jail. Not for what you did to get in here,” she disagreed.

“Why did you come then?”

On a drunken dare, Lena considered coming. And at the wedding, she tried to fight against it, but after the toasts and the cutting of cake, when the night grew longer and the drinks flowed once more, Kara held out her hand and twirled her toward the dance floor. Right there, in the middle of all of those people and friends, with the brides laughing and closing their eyes as they tried to memorize that feeling, Lena kissed Kara’s cheek and earned a tired forehead against her temple and eventually her neck.

While they moved, she played with the loose bits of curls at the base of the hero’s neck that escaped from the floral arrangement she’d been sporting. Quiet and alone, they hummed along with the music and Kara whispered, out of nowhere and honestly relieved, that she loved Lena. It was quiet and honest. Lena smiled into Kara’s ear and inhaled the day. She told her that she was still the sun.

“To tell you that I’m out,” she smiled finally, the first time since she’d parked at the jail that morning. “I’m selling LCorp. I’ll be retaining the weapons and defense branches so that no one else can get their hands on that. But everything else will be broken down to the tiniest bits. I’ll sit on a thousand boards if I have to, but I won’t let this monster exist anymore.”

“You can’t.”

“I am,” she sat up a bit straighter. “I’m done being a Luthor. I’m done. I’m not doing it anymore. I’m not apologizing for you and Dad. I’m not holding myself at fault for your actions. Mom died, and you two just… I was hurt and you two thought you hurt worse.”

“Because we did!” he yelled. A guard tapped a warning on the table behind him, the nightstick rattling threateningly while the chains on Lex’s hands rattled and strained against the outburst. “We lost something. She picked you, but she was… ours. She was my mother.”

“I’m done with all of you,” Lena shook her head, still smiling. “I was just a kid. I was twenty years old. I haven’t been able to decide anything for myself. I’m done. I’m done being a Luthor. I thought if I came, I would feel different, that I was holding onto something. But it’s not there anymore. You left me. I never left you.”

“You can’t turn your back—"
“I am. I quit, Lex,” she laughed. “I quit. I have a new family. And one day I’m going to marry that girl, and we’re going to have a house with a huge yard and a dog with floppy ears. And there will be little kids who ask me if I had a family, and I’ll tell them I had a mother, and that was all.”

“You don’t get to—”

“And when they get older, they’ll ask about my Luthor past, and I’ll tell them that I was never a Luthor at heart. That their Uncle Lex is a sad, pitiful excuse of a man who spreads hate and I wanted nothing to do with it. That was why I agreed to come. To tell you this. To get out of this sick hold and debt I always felt.”

“Lena, this isn’t you.”

“Good luck, Lex. I hope you enjoy seventeen lifetimes in here.”

The phone kept talking as she pulled it away and hung it up finally. The man behind the window watched her, tried to stand, tried to get her attention. But Lena just sat there and watched. She swallowed the lump in her throat and placed her hand on the glass.

Startled, the man in the jumpsuit looked at it, looked back at her. He’d anticipated the tiny girl who was eager to be his family. He anticipated help with his plans. He anticipated so much that was not this.

As he slumped back into the chair, the guard behind the other window warning him once more, she watched her brother furrow.

With the tiniest of movements, he tensed and glanced and called over his shoulder. The guard came and took him. Lena let her hand drop and smiled to herself as she stood, wiping the tear that finally made its way down her cheek.

In the hall, she felt a thousand pounds lighter, she felt the expanse of hope open itself up to her. A blonde with alarmingly sincere blue eyes stood quickly at the sound of the door opening, waiting in all jitters as Lena put her necklace back on.

“Did you hear any of that?” Lena asked.

“Yeah, I’m sorry,” Kara murmured, sweeping her up into a huge hug. “Do you feel better?”

“Yes and no,” she mumbled, digging her nose into Kara’s shoulder.

Hands ran along her back, holding her close, keeping her safe. Kara swallowed her whole, kept her safe, kept her protected. Nothing really mattered save the feeling of the girl she loved in her arms.

“Let’s go home,” the hero whispered, kissing her temple.

Lena hid in Kara’s shoulder. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath of her. The world was lighter now, was different after being set free by herself. All at once, she realized the words that she said to Lex were perhaps the most honest words she could have ever said. The only trouble spot was that she would now have to live with them, to fully commit to her future, to give up what held her down.

“I have a stop I want to make first.”
nervously about taking advantage and still wanting a kitten very badly. Today was the day, and Lena wasn’t about to wait any longer. She was born anew and probably slightly bothered by the incidents with her brother, though she shrugged that away and righted herself.

The entire flight home, Lena refused to tell her girlfriend where they were stopping. It was the best surprise when the car pulled up to the shelter, and she led her inside without a word. Kara paced and kept quiet, working over all of the ways that this was the best and the worst moment of her life. But Lena walked casually along the aisles and she cooed as she wiggled her finger through the bars.

“Are you sure? You’re upset,” Kara tried again, though Lena just crossed her arms and stared at the animals.

Lena Luthor did not know how to have a pet, nor did she understand the logistics of it all, but she’d basically been in love with a giant puppy who needed lots of food, constant affection, and walked or she got bored and tore apart things. Surely a kitten wasn’t that much different.

And she did want it. She wanted to be someone who had a cat. She wanted to be someone who had things and made plans, and she sure as hell was never someone to back away from a challenge. This was the biggest challenge of her life, if she were being honest.

“I want a good life, Kara. And I want a kitten with you.”

“Listen, I don’t want to say no to a kitten, but you just met with Lex, and I’m sure—”

“I meant what I said,” Lena explained. “Plus, I was going to do this for your birthday.”

“Seriously?”

“Surprise. Today just feels like we both need it.”

“Seriously?”

With a shake of her head, Lena melted as Kara wrapped her arms around her, kissed her neck and held her there.

“Now how do we pick? I want them all.”

“It will pick us,” Kara explained seriously.

“Like you picked me?” she smiled with an arm around her shoulder.

“Exactly.”

When Kara moved in, Lena wasn’t ashamed to say that her apartment hadn’t felt like a home. It wasn’t until the hero starting leaving bits of herself all over it, started ordering nerdy science-themed pillows and hanging up picture frames that were filled with moments as opposed to pretentious art, that it felt more like a place where people lived than a month-to-month rental where people stayed and left little imprint of themselves upon it.

Before the reporter moved in, Lena never thought to have cozy blankets and lots of pillows on the couch. She didn’t care much about lighting candles or having a smell other than naturally clean. But now, those things just appeared and happened, and she fell in love with that feeling. Kara noticed it and felt a little proud of sparking a nesting period for her girlfriend.
It wasn’t unusual to find Lena at home anymore, wrapped up with a glass of wine and her tablet as she worked, nice and cozy on the couch. Kara actually enjoyed that. From in the hall, she smelled the candles burning, she smelled dinner, she smelled Lena’s perfume hidden beneath her old sweatshirt.

The last alien attack was all over the news. She knew Lena was listening to it, she knew she would be worried. But still, Kara allowed herself a few moments in the hall to listen and smell and watch the domesticity of her own little home. Super suit in the gym bag on her shoulder, her hair smelled like burnt tires, but she finally caught one, finally succeeded, and now she was going home. Home. Home the operative word that was everything now.

“Lena, honey, I thought we talked about this,” Kara finally made her way inside, dropping her bag on the floor.

Four little paws padded toward her, quickly jumping off of the bed it’d made on Lena’s chest. Just a year old, the cat was getting well used to its new home and owners. Kara picked up the little grey and white thing and rubbed an ear.

“He likes it.”

With a small tug, Kara freed the cat from his Kingsmont shirt, though the Supergirl collar remained, making her smile.

“There you go, buddy,” she cooed before depositing him back on Lena’s lap on the couch.

In just a movement, she leaned over and kissed her girlfriend sweetly, earning a scrunched up nose.

“You smell bad.”

“I caught this one. No explosion.”

“I saw. We’re proud of you, but please go shower before dinner,” Lena asked. “Darwin isn’t going to come back and cuddle with me until you leave.”

Sure enough, the cat was already stalking across the apartment toward the balcony at the imposition. Kara didn’t care. She kissed her girlfriend again, earning a smile.

“I asked Alex to forward you some samples. Thought you might not mind working with us on this if you’re not too busy.”

“What? You did?” she sat up eagerly as Kara shrugged and grinned, making her way down the hall. “Kara! Wait!”

There was no answer, and so Lena settled deeper into her cocoon, electing to switch the channel to something less gruesome than her girlfriend getting slammed on concrete repeatedly as she waited for an email about foreign alien tech that would be, if she knew Alex Danvers, well redacted and minimal at best, but still exciting.

By the time Kara made it back, she tugged her wet hair up into a bun and tugged the collar of Lena’s old soccer shirt before collapsing onto the couch. Lena lifted her legs and let Kara settle there.

There was a coyness between glances. Kara, hopped up on finally succeeding, and Lena, eager to help and be involved in alien sciences. The cat circled and decided on the leather chair in the corner that he’d slowly been claiming as his own.
“I ordered dinner,” Lena finally murmured.

Kara smiled and closed her eyes, sliding down until she collapsed against Lena’s hip, earning a light scratch there for her reward. Hands gently coaxed a hum from her scalp.

“I’m starving but I can’t move.”

“Is Alex really going to send me stuff?”

“I asked her to whenever she gets samples.”

“I love you so much.”

“Because I provide you with nerdy things.”

“Yeah.”

“Mmmm. I’m exhausted,” Kara yawned. “I haven’t slept in like two days.”

“Come here.”

It took a little more effort than she thought she had, but still, Kara slid along the back of the couch and settled atop her girlfriend, earning the blanket thrown around her. She hid in Lena’s neck, nuzzling there, unable to keep her eyes open.

There was a naturalness there, the movement itself, Lena’s soft nature, that lent itself to domesticity neither minded at all. This was her home and her place, they both thought as they pressed together and cuddled closer.

“You have to stop stealing my shampoo.”

“I ran out,” Kara defended herself weakly. “Saving the city didn’t leave me time to run errands.”

“Always with the excuses.”

It didn’t take any time at all for nails to rake up and down her back, for her shirt to be pulled up until it hung around her shoulders and for Lena to absently toy with the muscles and spine there, relaxing Kara to impossible ends.

She must have been tired, Lena decided as gentle breathing started to even out against her neck. Kara falling asleep before food was such a rarity, she wasn’t sure she could remember it happening in recent history.

From her tablet, Lena smiled and snapped a picture of the sleepy hero tucked under her chin. Quietly, she typed up a message and posted it, even though she was decidedly unglamorous and decidedly frumpy in her glasses and with no makeup and a raggedy sweatshirt peaking up from under the blanket.

Never one for being very personal in public, Lena kept a carefully crafted and elegant profile. Not one picture was grainy or remotely indicative of her life. Her at events, at galas, at initiatives, at press conferences, science things, announcements. Nothing fun or showing much of her personality outside of work.

Lena liked to take pictures though, and she always had. In high school, she filled up books with polaroids she took of everyone and everywhere. Neat little descriptions appeared on the bottom or back. Sometimes it was as simple as a few words describing what the world felt like to her at the
moment. Her favorite sat on her desk in a little frame. When she was nineteen and Kara was kissing her cheek innocently. The words sunshine, pure sunshine were jotted quickly in a half-drunken scrawl.

There was a box under her bed of pictures. Nothing made it to the internet. Nothing made it to the world because Lena grew up with a box under her metaphorical bed, and that was how it always was. She was curated and never impetuous.

Kara, on the other hand, had ridiculous pictures of cheeks full of marshmallows and ice cream on her nose. Little goofy pictures of Lena even appeared, her watching sports and yelling at the television, them kissing in the park, her asleep with Darwin half on her face. It was a life. It felt homey like the couch with both of them on it felt homey in a way that Lena couldn’t remember feeling for so long.

Careful, so as not to wake Kara, she typed. Because Kara was right. It was their civic duty to be the hope, and it was her personal mission to be as anti-Luthor as possible, and that meant having emotions, that meant being… free. It’d been a learning experience, especially after her meeting with Lex, but Lena took up every challenge with vigor, and being human and happy was no different. She learned it took work to be happy. It wasn’t necessarily a natural trait, but a goal.

For a second, she looked at the picture of them on the couch and realized she’d found it.

When I was 17, a girl asked me for an interview about a soccer game for the school paper. We turned 18, and she was my best friend. At 19, my mom died, and that same girl fixed my hurting heart with her unbridled kindness. When I turned 21, my life was upside down, and even though she was the sun to me, I left. Tomorrow, it will be three years since she walked back into my life. Not one day has been the same, and I wouldn’t have it any other way. She’s my hero, my savior, my biggest love, my truest inspiration, my unrelenting support, and most importantly, still my best friend.

As soon as she posted it, she smiled to herself. Kara would never see it coming. She would never see the entire plan for their anniversary coming, either. But this time around, Lena felt different, felt eager, felt ready.

Gone was the weight of her family and their expectations. Gone was the guise to which she hid and locked so much away. Gone was the wall that kept her from being in love.

The notifications got muted once again. But the notification that came up was from Alex. They should have moved to the bed, but Lena was more excited for the results.

For three hours she sifted through the notes Alex forwarded. For three hours she had a sinking suspicion deep in her bones. She held a little tighter to her girlfriend at times while she compared LexCorp data with the findings the DEO sent.

“Mmm, what time is it?” Kara murmured sleepily.

“About four. Go back to sleep, love.”

“Did you get your science junk?”

“Yeah.”

“Let’s go to bed,” Kara decided, pushing herself up slightly.

She managed to get off the couch and stretch, bending back and yawning. She was starving, but
she was half asleep and couldn’t survive another two minutes without collapsing again. Her pillow didn’t move.

“Alien samples and nerding out with my sister will keep at least three hours,” she complained, stealing the tablet against her girlfriend’s wishes. “Come on, princess.”

“I’m not tired, Kara,” Lena pouted, proving her words false.

“I know, I know,” she tutted, lifting Lena robotically and tossing her over her shoulder. “Saving the world with your brain is hard, but you need to sleep.”

“Put me down!” she fought, swatting at her girlfriend’s ass as she felt herself tugged down the hall like she was dating a caveman.

With a small bend, Kara leaned over and gently placed the pouty CEO in bed. The tablet was far away, but Lena couldn’t stop thinking about what she thought she knew.

“I wasn’t done.”

“I know,” Kara nodded, not hearing anything. “But look at that. Here we are. In bed. We should sleep.”

“Just for a second.”

“That’s my girl,” the hero grinned, quickly sliding into the sheets and meeting the grump in the middle of their big bed.

Before she could settle, Lena grabbed at her shirt and yawned, falling asleep just as quick. The cat ran around the hall and living room as Kara yawned again and kissed her girlfriend’s forehead, smiling to herself.
Let's Be Happy

And if I say hello again
let it be for the last time.
And if I break my bones again
let it be for the last time.

The rhetoric was turned up ridiculously loud. The continued rogue alien attacks grated on the city’s
tolerance. Fear prevailed despite the best efforts of the heros. Despite the normal outcry, there were
more and more people who sounded an awful lot like the Luthors of old. Jargon slipped in, articles
highlighted undercover hate groups. The city and the world were waning.

The law was introduced, the newspapers all weighed in, talking heads jabbered while everyone
debated personhood and a portion of the population held their breaths and waited. Everyone, of
course, but Lena Luthor.

“I, frankly, find it despicable that anyone would follow in my father and brother’s footsteps with
this kind of speech,” she said, matter-of-factly. Calm, cool, collected, she crossed her hands over
her lap and nodded as a rebuttal came across her earpiece.

“This isn’t a reversal of my own stance,” she snorted. “I never shared those views. And after the
pain that my city felt just a year ago, I do not think it is appropriate to group me with them. I
cannot control their actions, but I certainly can’t believe we’ve reached a time in which their words
are common. I’m disgusted with the proposed amendment and the new laws in various states. We
are a country of immigrants, and we should have open doors for those feeling persecution.”

The cameraman adjusted the lense slightly while the other parts of the production team did their
part, reading from tablets, listening on headphones, all from the usual sanctity of a certain CEO’s
corner office.

As soon as Kara slipped in, she was overwhelmed with the entirety of the operation. Never before
had she seen so many people in Lena’s office, and never before would she have expected to see her
girlfriend willingly agreeing to interviews. Even for her to get a sound bite, it took a lot of begging.
Sexual begging, sometimes. Often, a nice massage and sweet words. Most of the time though, Kara
was afraid to ask because if there was one thing Lena hated more than anything else, it was
notoriety.

“I don’t agree, Peter,” Lena continued. Kara watched, amazed once more by the strong, smart
woman she got to go home with every night. “How are regulations on innocent citizens legal, or
better yet, American?”

While someone answered her rhetorical question, Lena pursed her lips and clenched her jaw. Kara
knew what was happening, she’d witnessed it first hand during many a fight. It was time for the
Kill. And with the emergence of the Smirk, she knew the interview was finished.

“For as pro-life as you claim to be, it seems a tad hypocritical to want to set up internment camps
and regulate humanity in such a way. It seems in our history, that happened, and we were very
ashamed of it,” she argued. “My father is wrong. My brother is wrong. When you quote alien
attacks on the rise, I hope you also quote the statistics on mass shootings and violent crime, all
perpetrated by human men. White, young to middle-aged men, to be specific. The perceived rise
coincides with a definitive rise in hate crimes. We aren’t in danger, but these conversations and
laws just brew hate which does lead to the lashing out.”
It was pride. Pride filled Kara’s chest as she watched the high school soccer star turned relentless entrepreneur eviscerate a host from across the country. It was pride to feel her girlfriend, in some small way, maybe not publically, but still, very honestly, stick up for her like she once did by inviting her to parties no one would have thought to include her in. The hero was used to standing up to others. She was not used to having someone defend her so heartily.

“It’s easy to make sense when you’re not being a dick,” Lena shrugged, that smile permanently on her lips as she stared at the camera. “No, thank you, Peter.”

“And we’re out,” the producer stood, flicking a few switches.

“Thank goodness,” Lena let out all of the nerve she held in her chest as fuel.

The relief couldn’t be missed when the lights clicked off. Kara was so darn in love with her it was infuriating.

“That was great, Ms. Luthor. Seriously,” someone complimented as they helped her out of the microphone clipped to her collar. “I don’t think they were expecting you to disagree with them.”

“Most don’t,” she smiled politely. “Thank you so much for your help.”

Quietly, Kara leaned against the desk in the back of the hubbub and crossed her arms, smile unable to be hidden even in the slightest. She filed her story early and hadn’t expected to walk into this in Lena’s office, but it was sure a welcomed surprise. She thought maybe lunch or something. Maybe a walk and coffee, as they were both very busy lately, fighting their own battles.

From across the crowd of people, Lena caught Kara’s eye and smiled her smile. Her smile. That smile. The one that was reserved for her. It was the same one she gave Kara when they snuck into the movie to see the double feature. It was the same one that came when Kara slipped into bed in the middle of the night. It was the same one she had at Kara’s company Christmas Party when she gushed about her girlfriend’s stories and couldn’t stop bragging. It was the same smile that came when Lena took Kara to a party in college and held her hand. It never changed; it never waivered.

There was a picture of them that ran for three days, with all kinds of headline about their love, after Lena posted a heartfelt anniversary message. None of them knew anything like what it really felt like to be loved by a wildfire. But still they tried.

That was the shift, the change in their relationship. No longer did they shy away from holding hands, or kissing at events. Instead, they were together, completely, valiantly and in the face of all else.

“Hey, sorry, I thought you were editing today,” Lena finally wove through the crowd that cleaned up their supplies and cords and tapes and machines. “I didn’t get a chance to text you. This kind of popped up.”

“Filed early,” Kara nodded. “I didn’t expect this when I decided we should go have dinner together.”

“You decided, huh?”

Arms slid around her neck and lips kissed her sweetly before pulling away, still not completely comfortable with displays in front of foreign eyes despite her continual attempts to grow accustomed to feeling such things so loudly, for all to see.

“I was going to surprise my cute girlfriend with dinner,” she corrected herself. “To distract us from
“How long have you been here?”

“Just long enough to hear you annihilate some reporter,” Kara shrugged, hands slipping up Lena’s waist.

“I’m just so angry, Kara, and that felt so… good.”

“I bet,” she agreed. “I wish I could be unbiased for even one inch of newspaper.”

“Well, if no one else is going to say the right thing, I guess I hope the words coming from someone with my last name will sway them,” she frowned, acting indifferent, though she was so invested it was painfully obvious above it all. “Maybe Lionel will see it.”

“I wish you wouldn’t do things just to antagonize him.” Lena ran her hand along Kara’s forearm, soothing the words that came.

“That’s just a bonus.”

“Lee, I’m serious,” Kara fret, looking around at everyone not paying attention to them. She leaned closer, her worry making her concern show. “If you’re analysis is right… he’s very involved, and I don’t want you to be the target.”

“I told you, I’ll be fine.”

“You must have Supergirl on speed dial.”

“You have no idea,” Lena smiled, relieved to not have another fight about putting herself in danger. “Dinner, you said?”

“If you’re done inciting the masses, yes. Dinner.”

“I suppose I can be done until tomorrow.”

“Lee,” Kara pled, much to her girlfriend’s enjoyment.

“You should have ran away with me when you had the chance. Now look at what I have to do just to get a dinner date.”

“Single greatest regret of my life,” the hero sighed. “I’m going to go pester Jess until you’re done in here.”

“Hey, wait,” Lena grabbed at Kara’s hand before she could pull away from the desk completely. Tugged back, harder than she thought possible, Kara felt herself met with arms slipping around her ribs and a burrowing girlfriend, despite the people left wrapping up and cleaning the production mess. It took a second to acclimate to the feeling, to the hug, to the need for it, but she did, and she did it eagerly.

“You were spectacular up there,” Kara whispered. “I am constantly in awe of you, Lena Luthor.”

“Thanks for stopping to take me to dinner.”

“If you’re going to overthrow the government, you need a full stomach.”
“You’re the best,” Lena mumbled into Kara’s shoulder with a chuckle.

It didn’t help that there were more attacks. That the news carried them on a loop. But Lena went viral, her interview calling a hate-mongerer a dick showing all across the internet and city. It was shown next to her father’s words, versus her brother’s thoughts, but it was there.

Nothing was the same.

Deep in the DEO, Kara sat on a bench and stared at the containment room. The captured alien finally calmed, hands gripping his head from the headache that came from coming down from that drug Alex still couldn’t type.

Arms crossed, the caped-hero thought over everything she could from the past week. Between increased pressure from the government and DEO to monitor her, to growing protests about her existence, to hotly debated morality issues about her imposing her justice, to the alien sitting across from her, locked up in a safe room.

For a moment, she considered if she was next.

She couldn’t tell anyone that she was getting tired of it all, that the schedule was wearing on her, that if she could go back, she’d tell that teenager sitting on a water tower to be careful, to run away with a pretty girl with green eyes and never look back. Kara felt a distinct sense of having to keep that secret very deep in her muscles, because to ever admit something like that, to anyone, would mean that she was done being Supergirl.

“You’re quiet,” Alex murmured as she approached, unrecognized to Kara’s deep thoughts. “Lena out of town?”

“A mini vacation with her housecleaner.” Her sister gave her a quizzical look. “It’s… They’re in Dublin visiting family.”

“I didn’t know Lena had any family left.”

“She made her own,” Kara smiled as she stood beside her sister at the cage’s window. “She’s been weird.”

“More letters?”

“Just one. Her father warned her to be careful. Things like that. Every time she gets a letter, she just… I can watch her curl up into herself.”

“She’s tough.”

“Don’t tell her that. It’s a full time job trying to keep her from causing a raucous.”

“We didn’t pick easy women to love,” Alex grinned, nudging her sister. “Probably the world’s most stubborn, actually.”

Kara nodded, believing full-heartedly that her sister was right. There was no way any two women were more stubborn than Maggie and Lena. No possible way, and she’d fight anyone who argued it.

“Did you get the results back?”

“I’m still comparing a few things,” Alex shook her head. “But I think Lena’s right. I think the
attacks are linked. I think it is the formula, or close to the one, her brother was working on.”

“And you don’t want to barge into LCorp with a warrant?” her sister scoffed.

“I want to, but I know it wouldn’t do any good,” she shrugged. “Lena has anything valuable under lock and key off-site. And she’s helping.”

“She’s different, Alex,” Kara sighed, furrowing at her own thoughts. “Ever since she saw Lex, she just… she believes she can cut ties, and she’s been more happy and more alive than since before her mother died. But this… this thing her father must be doing, injecting this drug into aliens, she can’t escape the guilt.”

“That’s why she’s all over the news, fighting the laws.”

“I’d like to think that’s for me.”

“I’m sure it is,” Alex hurried. “But she’s always been vocal when asked. Now she’s seeking it out.”

“Sometimes it feels like she has a deathwish. Like I’ve always been chasing behind her, waiting to catch her.”

“Could be she’s picked up some unbridled sense of duty and optimism from a hero that throws herself into danger.”

“I’ve been in love with her since I was seventeen, Alex,” Kara shook her head. “And something is going on with her that I can’t help with. But she always finds a way to help me. I don’t know what to do.”

“I’m sure you help.”

She wanted to fight, to argue it over, but her sister was too supportive. Kara took a deep breath and nodded. Deep down she was worried about ending up in this cage, she was worried about Lena seeing her like this, she was worried about that drug, and what it could do to her, and for a moment, she understood what Lena was terrified of finding.

The cat prowled through the quiet penthouse, hunting the toy hidden by the stools in the kitchen. Carefully, four little paws padded near the couch and peeked over the edge at the warm creature sprawled along it. The toy could wait, when that kind of warmth was available for a nap and rub.

“Hey buddy,” Kara cooed as he kneaded her belly and pushed himself into her palm as she scrolled on her phone. “Busy day today, huh? Sleeping in the sun and eating must be exhausting.”

Outside, the evening settled there. The sky hung around that purple state before finding grey, before finding dark. Curled up, the cat stretched its paws and closed its eyes with a tiny purr as long fingers stroked his stomach.

It clearly wasn’t her fault that she fell asleep as well. How could Kara fight against the warmth on her stomach and the calm in the air. Despite her nerves, she was excited and sleepy and she had to find a balance.

Fresh from a pick up soccer game downtown, Lena dropped her gym bag by the door and grinned at the scene in the living room. She got to come home to her best friend and their new life, and no matter what, that was all she could ever want in the world, she remembered, often forgetting it in
the light of day.

With a tiny movement, she tugged off her sweatshirt and climbed over the back of the couch, settling between Kara and the cushions, earning a little grunt as she adjusted to the new body.

“Hey,” Lena whispered, kissing her jaw.

“Hi,” Kara smiled, eyes still shut and dreamy. The cat meowed, indignant at the imposition and having to adjust, though he did.

“Hi, Darwin,” the CEO smiled, rubbing his chin.

“We missed you.”

“You look so cute all the time. It’s annoying. I can’t get anything done,” Lena complained, earning a snort and strong arms sliding around her waist.

Lips found her neck and she smiled against Kara’s cheek. The cat was long forgotten, hopping off as hips and legs met and mingled. The smallest moan came as Kara dug her hands into Lena’s hair, tugging for more neck, pushing her hips a little closer.

Languid and lazy as it was, it was warm and their’s and very quiet.

“I’m all sweaty from the game,” Lena complained, pushing away slightly. “Come shower with me?”

“Are you staying home tonight?” Kara countered.

“I have—”

“Stuff to do at work,” she finished.

“Hey, what’s that about?”

She didn’t want to answer, and so the hero just sighed and dug her shoulders deeper into the couch. It was easier this way. How was she, a person who flung herself into danger at the drop of a hat, supposed to complain when Lena was working so hard? It was impossible, and she felt stupid for thinking it.

“Kara,” Lena sang. “Come on. What it is?”

“Nothing. It’s stupid.”

“Come on. Out with it.”

That was the final warning before she got annoyed. Kara knew Lena well enough to seriously debate the fight. But she couldn’t help it.

“You’ve always got more work to do,” Kara shrugged. “I haven’t seen you in weeks.”

“We went to that party last week.”

“I just mean… I can’t explain it. You’ve got interviews and meetings across the globe and research for the DEO. I know I shouldn’t complain, I just… I don’t even know how to… I can’t be mad. I just… God, I miss you.”
Quiet, Lexa heard her. She pushed herself away and sat up on the couch. Something about being close made her oddly uncomfortable in the moment.

“I don’t want to be away…” she mumbled, furrowing slightly. “I didn’t mean for you to feel like I’m too busy for you.”

“No, no no no, it’s definitely not that.”

“I have to find a cure though, Kara. My brother started this, and my father is provoking… he’s using people. He’s attacking and people are getting killed.”

“But you didn’t do it!” she raised her voice, exasperated by the guilt.

“You don’t understand.”

“Understand what?”

“What having a family… what the guilt and the weight and the burden of having a family feels like.”

If words could have felt like a slap, Kara would have been reeling. She stiffened and her jaw clenched at the mere thought of her family. She pulled away after a stunned moment. There were certain things that just happened, that can’t un-happen.

“I have to fix what they did, Kara,” Lena tried, oblivious. “What if it’s you? I couldn’t… I can distance myself as much as I want, but at the end of the day, if I can do something, don’t I have a duty to try?”

It was Kara that couldn’t handle the closeness. She stood and paced, taking a few steps away. She was certain Lena kept defending herself, making perfectly good sense about all of it. But still, Kara couldn’t bring herself to listen.

“I don’t know what it’s like to have a family,” Kara finally said, her head shaking with the grief of the words.

Lena shut her mouth quickly, snapping it and whatever words were ready back inside. Her eyes grew wide as she looked at her girlfriend. There might have been clenched fists and shaking shoulders, now they just drooped and her body relaxed with the sadness of remembering such facts.

“I didn’t mean it like that, Kara.”

“You said it.”

“I meant that you don’t have a family that is evil.”

“Because I don’t have one.”

“I’m not going to fight with you over semantics,” Lena crossed her arms. “If you don’t want me to go to the office, I won’t.”

Just like that, it was a fight. Kara didn’t want it to be, but it was, because she was frustrated and hurt for no reason. Lena didn’t want it to be, but it was, because she was annoyed and defensive. It was never about the office, and it was never about family. It was about the past few weeks, and how neither felt like they could breathe, but instead of admitting it, both would hold it in their lungs and lash out in tiny ways.
“I want you to want to be with me,” Kara shook her head. “I want you to really want that life that we talked about together and not think you have to fix them.”

“I do! I always do, but I can’t let this happen, Kara. I look at the film, at the news, and I see you. What if they do that to you and I’m not ready?”

“You think you wear this burden alone, but I have to deal with it too!”

“What?”

“You had nothing to do with any of it, and yet you have this compulsion to run after those idiots, cleaning up behind them like a good little Luthor.”

“Oh.”

“And I support you. I know who you are, and I knew all along that you were stronger and smarter and better than them, than what you thought of yourself. But to tell me that I don’t have a family–”

“That was taken out of context!”

“You’re so darn brilliant but so frustrating!”

“Me? I’m the obsessive one?” Lena stood, stomping after Kara through the apartment. “You can’t go a day without putting that suit on! You know me? Well, I know you, and I know that I’m waiting around for a future that is never going to happen! You’ll never hang it up, and I’ve accepted it.”

“You don’t know that!”

“I know you. I know your heart!”

“I don’t know what I’m doing anymore.”

“Yeah, well. Me neither.”

Stuck in the kitchen, in the same spots where years ago, they’d reaquainted themselves, where they fell back together, where the clouds cleared and the waters receded and the world was born anew, they stood, very different and very similar. Both seethed for different reasons. Both were hurt, primarily by themselves and the truth.

“You don’t want me to be Supergirl,” Kara finally muttered.

“You don’t want me to be a Luthor.”

Kara nodded and flexed her neck, tight and sore from the pressure she placed upon herself.

“I think I hear sirens. I should go…”

“Kara,” Lena whispered, softening slightly. She took a step forward though stopped. “Please don’t leave in the middle of this.”

“The middle of what? You have work to get back to,” she shrugged.

“We have to figure this out.”

“Can we?”
It was quiet. There were no sirens, but still, Kara moved toward the balcony, afraid to look at the girl who pretended not to be hurt. It was a fight about nothing that spiralled into one they’d put off for weeks. Lena deeply regretted everything that led to the moment.

The second Kara took off, both knew it was perilous at best.

The world was different after the fight. Kara hovered and couldn’t make herself go back in, and so she made a long night of research at the DEO. And in the morning she apologized and said she was busy with work and stuff, and that she’d miss their date.

All the while, Kara twisted all the words around in her head. She had entire conversations with the things she wished she’d said. They all haunted her equally.

It was opportune that something came up in Metropolis, and Kara excused herself, packing a bag when Lena was at work. The DEO team spent three days trailing the first intel of Lionel, hoping to take him down as best they could, though he was just a puff of smoke. There one minute, and gone in an instant.

He didn’t leave empty handed though. In his wake, Lionel Luthor enacted his revenge upon the city, this time with Superman as the wrecking ball. Alex traced the device to something of a cannister that released odor-less gas into an area. Non-fatal and ineffective against human DNA, once those markers were absent, alien DNA absorbed it, and much like a drug, it caused violent outbursts.

They knew those facts, though they’d never seen it used as a weapon so effectively. Kara was elbow deep into the best pho in town, complaining to her sister about her fight, when she caught sight of the news that showed her cousin going insane.

By the end of the night, sixty-four were dead, and Kal was locked up. By the end of the night, Kara was exhausted and well torn up from the battle of not just her cousin, but sixteen other aliens at the same time. She didn’t have to hear the news to know that the hate would be at an all-time high. She didn’t have to see Clark to know that he was not going to wake up the same. No one would.

And so, suit ripped to shreds and barely hanging on, with aches and pains, Kara sat outside of Clark’s cell and held the phone to her ear, anxious to talk to the one person she loved more than all else. When she got voicemail she just sighed and let her head drop further.

“Change,” Alex instructed as she leaned against the holding cell where Superman struggled despite the heavy doses of Kryptonite.

His pupils were needles, his muscles were strained against the chains, his mouth foaming with rage and psychosis. But he was almost over the worst of it, and that was all Alex could hope he knew.

“I’m fine.”

“You’re torn up and starving and exhausted. Go,” the older sister instructed. “I’ll keep an eye on him.”

“I’m fine,” Kara said again, picking up the phone again. “Have you heard from Lena? I can’t get ahold of her.”

“Not since yesterday.”

The phone rang and Kara grew more agitated as she listened to the mechanical sound. She’d just
defeated Superman. Surely Lena saw it. Surely she wouldn’t hold a silly fight over them. They were… They were… Kara knew, with all of her being, that they were safe and good. She never lost that.

While Alex checked vitals on the monitor, she heard her sister stand and walk across the hall a few steps before turning on her heel and approaching again. She let out a groan before dialing once more.

“It was a stupid fight,” Kara lamented. “She can’t ignore me forever.”

“Um, Kara,” Alex furrowed and stared at the images on the monitor as she opened the link Winn sent from back home.

“This is ridiculous. I didn’t even mean half of what I said. I was just mad. I’m still mad. Everything just sucks for the past week, and I hate it.”

“Kara…”

“It hurt, yeah, but I just… I was frustrated more. And then this. I know she’s busy. I know it is important.”

“Kara…”

“How does she not pick up after my day?” Kara groaned, clenching her phone too hard in her fist, destroying it instantly.

“Kara!”

“What?”

Instead of answering, Alex just turned the screen to show her sister. At first Kara didn’t understand, and then the words and the pictures and all of it made some sense when her brain tried to form thoughts.

“I have to go.”

It wasn’t a question. Kara moved as best she could despite the whirring in her head and the frenzied impulses that made it impossible to process anything else. Everything kept happening to her and she was powerless against the whims of the world. It was exhausting to exist.

“But Kal–”

“Kara, I’ll stay.”

“Right. It’ll just be quick. I’ll be back. I just have to– They tried to take her!”

“Hey, wait. Kara. Just breathe. She’s fine.”

“Can you call Maggie–”

“Already on her way,” Alex promised, hurrying behind the sprinting hero in search of an exit in the unfamiliar DEO they found themselves squatting in to help with the emergency.

“I have to…” Kara turned herself around, frantic. “I have to go. I have to see her.”

“I’ll stay with him. Go. Don’t worry.”
“Thank you.”

“Kara, don’t worry. She’s okay,” Alex promised again. “Lena took care of herself, and she’s fine.”

“I should have been there.”

“How?”

“I don’t know. But I should have. What if she would have— what if they—”

“No. Don’t do that.”

“I’ll call as soon as I can.”

With nothing more than the self-flagellating frown, Kara found the door and took off, her words of promise to return quickly lost in the speed, though she didn’t notice one bit.

The pictures followed her no matter how hard she pushed herself. Lena, all grainy and determined, fighting back against whoever was attacking her, trying to get her into a car. Kara should have been there. Somehow. If they hadn’t been fighting perhaps she wouldn’t have gone to Metropolis. Perhaps her cousin wouldn’t have been there to be exposed. Perhaps she wouldn’t feel like Lionel was still ruining her life.

She wasn’t sure about any answers, but she did realize that if anyone had succeeded in hurting Lena, not much could stop her warpath. The wrath almost frightened herself.

There wasn’t even a hesitation when she touched down on their balcony. Not one part of her could contain the worry and she couldn’t believe that Lena was alright until she saw her. She made it from Metropolis in record time. She felt so exhausted that her body was fighting against itself, which was a far better alternative in her own opinion, than the rage she wanted to enact on someone, anyone.

“Lee?” she called, earning a meow from the cat as he stretched.

Straining her ears, she followed the sound of running water to the bathroom, not even giving Darwin a second or pet or any bit of attention despite the big green eyes that sprinted after her cape.

“Oh, Lena,” Kara finally breathed. She hadn’t realized she’d held it since the moment she saw Clark attacking the city. She hadn’t had a second to think since he flung a car at her, and it was all catching up to her.

In the mirror, Lena smiled, small and relieved, oddly, at the newest arrival. One eye swollen and stitches on her cheek, she was still the best thing to the hero.

“You should see the other guys.”

“I plan on it,” Kara swore, finally taking the steps toward her. “When I see them they will know fear.” Despite her lethargy, Kara felt her muscles shake with the angry kind of fear that made dogs bite.

“I took care of myself.”

“I should have been there.”

“How’s Clark?”
Tentatively, Kara finally touched Lena’s chin tilted her head and furrowed at the sight of the cut on her cheek. Lena was almost accustomed to seeing Kara a little damaged. But something about the sight of blood on Lena’s pale skin, the cut on her flawless cheek, it just felt wrong, felt like what footsteps through fresh snow did.

“I should have been there,” the hero whispered again, swallowing harshly. “I am so sorry, Lee. You have to know– I’d never let anything happen to you. I’d rather… I’d rather eat Kryptonite than see you hurt. I wish I’d–”

“I’m okay,” Lena smiled, softening with her girlfriend’s words. “I’ve had a bit of self-defense training.”

Hands on the crest on Kara’s chest, Lena pushed closer. She didn’t know how to ask for what she needed, and so her fingertips simply picked at the stitching there, eager only to feel the heartbeat that made Kara real.

“You should have called me… I would have… I could have– I’m so sorry.”

“Hey, no. Stop. I’m sorry. I didn’t mean what I said. I know things feel weird, I know I didn’t–”

“I haven’t been able to think of anything since I saw that video,” Kara shook her head. “I haven’t felt fear like that… I haven’t been afraid of anything for so long.”

There in the bathroom, Lena felt the hero wobble slightly with the confession and deep breath. Still, there were cuts to her uniform. There were bruises purpling and yellowing her neck and shoulder. Still, there was dirt and mud in her hair. She shook her head and sighed, her hand pressing firmly against her neck, then her jaw, helping to keep the weary hero standing.

“But did you see when I punched that one?” Lena tried to pull Kara out of the hole. “If my father thinks he can scare me, he’ll have to send better guys than that. I think the one peed his pants when I tased him.”

“I’m sorry I left,” Kara mumbled, eyes closing with the gentle way Lena always knew how to soothe her, fingertips massaging her neck, just where her hair was. She fought it as best she could because she had to. “I was mad and frustrated.”

“I’m sorry I said what I did. Maybe I don’t know how to not be a Luthor.”

“I don’t know how much longer I can keep being Supergirl.” With a long exhale, Kara leaned forward, nudging Lena with her forehead. Lena wrapped her arms around her broad shoulders and kissed her neck. “That could have been me. They’re targeting Superman. He’s going to feel so guilty, and I don’t know what to do.”

“We’ll figure it out.”

“I shouldn’t have left. I can’t lose you, Lena. I was so afraid. You have no idea.”

“I might have some idea. I watched you get punched into the stratosphere by your cousin today. I know what it feels like. But you told me you always come home. I’ve never doubted it, and neither should you.”

“I’m supposed to be making you feel better.”

Hands knit into the soft fabric of her own old shirt currently adorning the Luthor. Kara closed her eyes and held on tight. All of the anger dissipated. The fight was pointless and full of annoying
frustrations at themselves. Kara watched a video of people attempting to put her girlfriend into a van and she fought them off, but these types of things were almost normal.

“I’m alright,” Lena cooed. “You’re alright. We’re alright. Clark is going to be okay. I’ve already hired extra security. No worse for wear here.”

It wasn’t a front. It wasn’t even a fib. Lena thought she should have been more rattled, but she wasn’t. Something about it felt inevitable, and perhaps she’d always envisioned something happening to her. So quiet the world had been, she was on edge enough, distrusting anything that came so easy.

“I was so scared.”

“Please,” she scoffed. “I date a superhero. A little kidnapping attempt doesn’t even ruffle my feathers.”

“Can we fix this?”

“Oh, Kara, honey,” Lena kissed all that she could, stepping up on her tiptoes to wrap up the giant she loved. “Me and you are perfect. Now, the world? If anyone can fix it, it’s us.”

It was only then that she earned a smile. It wasn’t the loppy one she wanted, but it was a start, and it was real and earned and Lena found herself wiping away the tears Kara didn’t know she’d finally cried from the weight of the day finally being too much. Something about being needed, being the one that soothed and took care, that was the real cure Lena needed for her heart at the moment. To be needed and vital to Kara, to be the person who could make her smile when she was so upset, that was magic, plain and simple. Never before had Lena done something so inducing of pride.

“You look like you had a day.”

“If that’s not the pot calling the kettle,” Kara shook her head and grinned, almost back.

“You should see the other guys.”

“I wish I had been there.”

“I’m kind of glad you weren’t,” Lena realized. Kara quirked her head. “Yeah I dinged them up, but you might have killed them,” she chuckled. “Go shower. I’ll make you something to take with you. I bet you’re starved.”

“I want to stay.”

“He’s your family. I’m okay. I know you need to be there for him,” she promised, fretting her worried fingers over the crest.

“You’re my family.”

“I know,” Lena grinned, trying to contain the little bit of surprise and joy she felt at that description. “Go shower. I’ll get food. We’ll take the jet. Together.”

“I love you.”

“I know.”
Brave

Don’t let them take you down
Take your heart away
And when the world comes crashing down
You gotta hold your ground

It was absolute hell. Outside, out in the world, it was an ongoing battle and it was a never ending war. People yelled on television. People yelled on street corners. People yelled at marches and protests and parades and pretty much everywhere, actually. Everyone was very sad and mad and generally so very humanly worried about their place in the world, that it turned into defensive posturing only seen during times of the greats rashes of pandemics and war.

But not in the bed.

Outside, Superman was on trial and the world held its breath. 114 stories below the balcony, everything was swirling and people were uprooted in their firmest beliefs, and yet none of that happened in the bed. In the bed, there weren’t even words, there weren’t even thoughts. It was just quiet and safe.

The rain tapped against the large windows as the grey day hung heavy and woolen around the highest points of the city. Lena stared at the rain dripping and mapping the long trip, pausing and gathering before racing other droplets to the finish line. Not much of her felt like moving at all. She knew what waited once her foot stepped outside her bed, outside the safe walls of her home. Out there, people would hate her still, and she would be asked to comment on the crimes of her girlfriend’s cousin because of her family, and that was just too much to think about.

But not in the bed.

In the bed, she was just Lena, no past, no future, just the present instant and breath. Warm arms slid around her waist as she hunkered beneath the fluffy duvet that still smelled like Kara somehow, all sunshine and warmth despite the day outside that strived to eradicate all memory of the sun at all.

Lips kissed her shoulder through her old shirt. A nose ran along her neck and a warm body pressed against hers, molding to press close. A forehead took the nose’s place, rooting around there softly, earning a smile, until Lena just couldn’t take it any longer. She rolled over in the arms and intertwined their legs and closed her eyes again. Arms wrapped around Kara’s head, around her neck, keeping her close.

“We’re not leaving this bed today,” Kara mumbled, her forehead nuzzling into Lena’s, their noses brushing as she insisted. “Except to get food.”

“What about a bath?”

“Mmm, yeah a bath,” she agreed, almost purring as Lena ran her nails along her back, slipping her hands under the shirt and toying with the muscles that lived there.

The cat curled itself into Kara’s lower back, meowing the faintest complaint as a hand nudged it before it settled back in, also disinterested in moving at all.

“Did you sleep alright?” Lena whispered. “You tossed and turned a bit.”
“I slept like a baby,” Kara lied.

“Darwin got kicked like six times,” she chuckled. “He gave up and went into the living room.”

“I was wondering why I didn’t wake up with a tail or paw in my mouth.”

Lena finally opened her eyes, though Kara refused. There was still a smile on her face though. Moments like that were addicting to the CEO. They were two people, wrapped up in each other and happy. Surely there was someone else in the city in the same position, thinking the same things, being grateful for just a second of that kind of happiness. It was a universal moment that would replay itself and had replayed itself across every century and every continent in some form or another.

“You’re not worried, are you?” Lena asked as her fingertips moved along Kara’s eyebrows, along the bridge of her nose, over her lips and chin and jaw.

“Not right now.”

“Something bad is coming, isn’t it?”

“Nothing Supergirl and the brilliant scientist slash CEO slash genius Lena Luthor can’t handle.”

She couldn’t help it. Lena leaned forward and kissed Kara’s lips, kissed her in the softness that was the rain on the window, in the way that it threw itself against it, uninhibited and eager for the fall, regardless of the smattering upon landing, reckless in itself and its mission to live for a blink.

Once again, Darwin was disbanded, nudged too much for his liking, until he hopped off of the safety of the universe in the sheets, off to his own devices and the scratching post in the living room. Lena pressed her hips against Kara’s and slid atop her in the way that was so natural, even the waves would be jealous.

The kiss deepened until stars appeared around them and they were immortalized as such. Kara’s hands gripped her hips, slightly too tight, slightly enough to leave little bruises that were their own milky way on her thighs, and Lena would press them to herself when she was alone or at a meeting and just needed to feel that kind of love and adoration.

She couldn’t help her hips, and Kara wouldn’t have wanted her to if she could. Instead, she just moved and moaned in that languid, rainy day way that only the weather could understand, with its distant rumblings and gusts of more raindrops living and shouting for joy as they tapped at the window, honored to exist in a moment like that.

Only when she pulled away did Kara open her eyes, her chest moving just as quickly to catch its breath as Lena’s, her lips just as swollen from a kiss like that, her need just as violent and unending and absolutely overwhelming.

Lena pushed away the stray messy golden hair that provided some of the only color in their universe. She was the sun, at the center of it all, and all Lena could do was hold on tight as gravity and physics and such flung her around in an unending orbit.

“Do you know how much I love you?” she whispered.

Kara swallowed because of how earnest and tiny the voice was from the lips that she’d memorized since she was a senior, crushing a lock in her hand just at a glimpse.

“Yeah, I think I do,” Kara nodded.
“Please know.”

“I’ve loved you since I was seventeen, and every year, I think it can’t change, but it does. It just grows and grows and it… it makes me strong. It makes me… me.”

“Not leaving this bed today,” Lena decided again.

“Except for food.”

With a devious smile, Lena leaned closer, bit at Kara’s lip, ground her hip into the hero’s. Her nails moved down her neck, the weight of her elbows found shoulders as lips traced toward ear.

“Are you hungry right now?”

“Rao…” Kara moaned, downright moaned a filthy moan with no control at all. “I love you so much.” Teeth found her earlobe. “I’m voracious.”

In an instant, not even an instant. Less than an instant, less than a nanosecond, Lena was pressed into the mattress somehow, a gasp escaping her lips. This was the Kara she got to keep.

It was rare that days were actually good, the entire time, but Lena was living on a hot streak of good to great days. A streak she’d never believed she could ever have. It wasn’t that her life wasn’t good. In fact, over the past three years it got infinitely good. Something about having Kara in her corner just made her outlook on life a little different. She wasn’t the wounded underling sister of crazed psychopaths, she wasn’t fighting for retribution or absolution. Instead, she was just a girl, making a name for herself, and she was oddly happy with who she was becoming as a person.

What did happen, however, was that she had a thunderous kind of brow, where work and life and her past weighed heavy and often disrupted the feelings of goodness and relief from time to time before, as if sensing it in the air, a puppy would appear and close her laptop and sling her over her shoulder or calmly invite her for a break. Sometimes the break meant a daytrip to a museum. Sometimes it meant slow sex in the shower. It was a toss up, depending purely on Kara. But no matter what the activity, it was always super effective.

But Lena was on a hot streak, and life was good despite the impending, despite the trial and the world’s reaction and Superman’s retirement. Kara went out less at night doing her civic duty. Not because she wasn’t needed, but because once, she saved someone from a car robbery, and they spit in her face. It was a new age, rolling into the world, and it was terrifying. But Kara took it in stride, and she seemed happy as well. Life was just coming together, despite all else, and for Lena, the despite part was usually too big to be avoided. Now though, she was happy. She was alive and she was making a way and she had a life that she’d never imagined for herself. She defied the odds and beat her destiny.

That was, perhaps, why it was so downright bothersome when she spent the morning making arrangements for a romantic dinner to be delivered to their home, and those oils that Kara liked to be waiting in the bathroom, and candles purchased by the dozen, for a very, very, very fun night, only to get a call from the other Danvers to come down to the DEO headquarters.

While the inevitable truce remained, and there was less ice than before, it was like asking a lion and a gazelle to be friends. Sure, it was possible in theory, and even manageable for a while, but it was impossible to last. They’d fought, of course. Over LCorp patents and ideas, over investigations and over family, while at the core, it was always about Kara.

But, they were enjoying a time of relative peace between the two, much to the relief of their
respective girlfriend and wife. There’d even been a double date that ended in laughs and cheers and more wine being ordered.

Which was also why it was odd to be called down so formally to the headquarters she still disliked, so abruptly. But Lena took it in stride. Told Jess to do the magic she did and decided that surprising her girlfriend at work might be nice. Even as an act of kindness, when she stopped to get herself and Kara coffee, she picked up two extras for whatever part of the the Super Team would be lurking about the office.

Oddly proud of herself, Lena smiled politely as the door was held for her and she followed the agent that met her and accompanied her upstairs.

She gave it a chance to survive as a good day, and for Lena, that was impressive enough. But as soon as she saw Alex’s face, she just knew it was hopeless.

“Whatever it is, I didn’t do it, Agent Danvers,” she sighed. “I’ll have Jess send over my alibis and such—”

“Lena,” Alex shook her head. “When’s the last time you talked to Supergirl?”

“Um, well,” Lena furrowed and really thought about it. She’d been so preoccupied with the day that she couldn’t remember any texts. And Kara wasn’t there when she woke up, which was not out of the realm of normal. “Last night, about eleven when we went to sleep.”

“Did she leave?”

“I was asleep. Or. I mean, she was asleep. We were asleep, and I woke up alone. But when I went to bed she was there.”

“What time?”

“Like I said, about eleven,” she shrugged. “What’s going on?”

“You don’t remember hearing her leave at all?” Alex pressed.

“No, I don’t—” Lena thought hard about it and tried to find some hint. “Maybe? I was asleep. I don’t know what time it was.”

“And you haven’t heard from her since? You haven’t received any calls?”

“A Alex, what is going on?”

The agent inhaled deeply and ran her hand through her hair before steeling herself for the news she had to deliver and figure out.

“Kara is missing.”

“No,” Lena disagreed. “No. What do you mean, missing?”

In an instant, she was digging into her purse for her cell phone before dialing and holding it there defiantly, waiting for Kara to answer in that breathless, happy kind of way she always did, as if you could hear the smile through the line.

“A Alex, that’s… there’s no way,” she insisted.

When no one answered, she furrowed and shook her head again, typing a text before trying to call
once again. As much as she wanted to say she had a hundred thoughts in her head, but all Lena could think was how it was impossible. The word no, a few thousand times with the occasional no way for good measure.

“What happened?” Lena snapped, calling again.

“She went on a call last night with the night crew, and she just stopped responding. Her comm and tracker are offline,” Alex explained.

“Of all the stupid, stupid things that this company has done, it’s those useless trackers and your unfounded belief that she can just do anything—”

“She was doing what she always did!” Alex snapped back.

“Because you all made her into this… this… you did this!”

“And if she wasn’t out there hunting for your brother, she wouldn’t be gone!”

“If you had listened to me sooner about what he was doing, this wouldn’t be a problem!”

Both seethed and clenched their teeth. The entire DEO watched them want to continue to fight and no one wanted to get involved at all. It was their worry all exploding over each other, and neither wanted to do anything else but hurt the other.

“What is going on in here?” J’onn bellowed as she entered the room. Neither girl looked away from the other.

Lene leaned back slightly though, regaining some composure and the practically patented Luthor stare of disdain. Her muscles felt tight with this impending fear.

“Kara is important to all of us, and it is no one’s fault,” he yelled, roaring above them and their pettiness. “But we are going to get her back because we are going to work together and find her.”

The two kept staring at each other, nostrils flaring and bodies rigid. Lena bristled slightly, though tried to keep it hidden. She didn’t have anything else to say, but she knew what she had to do.

With a turn of her heel, she walked out.

By the third morning, Lena was out of her mind and exhausted. She was grateful that when she told Jess she was assisting on time-sensitive government business, her assistant was capable of basically running the company on her own. And she was grateful for the connections she’d made and exploited. But none of it mattered until she found Kara.

“Please, let me work,” Lena mumbled typing furiously as she followed another rabbit hole. The cat didn’t care. He hopped up into her lap and nudged her chest for some attention.

The longer that time went on, the easier it was for terrible thoughts to creep into her head. They haunted her and waited like wolves, just outside of the ring of her campfire-like persistence. In the dark, Lena heard them, circling and chomping and snarling, ready to pounce as she grew weaker and more susceptible to thinking of Kara as gone.

“You have to eat something,” Francine insisted, finally putting into the office in the penthouse. “I made you your favorite. Now just take a break. I’m sure whatever they are having you work on can wait.”
“It can’t,” Lena insisted, clenching her jaw as she sifted through code and tried to locate security footage.

“You haven’t slept more than a handful of hours. You need to take care of yourself.”

“I will. As soon as I finish this,” she lied.

Her housekeeper eyed her cautiously before deciding there was nothing she could do. That was the Luthor in her. It was hard not to press, but with Lena there was this idea that pushing her made her shut down so easily, and once she did, it was back to square one trying to pry her open.

Darwin curled up in a ball and purred in her lap, but Lena didn’t even notice when Francine sighed and began muttering to herself as she went back to her work. She did, however, hear the words under breath hoping that Kara came back from business soon.

Lex was her first stop, naturally.

But despite all else, he still remained at the blacksite. She knew this because of the feed she hacked. She also knew that an Agent Danvers made a show of interrogating him, only to be toyed with and questioned with a mocking smirk about the entire Super-family being replaced, like a sweet, sweet victory he didn’t even have to do anything to achieve.

Lionel was second up.

Even though he was a ghost, Lena kept constantly tracking his whispers and his trail. It never amounted to much, but after the show with Superman, she knew he was preparing. It didn’t make sense, to take Kara though, as she was around less and less. And from the last security footage Lena found of Supergirl landing at some building across town, she was unable to detect any sign of him in the area.

Lost and out of leads, Lena ran her hand along the cat’s sleeping belly before leaning back and running her hands over her face.

Once again, her phone rang and she tossed it back on the desk after seeing a certain agent’s number appear. After their third or ninth argument a few hours ago, Lena was in no mood for more patronizing or condescension from the DEO.

It buzzed and buzzed until it stopped, paused, and started again, much to the cats disdain. Lena felt the same way.

“What?” she snapped, disinterested in another round with the sister.

“Stop hacking our agencies.”

“Have better firewalls.”

“We followed that lead you had about the warehouse.”

“There weren’t any people near the warehouse.”

“There weren’t, but there were a few days before, and a few days after,” Alex explained. “Maggie has been hearing about this fighting ring, and word at the bar is that–”

“So you’ve been spending time at the bar?” Lena rolled her eyes.

“The word at the bar is that it’s an alien fighting ring, the larger, more exotic species, interesting
pairings, things like that.”

“Which would complicate figuring out those missing with this ring or with whatever Lionel is up to,” she nodded to herself.

“I think they took Kara.”

“Which one?”

“That’s the question.”

“Send me everything you have.”

“Send me everything you have.”

“When I have something, I will.”

“Lena, this is serious.”

“If this has a connection to my father, Kara would want us to figure that out first,” Lena reminded her. “No matter how much it hurts.”

“Just… forget it.”

“I need her back, Alex,” Lena whispered.

“I’ll send over what I have.”

“A courier will be over with my findings shortly.”

“Thank you, Lena.”

“Yeah.”

With a sigh, Lena furrowed and tossed her phone across the desk before furrowing and waiting for her email to explode with the agent’s email. Her heart sunk to her stomach as she waited to find the only thing that made life worth living.

The groggy feeling overwhelmed much of her senses, but still, Kara tried to sit up. The ground was hard and she blinked and furrowed a few times as she rubbed the sore muscles of her neck and arm. She tried to swallow but her mouth was dry and her head throbbed too much to focus on anything at all.

“What the heck,” she rasped and shook her head, coughing slightly. Kara rubbed at the spot on the back of her head that would have a bump.

Slowly, the world came into focus, stopped wobbling slightly. It stilled enough for Kara to realize she was in some kind of cage, and the glowing green of the lamp above explained what some of the lingering dizziness was about.

Groggily, she tripped to her feet, barely able to stand. The bars of the cage were cool against her head as she leaned there.

“Hello?” Kara called, peering toward the darkness. She coughed a bit more and rubbed her eyes.
“Keep quiet,” a voice hissed from down the hall.

“Hello? Where am I? What’s going on?”

“I told you, keep your voice down.”

Kara pushed herself toward the wall where the voice was coming from, hoping to get closer, hoping to find some answers.

“Who are you?”

“My name is Gideon. Now keep quiet before they come in here.”

“Where are we?”

“I’m not sure. But if you get selected, you might not come back.”

“How long have I been here?” Kara shook her head and rubbed at some of the pain her body was feeling.

“Three selections, so maybe a week,” he grumbled. “Hard to keep track of things.”

“Selection?”

A door opened down the hall. Kara tried to see what was coming, but shadows merely mingled along the floor from the light cast there. The light was turned up on her ceiling and she fell to the ground, collapsing under the weight of the radiation. Slowly she crawled back toward the bars and found herself staring at a pair of heels, unable to lift her head.

“The Kryptonian is almost ready.”

Exactly four days, to the hour, after the last time Lena saw her girlfriend, she saw her again, and she could finally breathe. Her eyes never moved from the Kryptonian that was paraded around the large ring as the bets or bids were collected.

The files the DEO sent over let her know exactly what was going on, because she had a missing piece of the puzzle, and Lena knew it as soon as she saw the surveillance picture of a ghost from her past. It was just a matter of hours before she was in touch with her old flame.

“See anything you like?” Veronica hummed close to Lena’s ear, earning a shiver.

“A thing or two, yes,” she smirked, falling into the role she knew so well.

The years after high school, when she was struggling to keep up with school and her father and her brother were maddening, and when she disappeared from Kara, she would very well admit that she had gone off of the deep end a bit. Veronica Sinclair was waiting with open arms at the bottom at the diving board, ready for mischief and all manner of escapism.

“I never thought I’d see you in one of these things again,” she quirked and eyebrow and sipped a drink, eyeing Lena carefully. “Especially after the last time.”

“I was young and naïve as to how the world worked,” Lena murmured, toying with the side of her own glass, twisting the stem purposefully. “I’ve learned some things.”

“And here I thought Lena Luthor knew everything already.”
“I’m quick to catch on.”

For a moment, deep brown eyes just stared back at her, and Lena felt her mouth dry slightly, though she kept the gaze. She knew this game. They played it a few times. Now, it was different though.

“I don’t know anything about your father.”

“I wasn’t going to ask. I had hoped that even you had your limits.”

“You’re still a good liar, did you know that?” Veronica shook her head, almost thoughtful at the entire exchange. “I have ears in many of the same places you do.”

“Sounds like you’ve been asking about me.”

“I keep tabs, when it interests me.”

“We still have things in common,” Lena looked back at the cage once more.

“Keeping the Luthor family business up and running?” Veronica ventured, following Lena’s gaze to the Kryptonian she finally managed to find.

The entire swirling party was eerily familiar, as always seemed to be. People didn’t take much notice of the private conversation. Lena caught the familiar perfume of her former lover, and still, she only missed Kara.

The person who once was with Veronica was a distant memory, almost as much as that name was forgotten. Roulette was born from the ashes, and Lena was reborn as well.

“I want her.”

“You know I never mix business and pleasure,” Roulette tutted.

It was a chess match, and both were experts of the attack and parry, both were experts in thinking a million moves ahead, so that each interaction was a full three moves ahead of where anyone else would think the conversation was going. They were in a battle that both craved, adversaries and possibly evenly matched.

“I seem to remember that being the only thing you did,” Lena smirked.

“You are too much like your father.”

“My father’s name was Phillip. He wrote poetry and was a terrible dancer,” Lena informed the entrepreneur. “And by now I thought you would have known not to second-guess Luthors.”

“Your brother’s well mysteriously dried up. Any idea how that happened?”

Slowly, Roulette slid along the small table, leaning dangerously against it while also pressing against her old friend. Lena watched her own fingers trail up Roulette’s arm.

“Give me Supergirl, and you can have the key to the castle, if you’d like.”

“Now this is getting intriguing,” she smiled again as she finished her drink.

“I still know how to catch your eye, Ronnie.”

“I’ll let you call me that once,” she warned playfully.
A wave of her hand, a nudge of her chin, and Lena followed, surrounded by a gaggle of large men in suits who were most certainly there to prevent any kind of disturbance. Lena wanted to, but she couldn’t do it. If she looked at Kara, she would lose the edge she somehow cultivated in the charade.

The office was little more than a large wooden desk and a light atop it, the rest barren as it would soon be taken apart and moved, gone like a whisper in a storm, leaving nothing else to the police or anyone looking. Lena felt oddly alone in the large room when the guards waited outside.

“That alien is going to make me a lot of money tonight in the fights. She’s the main attraction.”

“I didn’t want to believe it at first,” Lena shook her head and took the seat on one side of the desk. “That you were taking them. But the bodies, the fights, the kidnappings…. It all clicked. Brilliant, in a sadistic kind of way.”

“The only way to make money,” Roulette shrugged as she took her seat. “As you might know, Ms. Luthor.”

“My father is doing the same thing, you know?”

“Running illegal fighting rings?”

“Murdering innocent people.”

“I’ve never raised a hand,” she grinned. “My hands are clean. Your father’s, though, those things are blood-stained.”

“He’s not my father.”

“You have his money.”

“Luck.”

“You might be the luckiest person I know.”

“I think you might be right, actually,” Lena countered, earning piqued eyebrows. “And you might be the unluckiest.”

“You don’t earn the name Roulette for nothing.”

“I want the Kryptonian, and I want you to stop this.”

“You can’t bet against the house, Lena, and many of my fighters enter the arena willingly. Anyone is welcome.”

“Then stop collecting the unwilling at the very least.”

“Why? I have nothing to fear and as far as I’m concerned, whittling down those animals is the greatest public service I’ve ever undertaken,” she rambled as she took a cigarette case out of a drawer and offered it to Lena, who politely shook her head. “Your father does it his way, and I choose to make a living doing the same thing, hidden behind the guise of entertainment. Once you figure out how to make it about money, people don’t really care about the players.”

The lighter snapped shut and slid a few inches across the table. Lena stared at the red end of the cigarette and the smoke that enveloped their conversation.
“My brother’s money laundering program, and you disappear.”

“Just cutting out the foreplay? I know how much you love to take it slow,” she grinned wickedly and inhaled more smoke before tapping a portion of the desk.

“You know about the agents outside.”

“Naturally.”

“What I’m offering you isn’t part of that,” Lena tried.

“What else do you want?”

“My brother.”

“Why do you want Supergirl?”

“Answers aren’t part of the deal, Ronnie,” she grinned, teasing once again.

“That one’s going to cost you,” Roulette taunted, pressing another button on her desk before she stood and jammed out the cigarette. “No one can quite get under my skin like you, Lena. I forgot, until I found us alone again.”

“You just like long odds.”

“You miss me, don’t you?” she hummed, dragging her hand along the desk, ever seductive, ever the most gorgeous thing to ever exist.

Lena didn’t let it phase her at all. She just stared and remained unbothered, all while silently praying the stupid agents outside didn’t get a stupid order from an overeager sister with as many trust issues as the Luthor.

“No.”

“Do you remember what I told you the first night we met? At that club in Silton?”

Long legs rested beside Lena, and she followed them before meeting dark eyes and a devious smile.

“I don’t want to forget anything anymore,” Lena informed her. “I don’t have anything to escape.”

“Not even for a night?” she asked, leaning close to Lena’s lips, those which didn’t move at all, knowing full well the tactic at hand.

The door opened once more behind them, but neither moved. Definitely, Lena stared at Roulette, becoming the only thing she couldn’t have, frustrating her, challenging her in a new way. Before, when she was younger, Lena had been more than willing to take a hit of the drug that was a girl with a dirty mouth, filthy mind, and sweet tongue. Now, she was the chase.

“Tell the agents to disappear and she’s yours,” Roulette smirked, her hand running up Lena’s skirt. “I’ll even toss in the extras, lighten my baggage for my split.

“Lena?” Kara asked, confused at what she just was thrust into.

The Kryptonite shackles made her skin burn and her bones feel like glass, but still, she stood there, seemingly walking into her girlfriend being felt up by some vixen. It was just a bad few days, Kara
decided to herself.

“Do you remember that time, in Hong Kong?” the boss sat up, leaning against the desk once more as Lena dug into her purse for her phone, firing off a text.

“That’s a lovely offer, but this is a business transaction.”

“Pleasure and business.”

“What is going on?” Supergirl demanded again, straining against her restraints.

“You’ve been caught and bought, Kryptonian,” she reached for another cigarette. “Now kindly keep quiet while we reminisce. So rarely do I get a worthy bantering partner with a mouth like this.”

“Lena?”

The CEO didn’t turn around.

“Money is yours, agents are called off,” she met Roulette’s eyes again. “Have him at the Pier six by Thursday and the program is yours. You know I’m good for the rest.”

“Ah, so no repeat of Hong Kong then?”

“I was much more limber back then,” Lena shook her head as she stood. “And I don’t share as well as I used to,” she smirked, placing her palm on Roulette’s exposed sternum before leaning forward and kissing the side of her mouth. “Thank you.”

“Thank you, for your contribution.”

“I mean it,” she lowered her voice, held her hand there and earnestly spoke. “You did this for me.”

“Don’t flatter yourself, Ms. Luthor,” the gambler disagreed. Lena caught her tell though. “A monetary transaction, facilitated in my house by a lovely old friend.”

“If I was ever going to go to Hong Kong again, it’d be with you.”

“Now who’s the tease?”

“Be good.”

“Aren’t I always?” Veronica grinned, lighting another cigarette. “Let’s do this again sometime.”

“As soon as you go legit, I’ll be the first bet on your tables.”

“Where’s the fun in that?”

It was obscenely illegal and very lucky. All that Lena could think about was if it hadn’t been so easy, if it hadn’t been Roulette who attacked Kara, if it’d been her father. But she hid it deep down where she held her breath.

She took the key that the bookie offered to her and made her way to Kara, still oddly afraid to meet her eyes, though finding it necessary. Stark confusion and worry were knit there in her brow, but a kind of ease still rested when she recognized her girlfriend.

By the time they left the office, the warehouse was empty, all signs of life were gone, and Lena
rolled her eyes at the antics, still slightly in awe of Veronica Sinclair.

“What happened in Hong Kong?” Kara whispered, following Lena out. “Who was that?”

“Just an ex.”

“Oh… an ex?!” she yelped as the office closed behind them.

“Lena’s ex is an illegal casino operator.”

“Yup.”

“Who specializes in gladiator style fights, offered to ultra-rich clientele, supplied by now, strictly willing aliens.”

“Yeah.”

“And she staged a fake tragedy to lure Supergirl into a warehouse where she used illegal technology given to her by Lex Luthor, to capture and attempt to use her in one of these fights.”

“Mnhmm.”

“Lena then bartered a trade consisting of money for Supergirl and the other captured aliens, with no involvement from the DEO.”

“Yes.”

“And also a computer program for the miraculous return of Lex Luthor to American soil for prosecution.”

“That would be it, yes,” Kara nodded, staring intently at the captured, hairless Luthor as he was loaded onto transport.

“And the villain was super hot?” Alex continued, standing beside her sister as she watched Lena boss around DEO agents on the other side of the pier.

“Insanely hot.”

“Did you ever figure out what happened in Hong Kong?”

“Oh yeah,” Supergirl clenched her jaw.

“Are you ever going to tell me?”

“I think her ex proposed a… a… you know… a,” Kara furrowed and finally broke her gaze from the scene unfolding, distracted by her own inability to say a word. “I think she somehow proposed a threesome with us.”

There was dead silence for a moment. A long moment, before Alex couldn’t hold it in any longer and the laugh blew through her lips. It didn’t stop there, once the dam broke. She bent over, gripping her side from laughing until she was nearly crying, much to the annoyance of her sister.

“Sorry. Sorry,” she held up her hands. “I just… wow. That’s. So she had… you asked about. And she once went to… with a bad guy. And someone else? Man.”
“Alright, enjoy.”

“I have to meet her now.”

“I hope our paths never cross again,” Kara grumbled, sullen at the memories. First, of being tricked and captures. Second, of worrying her family. Third, for another woman’s hand on Lena’s thigh.

“This Roulette woman is your girlfriend’s ex. We’ll see her again.”

“Great.”

Despite herself, despite the enjoyment she had at Kara’s slight discomfort with Lena’s past, Alex felt a little bad for how her sister must have felt, thinking about Lena. It was a lucky break for them all, and the many fights that erupted between the agent and the CEO brought a lot of difficult things to light. The truce was more tenuous than ever, but still, it was there.

“Hey, I’m going to take a helicopter up, to make sure the new security measures are in place properly,” Lena approached and typed a few things into her phone before looking up at her girlfriend. “I was thinking of maybe getting a room in Gotham tonight, if you wanted to join me?”

Just like that, Kara was putty in the CEO’s hand.

“Yeah, that sounds amazing,” she grinned, wide and proud. “I’ll let Snapper know I’ll be covering this.”

“Do you think Jess will feed Darwin?”

“I will,” Alex offered, not really understanding where her voice came from in that moment. “I mean. I can stop by after work.”

“Thanks,” Lena nodded polite enough before returning her gaze to her girlfriend. “The suite on the East side. You know which one.”

“I’ll pick up dinner,” Kara promised.

They wouldn’t kiss. Not in public, not as a hero and a CEO. But Alex watched Lena look at Kara like she was the sun before she walked back toward the group.

“She found you, freed you, and managed the captured her brother in under an hour, with no punches thrown,” the older sister marvelled, despite herself. “Forget about Roulette.”

“Isn’t she great?”

“She didn’t sleep while you were gone. We were all worried sick, but she… she was willing to put that aside for the mission. Better than I was.”

“She loves me, Alex,” Kara chuckled to herself.

“If you ever tell her I complimented her in the least, I swear…”

“You love her too. Just admit it,” her sister teased, singing slightly, able to tease her back for the earlier comments.

“Hong Kong.”

With that, Alex zipped up her jacket and meandered toward the Director.
Kara huffed before catching a wink from Lena and shaking her head.
When the night was full of terrors  
And your eyes were filled with tears  
When you had not touched me yet  
Oh, take me back to the night we met

The entire museum was alive despite being after hours. Gowns and lights and all manner befitting a Luthor party existed there amidst the flashing camera lights outside and the stars above. It was a dream of a dream, a fragment of a wish a child would make when they wore their mother’s heels and tried to be a princess. The night gracefully nodded at itself in the mirror and enjoyed itself.

The gala was alive, lingering outside despite the mild heat. The lights glowed from the roof, glowed from the poles and trees in the courtyard of the museum. Summer hummed just above the quartet, and Kara soaked up the evening, hoping that a new season would mean a new her. Lena soaked in Kara like she was the sun.

They were good at those things. Good at the parties and the music and the small talk. Lena was polished, while Kara was sweet. Lena would just smile while her girlfriend recalled birthdays and children’s ballet recitals, asking all the questions she could from people she thought as strangers. No one was a stranger to Kara for long. People actually enjoyed seeing the two, enjoyed talking with the relaxed Luthor and her adorable girlfriend. It was a new feeling, one she couldn’t remember feeling since she was a kid and her mother dragged her to all of those things and people liked them.

It was a difficult event, and despite her best efforts to not be a Luthor, Lena could never get rid of the memory of her mother, nor could she find enough hate in her heart to push away any kind of chance to help. And so, on the anniversary of her mother’s birthday, a day that was once filled with balloons and her favorite dinner and handmade and painted wobbly art projects as gifts, Lena filled the museum with people and money and she donated enough to find a cure or at least try. That was how one honored the dead, in her opinion.

“You look amazing, did you know that?” Kara grinned as she kissed her girlfriend’s temple. “Spectacular. I’d say this is my favorite dress you’ve ever worn.”

“You’ve said that every time we have to go to one of these things.”

“I love you in sweats that you refuse to update and my old shirts, but this is a close second.”

“Is that your unbiased opinion, Kara Danvers, CatCo reporter?” Lena shook her head and tugged her along the line of cameras toward the entrance.

“It is,” she nodded. “In my professionally unbiased opinion, you’re the most beautiful girl I’ve ever seen in my life.”

Amidst the crowds and the people calling their names to look at cameras on the line, neither noticed much else, trapped in their own little world and utterly happy about it. Lena squeezed Kara’s hip as they took another step.

At no point in their decade long dance would she have imagined moments like that were possible. At no point, when she was sneaking glances at the girl who smiled during movies and actually would start breathing faster during tense parts, would she imagine one day holding her hand at an
event. Lena never had a second to fathom the idea of dressing up and wanting to go to something like that. Nor could she venture the idea of planning it. Nor could she have allowed herself to imagine being that happy. Seventeen year old Lena would have told present Lena to fuck off with her description of the future. She’d never believe that the nerdy reporter with big glasses and a penchant for tripping over her own feet would be the woman of her dreams.

Instead of thinking of it, Lena looked to the cameras while Kara absolutely beamed. It was amazing to feel how easy happiness was attained near someone like that.

“If only the nerdy Kara from senior year physics class could hear you now.”

“She would have said the exact same thing if she’d been just an inch more brave,” the reporter promised.

Quietly, Kara watched Lena answer questions, her excitement about the event evident. And she felt her hand squeezed slightly.

Once, when she was in college, Kara visited Lena, and she remembered looking at her, really looking at her. And she wasn’t perfect, she never claimed to be, but Kara was absolutely in love with the things Lena complained about from time to time. Her nose had a bump in it. Her eyes were wide. Her lips were too small. The little scar between her eyebrows that was barely noticeable. All the pieces people missed, Kara was obsessed with, and she looked at Lena with the same kind of ferocious wonder, once more reaching that epiphany of utter satisfaction.

“I’m very proud of you, Lee,” Kara promised as they made their way into the museum, time and space and history repeating once more for them.

“Oh, stop,” she brushed it off.

“No, I mean it. I’m always just…” she furrowed and paused because she had words. Her job was words. Someone who crafted them so often should be better with them.

“You’re sweet.”

“Wait. I mean. Just. Lena I’m so darn proud to know you. I don’t think I tell you that enough. I’m in awe of you. I’m bursting at the gills proud of who you’ve always been and what you’ve become. Sometimes I don’t think saying I love you encompasses that. But I’m so proud of you. I’m honored that you pick me. I’m… I am in awe of you constantly.”

“I could say the same for you,” Lena smiled sweetly.

Kara held her hips and let Lena lean her forehead against her own. She closed her eyes and took a deep breath, savoring it. Lena just basked in the sunshine in the deep dark night of August. She trailed her fingertips along Kara’s long neck, and she smiled to herself, her chest aflame, as if she were crafted of sparklers.

“Sometimes, I’m not sure who I’m supposed to be, but I know, beyond all else, that I am supposed to be here with you.”

“You’re too sweet tonight.”

“I’ve been known to dabble.”

“You’re the sun to me.”
“I don’t know what that means.”

“Thank you for coming with me tonight. My mom is probably very amused that we’re here together.”

The moment was there, atop the steps with all eyes on them and not, at the same time. But it broke. They opened their own and exhaled and were alive in the real world.

“I liked her a lot.”

“What do you think she’d say about all of… you know?”

“She’d probably insult Lionel’s tie and say something sassy about the notion of it.”

“Yeah,” Lena smiled to herself.

“Ms. Luthor, Ms. Danvers,” Jess interrupted the thoughts brewing, and for once, Kara was grateful for the intrusions.

“You look amazing, Jess,” Kara smiled, hugging her tightly.

“Oh, no, this is just… I mean… It’s okay, but you two…”

“You did an amazing job, Jess,” Lena assured her. “I’d say that promotion was well worth it.”

“That was still too generous.”

“You’re capable, and I couldn’t think of a better CFO.”

“My two little business ladies,” Kara beamed putting her arms around both of their shoulders. “I’m just so happy.”

The museum was alive. There had been a small, very different celebration earlier in the day in which Lena quietly went to the cemetery and put down her mother’s favorite flowers. She didn’t like to go there often. In fact, she actively avoided it. But today was different.

It shouldn’t have been a surprise that flowers were already sitting there, or that her father somehow slipped into the private space despite the vigilant surveillance. He had a knack for the dramatic.

But Lena didn’t let it bother her. She couldn’t. Because when she got back to the apartment, her girlfriend didn’t try to make her feel better by being loud and happy, but rather she just allowed her to curl up with her on the chaise on the balcony, setting down her book and losing her space.

Lena was someone Kara lost her place in a book for, and sometimes, to some people, that was a lot.

The day was bittersweet in the truest way.

But all at once, Lena was filled with the deepest melancholy and the most overwhelming kind of love. And it wasn’t just for her girlfriend. But as they spent the night among friends, Lena saw her little family, her new people, and she was inundated with happiness that did not mitigate her ache, nor did it stifle her pain, but rather existed at the same time, in harmony with it.

She had Jess, and she had Maggie, and she had Winn, and she had Jack, and she had Sharon and her rec league, and she had Sabine and her wisdom, and she had people. Good, honest, genuine people. It wasn’t many, but it was enough. More than enough.
There were speeches and there were auctions as they sailed toward their goal for the evening. This was just a drop in the bucket for the donations and charity work Lena did throughout the year. Kara could never understand why people didn’t recognize it more.

From the bar as she waited for drinks, Kara watched Lena hug someone, and she sighed a contented sigh at her night, at her life.

“When you first told me you had a crush on her, I thought you were insane,” Clarke smiled and adjusted his glasses beside his cousin.

“I thought so too,” she returned his smile and handed him another drink.

“If she’s your family, she’s my family.”

“Thank you.”

“Did Alex talk to you about what they think he’s planning?”

Kara took a drink and wished it were stronger. Though her smile faltered, it couldn’t be taken away by the likes of Lionel Luthor.

Instead, she just watched Lena from across the room and she couldn’t help but feel a little familiar ache of that high school reporter yearning after the prettiest girl in the world. That was never far away from her.

“I thought you were in town for the event,” she muttered. “Lena invited you because you’re my family. My only blood family, and you’re important to me.”

“I came for that,” he assured her. “I just… I have a feeling.”

“Yeah. Me too.”

“Do you want to do a lap?”

“I thought you were retired,” Kara ventured.

“Believe me, I am. Just, trust me. I know how they work.”

Kara eyed her cousin. What he did weighed so heavily upon him that he couldn’t trust himself. As much as she reassured him, as much as she wanted to help, there was no true retiring from their life, and she saw the burden playing out through him. It was terrifying.

Gone were the sturdy, steady eyes. Gone was that lilt to his chin that defied injustice. Left in his wake was Clarke that was unsure and wounded and so very mortal.

“Yeah. Let me go tell Lena.”

“Yeah,” Clarke nodded. “Meet you in a few by the Greek stuff. I have to go ask Lois.”

With a nod, Kara put on the smile again and brought her girlfriend another drink, hoping that two super guts were wrong.

“‘No one gets hurt if the Supers come out to answer for what they’ve done.”

The voice, though amplified over a speaker, was familiar. The crackle of it, the deep baritone waft
in it, the emotionless hint beneath an apathetic front. Lena knew the voice, though she barely
recognized it. She didn’t want to know it, but it haunted her more than most.

The crowds screamed and were herded toward the courtyard and Lena stood taller and walked
against the crowd toward the giant metal suits and henchmen that surrounded them, crashing the
expensive party and the memory of her mother forever.

Her party disintegrated with long shrieks and the yelling of people as they attempted to flee. All
around her, everyone looked for safety, and where they sought it, they were met with only a more
ferocious kind of violence in the form of her father’s henchmen. Lena was the rock in the middle of
the river of terrified bodies as they broke around her and she just stared ahead.

“Everyone who worships their false idols will pay for it tonight.”

He must have something, Lena decided. She couldn’t find his face amidst the chaos, but she heard
his voice, and she knew the cockiness of success. Her first thought was that tonight would be the
last night she saw Kara. And the second was that she hadn’t told her how beautiful she was in too
long. Those thoughts made her so sad, Lena felt empty. Until the third thought of somehow
protecting Kara wormed its way, full of hope, to the top of the pile.

There were aliens like they had not seen in too long, the drugged, deranged kind, the same kind that
Superman once belonged to, the same kind that were pawns in her father’s sick revenge. She saw
people attacked. She heard sirens, and still, she approached the largest suit of all.

The gun rounded and pointed toward her before the suit even started to turn around.

“Dad!” She flexed her jaw and stood her ground, eyebrow twitching from the power she needed to
draw to brave the storm.

As soon as it fired, she felt herself tackled, in a way.

“Just stay down,” Kara yelped as she arched her back and took the impending stream of bullets.

Lena felt her girlfriend’s body shaking with the impact, she heard her grunt with the weight of the
high caliber and modified weaponry.

“You have to get out of here,” Lena told her, clutching her shirt, gripping the emblem in her fists as
tight as she could, even when the barrage stopped.

“I think you should, actually,” Kara grunted.

“Not the Super I was looking for, but you’ll do just fi—” a loud clang erupted as Kara’s cousin
swung into the game, tossing one machine at the leader.

“Get these people out of here, the back through the kitchen,” Kara said as she held Lena’s
shoulders, making her focus despite the debris and dust kicked up by the battle that was tearing
apart the museum and street outside. “Don’t go home. Go to Alex’s. She’ll know how to keep you
safe.”

Dumb and mute, Lena stared back and gaped slightly because she was just putting on a fundraiser
and now she was confronted with a manifestation of her literal daddy issues. Sometimes, Lena
remembered that bumbling reporter who snapped a pencil the first minute they met. That was
another lifetime, but ever since that, they had always been a team, and there had never been just
Lena, or just Kara.
“You can do this. Get them out. Get to Alex’s,” Kara repeated, eyes boring into her girlfriend’s.

The museum would be in shambles, the proud columns outside in the street, the modernist facade that was a violent affront to design was smashed, and just a cage devoid of glass, the party was a gathering of screaming people who just wanted to survive the rabid aliens and monster metal machines that created a new chaos.

“You come home, too,” Lena finally said, though it wasn’t enough. She had so many more words.

“I lov—”

A yank of her cape sent Kara hurdling backwards and into a wall, and left Lena starting at nothing in particular until she fought against her gut and heart, and began to do what Kara asked.

Three years ago, Lena bought a water tower. She told Kara that she was selling the home in Midvale, but she couldn’t do that, and so when she returned and walked the halls for a full three days, she bought the water tower because it was a good place. Her home in Midvale was a good place too. Kara fought Lena on selling it because there was still a doubt there, and she never trusted Lena to not be impetuous.

Kara bought Lena a necklace on her birthday a few months before the gala. It was a thin silver chain and a little constellation, with a diamond in the place of where Krypton would have been. It wasn’t a water tower, but it was something good and important.

The fight with Lionel was unyielding. Kara struggled against the rogue agents and the machine, but when she saw a necklace on the ground, she felt fear more than the pain inflicted against her person.

It came in waves, the attacks. Lionel’s planned attack against the Supers was effective. A reformed and more intelligent serum made the aliens stronger, made it harder to hurt them without hurting them.

And then there were the machines. The goons. It was a fight, and Kara couldn’t win, and she made herself not think about Lena. That took up a lot of her power.

It was a losing fight though.

Tossed across the street once again, with the edge of a weapon made of high-grade Kryptonite slicing across her chest and arm and abdomen, Kara could barely see straight.

“The mighty house of El brought to their knees by mere mortals,” Lionel growled and gloated as the monster’s metal feet stomped closer. “It ends now. The revenge is finished with this.”

Unable to stand up, Kara tried anyway, her hands pushing weakly against her own knee though she didn’t go anywhere. Vision blurry, she blinked and spit at the ground, her wounds leaving her bones aching. All she could make out was a shield of a body standing in front of her, obscuring Lionel’s hateful smirk.

“Lena—”

From out of the rubble, from out of the mess of the night, a figure emerged and hurried to inject themselves into the struggle.
The rest of the party was gone, saved and led to freedom despite the impending battles. Lena couldn’t leave though, not even with her promise. She climbed through the rubble, she tore her dress and she cut up her legs as she squeezed through crashed cars and the broken museum debris.

When she saw Kara, bloody and battered and almost attacked again, she raced out, not even thinking for a moment at all about what Kara told her to do.

The gun came from the body of a dead guard in the street, half buried under the remnants of the display of presidential portraits. She didn’t think she even knew how to use one, but she held it up to protect the woman she loved.

“You can’t,” Lena stood between her father and the wounded hero. She clenched her fists and tried to look as brave as Kara did when she stood up to giant monsters and evil men. “I won’t let you hurt her.”

“Move aside, Lena,” Lionel leveled the gun again, the barrel pointed at his daughter. “This doesn’t involve you.”

“Mom would be so ashamed of what you’ve become,” she shook her head and raised the gun in her hands back at him.

Tears were streaming down her face, her muscles all ached, and the inevitable bruises and cuts formed. Her dress torn, her face covered in dirt, she looked like she played the entire game straight through, with no breaks. She looked like a survivor.

It’d been years since she’d seen him in the flesh, but somehow, standing there, was as if he was a stranger. She sure as hell didn’t know him. Not anymore.

“Lena, please,” Kara begged, gritting her teeth through the pain. Her hand held at the large gash in her side, her own blood seeping out despite herself. Between her words, she coughed and gurgled and spit. “Don’t hurt her!” she called to her enemy, thought it never reached that far.

As much as she struggled, her muscles had nothing left in them. Kara fought against gravity, normally a much easier war, but she was grounded, she was doubled over and couldn’t stop bowing under the pressure of simply existing. From her knees, she tried to reach out, to push herself up and walk, but nothing worked, not with the Kryptonite in her system. Never had she felt so fragile, so human.

“It’s going to be okay, Supergirl,” the CEO promised, not moving her eyes from her father’s. He was a stranger to her now thought. She wasn’t sure what to call him.

“Move, Lena!” He bellowed, his anger infecting the words violently. “I won’t ask again.”

“Don’t make me do this,” Lena shook her head and sniffled. She felt a few tears drip off of her cheek. Tracks formed through the dirt on her face like river beds after a flood. “Please don’t make me do this!”

“You’d betray your family for that– that– that thing?”

“She’s my family,” she disagreed. “My only family died. The rest left me. She’s never stopped choosing to love me.”

“Lena! Go! Don’t do this!” Kara yelped, trying to stand and failing miserably. Her cape hung heavy on her shoulders, weighed her down until she was on her knees, crawling forward with her wounds making her lightheaded. But she had to fight, and she had to save Lena. That made her
“Press on despite all manner of injury.”

“You bring shame to the name Luthor,” the father shook his head.

“The name gets power when you give power to the name,” she repeated his famous words, “I have done more for that damn name than any other before me. But it dies with you. It dies with Lex. I don’t want it anymore.”

“Lena, princess,” he swallowed and softened slightly. He didn’t understand how that idea could hurt him so much when the threat was supposed to get his daughter back in line. “You can’t—”

“Just drop it. Just walk away. Just go to jail and let me forget you,” she begged, hating the name, hating the memories that came with that voice. “Please. If you ever loved me, you would just stop.”

“I can’t do that, Lena. It is for your own good. It is for the future of this world!” He straightened, swallowing away that softness that felt so distant, as if it were from a memory of a movie he once saw, but never lived.

“Put it down!” Lena yelled.

“Move, or I will kill you!” he screamed.

She gripped the gun harder, she took a deep breath. Both began yelling at the other, and all Kara could do was watch as she felt the world spin and her consciousness begin to fade. Never before had she fought so hard to stay awake. Never before had she felt so powerless than effectively watching her girlfriend with a gun trained on her.

“Lena!” Kara tried to call her, but she knew her voice was only a whisper. Her throat was dry. Her body was weak.

Gravity was heavy. Living was painful. Loving was exhausting.

“Please, Daddy,” Lena begged, lip trembling as she heard Kara’s call for her.

“I’m sorry, princess,” he smiled slightly, his face easing as he took aim again toward the hero, hoping to find a shot around his daughter, though he knew it was impossible.

“NO!” his daughter screamed before pulling the trigger, causing him to stagger backward a few steps.

Another shot rang out, and he dropped the weapon and fell to his knees. Lena pulled the trigger again until he fell to his side, writhing. She screamed the entire time until there were no more bullets, until she threw the gun on the ground and rushed to his side. The past decade rushed off of her shoulders, dropped to the ground in a deluge.

“I’m so sorry,” she kept muttering through sobs. “I’m so sorry. You made me. You made me choose.”

“You were always,” he coughed and coughed and coughed. “The best thing. And now look at you—”

“I’m so sorry.”

“You’re just…” he closed his eyes before trying to lift his hand. He coughed again, only to open
and look at his knuckle against Lena’s cheek. Lionel smiled as he felt the softness of her skin beneath the sheen of tears. “Just like my Lily.”

“I’m so sorry,” she held his hand, kissed his knuckles, inhaled that smell beneath the dirt and grime.

It wasn’t as much an apology for pulling the trigger, and they both knew it. It was an apology for everything that led to this, it was for everything he thought her to be, it was for everything she knew him to be.

“Don’t be sad,” Lionel closed his eyes once again. “You were never meant to be a Luth– a Lutho–”

Sputtering noises came. Lena heard the police and DEO descend and she couldn’t move as the hand went limp and the noises stopped.

Despite herself, Lena sobbed. She didn’t know she was capable of such noises or sounds, but the entire battle left her defenseless and exhausted. She ran her hand along the stubble of his cheek like she once did when she was a child and he came home late from work. She ran her fingers over his eyelids, shutting them for a final time.

He was right; he freed her.

She was never meant to be a Luthor. It wasn’t malicious, it was a gift. The last gift that he could ever give her.

With a final look at his lifeless body, Lena stood before sprinting toward Kara, more afraid of what waited her there.

“Superman rounded up the aliens. He’s transporting them to– Supergirl!” Alex shouted, noticing the body on the ground under the cape as Lena tried to turn it over. “Secure the area and start processing survivors. Get a damn med team here!”

“She’ll be fine, right?” Lena asked. “She was shot with Kryptonite before, and she lived.”

The agent didn’t respond. She couldn’t. Instead, she did her best to triage while the Luthor ran her palm along her girlfriend’s lifeless cheek and pushed the dirty hair from her face before kissing her through tears and swallowed wails of bone-breaking pain in her soul.
Noble Aim

Chances are we are the same;
Against the odds, against the grain
We lean, like gardens toward light.
We reach with all of our might
For such a noble aim as love.

The year following the attack, almost to the day of Lillian Luthor’s seventh birthday since her death, James Olsen climbed the stage for his second Pulitzer for his efforts in photography for his emblematic image of Superman’s silhouette carrying his slain cousin.

The image ran with a memorial issue dedicated to the hero who gave her life in the service of others. It was stylistically simple and intrinsically violent and jarring to look at, while at the same time haunting to all who saw it.

The image was immortal. Tattered cape dragging, tinged a different crimson from blood, royal blue crusted over with dirt and the gore of the fight. When he looked at the picture, James felt nauseous, but still, he snapped it that day because it was Kara’s legacy, and he was as fiercely protective of it as he had always been of her, in his own ways.

In his speech, he swallowed a large knot that formed in his throat and gripped the podium to support himself. He thanked everyone for the honor. He took a deep breath and he told the world that he was forever touched by the hero and friend, Supergirl. He told her about how she was a beacon of hope and other clichés, but more than that, she was simply good and honest and inspired the best in himself. He left little doubt as to the magnitude of the loss for himself personally, which doubled for the feelings of the city and nation as a whole.

From the stage, James stared at the picture projected on the wall as he mourned his friend. The ballroom was full of rapt eyes who all belonged to someone who held the heaviness of a shared grief.

It’d been an entire year without a familiar garnet cape, without someone to save them from the minutia of their lives, and the city was different for it. People still got mugged. Cars still got stolen. Banks still got robbed. But beneath the normal wear and tear of a city, a renewed sense of civic duty and pride and responsibility wafted beneath the city. In their own way, people were kinder, people were more attune to their role within the community.

James applauded it as he honored his friend, and he thanked them once again, for keeping her memory alive and living in a way that would have made her proud, because that was all they had anymore.

As he took his seat, he spent the rest of the night avoiding the giant image he’d taken, averting his eyes. It was too much to see her body, and he wished, for the love of everything, that they’d chosen the picture of her smiling instead.

LCorp sold for, in its tiny pieces, well north of a few billion dollars. Even with its reduced price tag as a result of the unfortunate attack, even after an ample donation to the survivor’s fund, even after providing for its employees, there was still more than enough money for someone to live for a hundred lifetimes, very comfortably.
On the night before she signed the papers and took the deal her board created, Lena Luthor sat in her office, behind her desk, and drank from her glass, allowing the alcohol to burn her throat and amplify her mood.

An entire life’s work, and there was nothing left to do. The papers were prepared and she was finally free of it all, of everyone and everything, and she knew what came next in the broad sense, while at the same time, she really had no idea what the next hour might hold.

After the attack, after the memorial that was ruined, yet again, after it all, Lena had nothing left to give to the city, nothing left in her to apologize anymore, even though not many were asking for it from her. The city deserved a break, deserved her not intruding herself upon it in the tallest building in the city with her logo on everything and her last name etched on the sports teams and the ads on every bus. The city deserved to heal, and as selfish as she wanted to be and keep it her own city, she just couldn’t.

Second only to shooting her own father, Lena did the best thing she could for her home, and she prepared to take herself out of the equation. It’d once been a hope of her’s, to feel less obliged to blood and name. All at once, she was free, and she wasn’t sure what that left. Not entirely.

The streets held ghosts now. More ghosts than she was capable of tolerating, she realized, when she took the time to be honest with herself. The streets were downright packed with things that kept her up at night and weighed upon her soul.

And so she took another drink, emptying it, and listened to the memorized sound of her glass on the surface of her desk in the last hours of the night. But she did not move to get up just yet, as she normally did. There was no more normally or usually for Lena Luthor.

There wasn’t one particular thought that pervaded her mind, just that there was a lot to think about in general, a lot that she hid from, a lot that she refused to even let in her head, which was an exhausting mental work out. But beneath it all, she thought about the hollow feeling of losing everything and how failure felt like a relief in nearly every way.

She fiddled with the empty glass, swirling the last drops, and debated having another. She perused the normal papers and folders that always seemed to litter her desk during working hours, inevitably to be cleaned up by Jess before she returned. Only today she wouldn’t return. As soon as she left, someone would come and pack up everything, emptying the office completely. And Jess wouldn’t be there. She hadn’t been there in weeks. That thought made Lena smile despite everything else.

She rose and wobbled slightly before emptying the rest of her decanter into her glass and replenishing the ice so that it twinkled and twanged as she sat down with a sigh. For a second, she debated calling her friend, just to catch up. She could have. She was curious to see how Jess was enjoying her new position as a Director of Marketing at another firm. But she couldn’t.

Instead, she stared at the pictures that remained sitting there on her desk, looking back at her. Her mother seemed far away. So did the grief. She couldn’t remember it exactly, when it happened, but she did remember the sunset on the beach and Kara’s nose against her shoulder, the heat of her words as she laughed and tried to make Lena feel better. That was tinged in an ache, but she knew it was a dull throb compared to the flesh-eating nature of losing her mother.

Her mother was kind, was good to her, chose her, and Lena did what she could to make it worth it. It took a few therapists and a superhero to convince her that she was a damn fine legacy. She didn’t believe it often, but from time to time she was okay with it.
The picture of her family was the greatest source of pain in her life. She looked at her brother’s smiling face, that natural, large smile that reached his eyes. Even covered in paint, even hyped up from rooting for her, she saw this life in him that she always admired. Now, he was rotting away in a cell, deep underground. Now, there was a stiffness to his features, a weathered pain that remained there. She hated to think of him like that.

Her father was still that doting, proud kind of dad, who cheered at every game. At least in that picture. Scarf wrapped tight around his neck, his hair was long enough to be almost curly. His eyes had that innocent kind of mischief in them as he had his arms around his entire family.

Mud still on her cheek from a tackle. Ponytail coming out and flyaways in all directions, the college sophomore was a happy that Lena almost couldn’t fathom. The former CEO stared at herself, at her former self, long and hard as she cradled the glass of vodka against her neck and jaw.

There were a few pictures of Lena and Kara on her desk. She couldn’t help it. She loved to catch herself looking at her. She liked their history. Kara, the brave. Kara, the strong. Kara, the beautiful. Kara, the caring.

The first day that Lena Luthor met Kara Danvers, she had no idea that history was forever altered. Kara knew. She liked to rub it in from time to time. But Lena was fresh from practice, and she gave the cute reporter an extra look and an extra smile, that was certain, but she never imagined her as more. Until she spent time with her.

It took months for Lena to realize she was in love. She wasn’t like Kara; she wasn’t prone to love easily. She could love ferociously, it just took time. But by the time she figured out she loved Kara, it was too late to turn back.

Her favorite picture of them was a tiny little one from Kara’s old camera she occasionally brought out. It was a tiny little picture, and Lena yearned for it to be larger. But in the moment, forever captured, Kara pressed her cheek close. If Lena pretended, she thought she could trick herself into smelling the sunshine on their skin.

Sometimes, in magazines or at events, she would see a picture and realize how in love she was all over again. Sometimes, she was young and drunk on a water tower, and she was yearning to kiss Kara so badly that it physically hurt.

Lena downed the glass of vodka completely as she thought about Kara before standing and placing the empty cup down again. She grabbed a picture from her desk and placed it in her purse before leaving the desk once and for all.

For one final time, she looked at her office before closing the door and making her way downstairs. It was hard to not think about the hours spent building it, piece by piece, brick by brick. But as the elevator descended, Lena felt a serene wakefulness, a new hope, a melancholic kind of ending that was not bittersweet so much as just something that was needed.

The doorman held the door open and nodded politely to her. And with a final glance toward the sky, toward her empire, Lena Luthor climbed into the waiting car and disappeared.

The sun finally climbed higher than the horizon, finally brought on another day. The windows were all open, the breeze blew in and lifted the long curtains. From his spot on the chair near the windows, the cat stretched and yawned before burrowing deeper into the morning sun that began to warm his belly.
A few stories below, the street was already awake and full of life. A far cry from the high rise he was accustomed to, Darwin scratched his chin with eagerness, and shook his ears before arching his back and walking across the living room.

There were boxes still stacked against a wall that he rubbed his chin against. The spare bedroom and future office held even more unpacked treasures, though he didn’t particularly care about anything else. Silently, he padded into the kitchen and rubbed against the bare leg that was attached to the body reading the paper lazily as she waited for coffee to brew. When that daring display of begging didn’t take hold, the cat jumped to the island and nudged a chin with his head.

“Good morning, buddy,” Lena chuckled at his antics.

With an extra scratch beneath his chin, she sipped her coffee and flipped the page of the newspaper lazily.

The night that Supergirl died, and entire city was speechless. The death of Lionel Luthor was retribution, and she was the martyr who stopped him despite the cost, for them. Everyone remembered where they were when she was killed. It was that kind of history; she left that kind of legacy.

To Kara Danvers, it was a welcomed reprieve. Many times she’d heard that death was to be a new beginning. She never took it quite so literally, but it worked. Supergirl died so that she could be free of it all, so that she could start her life for the first time, yet again.

The breeze pushed against the sheets in bed. Lazily, Kara stretched and rolled toward the empty spot where a certain girl should be waiting and still asleep.

Outside the open windows, the bus squealed to a stop a block over while a gaggle of children held hands and sang something as they made their way to school. The smell of coffee and tea and breakfast wafted through the narrow street and into the bedroom. And all that Kara could really hear was the sound of the shower running as a cat hopped up into the bed beside her.

Still oddly sore from dying, Kara pushed herself out of bed. She ran her hand along the scars that were now on her body. Her hand automatically went to the jagged cut right above her ribs, where she rubbed it gently and stretched her back.

Still groggy, she took the cup of waiting coffee and retreated to the balcony where she inhaled the city. Three weeks ago she died. Two weeks ago, she put in her notice at CatCo. Last night, she arrived in Buenos Aires, and had Lena Luthor jump into her arms at the airport, looking much more like herself than Kara could remember seeing her. Gone was the weight of the world, and in its place was the same girl who used to drive her crazy with physics problems and soccer practice.

“Morning,” Lena greeted her as she towed her hair and joined her on the balcony.

“Hey, you’re up early.”

“I wanted to head over to the new shop for an hour or two until you woke up.”

“Sorry I ruined your plans.”

“This is better. I can take you and show you that café that has the good yerba mate near the new set up, and maybe get you some food.”

“You know I like the sound of that,” Kara nodded as arms wrapped around her waist and a nose
found a spot between her shoulder blades.

The sun was high, Supergirl was dead, and the kids who once had a random conversation once, when each were full of their own kind of grief, were in a faraway city, with a new home.

“Are you ready for this?”

“For what?”

“For... for our new life, I guess,” Lena tried.

“The one we should have had.”

“Yeah.”

“I’m very ready,” Kara hummed.

The End

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