stay the night

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by lynnearlington

Summary

"The National City Lakehawks," Jack says. He flips the cover of the binder over. "Who is this?"

“Kara Danvers,” Lena answers. It’s the only player she can name off the team at this point and that’s only because any sort of research into the Lakehawks seems to start and end with the same girl.

OR

The fic where Lena inherits the National City Lakehawks from her wayward brother and meets Kara Danvers, star player.

Notes

Thanks, as always, to mooosocialdreamz for prompting this stupid fic in the middle of a Minnesota Lynx playoff game and then badgering me to write it. (oh and also for deleting all my commas and making my sentences sound better and adding feelings where I forgot to)

This fic requires a slight suspension of disbelief regarding the popularity of professional women’s sports.
See the end of the work for more notes.
Chapter 1

The National City Lakehawks have never been something Lena’s paid much mind to throughout her life. The team had always been Lex’s little pet project and Lena’s never had much interest in sports. Her brother had always adored the Lakehawks, had preferred them over the other teams they owned, including the men’s National City Harriers. And sure, Lena attended a couple parties, when Lex had asked, but nothing too involved.

Her thoughts of the Lakehawks never wandered much past an absent enjoyment at the idea of a number of strong, tall women parading around Luthor Corp Arena with the sleek silver ‘L’ logo on their jerseys. It’s only when she’s essentially forced to that she spares them a thought deeper than that.

“It’s good for our image right now, Miss Luthor,” a member of her PR team is telling her. “In light of your brother’s recent scandal –”

“I’d think anything associated with him at this juncture would be unwise to promote,” Lena interrupts with a challenging arch of her brow.

“While that may be so,” another man says to Lena’s left. “The Lakehawks are beloved by much of the community. They’ve won back to back championships and are favored to win a third. They’re popular. And the Harriers...well, they’re a part of the package.”

Lena considers that for a moment, glances at the revenue spreadsheet in the file in front of her. “I’d like to consider potential buyers,” she decides, closing the folder and standing. “Have something for me by Thursday.”

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The meetings go relatively well. The team net worth is fairly high and Lena’s already considering where she’ll allocate any profit. The Lakehawks and Harriers are as good as sold in her mind.

Until Maxwell Lord steps into her office with a swarmy smile. His attitude radiates patriarchal superiority as does the way he casually adds, after talking up the Harriers for twenty minutes, “And I’m sure you have something better to do than care about some silly women’s basketball team.”

It’s at the feigned smile he gives that she decides not to sell at all.

“Thank you for your time, Max.”

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“You don’t know the first thing about basketball,” Jack says, laughing as he drops into one of her oversized leather arm chairs.

She walks towards him and hands him a glass of scotch with a reproachful look before falling into her own chair with her own drink. “I’m aware of that, thank you.”

“I’m merely pointing out the flaws in this plan,” Jack adds, sitting forward and giving her an amused smile. “The sports stuff was always more Lex’s thing anyway, right?”

“Yes, well, Lex is off doing Lord knows what in the Caribbean right now so –”
“So here we are,” Jack finishes, raising his glass in salute before taking a sip.

Lena laughs. “Here we are,” she parrots.

“And what are you going to do?” Jack asks, leaning back into the seat and crossing his legs. The amber liquid in his glass sloshes against the sides and Lena observes it for a moment before answering.

“Study the in-season team,” she answers simply with a shrug of her shoulder. She reaches towards the bag she has leaned up against the chair and pulls out the thick spiral bound packet her assistant put together earlier and throws it at him.

It hits Jack in the chest and he makes a disgruntled noise, barely saving his drink from spilling as he pulls the item into view. “The National City Lakehawks,” he reads, flipping the cover over. “Who is this?”

The inside jacket holds the latest promotional poster for the team, freshly shot, according to the PR person who had sent it over. On it is the Lakehawks’ star player, basketball held at her hip as she smiles widely at the camera. The Lakehawks jerseys are a pale blue that works well with her eyes; she looks the picture of an All-American girl.

“Kara Danvers,” Lena answers. It’s the only player she can name off the team at this point and that’s only because any sort of research into the Lakehawks seems to start and end with the same girl.

“Seems like an interesting read,” Jack mumbles with an arch of his brow towards Lena.

“Good,” she says, amused smile hidden behind the rim of her glass. “Because you’re going to help me study.”

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“Starting lineup,” Jack quizzes over glass of port a week later. They’re sitting in the Signature Room bar in downtown National City and Lena can see Luthor Corp Arena from where they’re sitting next to the glass windows.

“Lucy Lane, M’gann M’orzz, Maggie Sawyer, Alex Danvers, Kara Danvers,” Lena recites, watching the cars blur by below them.

Jack nods as he flips through a flashcard on his phone. “Head coach?”

“Cat Grant,” she answers, turning away from the window to see Jack’s affirmative nod again. “Assistant coach. J’onn J’onzz.”

“President of operations?”


“Try not to treat him like a dumb jock,” Jack tells her, setting his phone back on the table. “He’s made you a lot of money.”

“Throwing a ball through a hoop,” Lena deadpans with an unimpressed sip of her drink.

Jack laughs. “He doesn’t actually do any of the throwing anymore. You should probably know that detail before you meet with him.”

She rolls her eyes.
“Hey, he’s from your hometown,” Jack adds and at Lena’s blank stares finishes with a dry, “Metropolis.”

“Metropolis isn’t my hometown,” she denies, leaning back in her seat. “There’s a reason I got out of there as quickly as possible.”

“Do try to be nice to him tomorrow. He’s somewhat of a hero back there.”

“For throwing a ball through a hoop,” Lena repeats and Jack sighs but it’s punctuated by a soft laugh.

“Has anyone ever told you you’re a bit of a snob?”

“You have,” Lena answers with a teasing grin. “Many times.”

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James Olsen is tall. That’s the first thing Lena manages to think when she meets him. He towers over her and she regrets for a moment not wearing bigger heels.

“Miss Luthor,” he greets with his hand extended forward and a wide charming smile that pulls an answering one across her face unbidden. “Pleasure.”

“Likewise,” she says shaking his hand.

His hands retreat to the pockets of his dress pants and he straightens to an impressive size. If Lena were one easily intimidated she might be cowing a bit, but instead she merely mimics his posture and puts on her best CEO smile.

“A tour?” He offers, extending his hand towards the massive arena behind him. “I’ve been told you haven’t spent much time here.”

“None at all, really,” she replies and she’s impressed to find his expression doesn’t react to that at all. Part of her expected the meeting to hold a tone of the same kind of patriarchal assumptions Maxwell Lord had made about her, but there’s none of that in James Olsen.

“Well then,” he says, stepping towards a nearby door and opening it for her. “Let’s get you acquainted.”

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Luthor Corp Arena is impressive.

And full of reminders of her brother, from his favorite brand of beer sticking out from the line of taps at concessions to his picture still hanging outside the front offices next to a wall size mural of the starting lineup doing various things with basketballs.

“I don’t pretend to know much about basketball,” Lena admits to James as they reach his office.

He grins a little, leans as if admitting a deep secret. “Your brother never knew all that much either,” he tells her and she startles a bit in surprise.

“But he -”

“All due respect, Miss Luthor,” James says. “Lex was good with money. But when it came to the basketball side of things.” He shrugs. “Well there’s a reason he hired me.”
She observes him for a moment. “Thank you for the tour, Mr. Olsen.”

“James is fine,” he tells her and she smiles.

“If I’m calling you James,” she starts and he laughs.

“It was nice to meet you, Lena,” he replies, extending his hand again. “I look forward to working with you.”

After a firm handshake he offers to lead her towards the exit, but she waves him off. “I can find my way out,” she tells him. “I’m sure you have more important things to do.”

They part ways there and Lena has full intentions of making her way towards the exit doors when she hears the distant sound of a ball dribbling against hardwood. The arena is closed for the day and James had run her through the list of events for the month so she knows no one is scheduled to be on the court. Curiosity pulls her feet that direction and she comes out through a tunnel on the lower level to see a lone figure running drills under the basket.

It takes her a second to realize who it is, but it becomes obvious quickly. Kara Danvers. Superstar.

Leaned up against the cement wall of the tunnel, Lena watches as Kara dribbles around invisible defenders, the ball moving quickly between her hands, through her legs, around her back before she’s posting up and chucking the ball towards the basket. A satisfying swooshing sound fills the arena and Kara smiles, jogging to grab the ball and start again.

It’s a tad mesmerizing for Lena to watch, though she doesn’t want to admit it. It’s clear why Kara is considered the top of her league even without any real working knowledge of basketball. There’s a certain grace to her movements, a certainty in her body and hands as she moves through whatever drills it is she’s working through. The ball seems to be an extension of her body, and there are moments of pure athleticism that seem physically impossible as Kara twists into shots in strange positions.

Lena finds herself watching the other girl. She goes unnoticed for a few uninterrupted moments before a door slams somewhere in the stadium and Kara’s gaze suddenly somehow zeros straight in on where Lena is standing.

Everything seems to pause then and the ball Kara had just thrown towards the basket comes rebounding off the rim and straight for Kara’s head, hitting there seconds after Kara and Lena’s eyes lock.

Lena’s caught between laughter and concern, but settles for swallowing a smile and quickly pacing forward to where Kara is rubbing at her temple with a disoriented look in her eye.

“Are you alright?” Lena asks as she approaches and Kara looks up, squinting in a sign of pain.

“Yeah, totally. You’d be surprised how often I get hit in the head,” Kara jokes with a crooked grin Lena finds her stomach reacting to. She was more than aware of how gorgeous Kara Danvers was - Jack had been jokingly sending her Kara’s Calvin Klein ads for the past few days. But in person, it was....different. “Just super embarrassed.”

“Don’t be,” Lena tells her, her heels clicking on the hardwood floor. “I’m the only one who saw.”

Kara looks at her for a moment, hand leaving her temple and eyes clearing as they roam up and down Lena’s person. “Kara Danvers,” she greets, extending her hand. Her other finger points upward towards a massive banner hanging from the rafters. “I’m that one.”
Lena’s lips thin, struggling against a laugh again and she takes Kara’s hand, their palms sliding warmly against each other. “Lena Luthor,” she says, pointing towards the massive display of screens hanging over center court. LUTHOR CORP ARENA is in large red lettering around the top of it. “I’m that one,” she mimics and Kara’s eyes go a bit wide in reaction.

“My new owner,” Kara replies and then must realize how that sounds because she hastily attempts to reverse course. “The team's new owner, I mean. Not my new owner, obviously, because you can’t own people, right, that’s like entirely immoral and super illegal because hello, slavery and -”

“I knew what you meant,” Lena interrupts, saving Kara from the sudden flow of words.

Kara smiles on a deep exhale and Lena finds herself focusing on the errant strands of blond hair curling at Kara’s temples and the slight sheen of exertion visible across the defined muscles of Kara’s bare shoulders and collarbone. “Nice to finally meet you, Miss Luthor,” Kara says.

“And you, Kara,” Lena says trying to fight the sudden inconvenient pull of attraction she can feel happening low in her gut. There’s a reason, Lena realizes, that Kara Danvers is the face the Lakehawks use for nearly all their promotional material. It’s not hard to get caught in her spell.

Before anything else can be said a voice is calling out from the other end of the court. “Superstar! Team meeting!”

Kara turns to look at the source of the voice. “Coming,” she shouts back before turning back towards Lena. “I’ll see you around?”

Lena smiles, hums an affirmative sound. “Certainly.”

And with that, Kara is jogging to pick up the earlier abandoned basketball and down a tunnel.

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They hold an organization-wide dinner - players and staff - so Lena can be introduced as the new owner. It’s a more comfortable setting for Lena, held in one of the arena’s many banquet halls. Lex had designed the place as a multipurpose building capable of handling a multitude of functions at once.

It’s there that she meets J’onn J’onnz. He seems unassuming at first, but Lena can sense the quiet strength in his handshake and it’s not hard to tell the aura of respect the players and staff have for him. When she inquires as to Cat Grant’s whereabouts he smiles.

“Cat keeps her own schedule,” he tells her and she’s not sure exactly what that means, but it’s the only explanation she gets.

He takes her through a quick rundown of the Lakehawks players.

“Alex Danvers, captain,” he tells her, indicating to the woman with a gesture of his head. “All-star defensive player three years running.”

Lena watches as Alex takes a long sip of a champagne flute with a bored expression, her head half-tilted to one side and eyes directed at a dark-haired woman standing close by.

“Next to her is Lucy Lane,” J’onn continues. “Point guard, pure shooter. Great ball distribution.”

Lucy laughs at something Alex is whispering, her elbow poking out against Alex’s ribs in a friendly gesture that Lena tries to decipher while J’onn carries on.
“Maggie Sawyer is the woman in the leather jacket over there,” J’onn points out. “She’s the type of player you’d never want to play against, but when she’s on your team…”

Lena nods and takes a sip of her own drink. “I’ve read she leads the team in personal fouls,” she adds, remembering a particular video she had seen of Maggie being hauled off the court by Alex after getting ejected. There had been a good deal of cursing.

J’onn’s only reaction is a glance her direction. “You’ve done your homework.”

“Just a brief overview,” Lena tells him and he looks back towards the woman approaching Maggie.

“That’s M’gann. Her shooting percentage outside the three is nearly unmatched.”

Lena has only a slight idea what any of this means, but she puts on a smile and does her best at pretending.

“And I’m sure you know Kara,” J’onn finishes just as Kara Danvers comes into view, throwing finger guns at one of the Harriers players present and laughing. It’s a different sight than when they had first met, but Lena feels the same pull towards the other woman as before. Internally she rolls her eyes at herself.

Kara’s dressed in a nice pair of pressed slacks this time, a button down tucked into the waistband, but her sleeves are rolled up to reveal her forearms and Lena’s eyes linger over the long line of muscle there.

“We’ve met, yes,” she manages to reply, tearing her eyes away from Kara. It’s certainly not the first time she’s been suddenly attracted to a woman she’s just met, but this particular woman is not only inconvenient, but entirely inaccessible.

J’onn raises an eyebrow at her, but says nothing more than a simple, “Good.”

She observes the Lakehawks for a moment as they mingle about between staff and some of the other bench players Lena can’t quite remember all the names of. “They’re a bit short for basketball players aren’t they?” Lena asks for lack of anything else to comment on.

It J’onn is offended by the comment it doesn’t show. “We’re more of a finesse team,” he responds and she has no idea what that means, but faking it until she makes it seems to be the due course for her lately. Across the room, Lena’s eyes stick again to Kara’s forearms as she leans down on the table to say something to her sister.

For half a second, Kara’s eyes flick up to meet hers, and she directs a bright smile Lena’s way that Lena can’t help but return.

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Cat Grant extends an invitation for drinks the day after the team dinner and they meet at a downtown bar Lena’s been to a few times with Jack.

It’s nothing like she expects. If only because Cat is already at the bar when she gets there, primly sipping at a martini and looking nothing like the head coach of a professional basketball team.

Not that Lena has a vast knowledge set of what that is supposed to look like.

“I’m in the business of building a dynasty,” Cat tells her after their second round of drinks. “I hope you like winning, Miss Luthor.”
Lena smiles, feels strangely comfortable around Cat, and puts her glass in the air to clink against the one in Cat’s hand. “That’s something we certainly have in common,” she says. “And call me Lena.”

Cat observes her for a moment, takes a sip of her drink and nods. “Welcome to the Lakehawks, Lena.”

“Thank you, Cat.”

Cat arches an eyebrow. “You can call me Coach Grant.”

Lena’s eyes widen just the slightest before a hint of a smirk appears across Cat’s face.

“–

“It’s customary that the owner attends,” she’s being told one morning after discovering two courtside seats have been reserved for her at the home opener for the Lakehawks.

It hadn’t really occurred to her that a part of owning a team meant actually attending their games. It should have, had she given it any thought. Lex had almost never missed a game when he had still been around.

“Perhaps that’s a custom that needs changing,” she replies, signing off on a contract her assistant, Jess, is holding in front of her.

“The entire purpose of this team is to boost the company’s image, Miss Luthor. Part of that requires some measure of visibility.”

She sighs and resigns herself to a night of boredom. “Very well. Send me the pertinent information.”

The man leaves with a conciliatory nod and Lena falls back against her desk chair with a wry smile for Jess who is looking at her sympathetically. “Could you please get Jack on the phone?” Lena asks.

Jess smiles. “Right away, Miss Luthor.”

“–

“Do try to remember that a basket is worth two points,” Jack is telling her as they walk into the packed arena. “Sometimes three.”

Lena rolls her eyes. “I think I’ve at the very least mastered that bit.”

He looks at her so skeptically that she has to resist the urge to shove him. She saves it for when they’re more hidden from any cameras. Instead she just links her arm through his and walks them towards their seats.

“You know this will do nothing to quell the rumors that we’re secretly dating,” Jack tells her as they make their way onto the court and drop into two seats positioned across a gap near the home bench. His arm drapes across the back of her chair and she instinctively leans a bit towards him.

“As if you don’t benefit from being publicly linked with me.”

He feigns indignation with a slight gasp, his free hand moving to his chest and she laughs. “You’ve found me out. I’m just using you for that free coffee at Noonan’s.”

Her head whips to him. “You get free coffee at Noonan’s?”
“Sure,” he says with a teasing grin. “I need only drop your name there.”

A roar of cheers suddenly fills the air and Lena turns to see the players jogging onto the court to warm up. Her eyes instantly track to where Kara Danvers is trailing in at the back of the line, grabbing a ball when it’s tossed to her and immediately throwing it up towards the basket.

It hadn’t occurred to her just how close she’d be to the team at these games and Lena crosses her legs a bit and straightens as the team begins its warm ups.

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In all her research, the National City Skippers had been mentioned over and over again as the nemesis of the Lakehawks. It’s easy to see why. From tipoff, the game is rowdy and the crowd is loud. There’s plenty of jostling for position and loose balls. But even Lena is capable of seeing how truly talented the Lakehawks are, and can see that all five of their starters are having a good return to the court.

Under those circumstances, the game is, for the most part, boring in Lena’s estimation. The only amusing bit is Jack’s running commentary about the players - equal parts hilarious and informative.

“And - of course, Smythe is complaining about the call,” Jack whispers at some point. “Meanwhile, I think Sawyer just dabbed. Respect.”

At the very least, Lena gets a first hand view of just why the Lakehawks are so popular. They’re winning quite handily by halftime and the cheers of the full arena reflects just how pleased the crowd is with that. The Lakehawks are practically gallivanting up and down the court, working in harmony. In particular, Kara and her sister work around each other without hardly any communication - there’s a spectacular behind-the-back pass play that has the Skippers coach raging at his players. Lena can’t help but like it. Coach Grant was right - winning is quite enjoyable.

Cat Grant, however, seems to be one of those coaches that is rarely pleased despite heavy handed wins. Surprisingly tall heels stomp against the hardwood floor as Cat paces up and down the sideline screaming with a scowl. Occasionally she’ll yell out instruction, but mostly she just reacts uproariously to anything that goes negatively for the Lakehawks and argues with the refs in a manner Lena’s sure will get her kicked out of the game at any moment.

The players, however, seem unfazed. More than once, Kara comes over to the sideline to huddle close to Cat and hear something she has to say - strategy from the few words Lena can make out. At some point while listening to her coach, Kara uses her jersey to wipe away sweat from her forehead. She’s wearing a compression shirt of some kind underneath, but Lena can still see up close and personal the abs that play prominently in the Calvin Klein ads Jack is so fond of showing her. Lena takes a heavy swallow of her vodka soda.

“Cat’s won coach of the year twice in a row,” Jack informs her as they watch her push her star player back onto the court where Lucy Lane is shooting free throws.

“She’s very…” Lena thinks of the word she wants to use as she watches Cat stalk back towards the bench and rip a clipboard out of an assistant’s hands. “Passionate.”

Jack laughs. “That’s certainly one word for it.”

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It’s in the third quarter, just as Jack is handing Lena another vodka soda and retaking his seat, that it happens.
Had Lena’s eyes been on the game she might have been able to prevent it, but she was too busy squeezing a lime into her drink and stirring the small straw there to notice the body come barreling towards her, chasing after an errant pass.

By the time she notices it’s too late.

Vodka and soda and ice go everywhere as Lena gets slammed into hard. Something knocks right into her face and a burst of pain floods across her cheekbone as her chair tips backward. Distantly she hears a collective gasp sound out, but she’s too busy trying to figure out what the hell crashed into her to really register that.

“Oh my God,” a voice is saying and as soon as Lena feels like she can open her eyes she realizes the voice belongs to none other than Kara Danvers. A Kara Danvers who is currently still pressed on top of her quite awkwardly from her spill out of her seat.

“I am so so so so so sorry,” Kara is saying, trying to maneuver back to standing. She reaches down to pull Lena up and had she not been focused on the pain still radiating from her face, her back and her hip, she might have taken the time to enjoy the strong way Kara easily picks her up from the floor and sets her back on her feet. “Are you okay?”

The game has halted behind Kara. The players are all observing the interaction as well as the crowd. Out of the corner of her eye Lena can see that the cameras have honed in on the scene as well and that knowledge gets her to composure quickly. A few arena security guards attempt to come closer but she waves them off.

“I’m fine,” Lena says, clearing her throat and swiping a hand down her now stained pencil skirt. A glance downward tells her that her drink landed mostly onto her lap and arms somehow.

Jack is to her right with his jaw dropped a bit in shock and Lena takes a breath, leaning to pick up her discarded chair. “Please. Carry on,” she tells Kara and she’s aware of a phone pointed in her direction, presumably taking their picture. It makes her straighten her clothing again self-consciously and try for a casual smile – pain punctuates the motion, but she manages to get through it anyway.

Security has all but surrounded her and she glances to Jack. “I’m going to go freshen up,” she tells him with a last look at Kara - still staring at her with concern.

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The Lakehawks win, but Lena never returns to her seats. Instead she spends the rest of it in the owner’s suite hidden from cameras and with an ice pack pressed to her face. The team trainer comes to meet her with a nervous look of worry in his eyes.

“Hi, Miss Luthor,” he greets, holding a penlight up to her eyes. “How is your head?”

He takes her through a concussion protocol and leaves her with another ice pack, two aspirin and an apology on behalf of Kara - she doesn’t have control of her body sometimes. Just lays out for a ball like it’s life or death or something.

Jack joins her at the start of the fourth quarter.

“Quite a start to the season,” he jokes, eyeing the ginger way she presses her fingers against her cheekbone. “Are all the games going to be this exciting?”

“I certainly hope not,” Lena says eyeing the drink in his hand.
“I got you a double this time,” he tells her, handing the plastic cup towards her.

She tries to laugh, but it spikes pain up towards her eye so she just winces and takes a long grateful sip of the drink. The Skippers sulk their way off the court after being thoroughly trounced and Lena stays long enough to witness a post-game ritual involving Lucy and M’gann barrelling full speed at each other from across the court and jumping, and then Jack ushers her to her towncar.

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The result is a massive black eye and a sore hip in the morning. It takes an extra thirty minutes in front of the mirror to try and cover up the bruising, but it’s still visible when she walks into work. Jess nearly gasps when she catches sight of her, but Lena ignores it and just asks her for a triple shot latte as quickly as possible.

A headache remains persistent throughout the day, but Lena’s worked through worse. Jack spends his morning texting her the clip of her collision that ran on Sportscenter all night.

Around lunchtime Jess steps into her office and approaches the desk. “A Kara Danvers is here to see you,” she informs Lena and the knowledge makes her straighten, eyes glancing towards the slightly ajar door to her office.

“Send her in,” Lena says curious as to what it could be about. The pain in her cheek seems to radiate an answer.

When Kara paces into the office in light wash jeans and a soft looking Lakehawks zip-up, she looks nervous and fidgety, her eyes widening at the first look at Lena’s face. “I am so sorry,” Kara says in greeting and Lena waves her off.

“It’s an occupational hazard, Kara,” Lena tells her, regretting the smile that tries to pull across her lips at the first bite of pain. “I’m certain you didn’t intend to tackle me.”

“Not at all,” Kara tells her. “I was just - trying to get the loose ball, and then Smythe tripped me, and then I totally elbowed you in the face and fell on top of you, and I’m so sorry.”

“You didn’t need to come all the way over here to apologize.”

“I just feel awful,” Kara says and she falls into one of Lena’s office chairs uninvited, sitting on the edge of it.

“Don’t feel awful,” Lena says, with as small a smile as she can offer without wincing.

“I couldn’t sleep all night. You have to let me make it up to you.”

There’s suggestion in that sentence that Lena is sure Kara didn’t intend, but her body reacts to it just slightly, warming up from bottom to top. “As I said,” Lena starts slowly. “That isn’t necessary.”

“Dinner,” Kara offers with an open expression. “Please.”

Lena goes to protest yet again, but Kara leans forward, insistent. “Think of it as a chance to get to know your star player,” Kara adds and Lena sighs, already feeling herself agreeing.

“Kara,” Lena starts softly.

“Miss Luthor,” Kara entreats. “If you don’t let me take you out to an apology dinner then I’m still not going to be able to sleep tonight or the next night and I’ll be tired and exhausted and it will probably
affect my shooting percentage and the Lakehawks will start losing and then -”

“Oh, okay,” Lena says with her palm extended to interrupt Kara’s babbling. She laughs even as it hurts. “In the interest of the Lakehawks and a winning season we can have dinner.”

“Great!”

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They agree to meet at some undiscovered restaurant Kara swears by and Lena has never heard of in her entire time in National City. Lena arrives first and can’t help but admire the Range Rover Kara pulls up in, its rims a matte black.

“I come here all the time when I want to avoid press,” Kara tells her as they walk in and Lena hadn’t considered that aspect of Kara’s life.

“I have some experience with evasion tactics myself,” Lena replies.

Kara laughs and the sound of it pools warmth in Lena’s gut. It also spikes instant regret for agreeing to this dinner. Here she is now sliding into a small wooden booth in the corner of a dimly lit bar with an attractive girl who is basically her employee.

It wouldn’t be the first time she’s had to actively avoid mixing business and pleasure, but something about Kara feels more dangerous than usual. It doesn’t help that the other girl is dressed like this is a date - dark wash jeans, blazer with the sleeves cuffed up and her hair tumbling in waves down her shoulders.

Lena runs a hand down her work appropriate dress and trains her eyes on the menu.

“Everything is good here,” Kara tells her. “Literally everything. The baked mac and cheese is my favorite, but also the nachos are great too. It’s like a mountain of cheese and you can get it with this seasoned beef on it.”

Lena arches a brow at the description and winces a bit at the sore tug it creates in her cheek. “Aren’t you an athlete?”

Kara’s brow furrows. “Yeah, why?”

“You eat nachos?”

Kara laughs, her eyes mischievous in a way that makes Lena want to get lost in them. “I burn a ridiculous amount of calories in a day playing basketball.”

“A mountain full of nachos amount of calories?” Lena teases and Kara shrugs it off.

“Easily. Especially if Cat has us on two-a-days or during a game.”

“Why do you play basketball?” Lena asks, suddenly curious.

Kara looks confused by the question for a moment before answering. “I’m good at it.”

Lena’s head tilts a bit. “Being skilled at something isn’t necessarily a reason for doing it. Certainly not for making a career out of it.”

“Why not? I’m good at it and it makes a lot of money,” Kara tells her.
Before she can inquire further the waiter steps up to the table to take their order.

“So. Give me your elevator speech,” Lena instructs, watching as Kara navigates her way through a pile of melted cheese with a gleeful smile.

“My what speech?” Kara asks before popping a chip in her mouth and taking a sip of a ridiculously neon pink drink with a little umbrella poking out near the straw.

“If I’m going to get to know my star player then we have to start somewhere. So, give me your elevator speech,” Lena repeats. At Kara’s blank expression she continues. “It’s the **what do you need to know about me** speech you would give someone in the time it takes to ride an elevator.”

Kara chews on her food a moment and swallows. “That’s a thing?”

Lena laughs, charmed by the innocent look of confusion and ignores the way the motion tugs at the bruising on her cheek. “In my world, it’s quite common.”

“I don’t need to talk to sell myself in my world,” Kara says, going back in for another nacho. “My game speaks for me.”

“It’s a figure of speech,” Lena explains with an amused quirk of her lips. “Indulge me.”

Kara’s eyes look up at that, sharply connecting with Lena’s. Her attention gets drawn to how close Kara’s knee is from her own under the table.

“Okay,” Kara says, lips pursed for a moment. “I’m Kara Danvers. I’m a shooting guard for the National City Lakehawks. My favorite food is a tie between pizza and potstickers and I’m missing a knuckle on my left hand.”

Lena’s eyes go immediately to the limb in question. “You’re what?”

Grinning, Kara picks her fist up and flexes it in Lena’s line of sight. “I’m missing a knuckle,” she repeats, pointing to the way the line of her knuckles dips in the absence of a ridge near her pinky finger.

“How unique,” Lena says, looking around Kara’s fist as if it’s a puzzle she can solve. She reaches out a hand to stroke her finger against the area before she can even think about it.

“Thanks,” Kara says, but her voice is low and makes Lena realize that they’re touching. Abruptly she pulls her hand back and clears her throat. “I broke my hand in a game my junior year. Hasn’t been the same since.”

“That must have hurt,” Lena comments ignoring the way Kara seems to lean forward, her foot brushing against Lena’s.

Kara shrugs. “We won the game,” she says, as if that alleviated any pain.

Lena turns back to the glass of whiskey at her elbow and takes a sip of it while Kara returns to the plate of nachos between them.

“Now you go,” Kara says as she pulls another chip out from the pile and goes about stacking more cheese on top.

“Go where?”
“Give me your elevator speech,” Kara explains and Lena laughs a bit.

“I think my name does that for me.”

Kara scoffs, eyes still on the food in front of her. “People are more than just their names.”

“My name is a pretty big one,” Lena replies and Kara finally looks up, shoving the nacho in her mouth and raising a skeptical eyebrow.

“Bigger than you?” Kara asks simply as she swallows and Lena has to contemplate that. Since she was younger her name had always seemed a larger than life entity. Being a Luthor was like wearing a heavy mantle her entire life, but now, as the only one truly left - father dead, brother in hiding, mother all but the same in light of her son’s scandal - Luthor holds different meaning now that she is the only keeper of its legacy.

“I suppose not,” she answers before letting her shoulders relax and taking another sip of her drink.

“--

“To be completely honest, I don’t much care for basketball. Or for many athletic competitions in general,” Lena admits as Kara continues to peruse the dessert menu.

At the confession her head snaps up. “You don’t like basketball?! The question drips with incredulity that makes Lena laugh.

“It’s just never been my thing.”

Kara looks completely befuddled by the idea as if it’s incomprehensible that someone wouldn’t like the sport she’s made a career out of. “That’s it, friendship over,” Kara states definitively.

“We were friends?” Lena asks with a laugh and another sip of her drink.

“Well not anymore,” Kara grumbles, but her face is smiling when she peeks a glance back up at Lena.

“--

“So when is your next game?” Lena asks casually and then realizes she should probably know that answer to that so ventures a guess, “Sunday?”

Kara pulls a face, stirs the straw around in her drink. “Yeah. The Skippers again,” she says with a tone that conveys quite clearly how Kara feels about the team.

“The local rivalry?”

“We’re not big fans of each other,” Kara says, smiling at Lena. “You should probably know that.”

“I do know that,” Lena replies and just barely stops herself from kicking Kara’s shin under the table like she would do if it were Jack telling her this. “I’m trying to make conversation. It’s polite.”

“Right, totally,” Kara says with a teasing nod of her head. “I’m sorry, I didn’t look at the script.”

“Indeed,” Lena says with a prim arch of her brow that makes Kara chuckle.

“I’m sure they’ll be angry we killed them on opening night,” Kara says, fingers toying with the stem
of her margarita glass. “It doesn’t help that Leslie Willis used to play for the Lakehawks with us until we traded her.”

“For Maggie, right?” Lena asks, trying to scrounge up the information she’d read about the Lakehawks draft and trade history.

“Yeah kind of,” Kara says with a shrug of her shoulder that would look indifferent if Kara wasn’t making a pinched kind of expression as she does it.

“Leslie wasn’t happy with the trade?”

Kara looks away a second. “Leslie and I also might have a bit of…personal…history.”

That catches Lena’s attention and she shifts in her seat, searching Kara’s face. It’s not a big secret that Kara’s dated women, but the confirmation of it does nothing to quell the pull of attraction low in Lena’s gut. “Really?”

Laughing softly, Kara nods. “Yeah, it’s made the games we play each other kind of tense.”


“We didn’t date,” Kara clarifies with a slight eyeroll and a frown.

Lena laughs. “Well in that case, I’d think it’d be even worse.”

“That makes me sound so sleezy,” Kara says with a scrunch of her nose that makes Lena laugh again.

“Not at all,” Lena tells her with a dismissive shake of her head. “I’m well practiced in the art of casual flings.”

That seems to interest Kara who raises her eyebrows and leans forward just the slightest. “You are?”

Laughing, Lena picks her drink up and pushes her lips together in a smug looking smile. “Of course. Relationships aren’t exactly something easy to manage when you’re in my position.”

“Mine either,” Kara says and Lena acknowledges that with a quick quirk of her brow.

“Now, dipping into the company ink, however…” Lena starts with a soft chuckle. “I’m not sure I’d ever want to approach a woman I have to see in the workplace every day. Even for something casual. Not that I haven’t been tempted.”

Something about whatever she’s said makes Kara’s face still as she looks over and she’s not sure if it’s because of their current professional relationship or something else. “Well, I learned my lesson after Leslie,” Kara says softly with a slight upturn of her lips.

--

The rest of dinner passes easily. Lena finds Kara to be a relatively interesting companion if not entirely distracting. It’s a struggle to remember this is nothing more than a business dinner and not a date. Especially when they’re leaving the restaurant and Kara’s hand drifts to the small of Lena’s back as they pass through the door towards a waiting valet.

Apart from a career path that Lena’s never understood the appeal of, Kara is funny, smart and attractive in a combination that Lena usually goes for quite easily. In any other circumstance, Lena would already be asking Kara over for an after dinner drink at her penthouse.
“Thank you for dinner,” Lena murmurs as the valet scurries off to fetch Kara’s car. Her own driver is pulling up to the curb. “Though entirely unnecessary, it was enjoyable.”

“I’m glad, Miss Luthor,” Kara says, rocking a bit on her feet as she looks over at Lena.

“I think sharing a plate of nachos qualifies you for first name status,” Lena jokes, emboldened slightly by that third whiskey she had consumed over dessert.

Kara’s eyes darken a bit, her gaze hot on Lena’s face. “I’m glad, Lena,” Kara corrects and Lena can’t help the reaction her body has to the sound of her name out of Kara’s lips.

This attraction she feels for Kara is clearly not ebbing away and Lena can feel how risky it is. It doesn’t stop her, however, from pushing up onto her toes to press a friendly kiss at the corner of Kara’s mouth before slipping into the back of her car.

As she drives away she spots Kara’s eyes following her, smirk on her lips.

--

There’s an e-mail in her inbox the next morning from a k.danvers@lakehawks.com that reads only: Last night was fun. Sorry about your face. Followed by a sequence of digits Lena realizes is Kara’s number.

It takes a moment of indecision before she logs the number in her phone, but she resists the urge to send a text message and focuses on her work for the day.

--

The next Lakehawks game comes far too quickly for Lena’s taste.

“How many games are there in a season?” Lena asks Jack as they share a pre-game meal at a nearby steakhouse.

“Something like eighty I believe,” Jack answers, stabbing a green bean with his fork.

“Eighty?!” Her voice rises against her control and a couple at a nearby table shoot her matching looks of disdain that she glares back at.

“It’s a long season,” Jack agrees, “but at least you only have to go to some of the away games.”

Lena chokes on a sip of her martini. “I have to go to away games?”

“Some of them,” Jack says. “Lex did, from what I remember. The local ones or the big rivalries. Or when they make the playoffs.”

Lena lets out a dignified groan and drops her forehead against her palm, elbow propped against the table. “Remind me why I decided to keep this team,” she grumbles and Jack laughs.

“Because you love getting into the old boy’s club and ruffling feathers,” he answers dutifully and it makes her laugh as well, this time the fading bruise covered by makeup under her eye doesn’t even twinge.

--

Kara approaches her nearly as soon as she and Jack find their seats and Lena hears the sound of flashes go off as they greet each other on the court.
“I’ll try not to crash into you this time,” Kara jokes with a flirty kind of smile that makes Lena take a deep breath.

“At least try to avoid it when I have a drink in my hands,” Lena teases back and Kara laughs. It’s easy, warm and Lena finds herself reconsidering her previous misgivings about basketball.

“Will do, boss,” she says with a wink before turning back to her team.

“That was familiar,” Jack observes when Lena takes her seat next to him.

“We had dinner,” she answers, her eyes on the flash of players performing shooting drills on the court in front of her. “It was pleasant.”

“You what?” Jack exclaims loudly, suddenly straightening in his chair.

“Hush,” she admonishes, slapping his thigh. “She took me out to apologize for falling on me the other night.”

“You went on a date with Kara Danvers?” Jack asks in a conspiratorial whisper as he leans close to her ear.

The loud booming sound of the team’s warm-up playlist thankfully covers most of the conversation and Lena cuts him a glare. “It wasn’t a date.”

He turns to look at Kara who is standing on the far side of the basket taking shots from the baseline. When Lena follows his gaze Kara glances at her and a hint of a smile forms. “Never thought you’d go for a jock,” Jack says with a contemplative look.

“I wouldn’t,” Lena says with a tone that tries to convey how affronted she is at the suggestion. “It was just dinner.”

Jack looks unconvinced, but leans back in his chair and crosses his legs. “Be careful with that one, Lena. Company ink and all that.”

She rolls her eyes, but doesn’t reply. The same thought had been repeating itself the longer the feel of Kara’s skin under her lips lingered in her memories.

--

The picture of their conversation is apparently posted onto both the Lakehawks and the Luthor Corp social media accounts.

Jack texts her screenshots of it and Lena rolls her eyes.

_Do you have a google alert for my name or something?_ Lena texts him and she can practically hear his laughter when he texts back.

_You photograph well. And so does Kara._

Lena finds she can’t disagree with that sentiment as she spends an extra few seconds looking at the picture of her and Kara standing next to each other.

They make an attractive pair. Kara in her Lakehawks warm-ups, smiling widely and Lena in heels that bring her at eye-level with Kara and always make her legs look great. Kara’s body is angled towards her, her hands behind her back, and Lena finds herself endeared to the posture displayed there.
She exits out of the conversation with Jack, but not before she makes a point to follow the Lakehawks Instagram and Twitter accounts.

--

Kara seems to be a frequent target of local news and Lena can’t decide if she just didn’t notice before or if it’s a recent development brought on by the Lakehawks winning streak of late. Ten games into the season and they’ve yet to lose.

The picture shows up on her Twitter timeline no less than ten times and Lena only clicks on it because she has a business interest in keeping tabs on the players of a team she owns. Or so she tells herself.

It’s Kara. That much is clear not just from the bold caption under the photo, but because Lena’s come to find Kara’s laughing face a familiar sight. There’s an unfamiliar girl tucked under her arm smiling up at her and they’re pressed in close together. Intimately close.

The article goes on to speculate the obvious and includes a long list of people Kara’s been rumored to have romantic ties to. The list is so long that Lena finds her eyebrows raising as she reads through it. Kara had mentioned that she wasn’t in a position for serious relationships, but certainly hadn’t indicated she’d indulged in this many flings. Quite the opposite really.

“So the player is a player,” Lena murmurs with a laugh at her own joke before choking it back. She clicks out of the article and closes her Twitter feed to re-open her e-mail.

Lena can’t decide how she feels about the information. Relieved that it gives her a firm reason to avoid entanglement with Kara or irrationally discontent at the idea of Kara having a significant romantic history that doesn’t include her.

“This isn’t high school, Lena,” she chastises herself.

“Did you say something, Miss Luthor?” Comes a voice from her door and her head snaps up to see Jess wavering there with a confused look and a stack of papers in her hands.

“No, sorry, Jess. What can I do for you?”

--

They’re sitting at a local rooftop bar when Lena hears a woman lean over the counter to her right and ask the bartender, “Could you put the Lakehawks on that TV please? I think they’re on ESPN tonight.”

Jack’s in the middle of discussing some new project he’s started at work, but Lena’s attention gets pulled to where the bartender is changing the channel on the television hanging behind the bar. Kara’s face suddenly comes up on the large screen as she gives a pregame interview.

“Sudden interest in basketball?” Jack muses with a knowing grin on his face.

Lena shrugs a shoulder and reaches out for her wine glass. “I own the team, Jack.”

“Ah yes,” he says, looking up to where Kara is grinning down at a reporter holding a microphone between them. “The team.”

“She’s our most valuable player,” Lena says. “And a huge source of profit for the company.”
It sounds thin even as she says it, but Jack doesn’t reply, just cuts into his steak and smiles at her.
“You know, I heard she’s dating Alex Andrews.”

Lena had heard the same. Kara’s dating exploits had become somewhat of a frequent resident on Lena’s news feed each morning. “Reading the gossip column again?”

He laughs. “I have to,” he says. “If only to keep up on our relationship. Did you know I’m cheating on you with Veronica Sinclair?”

Lena makes a face and looks away from the television that’s now displaying the starting lineups of each team. “If you’re going to cheat on me, please have better taste in mistresses,” she jokes.

“I’ll keep that in mind,” he says with another laugh.

They eat dinner together in companionable silence and Lena can’t help the way her attention seems to linger on the basketball game playing on the television. The Lakehawks take a commanding lead early on and Lena watches as Kara hits back to back three-pointers. Celebrating with a flourish and some kind of intricate hand shake with her sister, Alex, on the sideline.

“She really is very good,” Jack observes as they watch together.

“She is,” Lena agrees without further comment.

Later that night when she’s returned home and her phone has notified her that the Lakehawks did indeed manage to win the game despite a shaky fourth quarter, Lena sits awake in bed and considers.

Kara’s phone number is pulled up on her contact list glaring at her and she wonders what the other girl is doing all the way in Midway City right now. Is she celebrating a victory with her team? With another woman perhaps? Maybe she was already asleep.

Lena contemplates a text message for long moments before closing the messaging app and pulling out her e-mail instead.

The message is brief.

*You played well tonight. Congratulations on the victory.*

She signs her full name on the bottom and sends the e-mail before dropping her phone back on her bedside table and killing the lights.

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The reply comes midmorning the next day just as Lena’s placing her lunch order with Jess.

*Didn’t I give you my number?* is all it says.

Lena deletes the e-mail, but smiles.

They see each other again in passing as Lena’s walking in for a meeting with James Olsen at the arena and Kara is walking out clearly just from practice if the sweaty way her hair is falling out of her ponytail is anything to go by.
“Lena!” Kara greets with a bright smile as they step towards each other.

“Kara, fancy seeing you here,” Lena replies with a polite level of tease, mindful of James’s secretary watching their interaction with interest.

“Are you here to see James?”

“I am, yes,” Lena says and Kara smiles.

“Well it’s good to see you,” Kara answers and Lena fights the urge to take a step back. The heat Kara’s giving off and the way the muscles of her biceps flex as she reaches up to tighten her ponytail are making Lena’s thinking go a bit fuzzy.

“You too,” Lena replies genuinely. “Practice all done?”

“Almost,” Kara says with a crooked smile. “Cat’s got this philosophy that if practice is insanely hard it makes the games a cakewalk in comparison.”

It’s a logical idea, Lena thinks, though she knows squat about sports. “Sounds intense.”

“Totally,” Kara says and god can she just stop smiling so Lena’s stomach would stop doing somersaults? It gets worse when Kara decides to use the hem of her practice jersey to wipe a drip of sweat off her head and Lena’s greeted with a close up view of Kara’s unfairly toned abdomen. “Well, I should get back before Cat decides I need to do more suicides.”

Even if Lena understood exactly what that meant, she wouldn’t be able to reply anyway because her mouth has gone so dry she’s not sure she’ll be able to speak to James in the next few minutes.

“Of course,” she manages to get out. “Wouldn’t want that.”

“No,” Kara agrees and thankfully drops her jersey back into place covering up the skin of her stomach. Lena’s fingers twitch involuntarily. “Like I said, good to see you.”

“You too,” Lena says, hoping the heat in her cheeks isn’t visible.

Kara, for her part, doesn’t seem to notice Lena’s inner turmoil and just graces her with another bright smile before walking away.

Lena blinks at the empty space in front of her and then seems to remember herself. She turns to look at James’s secretary, recalling with sudden worry that she has an audience, but the woman is staring at Kara’s retreating form with a dreamy look on her face.

Seems Lena’s not the only one completely affected by Kara Danvers. That knowledge does some good in restoring Lena’s composure and she manages to clear her throat pointedly and arch a brow when it startles the assistant out of her staring. “Could you let Mr. Olsen know I’m here for our meeting?”

“Oh, yes, of course Miss Luthor,” the girl says, scrambling to pick up her desk phone.

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“I’m merely concerned for you,” Jack is saying. “As your friend.”

There’s this casual smile on his face that comes across teasing and smug at the same time as he leans against the bar, knot of his tie loose around his neck, top button of his shirt undone and his hair with that end of the day tousle in it.
Lena rolls her eyes at him. “You’re not my mother, Jack,” she says – annoyed as usual with his constant badgering regarding her love life.

“You’re mother is terrible,” Jack says, pointing at her with the hand holding his glass of whisky.

“Something we agree upon.”

“And you’ve been tense lately. All this business with Lex -”

“I’m not tense,” she snaps at him, but he just laughs and she concedes the point with a quirk of her lips.

“I could set you up,” he offers for the fifth time that night. “Something casual. It could be good for you.”

“When’s the last time you’ve been on a date, Jack?” Lena says with a pointed look as she runs her fingers through her hair.

“We’re talking about you right now, not me.”

“You spend too much time with me,” she says. “And caring about my love life instead of worrying about your own.”

“Love life,” he scoffs, taking a long drink of his whisky. “We’re not talking about love lives.”

“Aren’t we?”

“You know how I feel about that word,” he says as if talking about love is something sour in his mouth.

“The last time you gave me dating advice it went terribly,” Lena says, watching a dark look cross Jack’s face. “Or do you not remember?”

“Of course I remember,” he says. “This isn’t Sam.”

“You’re right,” she says, trying not to get angry with him, but irritated with this constant focus on what she is or isn’t doing romantically. “It’s some random stranger you’d like me to take to dinner only to be bored to death and out the price of a nice meal and a taxi.”

“It wouldn’t hurt to share a meal and conversation with someone that isn’t me or someone that works for you,” he points out and she can admit he has a point.

“I don’t have the time for that,” she sighs and he looks at her with soft affection.

“You can make time for this,” he says. “It’ll be good for you to get away from your life for a few hours.”

Lena hesitates, considers and Jack reaches over to touch her hand.

“Just go on one date and I promise I’ll leave you alone about this for a week.”

“A month,” she bargains and he laughs.

“A week and three days.”

“Two weeks.”
Jack narrows his eyes for a few seconds before extending his hand towards her. “Two weeks.”

--

The woman Jack sets her up with works at a local investment firm downtown and she makes sure Jack triple checks her work history to confirm that she has no ties to Luthor Corp. The last thing Lena needs is a casual date turning into an impromptu business dinner.

Or for anything in her off-hours to bleed suddenly into her work.

They meet at a popular steakhouse called Seven in the heart of downtown and Lena reserves a table on the rooftop floor of their seven-floored restaurant.

The rooftop layout is nice, and intimate. A square bar in the center and the edges of the roof lined with small two-seater tables. There’s a glass firepit on one side of the roof surrounded by comfortable looking chairs and strings of lights cover the entire space like a canopy.

For a date, it’s perfect.

Except Lena has such little interest in her companion that even the sight of the National City skyline and the eighty-dollar steak in front of her can’t make her enjoy herself. It’s somewhere between awkward and dreadfully boring and Lena half considers faking an emergency to have an excuse to leave.

It’s after her date excuses herself to use the restroom that Lena notices a familiar form standing near the bar and looking her direction.

Kara Danvers.

In form fitting dark wash jeans and a casual flannel button down, Kara’s leaned up against the bar with a drink. There’s a woman talking to her – someone Lena doesn’t recognize – but Kara’s not paying her much attention apart from nodding every few seconds. Her eyes, however, are looking straight at Lena.

“Is that Kara Danvers?” It seems her date has returned to the table and has followed Lena’s gaze over to the bar.

It rips her stare away from where Kara is still watching them and back to the woman across from her. With a short clearing of her throat she reaches to pick up her glass. “Yes, I believe it is.”

“Do you know her? She’s staring right over here.”

Lena smiles. “I own the Lakehawks,” she says with a quick sip of her wine.

“Oh, of course. That’s right,” her date says before leaning forward over the table. “Do you think you could introduce me?”

Laughing abruptly, Lena tilts her head quizzically at the excited glint in the woman’s eyes. “Excuse me?”

“Do you think you could introduce me? My little sister is a huge fan and it’d be such a big deal if I could get her autograph.”

Lena glances back to where Kara is still standing at the bar, now paying far more attention to the woman talking to her, but still stealing looks Lena’s direction. “Sure.”
They make their way over to the bar and when Kara notices Lena’s headed her direction she straightens abruptly enough that the woman she’s with looks over.

“Lena,” Kara greets with a bright smile that falters only slightly when she looks at the woman trailing behind Lena.

“Hello, Kara,” she says and when she looks to the woman Kara is with expectantly, Kara chokes a bit on her drink for a second.

“Right, yeah, this is -”

“Sara Lance!” Lena’s date exclaims in an excited burst of sound that makes Lena jump a bit.

Kara’s friend – Sara Lance, apparently – laughs charmingly and extends her hand. “Guilty as charged,” she says with a look that can only be described as flirtatious.

Her date – whose name is escaping her at the moment – giggles as she takes Sara’s hand and Lena can’t help the bit of her that’s relieved at the idea of this Sara Lance taking her date out of her hands.

“Lena Luthor, right?” Sara says, this time extending her hand towards Lena.

“That’s right,” she says with a polite smile as she shakes Sara’s hand.

“I saw that video of this one here,” Sara nudges at Kara’s bicep in a friendly gesture, “running into you during the game. I know what that feels like and I can empathize.”

Lena’s brow pulls down at the statement until Kara clarifies, “Sara plays for the Evergreens.”

“Star City’s superstar,” her date swoons much to Sara’s clear delight. “Wow, imagine my luck running into the two of you together.”

“But like that,” Kara says hastily, looking at Lena. “We’re not together together. We’re just - I mean…” Sara gives Kara an indulgent smile, laughing softly.

“Would you like a picture?” Sara offers, diverting everyone’s attention from a now blushing Kara Danvers. Which is how Lena ends up holding her date’s phone and snapping a picture of her with her arms around both Kara and Sara.

In the end, Sara manages to charm Lena’s date out from under nose – not that Lena puts up much of a fight. By the time they order a round of drinks, Sara’s already convinced Lena’s date to join her at the small firepit across the way. “If you don’t mind, Lena,” Sara does say with a cocked eyebrow for Lena and a short amused quirk for Kara.

“Of course not,” Lena says softly with a silent laugh as Sara leads her date away.

It leaves her with Kara at the bar and both of them exchanging a chuckle.

“Well it looks like we’re both out a date,” Lena comments as she takes her place at the bar next to Kara and picks up her drink.

“Sara and I weren’t on a date,” Kara says.

With a playful smile for the serious way Kara says it, Lena quirks a brow. “No?”

“I know Sara has a bit of a reputation,” Kara says slowly and Lena narrows her eyes.
“She does?” Apart from a brief memory of hearing about the Lance sisters of Star City’s basketball team, Lena’s not well versed in the gossip circle of professional basketball.

Kara points over to where Sara is now leading Lena’s date towards the elevators. “I’m pretty sure Sara’s taking your date home now.”

Lena laughs. “I’ll send her a thank you note later.”

Kara glances over with an interested arch of her brow. “Wasn’t going well?”

“You could say that,” Lena says with a little sigh as she finishes the last of her drink.

“Another one?” Kara offers with an inviting smile. When Lena hesitates, Kara gestures around them towards the setting sun and the skyline beginning to light up around them. “It’d be a shame to waste this view.”

Her lips stretch into a warm smile and she laughs softly. “Kara Danvers, smooth talker,” she says, let out only by the amount of alcohol finally settling into her system. It’s the wine, she thinks, that makes it come out as flirtatious as it does.

A flush blooms into Kara’s cheeks and her eyes skit away sheepishly. “I wasn’t trying to sound weird,” she says which just makes Lena laugh more, charmed by the way Kara turns from confident superstar to shy, pretty girl in seconds.

Taking pity on her, Lena reaches across to touch Kara’s forearm. “Buy me a drink,” she says softly and Kara grins so immediately that Lena finds her own lips moving to mirror the expression.

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They end up on the comfortable two-seater couch near the firepit with a glass of wine and Lena feels drawn in by a strong irresistible tug of attraction towards the way Kara’s face looks under the soft brush of light from the fire.

“I can’t believe Sara took your date home,” Kara laughs, elbow propping up on the back of the small couch and holding her head.

“I thought you said she had a reputation,” Lena says with a answering laugh and a sip of her wine.

“Well sure, but I mean if I had the choice between you and Sara…” Kara starts, leaving the end of the thought dangling, but Lena picks it up easily enough. It blooms warmth across her cheeks suddenly at the implication.

“Because Sara’s your friend,” Lena points out, trying to ignore the very unsubtle way Kara’s staring at her now.

“Right,” Kara says, nodding slowly, eyes still intent on Lena’s face.

A change of subject seems entirely necessary so Lena looks away and into the fire next to them for a moment, taking a careful sip of her drink. “So Sara plays for the Evergreens?”

Kara’s silent a moment before sitting up and shifting straighter on the couch. “Yeah, with her sister Laurel, actually.”

Lena looks back at Kara, tries to ignore the pretty way the Kara’s hair falls over her shoulders. “Is that some kind of rule in basketball?”
Kara’s brow knits. “What?”

“That you have to play with your sister?” Lena points out and Kara laughs.

“Oh, that. Yeah, weird right?”

Lena shrugs a shoulder. “I guess?”

“Actually, Alex and I were first,” Kara says, swirling the wine in her glass around a bit. “I think we kind of paved the way for Sara and Laurel to play together. Before us Laurel played for Century City and then she put in for a trade and the Evergreens picked her up.”

“I don’t know that I’d want to play with my sibling,” Lena says, remembering how just working for the same company as Lex can get on her nerves.

Kara hums, half in agreement. “Sometimes it’s a lot,” she admits. “But Alex and I have been playing basketball together since we were kids, before the Danvers adopted me. Sometimes I feel like I wouldn’t be able to play without her on my team.”

“From the way your contract is structured that doesn’t seem like something you’ll have to worry about,” Lena says pointedly. The team contracts were one of the few things from the massive file on the Lakehawks that Lena felt familiar with immediately. Money, numbers, legalese, these kinds of things weren’t that different between sports franchises and corporate conglomerates.

Kara’s in particular had a very clear clause regarding her sister Alex and if Kara hadn’t already proved her value to the Lakehawks in tenfold Lena would have balked at it.

It pulls an almost sheepish smile across Kara’s face. “True.”

“You were adopted?” Lena asks, after a moment of simple silence. Kara’s smile softens a little and she plucks at the stem of her wine glass.

“Yeah,” Kara says, shrugging. “I’m pretty sure you could YouTube the whole story from some ESPN special, if you wanted to learn all about it.”

“No, I - sorry,” Lena says, her hand reaching halfway between them before she thinks better of it and withdraws. “I was adopted as well. But I know what that’s like, to have everyone know about something you would rather hide.”

Kara hums, her eyes glistening under the firelight before her smile brightens again and she leans close.

“Okay then, Lena Luthor,” Kara says. “Tell me something no one else knows about you.”

Lena can’t help but laugh at the enthusiasm on Kara’s face, can’t help but be charmed by her.

“I don’t know,” Lena says. “I - accidentally set the chemistry lab on fire at boarding school and blamed it on this girl who lived down the hall.”

“Wow, that’s dark,” Kara says, reaching out to nudge at Lena’s shoulder and laughing. “What’s next? Where are the bodies buried?”

“Shush,” Lena says, laughing as Kara rolls her head along the back of the couch. “You go now. Tell me something no one else knows about you.”

Kara makes a noise of thought, rubbing at her chin and smiling when Lena laughs again.
“I had a panic attack before my first Lakehawks game,” Kara says, finally. “Threw up all over the locker room. I told everyone I didn’t know what had happened, later. Coach almost killed security because she thought some drunk fan had got in to ruin our game.”

Lena lets a moment pass in silence, taking in the information.

“That’s disgusting,” Lena says, and Kara laughs loudly, her face scrunching up in such an endearing way that Lena has to look away.

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Time passes easily between them. The rooftop area becomes more and more deserted without either of them realizing it until a waiter is stopping by with an apologetic expression and the check.

Kara sits up at that, reaching for it, and Lena glances around with a start to realize the restaurant is very clearly closing up.

A look at her watch tells her it’s just past two in the morning and her jaw drops a bit. Which is how she misses Kara slipping a credit card to the waiter with a smile.

“Wait,” Lena says uselessly as the server has already moved away to process the payment. “You don’t need to do that. I said you could buy me one drink, not four.”

Kara waves her off, sits back against the cushions and Lena resists the urge to press forward and lean against her. That fourth glass of wine was probably a mistake.

“My friend stole your date,” Kara says. “It’s the least I can do.”

“Sara taking my date home was probably the best end to that dinner I can think of,” Lena jokes with grin on her face that she realizes is probably too flirty to be appropriate but can’t stop.

Kara’s eyes flicker down to her mouth and then back up and good lord Lena really wouldn’t mind if she could kiss Kara right now.

It’s the waiter returning that saves the moment and Lena can’t decide if she’s grateful or irritated. Which is how she knows it’s well past time for her to go home.

“Thank you for the drinks, Kara,” she says, licking dryness off her lips and clearing her throat from the thick feeling that’s taken hold of it.

“Anytime, Lena,” Kara says with a gorgeous smile and warmth in her eyes that Lena has to look away from lest she throw propriety to the wind and kiss Kara back into the couch.

--

Jack finds her the next day for a mid-afternoon coffee break and makes a ridiculously exaggerated lecherous face. “So how did your date go? Did you two hit it off? Give me the details.”

The memory of Kara’s face under the dim lighting of the rooftop comes to mind then – the way she laughed at Lena’s stupid stories from college and how she casually paid their bill like she was the one taking Lena on a date all along. When they parted ways, Kara had pressed a warm kiss to Lena’s cheek as if they’d known each for years instead of a month and a half and looked into Lena’s eyes just a second too long to be appropriate.

“It was fine, Jack,” Lena says, clearing her throat at the sudden, sense memory of the way Kara’s
hair smelled as it pulled away from Lena’s face. “But it didn’t go anywhere past the entrees.”

“How disappointing,” he sighs and Lena shrugs.

“The meal was good,” Lena says, thinking of the way Kara smiled at her when they moved to sit at the small chairs near the firepit. “And the view was gorgeous.”

Jack smiles. “Well at least you got something out of it.”

Declining further comment, Lena just hums into the rim of her coffee cup and takes a warm sip.

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It makes her laugh when Jack sends her a picture later – grainy and out of focus from someone’s Twitter. The caption explains the contents, but Lena already knows it’s Sara Lance and her date from the other night striding out of the restaurant and getting into a waiting car.

*I’m just happy she got something out of the night* Lena replies and Jack sends back a series of laughing emojis.

Another picture surfaces the following day, a photo of Sara again, but this time back with Kara. The body language in the picture is clear – Sara’s got a hand on Kara’s hip, too low to be friendly and she’s close enough that they almost could be touching. Kara’s looking down, eyes serious and the picture is clear enough Lena can see a familiarity there she hadn’t picked up on the previous night.

“Sara Lance sure moves fast,” Jack comments when they see it together. “Makes sense they’d be together from what I’ve heard of Kara.”

“What about Kara?” Lena says, swiping the picture away and trying to ignore the irrational way it makes her feel.

“The girl in every port bit,” Jack explains. “Typical superstar athlete rumors. Seems Sara is the same way.”

“They’re friends,” Lena replies, and it comes out far more defensive than she means it to. “I ran into them the other night at Seven, actually.”

“So that’s how your date ended up going home with the wrong woman,” Jack says, his attention now wholly focused on Lena in interest.

“Kara and Sara were having a drink,” she explains. “And Kara made it very clear they were just friends.”

Jack’s brow furrows just the slightest, his head tilting. “Why would she feel the need to make that clear to you?”

There’s no easy answer to that and Lena can feel herself getting back into a corner. “Perhaps to avoid the kind of reputation you’re accusing her of having.”

Jack laughs. “I’m not accusing her of anything, I’m merely pointing out what I hear from other people.”

“They’re friends, Jack. Leave it alone,” Lena says even though she doesn’t find herself believing it fully.

“I never said they weren’t,” Jack defends, a surprised look of amusement on his face. “Just because
they’re friends doesn’t mean they don’t—"

Lena holds up a hand to halt his words. “I honestly don’t want to waste my time speculating on the love lives of the rich and famous.”

“Again, Lena,” Jack tsks with a laughing smile. “With this love thing.”

Lena swats at him, rolls her eyes, but chuckles. “Shut up, Jack,” she orders with fondness.

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If pressed, Lena would not admit it to a single soul, but whoever runs the Lakehawks Instagram deserves a raise. They post photo after photo of various Lakehawks in practice, in team meetings, at charity events, and working out - and Kara is a particular favorite. One video that gets posted is of Kara doing a rope drill, sweating profusely, her arms exposed and muscles visible as she moves through the exercise.

Lena watches it a full four times before she manages to make it past the visuals and glance at the comments, which are full of fans putting in various suggestive emojis. There’s even one from Lucy Lane, and all it says is where’s your permit for those guns, kd?

She likes the Instagram before she can think better of it.

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The next time she sees Kara it’s because the basketball player is loitering outside Lena’s office one afternoon chatting with Jess. Lena stops, unnoticed, as the elevator doors close behind her and Jess laughs at whatever Kara is saying.

“Good afternoon,” she says with a short clearing of her throat, stepping forward towards both women.

“Miss Luthor,” Jess exclaims, standing up abruptly.

Kara turns casually and grins at Lena. Without the excuse of too much wine, Lena knows she needs to nip this attraction in the bud – or at the very least stop giving Kara the idea that she’s as interested in breaking a series of personal and professional rules as Kara appears to be.

“I wasn’t aware we had a meeting,” Lena says, sending a quizzical look at her assistant.

“We don’t,” Kara answers. “I was just in the building and thought I’d stop by. Do you have a second?”

Lena’s nearly done with her day anyway so she escorts Kara into her office and closes the door behind her with a final sounding thud.

“What had you at Luthor Tower today?” Lena asks as she paces across the room towards her desk, depositing her bag on a nearby counter and pouring herself a glass of water.

“I had a meeting with marketing,” Kara explains fiddling with a small globe Lena keeps on her desk. “Workshopping what I’m going to promote this season.”

Lena takes a long gulp of water before walking over to her desk and sitting down. “You certainly do a lot here.”

Kara shrugs, ignores the statement. “What are you doing tonight?”
The invitation is clear and Lena takes a deep breath to steady her resolve. “Did you come all the way over here to check on my schedule?”

Kara’s answering smile is unmistakably flirtatious. “Actually, I was hoping you’d be free for dinner,” she says.

The invitation is clear. Lena has always been good at navigating social situations like this and there’s unmasked interest in Kara’s eyes. “I’m afraid not,” Lena answers slowly.

“Not tonight?” Kara asks.

Lena’s not sure how to answer that without making a major assumption. “Surely you have better options than me for a dinner companion,” Lena settles on and Kara’s brow pulls together.

“While I disagree,” Kara starts with a confused laugh. “I’d like to have dinner with you if you’re available.”

Lena sighs, goes for blunt. Better to get out in front of something than to deal with it when it’s too late. “Are you asking me on a date, Kara?”

Kara seems taken aback by the questioning, her fingers twisting together in front of her for a moment before she untangles them and leans her hands up against Lena’s expansive office desk. “If I was?”

“I would ask why.”

“Because I feel like there might be something here. Don’t you?”

Laughing is an instinctive defensive measure and Lena doesn’t stop it even when a flash of hurt shadows Kara’s face. “Kara,” Lena starts slowly, rising up from her chair. “I own the team that you play for. I’m your boss, if not directly, than certainly indirectly.”

“I know that,” Kara says, back straightening in a show of insistence. “But I thought we had a good time at dinner last month and then having drinks the other night and I feel like you might be attracted to me and I certainly am to -”

“Attraction is one thing,” Lena says, halting Kara with a show of her palm. “It’s biological. It can’t be helped. Consciously breaking a series of professional and ethical rules is a completely different story.”

“There’s not a rule against -”

“Kara, it’s not going to happen,” Lena interrupts with a note of finality that Kara finally seems to hear. “Thank you for the drinks and the company the other night, but that was…that was an anomaly. I’m not available for anything else.”

A tense silence stretches between them. Kara’s pretty blue eyes search Lena’s face and it makes her uncharacteristically uncomfortable enough that she has to look away for a moment.

“Okay,” Kara says simply her smile only dropping slightly from the brightness of earlier. “We could still have dinner as friends. Or even colleagues if you’d like.”

“Sure,” Lena allows without really believing in it. “I’ll let you know if my schedule frees up.”

Kara takes the hint and retreats from the office with a last look at Lena before the door closes behind her.
“She really asked you out?” Jack asks a few days later as they’re idling at the open bar of a charity dinner Lena had been invited to. “At your own office.”

Lena hums an affirmative and takes a sip of the cocktail the bartender is handing over to her.

Jack grabs for the lowball of scotch he’s being offered and walks with Lena to a nearby hightop. “And you said no?”

Lena shoots him a look. “Of course I said no.”

“But you’re attracted to the girl,” he says. “That much is obvious to anyone with eyes in a ten foot radius of you two.”

“You’ve seen us together one time,” Lena replies rolling her eyes.

“That was enough,” Jack tells her. “It’s not like attraction is something that moves on a schedule.”

“She’s my employee,” Lena says, having thought Jack would be more agreeable to this line of reasoning.

“Hardly,” he scoffs, clearly unimpressed.

“Jack,” she sighs, but he barrels forward.

“It’s a crush, Lena. I didn’t say marry her, I said go out to dinner with her,” he takes a sip of his drink while Lena smiles at a passing acquaintance and they wait until he’s out of earshot before continuing. “Get it out of your system.”

Lena scoffs a bit. “Just what exactly are you suggesting, Jack?”

“Oh gosh,” he says with a chortle into his glass. “I hope it hasn’t been so long that you don’t know.”

“Be serious,” she admonishes him, but before they can continue one of Jack’s old colleagues is stepping up to their table to say hello.

Get it out of your system lingers in Lena’s head the next few days. The Lakehawks are on the road and Lena turns the game on while she’s stuck in the office for a late night. It plays on mute on the television screen across the room and she watches it idly while slogging through a stack of reports she’s behind on.

The Lakehawks are losing, an uncharacteristic turn of events and the screen is showing a series of statistics on the screen that Lena only half understands. The way the camera keeps cutting to where Kara is sitting on the bench with a clear look of frustration on her face is very telling.

Glancing at her phone, Lena considers sending a message for a moment but thinks better of it.

A monthly meeting is scheduled to discuss basketball operations with James and they spend the time going over some preliminary things - scheduling, event planning, team spending.

“There’s a benefit we do every year coming up. Taste of the Lakehawks,” he tells her. “I’m hoping
it’s something you’d like to continue.”

Lena flips to the page in her briefing detailing the event. “What is it exactly?”

“We invite a lot of local restaurants and other business to cater the event. They usually agree just for the free publicity alone and then later the players do a bit of entertainment for the guests. There’s usually a silent auction, some raffles. The ticket, auction and raffle proceeds go towards the foundation.”

Lena scans the page. “The Luthor FastBreak Foundation?”

“Yes,” James answers and Lena remembers only absently what Lex had created the foundation for, but enough not to be suspicious of it.

“Keep the event on the schedule. We can go over details as we move forward,” she decides and James smiles.

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Jack can’t attend the next home game and he sends his apology with a picture of his work desk - piled with all kinds of papers and what looks like a robotic arm in disarray.

Lena loathes the idea of attending without some kind of company, especially Jack’s comforting presence, but she does anyway. It’s not in her nature to shirk responsibility and she can’t deny that’s she’s found a more-than-passing interest in the fate of the Lakehawks now that she owns the team.

When Kara jogs out with the rest of her team for warm-ups she spares Lena a glance and a smile, but doesn’t let her gaze linger and Lena’s a tad grateful.

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The game ends up holding Lena’s attention for longer than normal, which might be because of how poorly the Lakehawks are playing. They’re down by double digits going into the half and when Lucy Lane comes towards the bench when the whistle blows she nearly kicks a chair into the stands. Lena can see Alex slinging an arm over Kara’s shoulders as they walk towards the locker room, whispering something in her ear and scruffing the top of her head encouragingly. Kara doesn’t look soothed, a tight line in her jaw radiating anger.

Just as they’re about to disappear into the tunnel Kara catches Lena’s eye and Lena gives as an encouraging smile as she can manage. It seems to have some kind of effect because Kara’s face softens just enough before she rounds the corner with the rest of the team.

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“In sports news this evening the National City Lakehawks managed to overcome a fifteen point deficit going into the third quarter to beat the Coast City Chaos. The victory breaks the two game losing streak the Lakehawks have been on and comes on the heels of star forward Kara Danvers’s twenty second half points.”

The television shows a sequence of clips of Kara scoring, a series of Lucy Lane enthusiastically jumping on Kara when they take the lead on a deep three-pointer and then Alex Danvers giving a post game interview about her team’s success.

Lena flips it off, returns to the bottle of wine she’d opened when she got home and tries not to smile.
After a moment’s debate she opens up her e-mail and sends a quick message.

*Exciting game. Go Lakehawks!*

The response comes in the morning when she’s scrolling through her inbox over a cup of coffee.

*Thanks! It’s always exciting to come from behind.*

She chokes a bit on her coffee but manages to stop herself from spraying it onto the tablet she’s holding.

The message is signed off with a simple *KD* and a question: *Do you have something against phones?*

Lena just deletes the e-mail thread and pours the rest of her coffee down the drain.

The next time she spots Kara Danvers on television late night over drinks with a potential investor she has to fight a blush.

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The number blinking up from her phone is unlisted as far as she can tell and she squints at it in the darkness of her bedroom for a long moment before deciding to answer.

It takes a second through the fogginess of her still sleep laden brain, but she manages to register the voice on the other end of the line giving her an amused, “Hey, little sister.”

“Lex?!”

“The one and only,” he responds and Lena can hear the cocky grin in his voice.

She sighs and rubs sleep out of her eyes as she sits up and bed. “Lex it’s,” Lena glances at the digital clock on her bedside table. “Three in the morning.”

“Ah sorry,” he says with a soft laugh. “No concept of time where I’m at.”

“And where is that exactly?” Lena asks, reaching over to switch a light on.

Lex tsks into a chuckle. “That’s not of consequence.”

“Not to you maybe,” Lena says dryly with a roll of her eyes. Her brother continues to laugh on the other end. “Is there a point to this middle of the night phone call?”

“I saw you kept the basketball teams and have been attending the Lakehawks games,” Lex comments.

Lena’s brow furrows. “You get sporting news in your hideout?”

Lex laughs again, an unaffected casual sound for someone who is basically a fugitive. “I just called to say I was happy you kept the teams. Especially the Lakehawks. If you had sold off the Harriers, I would have been disappointed, but not quite so sad. And I’m happy to see they’re doing well. If you need any help…”

“James Olsen already warned me that you know nothing about basketball.”

“Sure,” Lena drawls and can’t stop the smile. It feels good to talk to her brother again.

“Hey, I’m the one that drafted Kara Danvers, okay? That was me and without her what are the Lakehawks anyway?”

Lena thinks of Kara for a moment and clears her throat. “I’ll give you that,” she murmurs.

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She’s in London over the next stretch of games at a tech conference to showcase Luthor Corp’s new Model L electric car. The task of getting everything ready and delivering the keynote speech pushes thoughts of basketball far from her mind.

It isn’t until she’s sitting at her hotel bar having a late night martini that she catches wind of the Lakehawks again.

The television there is playing the news and she hadn’t thought that American women’s basketball would be something she’d hear about in London of all places, but the league logo is flashing on the screen.

It’s because of the upcoming Summer Olympics, she realizes quickly, as the news seems to go over the players from the Lakehawks that will likely represent the United States at the games.

The promotional pictures of Kara and Alex that hang in the entrance of Luthor Corp Arena are suddenly on the screen and Lena reads the closed captioning while the announcer discusses the potential roster.

The next sequence of videos, however, gives Lena pause and she watches as Kara takes a nasty spill during the game that night against local rival the National City Skippers.

The cameras stayed zoned in on the way Kara gingerly picks her up from the floor, Alex’s grip on her bicep helping her back to her feet. Kara walks slower than normal towards the bench after being subbed out and the last bit of footage shows the team trainer kneeling in front of her chair.

It cuts back to talk of the roster after that and Lena gives it a frustrated glare for a moment before reaching for her phone.

A quick mental calculation tells her it’s not at all unreasonable to send a text to someone in America, but she pauses for a moment at the realization this would be the first time she’s used the number Kara gave her all those weeks ago when they first met.

She should just e-mail her. It’s professional and in line with the way they’ve been communicating before, but it also risks a delay in response and she knows the quickest way to get an answer to her question is to use the number Kara gave her weeks before.

Curiosity wins out over better senses and after another sip of her martini she writes a quick friendly text and sends it out.

*Leslie Willis certainly does hold a grudge - LL*

It doesn’t take long for a reply to come and her phone blinks at her just as she’s ordered another drink and a small appetizer off the late night menu.

*I was beginning to think you didn’t know how to use a phone.* It’s followed by a few emojis that Lena’s phone doesn’t recognize for some reason.
Lena quirks a brow at that, lips pursed, but before she can respond Kara texts again.

*L Leslie is the worst, but she can’t keep a good girl down.*

This text is accompanied by a picture of Kara grinning at the camera, her arm flexed in the shot and chin lifted. It reminds Lena why she didn’t want to open this line of communication in the first place.

Regardless, her curiosity is sufficiently satisfied. Kara doesn’t look at all injured in the photo and if she thought about any kind of game-altering injury would have made the news she was watching earlier.

They haven’t exchanged many words since Lena rejected Kara’s proposal for dinner in her office days ago and she can’t deny she’s happy Kara doesn’t seem to be sulking about it. Perhaps her offer of friendship was just as sincere as her offer for dinner.

*That’s good. I have a lot of money invested in your well-being,* Lena texts.

A video comes through this time and it’s clearly taken from Kara’s POV as she throws what looks to be like an empty Gatorade bottle towards a trash can and makes a triumphant sound when it lands inside. The text that accompanies it is: *your investment is well protected.*

Lena laughs, but declines saying anything back other than *Good. Sleep well.*

When she falls asleep that night in her empty hotel room and Kara Danvers’s face lingering in her mind’s eye it’s with a smile and a light heart.
Chapter 2

Every few months, Luthor Corp volunteers for the day at a local shelter. It’s a tradition that’s been in the company since she was a child. This year, she’s informed that some of the Lakehawks will be joining her at People Serving People to help serve food at lunch and dinner.

It should have occurred to her that if any Lakehawks would be showing up for what is - in some more cynical minds - a press event, it would be Kara Danvers. But she hadn’t thought much of it and when she catches sight of Kara in the small shelter kitchen it stops her movement for a brief second.

“Miss Luthor,” Kara greets warmly, clearly aware of watching eyes and listening ears. Lena smiles a bit.

“Kara, I didn’t know you’d be here.”

“Of course,” Kara says. “I volunteer here during the offseason anyway. I’m happy to do it on behalf of the Lakehawks and Luthor Corp.”

The personal anecdote surprises Lena a tad, but she manages not to react other than a nod of her head and a smile. A flash startles her from staring at Kara and she spots a man with a camera to their right.

“Smile for the newsletter!” he says and Kara doesn’t hesitate before wrapping an arm around Lena’s shoulders and smiling.

It’s a good thing that Lena naturally smiles in reaction to a camera being pointed her direction because otherwise she’s not sure exactly what the picture would look like. The entire side of her body is suddenly plastered against the heat of Kara’s and she’s so acutely aware of Kara’s fingers gripping around her bicep that it feels like she can’t notice anything else.

Satisfied, the photographer moves away from them and Kara detaches from Lena’s body. Warmth lingers from where they were touching, but Lena just shakes it off, mindful of the rest of the people shuffling around them.

“So, you ready to serve some lunch?” Kara says with a quirky grin that makes Lena smile.

“Of course,” Lena replies, running her palms over the fabric of her slacks to try and get the clammy feeling to leave.

Kara’s grin turns mischievous. “You’re not exactly dressed for the part.”

Confused, Lena looks down at her outfit – a pair of very casual black slacks and a white blouse – but when she looks back up to protest that Kara’s not dressed much differently something is being tugged over her head.

“Wha -”

Suddenly, Kara is very close to her again and it registers after a few seconds that she’s tugging a cheap hairnet over Lena’s perfectly styled hairdo with a laugh.

“Much better,” Kara jokes when the piece is settled and Lena manages to compose herself enough to roll her eyes.
“It took me a half hour to do my hair this morning,” Lena deadpans – and it’s not entirely true, but Kara doesn’t need to know that.

“And it only took me two seconds to perfect it,” Kara replies with a tease and a smile and Lena struggles to keep a straight face, eyes narrowed into a glare even as she does nothing to pull the hairnet off her head.

“If a picture of me in a hairnet ends up on the internet tomorrow I will personally see to it that you’re traded to the Skippers,” Lena says in a low whisper. It comes out sounding threatening, like she means it, but she’s sure that the way her lips quirk at the end gives her away.

Kara only looks affronted for a second before laughing and leaning in close to Lena. “My contract is ironclad. You should know that.”

Lena rolls her eyes and pulls away a bit, taking a deep breath. Kara is a bit too close and the slacks and button down combination she’s wearing is a bit too enticing to Lena. She’s glad they’re at least in relative privacy for the moment – tucked in the small shelter kitchen with only a few attendants around. If Jack were to ever see pictures of she and Kara Danvers smiling at each other in close proximity, she’s sure he’d plaster her apartment with it as a wallpaper.

“Come on,” Kara entreats and she pulls a matching hairnet over her own casual ponytail. “We’re date mates.”

Lena quirks a brow. “Does your fanbase know what a dork you are?”

The smile on Kara’s face only widens and she hooks an arm through Lena’s to lead them towards the food line they’re stationed at. “That’s part of my charm, Miss Luthor,” she says in a cocky kind of tone that makes Lena’s cheeks heat up.

“You’re going to be insufferable all day, aren’t you?”

“It’s good press,” Kara stage whispers. “Make sure you smile at the cameras and look at me like I’m the coolest person you’ve ever met.”

Lena pulls her arm out of Kara’s hold as they approach the open dining room and rolls her eyes even though she’s laughing. “I’m not that good of an actress,” she says with a sideways look at Kara who makes a show of looking offended, but starts laughing too.

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There’s a picture that surfaces on the internet later - the two of them smiling at each other as they stand behind the food line. Lena doesn’t know how the picture got taken, can’t recall the exact moment, but sure as day there she is - beaming at Kara Danvers.

It’s odd to see such an expression on her own face and Jack comments as much later when he shows her it’s on the Lakehawks official Instagram page.

“If only you’d look at me like that,” he says to her with a cheeky smile.

She shoves him in the shoulder. “Shut up, Jack,” she says and it feels like she’s been saying that a lot lately.

From the way he just laughs at her she thinks maybe the words are losing their effect.

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The first away game she ends up being able to attend is in Metropolis, and she books her flight, schedules a few meetings, just so it doesn’t feel like she’s only stopping in to see a basketball game. It’s at least a place she’s familiar with, even if she despises it. She can only hope her mother is off in France or some other locale, or else she isn’t sure she could survive being forced to sit through a dinner with her.

“Lena Luthor, prodigal daughter, returns to Metropolis as a basketball hero,” Jack mocks, waving his hands in the air as if to mimic a headline. Lena swats at him with a roll of her eyes.

“Are you sure you don’t want to come with me?”

“And spend the next two days hearing you complain about everything wrong with Metropolis?”

“It’s not as if we’re going to Gotham,” Lena says dryly, but Jack just laughs again.

“Say hello to Lana for me,” he says. But then he leans forward with an entreatingly grin that has Lena eyeing him in concern for her future.

“What do you want?”

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Jack’s request is easy to fulfill - access to the VIP section of a nightclub downtown named Eleven Down. He could probably achieve such a thing himself, but he proclaims Lena his best wingwoman and far better at charming the bartenders out of top shelf liquor for a cheaper price.

Lena’s not so sure any of that is true, but moments after they get bottle service in their booth and Lena’s introduced Jack to a cute blonde that’d caught his eye when they arrived, Jack’s left her side in favor of the dance floor.

Typical, she thinks as she pours two fingers of whiskey into her glass and settles against the plush cushions of the booth. For a solid few moments, she just listens to the thumping music, drinks her whiskey, and people watches, observing the push and pull of bodies with disinterest. It’s not so much that she’s opposed to the club scene, though it was admittedly always more Lex’s thing. There’s something vapid about settling in the VIP section of a club and holding court - at least without the objective of finding casual companionship or getting wasted.

She spares a thought for her brother, probably partying his way through his exile, and sighs into her glass of whiskey, but the exhale cuts off in a choke when her gaze lands on a high top table not too far away.

There are three people standing there, and the crowd is parted just enough for her to make them all out though only one of them is truly familiar to her - like a beacon across the dark room.

It’s Kara. Of course. Though Lena’s not really sure what Kara would be doing out at a nightclub the night before the Lakehawks are due to get on a plane to Metropolis.

Next to Kara is a taller man, a scruffy looking beard covering a face that tugs at Lena’s recollection - a Harriers player, maybe. He has his arm slung around Kara’s shoulders as he leans into her and laughs at something. The last occupant is a slim woman, shoulder length brown hair and pretty looking dress.

Kara and the man with her are both smiling at the woman and Lena watches the interaction with interest.
They’re far enough away that Lena feels safe to openly stare at them while she takes long sips of her whiskey and calculates how easily she could slip out of the nightclub before Kara spots her.

Just as she’s nailed down a plan - slip towards the bathrooms and out the back exit - she glances once more towards Kara to see blue eyes looking straight in her direction.

A panicky feeling bubbles up in her chest - which is ridiculous - but there’s something dangerous about the thought of talking to Kara right now. She’s had just enough whiskey between her and Jack’s dinner and the amount she’s consumed quickly now to feel looser than normal and Kara’s...well Kara’s dressed in a tight pair of black jeans, a white shirt, and a light wash denim jacket. And she’s wearing...she’s wearing glasses. Lena didn’t know Kara wore glasses and the knowledge - the sight of it even this far away - is doing things to Lena’s sanity.

She needs to do something before Kara makes her way over here, but just as she’s downing the last of her whiskey and standing, Kara’s whispering something to her companions and stepping away from the table.

Shit.

There’s still time, Lena thinks. Still time to slip out of the booth, find Jack maybe, but Lena’s feet won’t seem to obey her brain.

Seconds later, Kara’s saying something to the security guard watching the VIP section and he’s laughing, reaching down to open up the velvet rope that cordons the area off. And then Kara’s sliding into the booth next to Lena, pressing in far closer than should be appropriate and propping an elbow on the table, a glass hanging from her fingers.

“Hi,” Kara says, her voice low but audible across the loud sounds of the club around them.

Lena attempts a polite smile and makes to grab the bottle of whiskey from the table, but Kara’s beating her to it.

There’s something languid about the smile on Kara’s face as she pours more amber liquid into Lena’s glass. When she’s done, Kara clinks the glass she’d brought over against Lena’s and takes a sip.

“Hi,” Lena finally manages to return, wishing she were just a little more drunk while also being very grateful she’s not. Six drink Lena would probably already be pulling Kara in by the lapels of her jacket and kissing her senseless, but five drink Lena is just holding off. The desire to do so spikes so heavily in her stomach she has to take a long sip of her drink to repel it.

This is not good.

It’s worse to see Kara this close up. Her hair is drawn back in a ponytail, but it’s got flyaways that Lena wants to press back behind Kara’s ear almost immediately as she notes them. Her eyes dance around, but Lena can tell by the slight redness in their rims that Kara’s likely been at the club longer than Lena - has probably had a few more drinks too.

Everything about the moment feels like a mistake waiting to happen.

“What are you doing here?” Kara asks, setting her glass on the table with a thunk and adjusting her glasses in a move that makes Lena have to lick her lips.

“What are you doing here?” Lena asks, making a valiant effort at finding some kind of composure. “Don’t you leave for Metropolis in the morning?”
Kara laughs, her arm sliding across the top of the booth behind Lena’s head. “I’m here with friends,” she says and she glances over her shoulder back towards the high top Lena had spotted her at previously. Lena spends a second too long observing the long column of Kara’s throat as she does it, before remembering herself and looking away.

Kara’s two friends are still there - moved in close together and speaking with heads tilted towards each other. “Imra plays for Coast City and Mon-El’s been trying to get her to date him for like the last year,” Kara explains, looking back at Lena. “I told him I’d help.”

It works to distract Lena a moment from the oppressive feeling of attraction in the booth. “Mon-El? That’s his name?” When Kara nods, Lena makes a face. “Strange.”

“It’s his nickname,” Kara says, leaning closer and sounding conspiratorial. It doesn’t help that Kara has to push in close just so they can hear each other. “His real name is Mike, but like no one calls him that.”

Lena hums, takes another sip of her drink to avoid the way Kara’s looking at her again and that’s probably why she misses whatever it is Kara says next. Her brow pulls down and she looks over. “I’m sorry?”

Kara leans in even closer, her lips nearly brushing the shell of Lena’s ear and repeats, “You look gorgeous.”

An overwhelming kind of heat spreads from the side of her face, down her neck and over her chest and she’s sure her heart is beating loud enough to be heard over the booming sounds of the music. She glances down at her simple black dress and heels, the tight way it clings to her body and she pulls a bit at the hem. Swallowing thickly, she looks up at Kara and thins her lips in an expression of distaste so at odds with how she feels it’s a struggle to make it work. “Are you drunk?”

Kara chuckles a bit, tilts her head to the side. “Not especially.”

The responsible thing would be to remind Kara of the lines she’d drawn all the way back in her office, delicately extricate herself from this situation and chalk it up to alcohol induced bravery.

But responsibility seems to have fled Lena’s brain because the next thing she says instead is, “I didn’t know you wore glasses.”

Kara reaches up again to touch the object in question, a faint dusting of pink in her cheeks. “Well I don’t while I play, obviously,” she says, shrugging. “I’d break a pair every game.”

“They’re cute,” Lena says, the words toppling out of her mouth before she can catch them.

A pleased smile spreads over Kara’s face. “You think?”

Lena shrugs a shoulder, tries to hide her blush in the rim of her glass and looks pointedly away from where Kara is observing her with laughing eyes.

Seeming to take pity on her, Kara moves a bit away, enough that Lena actually feels a chill and nearly chases the heat of Kara’s body. “So how was your day?” Kara asks, taking a long sip of her drink and quirking a brow at Lena.

“How was my day?” Lena repeats, laughing a bit. “Is it customary to make small talk in the middle of a night club?”

Perhaps a ridiculous question considering that’s what they’ve been doing since Kara came over to
her, but Lena feels like she’s seconds away from saying *fuck it* to any reasons she’d given herself for not sleeping with Kara Danvers.

“I’m being polite,” Kara says, teasingly and Lena’s suddenly hyper aware of the way Kara’s arm is still perched on the back of the booth, her fingers just barely ghosting over Lena’s bare shoulders. “I know how much you need things to be polite.”

Lena crosses her legs, rolls her eyes a bit. “My day was fine,” she answers. “Long, really. And now I’m here for some reason.”

“Alone?” Kara asks, her eyes suddenly intent on Lena.

Lena pauses, observes Kara’s face a moment before answering. “Jack is…” she gestures vaguely towards the dance floor. “Somewhere.”

“Jack?”

“Jack Spheer,” Lena offers and feels compelled to add, “An old friend of mine.”

Kara nods, seems to take that information in for a moment. “Well I’m sorry your day was so long. Coach had us watch game film for a full five hours straight today, so I get it. Mon-El used Alex to convince me to come out with him. I was ready to pass out on my couch earlier.”

“How were you convinced?” Lena asks for the sake of something to say.

“They pulled the old *you never know what might happen* thing,” Kara says, smiling. She leans forward, her arm pressing more intently against the top of Lena’s back and grabs for the bottle of whiskey on the table, pouring some into Lena’s glass before she quite realizes she’s out. A waft of fresh smelling perfume hits Lena and her lips go a little dry when she notices just how close the tense muscle of Kara’s neck gets for a few seconds.

“And you fell for that?” Lena asks when Kara pulls back and Lena feels like she can breathe.

“I’m very optimistic,” Kara says with a grin that threatens to topple Lena’s resolve.

She needs to get out of this booth before she crosses a line she can’t uncross.

“Excuse me,” she says, straightening her spine and gesturing behind Kara. “I need to…”

Kara catches her meaning easily enough. “Oh, yeah of course,” she says before sliding backwards and out of the booth.

It doesn’t really help anything because now she’s standing in front of the table and Lena’s about eye level with her belt buckle and the tight way her white shirt is tucked into her jeans. She manages to look away and stand and even finds a way to ignore how her body brushes against Kara’s front as she moves away.

In the calm privacy of the restroom, Lena splashes a little cold water on her face, mindful of her makeup and takes a deep breath. There’s no way she can go back to the booth, go back to Kara. Everything feels far too tense, like it’s going to break at any moment.

She sends a quick text to Jack - wishes him luck on his romantic endeavors of the evening and tells him that she’s heading home.

Her plan is to make her way to the back exit she knows is on the other side of the bathroom hallway
and mention to Kara some time later that she just ran into another friend and got whisked away. She’ll understand, surely. It’s a night club. Things happen.

Except, when she comes out of the bathroom, Kara’s leaned up against the wall opposite, hands slung low in the pockets of her jeans and eyes locked on Lena.

“Kara?” Lena asks, depositing her phone in the clutch she brought with her and darting her eyes around in inquiry. ‘Did you…?’

Lena gestures behind her to the restroom, but Kara doesn’t answer, just looks at Lena with a slight crinkle to her brow.

It’s darker in this hallway, and quieter than the rest of the club - there aren’t many people around at all. Something feels even more dangerous about this moment, Kara watching her like she’s deciding something.

They hover around each other, neither of them making a move and Lena wonders if Kara’s going to do something drastic like press forward suddenly and kiss her - push Lena against the dark brick of the wall behind her and hike up her dress abruptly.

Lena’s not entirely sure what she would do - would she push her away immediately, or clench her fingers in denim and pull her in closer like she wants to?

A dark part of Lena wants nothing more than for Kara to just throw caution to the wind, ignore all of Lena’s protests about professional and ethical rules, and just charge ahead full steam.

But hesitation is all over Kara’s face.

“You look a little freaked out,” Kara says, stepping close. Lena backs up a bit, her shoulder blades hitting the wall.

“I’m okay,” Lena says even though she’s definitely not.

“You sure?” Kara asks and there’s nothing predatory about the way Kara’s eyes rake over her form - instead it’s earnest, open, concerned and just like that it’s not just the throb of attraction between her legs calling out to Kara. Her chest starts to flutter so intensely she feels like she can’t breathe again.

Kara’s leaning close - too close now - and oh god Lena’s going to kiss her. She knows it like something inevitable. There’s not enough resistance left for Lena to muster up. She’s going to kiss Kara Danvers here in the bathroom hallway of this night club and for this singular moment she doesn’t give a fuck about the consequences.

Which is exactly when a group of girls come stumbling into the hallway - two of them carrying their friend who is struggling to keep her feet under her. It startles Kara and Lena away from each other and the move to allow the group into the restroom.

The moment is broken, Lena feels like she can think again and she spreads her fingers out over the fabric of her hip and clears her throat. “I should go,” she says and without waiting for Kara’s response, she steps forward and presses a quick kiss to Kara’s cheek - it’s intended to be friendly, but Lena will look back on it with exasperation. Like she kisses any of her friends on the cheek this often.

When she gets into the back of her towncar, she asks George - her driver - to crank the air conditioning as high as possible and resolves to stay the hell away from Kara Danvers.
Lana Lang, despite being one of her oldest friends, is not very happy to see her.

“A basketball game,” Lana says skeptically, after hugging Lena in greeting. “Really? At least tell me there’s vodka.”

“Would I force you to endure such a thing sober?” Lena says with a smile that Lana returns.

“What has happened to you over in National City?” Lana teases. “Are you turning into a sports enthusiast? I never pegged you for a sporting gay.”

“Hardly,” Lena scoffs before looping her arm through Lana’s. “But I assure you it won’t be as painful as you’re anticipating.”

“I’ll be the judge of that.”

The seats saved for her are still courtside, but across the court from the Lakehawks bench instead of beside it. Lana immediately orders them drinks from the courtside server that approaches them.

It’s a different experience to be at a game not hosted in National City. The crowd is heavily weighted with Metropolis Makos fans, their red and blue colors littering across the seats, but there is still a significant presence of blue and grey. As the team comes onto the court for warmups, the Lakehawks fans make themselves known with a loud roaring.

Lena’s eyes get drawn where they usually do and she can’t help but linger on the image of Kara taking a ball to halfcourt and beginning a series of dribbling drills.

It’s M’gann M’orzz, who crosses in front of them to catch a pass from Lucy Lane, that makes Lana arch a brow and cross her legs. “Okay, I see how this might not be terrible to watch,” she comments and Lena laughs.

“The vodka helps,” Lena tells her, taking a sip of her drink, but keeping her eyes towards where Kara is dribbling around Maggie Sawyer and laughing uproariously at something she’s saying.

“Oh, of that I have no doubt,” Lana jokes.

It becomes quite obvious the exact moment Kara notices her if only because Kara trips a bit as she’s jogging towards the sideline and her eyes connect with Lena’s. It might not have been noticeable to anybody not flat out staring at Kara, but Lena catches it and nearly chokes on her drink in reaction.

The sound of it makes Lana follow Lena’s gaze across the court. “Ah, Kara Danvers, right?”

Lena manages to recover with a slight cough. The memory of the night club still lingers hotly in the back of her brain. “Didn’t think you were a basketball fan, Lana.”

Lana smirks. “Everyone knows Kara Danvers. She’s a megastar. Not to mention her cousin Clark plays here in Metropolis.”

“She has a cousin that plays too?”

Lana blinks at her. “Are you really that oblivious to anything that happens in sports?”

“I have other things to be concerned about,” Lena answers, dismissing Lana with a roll of her eyes.
The silence that follows for a few seconds after is ominous, punctuated by the growing mischief in Lana’s smile. “Yes, but you do own a basketball team now, right? Jack managed to inform me that you’ve begun to take a particular interest in your star player.”

Lena shoots her an incredulous and glances around to see if anyone is overhearing their conversation. “Lana, be serious.”

Lana shrugs, unaffected by the narrowing in Lena’s eyes. “He also mentioned something about how you’re in dire need of getting her out of your system.”

“Why are you and Jack discussing my private life in such a manner?” Lena scoffs and Lana laughs. “Because we both love you and it’s been way too long since that disastrous situation with -”

“Don’t,” Lena interrupts with a pointed look. “Need I remind both of you that implying I engage in relations with a person under my employ is highly inappropriate?”

“She’s hardly in your employ, Lena.”

“I sign her paychecks and my name is sewn into her jersey,” Lena points out, referring to the small sponsorship patch every Lakehawk player wears with the Luthor Corp logo.

“And? There’s no sort of chain of command that makes her your employee. You don’t have direct supervisory power over her job or any kind of hands on -”

“You seemed to have an overly detailed knowledge of the situation,” Lena comments with an amused quirk of her brow. Lana laughs.

“I make it my business to be aware of these sorts of things. Or do you not remember when your brother -”

“Oh please don’t bring up my brother’s love life,” Lena says with a sigh and a chuckle. “I’d like to keep my dinner in my stomach where it belongs.”

“Of course, we can stay on the topic of your love life,” Lana says with an ominous smile. “Jack said she asked you out.”

“Who?” Lena asks with feigned ignorance.

“You know who,” Lana says and Lena sighs.

“She did. For dinner as friends.”

“She has a reputation, you know,” Lana continues. “I’m sure she’d be fine with a little -”

“Will you stop it?” Lena asks with a fond shake of her head. “You sound like Jack.”

Lana just looks at her with a smug smile playing on her lips. The whistle blow indicating the start of the game cuts off further conversation, though Lena can feel Lana’s eyes on her when Kara jogs over to their side of the court for the tipoff and gives a small smile to Lena on the way there.

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The Lakehawks take an early and commanding lead. It silences the home crowd almost entirely by the time they go into halftime.
Part way through the third quarter a ball comes flying straight for Lena and just past it she can see Kara’s body sprinting towards it. For a split second she realizes that she’s about to have Kara Danvers crash into her for a second time. Her shoulders tense in anticipation and she moves the hand holding her drink to the side, but the impact never comes.

Instead, Kara manages to fling the ball behind her back into play towards Lucy and stops herself from crashing into Lena with a hand on the back of her chair, feet skidding against the hardwood. It’s a miracle she doesn’t fall backwards and injure herself.

There’s no full body tackle this time or toppling of chairs, but the incident does bring their bodies close together, the heat of Kara’s body suddenly wafting over Lena as the other girl hovers over her.

Kara’s breath is coming in quick pants and the hair at her temples is a sweaty mess, but Lena finds herself licking against dry lips.

“Sorry,” Kara says, as if she did actually crash into her. Distantly, Lena’s aware that the game has continued and Lucy managed to score a basket off of Kara’s play. “At least I didn’t spill your drink this time.”

As quickly as it happened, Kara is pulling away with a small smile for Lena and jogging towards where the opposing team is inbounding the ball.

Lana is staring at her when she glances over and Lena rolls her eyes to the ceiling, turning back to the game. “Shut up,” she murmurs and Lana laughs.

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After the game, they grab cocktails at the bar of the hotel Lena’s staying in. Two martinis later Lana is hugging Lena goodbye with a whispered demand of staying in better touch and visiting Metropolis for a better reason aside from basketball.

Lena is tired and has had just enough vodka to start to notice. After pressing the button for her floor in the elevator, she sags against the far wall and checks the time, mentally calculating how much sleep she’s about to reasonably get before her morning flight.

Just as the elevator doors are about to close an arm stops them, sticking through the small gap and forcing them back open. The sight on the other side makes Lena straighten immediately.

Kara Danvers. Showered and changed from the game. Her hair is loose around her shoulders and she’s dressed in soft jeans and a Lakehawks sweatshirt with the team motto emblazoned on the front - *Up. Up. Away.*

Kara steps into the car with a tentative smile for Lena and the doors shut behind her with an ominous ding. With the way they keep running into each other – both literally and figuratively – Lena’s starting to believe the universe is trying to tell her something.

“Hi,” Kara says softly, turning towards the panel of buttons and pressing one before coming to stand next to Lena.

“Hi,” Lena returns and the *get it out your system* repeats like a mantra in her head. A mantra that suspiciously sounds like Jack’s voice, like Lana’s voice. Like Kara’s voice - hushed and warm - in the privacy of a nightclub booth.

“I didn’t know you were coming to the game,” Kara murmurs as the elevator ascends. Lena keeps her eyes on the crawling numbers above the keypad.
“I have friends in Metropolis,” is the answer Lena gives. She spares a glance to where Kara is standing, watching her. “You played well tonight.”

“Thanks,” Kara says with a wide grin and the memory of what Kara had looked like hovered over Lena’s chair just hours earlier bursts across her brain. It makes her throat go a little dry and her skin start to buzz. Everything in her body seems all too aware of just how close Kara is to her and just how alone they are.

The elevator slows and the doors open. It’s Kara’s floor. Or at least the floor she had pressed when she first entered, but Kara makes no move to exit. Instead she leans back against the elevator wall and looks at Lena.

They stare at each other for a long enough moment that the doors close again and the car starts to ascend towards Lena’s floor.

“Wasn’t that your floor?” Lena asks in a whisper.

Kara swallows visibly and gives a short nod. “Yes,” she answers simply and Lena knows she has a decision to make in the time it takes for the elevator to travel ten more floors.

Kara doesn’t move. Just stands there, hovered near Lena and regarding her with intent eyes.

Get it out of your damn system, Jack yells in her head and it’s what propels Lena forward.

Her fingers grip at the fabric over Kara’s chest and she hauls her forward until their lips are crashing together.

It feels staggeringly good to just give into it. Kara responds immediately, melts apart as soon as their bodies touch and she walks them towards the side wall until Lena’s back is hitting it and she lets out a noise into the kiss.

Kara’s hands take hold of Lena’s head, fingers twisting through the loose hair there and keeping their faces together. Lena feels overwhelmed by sensation in a way that makes her fingers grip tighter at the fabric of Kara’s sweatshirt and her hips move forward with intent.

The sound of the elevator opening and the sudden ceasing of movement in the car spurs them to spring apart and Lena heaves breath into her lungs. It seems Kara isn’t doing much better in the breathing department. The neck of her sweatshirt is wrinkled from where Lena had her fingers twisted in it and her cheeks are flushed attractively. Lena can’t help but just stare at her for long moments.

Far too long, she realizes, as the elevator doors start to close again and she has to slap her hand out to catch the open door button.

With a last glance at Kara, Lena exits the elevator and runs her fingers through her now tangled hair. A few steps outside the elevator she turns over her shoulder to see Kara still inside the car watching her.

“Are you coming?” Lena asks simply, her voice sounding throaty and thick with tension. An arch of eyebrow is all she offers further before turning towards the door to her suite.

The sound of the doors closing makes her uncertain as to whether Kara has followed her or not, but they’re punctuated by a sudden thud and Lena turns again to see Kara’s arm sticking out between the doors to stop their progress.
If Kara is at all impressed by the amenities of the presidential suite that Lena is staying in, she doesn’t comment. Not that there’s much room for conversation with the way they come crashing back together as soon as Lena gets the door open.

Lena’s purse hits the floor just inside the door seconds before Kara’s hands slide back over her hips and their lips reconnect.

They maneuver their way through the dark hotel room until the back of Lena’s knees hit the edge of her bed and reality seems to filter back into her brain.

Kara pulls away for a moment, searches Lena’s eyes even in the dim light from the window. “Is this okay?” Kara murmurs, eyes flicking down to Lena’s lips.

It’s the point of no return. Lena knows they’re about to cross a very serious line, but there’s insistent pressure building low in her gut that wants to scream out an answer for her. There’s a small rational part of her that peaks through. It’s the part that manages to speak even though her hands are already pulling Kara closer.

“You can’t stay the night,” she whispers and Kara stills for a moment before nodding quickly.

“Whatever you want.”

Lena leaves the line far behind them and lets her weight fall back onto the bed, dragging Kara with her. “There’s only one thing I want right now,” she says softly and Kara’s eyes brighten before she presses solidly on top of her.

Kara is unsurprisingly skilled in bed. That’s all Lena can think when they’re both finally stripped of their clothing and pressing against each other. Kara’s hands are warm and they drift all over Lena, feeling out which parts make her tick while Kara’s lips trail down Lena’s neck and bite at her collarbone.

She also has the kind of abs Lena might kill people for, and Lena can’t help lingering on them for longer than she really needs to when she makes her trek down Kara’s body. It’s one thing to spot them when Kara lifts her jersey up during a game or after practice, or in the massive Calvin Klein ad she posed for — the billboard taunts Lena where it stands blocks from Luthor Tower. It’s another thing to get her fingers on the muscles, to spread them out and up and feel the way they tense when Kara moves.

It certainly doesn’t help that Kara is basically *all* muscle. Where Lena is soft, Kara is hard.

Their legs shift against each other and Lena can feel a hot searing kind of pressure at the base of her spine begging for some kind of friction. Of their own accord, her hips try to push forward, press harder against Kara’s body.

Kara’s breath is abrupt and hot against the skin of Lena’s shoulder, her lips pressing there as strong fingers hook underneath Lena’s thighs and pulls her legs apart. “What do you want?” Kara asks, voice thick and liquid in Lena’s ear. An answering throb pulls so heavily at Lena’s clit that she’s half convinced she could come just from this. “How do you like it?”

It’s hard to answer through the oppressive feeling of arousal clawing at her throat, but she manages, says the first thing she can think of because she just needs Kara to do *something* before she
embarasses herself by coming just to the sound of her voice. “Fingers,” she croaks out, bending her knee to pull Kara down into her body and hooking a heel around her thigh. “Use your fingers.”

A quiet noise escapes Kara that Lena can’t process because long strong fingers are creeping up her leg and spreading open hot wet flesh and fuck she’s way too close.

“Good?” Kara asks, lips up under Lena’s ear as a slender finger slides so slowly inside her.

Lena swallows, her neck arching at the feeling of it, and her fingers clench against the skin of Kara’s back. “More,” she answers, hips jutting up when Kara obeys her instruction.

It’s too much. She’s going to come any second and she wants to be kissing Kara when she does so she pulls Kara’s face back up to hers, jerks her hips erratically at the feel of Kara’s fingers twisting and fucking between her legs. “Fuck,” she sighs out into Kara’s mouth before crashing their lips together firmly as her whole body goes tight and her orgasm rips out of her.

Absurdly, the first thing she thinks when Kara slowly removes her fingers and studies Lena’s eyes as she brings them up to her mouth is that there’s no going back now.

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When Lena comes for the second time that night, Kara’s head buried between her legs and Lena’s fingers clenching hard in blonde hair, she feels like she’s going to pass out. Kara’s tongue is so soft and warm and it moves with a kind of single-minded precision that winds her up and brings her down so quickly Lena thinks to be embarrassed again. But she can’t muster up the feeling.

Instead, her body just feels lethargic and relaxed in a way it hasn’t in some time. She spares a mental note to thank Jack for his good advice.

Kara’s crawling up her body pressing her lips against Lena’s hipbone, the line of her ribs, collarbone and then her neck until she’s pressing against her side.

Lena’s eyelids feel impossibly heavy and the solid feel of Kara’s body is lulling her into unconsciousness. Her fingers run up the strong muscles of Kara’s back and she closes her eyes, but not before murmuring, “No one can see you leave.”

If Kara has any reply, Lena doesn’t hear it as her body gives into exhaustion.

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In the morning, the only sign of the night’s activities is the fact that Lena’s clothing is thrown in various spots across the room. Her bra dangling off the arm of a chair, her shoes kicked off somewhere in the other room.

Kara is gone. As are the articles of clothing Lena definitely remembers stripping off her and chucking around absentmindedly.

For the most part she’s grateful that Kara heeded Lena’s instructions the night before. A small part of her - the part that’s a little sore and tired after everything they did - wishes Kara were still there. There’s something comforting in a morning after if only so Lena could reiterate a few ground rules. Like how this was definitely a one time thing and how no one can find out.

She hopes Kara knows enough about how the world works not to kiss and tell, but a thread of worry starts to make itself known.
Jack is waiting in the back of the black car she has pick her up at the airport. He shoots her a mischievous smile and Lena eyes the tablet in his lap warily as the car starts to drive away.

“Welcome home,” he says.

“What have I done to deserve an escort?”

His smile just widens and Lena sighs, knowing whatever reason Jack has for picking her up it’s likely not a good one.

“I take it you haven’t seen the news this morning.”

Lena arches a brow. “What specifically are you referring to?”

“Oh, I’m so glad you asked,” he says and he swipes on his tablet for a moment before showing it to her.

It’s a picture from the basketball game the previous evening and Lena feels her mouth go a little dry as she realizes the picture is of Kara hovered over her chair.

Star Player Nearly Tackles Team Owner for Second Time is the caption on the photo and Lena rolls her eyes even as her heartbeat starts to speed up at the image. It makes her think of the more private moment of Kara hovering over her and she crosses her legs against the ache there that makes itself known.

“You read the trashiest news outlets,” Lena comments with an exasperated look for Jack.


“Agree to disagree,” is all she says.

It occurs to her that she could probably seek Kara out at some point. They didn’t exactly lay out any ground rules for their one night stand and Lena finds herself wary at trusting Kara’s discretion. She thinks to text her, but there’s not exactly an easy way to broach the subject that Lena can imagine - plus, she’s just paranoid enough that the thought of even mentioning that night in a textual form scares her off.

The only comforting thought is that had Kara disclosed their tryst that it would surely be somewhere on her news feed, but the only mention of Kara Danvers and the Lakehawks are some quips about Kara having been late to the team plane that morning and some speculation about the upcoming All-Star Roster.

There are pictures of Lena attending the game - including the one Jack has spent the entire day laughing over and has made his phone background - but nothing to indicate how Lena spent the rest of her evening.

Lana calls her the night she’s back in National City. “I can’t believe I’m photographed with you for the first time in months and we were at a basketball game.”

“I’ve told you before that I’m dangerous for your reputation,” Lena replies with a laugh.

“Yes, in college for dragging me to the library on a Friday night,” Lana says. “Not for implying I’ve
taken an interest in women’s sports.”

“It’s just sports,” Lena says with a touch of exasperation. “You needn’t qualify it with gender.”

“Ever the feminist,” Lana replies dryly and Lena rolls her eyes but allows an affectionate chuckle to drop out of her mouth.

--

The next home game conflicts with Lena’s schedule, so she gives the tickets to Jack, who actually seems eager to go to the game.

“Becoming a fan, Jack?”

He’s got a sly smile on his face before he answers. “I have some money on the game,” he admits and Lena just gives him an unimpressed look.

“Tell me you’re being careful,” she says. “I don’t need a repeat of my brother’s antics.”

“I bet on the favorite,” he tells her. “It’s hardly suspect. Or likely to lose me much money.”

“Don’t involve me,” she says waving him off and he laughs.

“I won’t, I won’t,” he assures her. “But if you happen to see Kara before the game, give the superstar some encouraging words for me, will you?”

It’s disarming how quickly her brain supplies words of encouragement, but they’re not the ones Jack is referring to, Lena’s sure.


“I will,” Lena says, happy with the way her tone stays even.

--

The Taste of the Lakehawks requires a new dress, if only because Lena can’t pick anything appropriate out of her closet that she hasn’t been seen in the last few months. It’s not because she knows she’ll probably run into Kara at some point.

The event is held directly on the court at Luthor Corp Arena, though the building looks nothing like it normally does. Faux walls have been made out of heavy black material hanging around the floor and the perimeter is full of local food vendor booths.

In the center is an arrangement of tables hosting the silent auction and Lena walks past it to find the bar at the far end of the room. It takes longer than she’d like because of how many people stop her on the way there, but eventually she ends up with a cocktail in her hand.

Jack is meant to meet her at some point, but for now she’s left solo trying to avoid being caught in any uncomfortable or awkward conversations.

It doesn’t work for long. One of her investors, Mitchell Glennon, approaches her almost immediately and begins to compare the men’s and women’s game of basketball as if Lena cares enough about basketball to want to talk about this, much less his sexist opinions. The only relief is that she’s well practiced at seeming to listen to someone while completely zoning them out. She plasters a smile on her face and nods when appropriate, sipping at her drink as much as possible.
Across the room Lena can spot a line of people standing near a booth where Alex Danvers is taking pictures with fans. Lucy Lane, who is stationed at the booth right next to her, is leaning over and attempting to photobomb every other picture. It makes Lena smile ever so slightly.

“That Kara Danvers, is it?” Mitchell is saying and Lena tunes back in at the name. “Quite muscly for a girl.”

The comment prompts Lena to follow where Mitchell is staring and she spots Kara’s entrance into the room. A spattering of flashes goes off immediately and heads seem to turn that direction. Kara’s wearing a well-tailored blue suit that manages to give enough of a hint at her biceps that Lena can see where Mitchell is getting the impression, but Lena is distracted by the open collar of the yellow polo underneath the blazer, and the way its buttons are undone and revealing the hollow of Kara’s throat.

She’s had her hands on those muscles Mitchell’s referencing, has watched them strain while Kara moved inside of her. It’s hard not to derail into a much more pleasant memory than her current reality.

“She’s a professional athlete,” Lena manages to respond, her patience waning. Between having to entertain irritating conversation and being disarmed by Kara’s mere presence in a room, Lena feels a headache approaching.

“Yes, but still,” is all he says before something catches his eye. “Are those cucumber sandwiches?”

Satisfied that his attention is elsewhere, Lena moves away from him and makes a show of scanning a nearby booth advertising a new steakhouse set to open later that year. It’s there that Jack finds her with a harried look on his face as he scrapes his fingers through his tousled hair.

“Sorry I’m late, love,” he says, kissing her on the cheek and smiling at the watching vendors behind the booth. “Your Kara Danvers creates quite the traffic jam when she enters a room.”

Lena returns his casual embrace and glances to where Kara is still being swarmed by fans and reporters alike. “It’s alright,” she murmurs, looking away from the crowd and smiling at him.

“I see you’ve already found the bar,” he comments as he plucks her drink from her and leads them both to a close by hightop. He throws the rest of her drink back and tosses it in a bin before straightening his tie. “Another?”

He doesn’t wait for a response, just paces over to the bar and orders two glasses of champagne.

--

Having Jack there makes the night far more bearable. They both work much better as a team when it comes to fielding dry or offensive questions from people they can’t merely tell to shove off.

She spends most of the evening circling around Kara, who hops from booth to booth to take pictures with fans and sign autographs. It isn’t until they’re meant to be seated for the dinner service that they connect eyes with each other for the first time since Lena’s hotel room.

Though Lena had seen this series of events on the evening’s itinerary it still startles her a little to be left alone with Kara in the back tunnel behind the stage.

Before they can even say hello to each other a man comes scrambling over to them holding his
phone in the air. Lena’s sure he’s some fan that’s skirted security until she spots the badge hanging around his neck.

“Kara,” he nods with a smile and she returns the expression, clearly familiar with him. He extends his hand forward towards Lena. “Miss Luthor. I’m Winn Schott. Social Media Director for the Lakehawks.”

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Schott,” Lena replies, shaking his hand briefly. So this is the man responsible for all those Instagram posts of Kara’s workouts. Just two days ago, there had been one of her doing an aggressively high box jump that Lena had watched far too many times.

He glances between them with an eager look in his eye and gestures with his phone. “Quick pic for Snapchat?”

Kara laughs like she knows what the hell that is, but Lena just looks at them quizzically. “Snapchat?”

“It’s a social media platform,” Kara explains and Lena could have probably guessed that part, but then Winn adds, “For picture sharing.”

“I see,” she says and Kara straightens her clothing a bit and shifts closer to Lena.

It occurs to her what’s going to happen only milliseconds before Kara slides a familiar hand across the small of her back and brings their bodies together.

“Perfect,” Winn says as Lena schools herself into a normal expression and puts her arm around Kara in return. It’s only years of practice at having her picture taken that allows her to smile naturally as Winn takes the picture. It should be easier considering she’d been in this position before – at the shelter during their service day – but somehow with the knowledge of what Kara’s skin feels like, tastes like, it’s so much harder.

“Great, guys,” he says when he’s done. “Thanks.”

He doesn’t even look at them as he walks away, focused on doing something on his phone, and they’re left alone again in the hallway. They disengage from their hold quickly, but Lena feels Kara’s hand buzz across her skin as it leaves her and they take opposite positions from each other.

“Hi,” Kara greets softly as she leans back against the wall and crosses her legs. Her hands slip into her pockets, and she looks like a teenage Lena’s vision of a perfect woman, somehow. It’s disturbing, how interested she is in slipping closer to Kara and forgetting about the walls she’s stacked up since Metropolis.

“Hello,” Lena says and she can’t help the way her eyes take the time to track down Kara’s body. The blue of the suit contrasts so well with the yellow of her polo that Lena feels a near-irresistible urge to run her hands along the join, to slip her fingers beneath the jacket and feel Kara’s body. It’s even worse this close to her when Lena can see the blue of Kara’s eyes and track their movement as they rake over Lena’s form.

“You get used to him,” Kara says and Lena pulls herself away from unsubtly checking Kara out to furrow her brow.

“Who?”

“Winn,” Kara explains. “You get used to having his phone in your face all the time. He’s a little over eager.”
Lena laughs. “As long as he gets my good side,” she jokes and Kara just stares a little too hotly.

“I don’t think you have a bad side,” Kara says in a soft, intimate voice that Lena’s body reacts to.

“I assure you I do,” Lena says just as soft and Kara breaks their stare to look down the hallway before pulling her gaze back and taking a visible breath.

“How have you been?” Kara asks with a casual tone, like the last time they saw each other wasn’t naked and heated, Lena coming off an orgasm and Kara’s mouth tasting like Lena.

Lena thinks to respond, but a staff member steps up to them with a five minute warning, Miss Luthor and she becomes suddenly mindful of where exactly they’re standing and who they are.

“Look,” she says, stepping forward and lowering her voice. It seems like as good an opportunity as any to quell the nervousness she’s felt since they slept together. “I hope you know that what happened was a one time thing, and that no one, and I mean no one, can know about it.”

Kara’s eyes seem to search her face as her entire body stills from the slight sway it had a few seconds ago. “I understand,” Kara says after a few seconds, her voice sounding a little thick.

“For the sake of both of our careers,” Lena adds.

“I wasn’t going to tell anyone,” Kara replies so earnestly that Lena feels like maybe she’s being too harsh.

“My position doesn’t leave much room for uncertainty,” Lena explains. “I don’t mean to sound…”

“I know,” Kara says, with a smile and a sheepish shake of her head. “I said that I understand.”

They regard each other for what feels like long moments and Lena licks her lips at the sudden memory of what Kara’s body felt like spread out over her own. Idly, she wonders when the memory will stop feeling so vivid, if she’ll be able to be around Kara without remembering what it felt like to take three of her fingers.

“Okay,” she says, taking a deep breath at the shaky way she’s starting to feel. Her palms go a little clammy and she spreads out her fingers to fight the feeling.

Kara’s looking at her like she knows exactly what’s going on in Lena’s brain. “Yeah,” she says softly, eyes hot and intent.

They’re silent for a few more seconds, something sad and wistful playing across Kara’s face that Lena finds herself responding to before she can stop it.

“I had a good time though,” she admits and she curses the second glass of champagne Jack had coerced her into having - it’s a party, Lena.

Kara’s eyes narrow a bit. “Me too,” she murmurs and Lena feels the pull to kiss Kara again tug hard at her chest.

The sound of a voice calling Lena to the stage is what ultimately stops her and she gives Kara a short nod and a smile before stepping up around the curtain and grabbing a microphone being held out for her.

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The Lakehawks do a comedy sketch as part of the entertainment for the evening. It’s apparently
written by Lucy Lane and stars M’gann as an old, grumpy version of Michael Jordan. Kara plays a small part, but can’t get through any of her lines without laughing hysterically. It ends up being just as funny anyway and Lena struggles not to smile widely every time Kara loses her composure. Alex just keeps hitting her sister for breaking character while Maggie rolls her eyes at both of them.

It’s a trainwreck, but the crowd eats it up and it’s announced that they’ve exceeded their fundraising goal for the night.

Lena feels more and more like she’s made a mistake for discounting the Lakehawks all these years.

Kara catches her eye as she’s leaving the stage and then Lena thinks maybe it was a good thing she didn’t discover the team earlier.

--

Lex calls one night as Lena’s cleaning up the remnants of her dinner and she can hear music and laughter behind him when she answers the phone.

“You know some people actually face their responsibilities instead of hiding away,” she says to him, but he just laughs.

“It’s best for our company that I stay out of view for a bit,” he replies. “You know this.”

“It’s my company,” Lena corrects and he scoffs, but it’s filled with mirth. “And you fleeing to hiding didn’t do my company any favors.”

“It didn’t not do you any favors,” Lex adds and Lena rolls her eyes.

“You’re ridiculous, I don’t know why I put up with you,” she says with a soft laugh.

“Speaking of, I need a favor.”

Lena pauses mid-motion as she’s about to pour a glass of wine and arches a brow even though she knows Lex won’t see it. “What kind of favor?”

“Nothing underhanded,” he hastily assures her. “You remember my friend Pete? Pete Ross from college?”

“Of course,” Lena says, turning back to her half full glass of wine and completing her pour. “He dated Lana.”

“Yes, well no accounting for taste on her part.”

Lena laughs. “I thought you said he was your friend.”

“Not a good enough friend to date Lana.”

Lena lets out an affectionate sigh and shakes her head in exasperation. “What’s the favor, Lex?”

“Pete’s opening a new club this weekend. Oblivion Bar. They’re having a big VIP party to kick it off.”

“And?”

“And I was hoping you’d attend in my name.”
Lena blows out a breath and drops onto her couch. The news plays on the muted television across the room and she takes a quick sip of her wine. “You know I’m not much for night clubs owned by your friends.”

“Take Jack,” Lex tells her. “It’s open bar for anyone on the list and I’d really owe you one.”

“I don’t know…”

“Come on, little sis,” he entreats and she relents with a laugh. “You know that business is all about networking and I can’t exactly give Pete any face time these days.”

“You owe me big,” she tells him with faux seriousness in her tone. “Like keys to the good private jet, big.”

“Planes don’t have keys,” Lex replies, chuckling. “Might want to figure that out before I figuratively hand them over.”

--

Oblivion Bar has a line wrapped around the corner when she and Jack get dropped off in front of it. Lena has every intention of making her way to the end of the line when one of the bouncers must recognize her and waves her over with a chirp of, “Miss Luthor, Mr. Spheer, this way.”

They’re guided past a velvet rope into the loud booming open room of the new club. It’s not packed in the way night clubs can get, but there are a considerable amount of people congregated on the dance floor and in various booths littered around the edges.

They find their own corner of the club, a half-booth on the other side of the building from the entrance and not far from the restrooms. Jack leaves her there to make his way to the bar for drinks.

Lena scans the room and is grateful that her presence has seemingly gone unnoticed. She leans back into the booth and looks at her watch wondering how long she should reasonably stay. As long as she has a second of face time with Pete Ross to appease her brother she’ll be fine.

A body is suddenly sliding in next to her and she’s certain it’s Jack until she looks up and Kara Danvers is regarding her with smoky eyes and loose hair. It reminds her so much of the first time this happened that she momentarily imagines she’s traveled backwards in time.

Lena straightens so rapidly she nearly knocks her knee against the table. “Kara,” she greets, clearing her throat in surprise.

“Hey,” Kara says, pushing into the booth until their knees brush and her arm slings over the top of the booth seat behind Lena’s shoulders. It’s exactly like last time except now Lena knows what it would feel like if she pushed forward and put her lips to Kara’s jawline, if she curled her fingers in Kara’s hair and tugged forward. “I didn’t know you were coming to this.”

Lena thinks to comment that there’d be no reason for Kara to know such a thing, but she bites it back and glances over Kara’s shoulder to see if she can make out Jack’s progress at the bar. “Pete Ross is an old friend of my brother’s.”

“Oh yeah,” Kara says with a contemplative tilt of her mouth. “He’s from Metropolis, right? That’s how he knows Lucy I think.”

“Lucy?”
Kara gestures over her shoulder and turns a bit. On the other side of the room congregated around a high top is Lucy Lane and Alex Danvers. They aren’t looking this direction, but instead seemed to be engaged in some deep conversation, their drinks untouched next to them. “Lucy Lane,” Kara explains. “Alex and I are her plus ones.”

“Oh,” Lena says not knowing what else to add. Kara looks back at her and Lena is very aware of their positioning. It feels like she’s trapped against the corner of her booth, blocked in by Kara’s body and if she’s not careful, her brain is going to short-circuit and start responding to the nearly irresistible urge to press in closer to the heat Kara’s giving off. This was so much easier to handle when she didn’t know what she was missing out on.

Kara is silent for a long, ominous moment and Lena just waits and tries to keep her face neutral. It’s hard with the sudden overwhelming of her senses when Kara leans forward a little and her hair brushes off her shoulders, a waft of her perfume hitting Lena’s nose. It’s spicy and delicate and Lena wants to put her nose into Kara’s collarbone and get closer to it.

“I was hoping we could talk,” Kara says, low and suggestive sounding.

Lena’s lips thin as she swallows. “About?”

Kara’s brow furrows as if the answer should be obvious - it is, of course, but Lena’s trying hard to avoid what she knows Kara wants to talk about. “You know…” Kara makes some gesture that Lena can’t really follow, but she catches sight of Jack approaching out of the corner of her eye.

He seems to notice who is sitting in his unoccupied seat because he stops abruptly a few feet away and a smile grows on his face. Lena sighs, unsure of whether she’s grateful for the incoming interruption or worried about whatever scene Jack is likely to make. There’s little mistaking their body language right now and she shifts away from Kara as Jack grins and resumes his approach.

“Hello there,” he says politely as he sits in the seat across from them and slides a tall glass towards Lena. “Kara Danvers, right?”

Kara looks a bit startled at the interruption, but recovers with a practiced grin and an extension of her hand – gratefully moving away enough from Lena to allow her to breathe. “Nice to meet you,” she greets genuinely and Jack shoots Lena a tight, but amused smile as he shakes her hand.

“Jack Spheer. Lena’s lesser half,” he says and Lena cuts him a glare as Kara glances between them with a wash of confusion starting to creep onto her face.

“Oh, so you two are -”

“No,” Lena answers forcefully. The sharp cut of the word makes Jack laugh.

“No, Lena is tragically and woefully single, I’m afraid,” Jack tells Kara companionably. “Despite my numerous offers of marriage.”

It’s clear Kara’s not sure what to make of the interaction as her eyes continue to bounce between them warily.

“Jack’s sense of humor is an acquired taste,” Lena explains, her hand reaching out to touch against Kara’s arm briefly. “Ignore him.”

Jack scoffs. “So, Kara, I must tell you that I’m becoming quite the fan of yours.”

Kara arches a brow, a hint of a smile at her lips. “Oh?”
“Lena’s been dragging me to all your games.”

“Don’t tell me you’re not a basketball fan either,” Kara says, the words punctuated with a slight groaning sound. “Both of you? Really?”

Jack just grins. “So, Lena’s confessed her darkest secrets to you?”

Lena rolls her eyes. “That’s hardly a dark secret.”

Kara turns a curious gaze her way. “What is your dark secret?”

The obvious answer claws up her throat suddenly and her eyes go straight towards Kara’s mouth. She’s saved only by Jack leaning over the table with a laugh. “If you want to know all of Lena’s fun secrets, I’m your man.”

Kara’s eyes linger on Lena’s face for a moment before she turns a friendly grin to Jack. “Buy you a drink?” Kara offers with a teasing smile and Jack winks.

Before anyone can answer, the sound of Kara’s name being called out interrupts them and they all turn to see Lucy Lane approaching the table with a sly smile. “There you are,” Lucy says as she steps forward and places a hand on Kara’s shoulder. Her eyes flit around the table. “Miss Luthor,” she greets politely.

“I was just saying hi,” Kara explains, looking at Lucy with an inscrutable expression.

“I’m sure,” Lucy says, with a second glance at Lena. “But Alex says you owe her a drink and she insists I come get you.”

“Tell Alex she can wait,” Kara says with a trace of heat and raises Lucy’s eyebrows.

“You want me to tell your sister...Alex Danvers...that she should wait for her free drink?”

A noise escapes Kara that sounds like a scoff and she turns regretful eyes back at Lena and Jack. “Nice to see you again. I should go.”

“Of course,” Lena says politely and she tries not to react when Kara’s hand finds her thigh as if that’s a normal way to say goodbye to people. The hemline of her dress allows skin-to-skin contact that has Lena flushing all over again.

Jack is all smiles across from them and Lucy is watching the interaction with interest.

“Nice to meet you, Kara,” Jack says and Kara startles a bit, turning to Jack with a grin.

“You too, Mr. Spheer.”

“Jack is just fine,” he assures her and she graces them both with a warm smile before retreating with her teammate.

Lena sighs a bit at the sudden loss of heat that washes over her the minute Kara slides out of the booth and attempts to not watch Kara as she walks away. She swallows thickly and adjusts the way she’s sitting, grabbing for the drink Jack brought her and taking a long sip. He watches her with amusement.

“What?”

He just smiles. “Kara Danvers. In the flesh. I can see the appeal.”
“You’ve seen her in person before,” Lena says and the memory of all the flesh Lena’s seen pulls low in her gut.

“Sure,” he acknowledges, and he glances over his shoulder to where Kara is rejoining her sister. “But not like that all close up.”

Lena follows his line of sight and looks to Kara’s long legs, the way her hair is tumbling over her shoulders, the way her jeans cling to her and how the loose, soft-looking blouse lies on her frame and the sight of her hip jutting out as she leans up against the high top. She doesn’t respond to Jack, but she does finish the rest of her drink and slide the empty glass towards him in a silent request.

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The next away game Lena manages to attend is in Las Vegas and she plans a few work meetings over the weekend so she doesn’t feel as though the trip is entirely wasted. Luthor Corp has a few properties on the strip anyway, and Lena doesn’t mind the opportunity to check in on the plethora of subsidiaries that reside there.

Their main hotel - Canes Venatici - is on the far end of the strip and it occupies nearly three blocks. She usually prefers to stay at one of their smaller properties in proper downtown Vegas, but Canes Venatici is closer to the arena where the Lakehawks will be playing. It’s a massive, sprawling spectacle, a venture Lex had taken a particular interest in when it was being built, and she can’t help but roll her eyes when she sees the statue of two very shiny dogs that crowds the lobby.

The suite she books is the same one Lex apparently always stayed at when he was in Vegas and when she walks in, she immediately knows why. Calling the place huge would be an understatement. Typical of Lex.

Among other things, the suite contains an indoor hardwood half-court, a pool table, a full bar and four different bathrooms. It’s ridiculous and Lena actually laughs as she walks in and spots the full assortment of Lex’s favorite whiskey, gin and vodka.

Seeing that her bags have already been brought to the room and she has nothing to do for the rest of the night, she pours herself a gin martini and observes the lights of the strip from her floor to ceiling windows. Tries very hard not to wonder if Kara is already in town and what she might be doing.

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The game goes terribly.

Alex gets injured at the very end of the first quarter when an Aces player hip checks her in the middle of a drive and sends her sprawling into the row of cameramen at the baseline. The hard hit she takes to her shoulder as she lands sends her quickly to the locker room with the team trainer.

Kara’s play goes from distracted to vengeful and by the start of the second half she’s fouled out of the game - her retreat to the locker room involves a thrown Gatorade bottle and a kick to a chair that sends it clanging towards the stands.

The Lakehawks lose by six.

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There are nearly thirty different hotels on the strip alone so Lena doesn’t stop to think that the Lakehawks would naturally be staying in a Luthor Corp owned property, and would certainly be staying in the most accessible one to the stadium.
Which is why she’s so surprised to see Kara at the end of one of the hotel bars - The Sunflower - nursing a drink and clearly sulking.

Lena had stopped in for a late-night bite to eat and a drink, but she halts at one end of the bar the second she sees Kara. The other woman doesn’t notice her, far too involved in the contents of her glass, so Lena just kind of stares for a moment, unsure of what to do.

The polite thing would be to stop by and say hello, maybe offer a few words of encouragement. But Lena can’t stop remembering the last time they were in a hotel together over an away game. Indecision makes her waver there for far too long not to go unnoticed and the bartender gives her a skeptical look.

“Drink, Miss Luthor?” He asks loudly enough that Kara must hear it over the din of the room. Her head snaps up so quickly that Lena nearly jumps.

She manages to keep her composure and steps up to the bar with a short clearing of her throat. “Gin gimlet, please,” she orders, glancing at him for a moment before turning back to where Kara is still staring at her.

Feeling a bit like she can’t just walk away at this point, Lena moves around the bar and walks over to where Kara is sitting, sliding into an empty stool there. Their legs bump against each other as she settles in.

“Hi,” Kara says softly and Lena smiles.

“Hi.”

Kara stirs a straw in her drink and Lena nods as the bartender hands over her own. “Were you at the game?”

Lena quirks a brow. “Yes.”

Huffing out a clearly discontent breath, Kara turns back to her drink, her shoulders sulking down. “That sucked.”

“How is Alex?”

Kara turns her head slightly at the question, face softening. “She’s okay. Thought it might be a bone bruise in her shoulder, but it’s not.”

“That’s good,” Lena says.

“She’s exiled me from the room though,” Kara grumbles. “Says my negative energy is affecting her healing process.”

“That seems extreme.”

“She’s being dramatic,” Kara says.

“Well, my brother’s version of being dramatic involves running off to God knows where after embarrassing the family name, if that makes you feel any better,” Lena drawls, taking a sip of her drink. Kara snorts, looking down at her drink and stirring it.

“I think you probably do a lot more good for your family name than your brother ever did bad,” Kara comments, sounding genuine in a way that makes Lena’s cheeks feel hot.
“I’m not so sure about that,” Lena replies, with a self-deprecating chuckle. Some habits are hard to break - the one where she’s convinced she’ll never be as good as Lex is especially hard. Even now when she’s so clearly achieved more, succeeded where he hadn’t, and amassed far more wealth, there’s still a part of her that will always feel like the lesser Luthor child.

Kara observes her for a second, the grumpy expression from earlier faded to one of soft empathy. “You know, I own one of your cars,” she says. “The Model L.”

Lena’s surprise must show on her face, because Kara laughs, taking a drink before continuing. “Yeah, and those things are expensive as hell.”

A smile playing at her lips, Lena hums, shrugs a shoulder. “Cutting edge technology isn’t free,” she says.

Kara grins, concedes that with a tilt of her head. “I read an article about how you wrote some of the code for the interface on the dashboard.”

Lena blinks, wonders where Kara would have read such a thing - it wasn’t too widely publicized and certainly wasn’t something she’d imagine someone of Kara’s proclivities would be interested in. “I did,” she says after a moment and Kara nods, smiling softly.

“I like the interface you designed for people with disabilities,” Kara says. “It’s - not the same, obviously, but I had a bad ankle sprain a couple months ago and I couldn’t really do the pedals, so I had to use the crazy button steering thing you added in and I even tried the voice steering. It’s...really cool.”

“Thank you,” Lena says. Her voice sounds hoarse, and her face warm as she directs her eyes back down to the bartop and her drinks. It provides her a vantage point of Kara’s hand reaching over to grasp at Lena’s forearm.

“I’m just saying. Your family name or whatever - you’re a credit to it,” Kara says. Lena blinks, watching the way Kara squeezes once at her forearm and lets her hand rest there. She tries to clear her throat and pull away from the moment, looking up and around, anywhere but at Kara.

There are four televisions hanging around the bar and when Lena glances towards one it’s showing highlights from the night’s game. Kara looks up just in time to see footage of herself stomping off the court after fouling out and whatever softness she had taken on morphs back to annoyance as she flicks the stir straw in her fingers away from her angrily. “I hate losing.”

“It’s a good thing you don’t do it very often then,” Lena says lightly, trying to change the mood. It makes Kara laugh, a bright happy sound as she smiles at Lena. “True.”

A loud group of drunk men come walking into the bar then, dressed in Las Vegas Aces paraphernalia and singing some sort of obnoxious cheer loudly as they approach the bartop. Kara shifts her body to hide a bit behind Lena’s and bends farther down as if she can disguise herself.

Lena eyes the group as they order a round of drinks from the bartender and she notices one of the men start to glance their direction, clearly noticing Kara’s presence.

Kara slinks farther down and keeps her eyes on her drink and the defeated posture - so uncharacteristic of the Lakehawks star player - prompts Lena into action.

Leaning close to Kara, Lena whispers, “Do you want to come up to my room?”
Kara’s expression is so grateful looking that Lena can’t help the way her heartbeat starts to thud heavily in her chest.

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“Holy sh-” Kara’s voice cuts off the minute she steps into the suite and Lena seems to just then remember how ostentatious her room is.

“It’s a bit much, I know,” Lena says as Kara walks into the room and does a spin, her eyes wide as saucers.

“Is that a basketball court?” Kara marvels as she suddenly flips her shoes off and skips towards the hardwood portion of the room. Her socked feet slide against the floor, but it’s clear that Kara is perfectly comfortable on a court with any kind of apparel, because she moves as though it’s no hindrance at all to her.

“It seems so.”

There’s a rack of basketballs with the Luthor Corp logo on them against a far wall and Kara picks one up with an awed expression. “You have a basketball court in your hotel room.”

Lena shrugs, laughing a little at the childlike expression on Kara’s face. “It’s Vegas,” is all she can think of as an explanation.

“You don’t even like basketball,” Kara says almost absently as she spins the ball in her hand before throwing it up towards the hoop. It swishes into the basket. “What a waste.”

“Good thing you’re here then,” Lena says and she leans up against the wall, arms crossed and amused smile on her face as Kara grabs the ball and dribbles around an invisible defender.

Kara fakes a pass and then makes a jump shot again, pumping her fist in the air when it goes in. Gone is the sulky expression from the bar, replaced by a sudden exuberance.

Grabbing the rebound, she dribbles up to where Lena is standing. “You wanna play?”

Lena laughs. “Sure, I’d love to play a sport I’ve never so much as attempted against the number one player in her league.” Lena pauses and looks down at her feet. “In heels,” she adds dryly.

A bright smile spreads over Kara’s face. “You think I’m the number one player in the league?”

Lena’s eyebrow arches. “Is that something in dispute?”

Kara shrugs, bounces the ball between her legs and then around her back. “You’ve really never tried to play?”

“I’ve never been very athletic.”

Kara eyes Lena up and down, still dribbling the basketball in an absent motion around her body. “I think you probably have untapped natural talent,” she says, but there’s a teasing quirk to her lips that makes Lena roll her eyes.

“You clearly don’t know me very well.”

Kara’s head tilts a bit. “That’s something I’ve been trying to change,” she says softly and Lena’s mouth goes a bit dry. Kara bounces the ball her direction so suddenly that Lena jumps, hands out in front of her as the ball hits her in the hip.
“What was that for?!” Lena exclaims as the ball falls away and Kara jogs over to retrieve it with a laugh.

“You’re supposed to catch it,” she says with a laugh. “Try again.”

With a warning this time, Lena manages to get her hands in the right place to catch the ball and she hefts its weight for a moment, holding it away from her body like it’s going to detonate at any moment.

Kara’s still laughing as she paces closer. “So you’ve never shot a basketball before?”

“Never,” Lena says, still eying the ball in her hands warily.

“That feels super wrong considering you own a professional basketball team,” Kara tsks. “Let’s change that.”

“I own two, actually,” Lena corrects.

Kara scoffs. “The Harriers don’t count.”

As soon as Kara makes it clear that she’s about to come closer and possibly touch Lena, Lena chucks the basketball towards the hoop in an arc. “There. I’ve shot a basketball,” she says as the ball hits the rim of the hoop and bounces violently off. It crashes against a far wall and Kara laughs again, jogging over to retrieve it.

“Throwing a ball towards a hoop is not shooting a ball,” Kara explains, dribbling back over.

“I fail to see the difference.”

“That’s why I’m going to teach you.”

Kara hands Lena back the ball and arranges herself at Lena’s back, reaching around her to position Lena’s hands on the ball. It brings Lena’s back directly up against Kara’s front and her skin starts to buzz at the feeling of it.

The sound of her voice and the feel of her hips pressing against Lena’s backside pools liquid heat between Lena’s legs and she’s positive this lesson is going to turn into something else quickly if she doesn’t separate herself from Kara’s body.

“Like that?” She manages to ask, her voice sounding thick and low.

“Yeah,” Kara says. “Then bend your knees.” Kara’s hands leave Lena’s on the ball and move to her hips, pulling them both down a little. The contact makes Lena drop the ball and Kara’s fingers clench against Lena’s body.

“Kara,” Lena says softly as the ball bounces away from them and Kara fails to move towards it. They just stand there pressed together for long seconds before Lena turns slowly.

“Can a one time thing become a two time thing?” Kara asks quietly and Lena doesn’t answer other than stepping up into Kara’s space and pressing their lips together so solidly that Kara has to take a step backward in reaction, arm wrapping around Lena’s waist to keep them together.

Kara kisses just like Lena remembers and this time the feeling isn’t at all diminished by post-game
martinis or the fever feeling of doing it for the first time. Instead, Lena sinks into how Kara takes over the kiss, how her hands pull Lena up into her body.

“Is there a bedroom in this mansion?” Kara asks and Lena laughs softly before disengaging from Kara’s body and grabbing her hand to tug her towards one of the two bedrooms in the massive suite.

In a moment of clarity as they step towards the bed, Lena pauses and turns to Kara for a moment. “You can’t stay the -”

Something flinches on Kara’s face and she interrupts Lena with a soft, “I know the rules.”

Nothing more is said as Kara picks Lena up and drops them both to the mattress.

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It’s somehow better.

Lena chalks that up to experience - however slim. Kara is seemingly much more confident this time around and Lena can’t deny that she gets off on the way Kara maneuvers her around the bed, pulling her closer, pushing her legs apart, holding her down onto the mattress.

It’s like Kara fucks with a purpose - unselfishly and singularly focused on pulling reactions out of Lena’s body. It’s an all consuming feeling that Lena drowns in so deeply that it feels like she spaces out.

At one point, Kara has her bent over, face down into the mattress, is pulling an orgasm out of her from behind and all Lena can think is we should do this with a strap-on.

For a moment she’s distracted by the casual assumption that they’d do this again, but she doesn’t dwell on it too long because Kara pushes in particularly hard, pulls Lena up to her knees so she can reach around for her clit and the thought gets obliterated.

A soft, breathy gasp of Lena’s name drops heavily out of Kara’s mouth, beats against Lena’s back and Lena’s vision goes white as she comes on Kara’s fingers driving into her.

Kara never lets her catch her breath. When one orgasm begins, it feels like Kara’s already on to the next one. Lena’s barely shaking through the rest of it when Kara’s twisting her around, spreading her legs and dipping her head down to lick against overly sensitive flesh. It makes her hips buck upward and she’s sure she’d hit Kara in the face if Kara didn’t already have a hand on her hip holding her down as if she expected the reaction.

It takes a half-groan of Kara’s name and a sharp tug at her hair to get the other girl to give Lena a break. “I can’t,” Lena says between pants of breath. Kara moves up with the tug, presses open mouthed kisses to Lena’s collarbone. “I’m done.”

A smile forms on Kara’s lips where they’re pressing up against Lena’s neck and then her jawline. “You can,” she insists, her fingers tracing Lena’s hipbone.

Lena darts her hand out to stop Kara’s progress. “I really can’t,” she says with more strength this time that makes Kara sag into her body, falling to the side.

She manages to follow the motion until she’s sliding on top of Kara and trying to muster up some energy to return the favor.

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When they finally stop, Lena feels completely spent, all the strength drained out of her body, but she manages to sit up in bed and run her fingers through her overly tangled hair.

The sheets are a sweaty, rumpled mess and Kara stays on her back, chest heaving in air and her hand splayed out over her defined stomach.

“Drink?” Lena offers as she stands and walks to the suitcase she has open against the side wall. Her legs feel ridiculously shaky and she knows she’ll be sore by the next day, but the pleasant throb she can still feel between her legs makes it all worth it. Finding a clean pair of underwear amongst her clothes, she glances over to where Kara is watching her from the bed, still naked and with that just-fucked look that makes Lena want to slide back across the sheets.

When Kara doesn’t answer her for another few seconds, Lena just quirks her brow, and tries to get her sticky fingers to rearrange her hair into something less messy.

“I’m not positive I can move,” Kara says finally, her voice hoarse and eyes narrow with invitation. As if either of them could survive another round. As it is, Lena’s pretty sure she’s going to have a physical reminder of their encounter for the next week.

Lena laughs and picks up the discarded pair of pants Kara left near the foot of the bed. Tossing them at Kara’s face, she turns to exit the room. “You’re a professional athlete,” Lena comments. “I believe in you.”

Lena makes them both manhattans with the wet bar provided for her in the suite. Kara eyes it with a surprised arch of her brow.

“Fancy,” she comments, taking a sip and Lena smiles, bemused.

“What do you usually drink after sex?” Lena asks, leaning up against the countertop across from Kara.

“I usually sleep,” Kara answers with a quirk of her lips.

It gives Lena pause and she sets her drink down on the bar, feeling serious for a moment. “Look, Kara,” she starts and Kara clears her throat, straightening.

“I didn’t mean anything by that,” Kara says hastily before Lena can continue.

“I like you,” Lena admits softly, holding Kara’s gaze. “And we clearly have chemistry without our clothes on.”

Kara laughs, an attractive blush dusting her cheeks. “I like you too.”

Lena rolls her eyes just slightly, feeling lame, but pushes on. “Anything more than this,” she says, gesturing between them, Lena in just her underwear and a soft sleepshirt, Kara in just her crinkled pants from earlier and her sports bra. “It’s a PR nightmare waiting to happen. My company just survived everything with my brother and the Lakehawks has always been a source of good publicity. I don’t want to do anything to jeopardize that. Not to mention that my job isn’t great for relationships -”

“We’ve talked about this,” Kara interrupts softly. “At dinner.”

“That was in the abstract,” Lena says, recalling their brief conversation about dating. “This is
different.”

“How?”

“I don’t want you to get the wrong impression.”

“What impression would that be?”

“That this can go anywhere outside the bedroom,” Lena says, forcing herself to sound stern.

Kara laughs. “You didn’t give me that impression,” she says.

“Good,” Lena says with finality. “Then we’re clear.”

“I told you before that I don’t really do relationships either,” Kara says softly, but with a smile. “It’s just easier to…”

“I agree,” Lena says with a short laugh.

There’s a strange hopefulness on Kara’s face that Lena doesn’t know how to interpret. “So it can be this then?” Kara asks, mimicking Lena’s earlier gesture. At Lena’s confusion, Kara clarifies, “We can keep…you know…?”

Lena wants to laugh at the way Kara avoids saying anything straightforward. It’s ridiculous considering the things Kara just did to her in the bedroom or the filthy words that dropped out of her mouth. The dichotomy of the woman before her now and the one on top of her earlier is fascinating.

“If the opportunity presents itself again,” Lena agrees. “I wouldn’t be opposed.” Kara smiles a bit and Lena takes a sip of her drink before adding. “Provided I can trust your discretion.”

“I can keep a secret,” Kara says hastily, holding her hand up as if taking an oath. “I mean, I haven’t told anyone that Alex slept with Lucy last season over the Gotham trip.”

Kara’s eyes go wide as she suddenly realizes what she just disclosed and Lena raises her eyebrows at the information.

“Okay, that was a bad example,” Kara says quickly. “I swear I’m better than that.”

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Kara leaves after they’ve finished their drinks, but not before pressing Lena against the wall near the hotel room door and kissing her goodbye as if trying to promise something.

“I’m here all weekend, you know,” Kara murmurs with the kind of suggestion Lena tries not to respond to. It doesn’t work. Her fingers clench a bit around Kara’s biceps and she kisses her again, but doesn’t reply before pushing Kara out the door. Better that than giving in to what her body is telling her to do.

Lena retreats back to the bedroom, but upon observing the disaster the bed became during their tryst, decides to sleep in a different room.

--

The next morning is spent with a series of meetings Lena had scheduled over the weekend. Breakfast with the General Managers of her hotels, a midmorning meeting with the casino managers and then lunch on her own while she answers a few e-mails and checks in on projects back in National City.
Her afternoon ends up involving putting out a fire with one of her manufacturing plants in Midway City and she calls Jack before dinner to rant about the ignorance of government bureaucrats.


“This is a business trip, Jack.”

“The idea that you can’t mix business and pleasure is highly overrated in my opinion,” Jack replies and Lena thinks of Kara - a recurring problem she seems incapable of solving.

Lena sighs. “I’m not surprised.”

Jack laughs. “Why don’t you sit at the tables tonight? You love taking money from people.”

It makes Lena chuckle a little in kind. “I’d be playing against myself,” she tells him because it’s technically true.

“That’s what makes it so fun,” he says and she rolls her eyes even if he can’t see her.

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She decides to take Jack’s advice and heads down to the casino floor after dinner.

The high rollers tables are located in the private rooms on the back part of the casino. Lena is led to a table in a small quiet room and handed a tray of chips. It isn’t until she sits down in her chair that she notices another person at the table watching her.

In a pulled down powder blue Lakehawks baseball cap, Kara Danvers is smirking at her from across the table, her fingers idly playing with a stack of chips. It’s then she notices that two chairs down from Kara is Alex Danvers, slouched back in her chair with a neutral expression, a poker chip sliding over her fingers in an agile, but absent motion. The elder Danvers sister seems to take little notice of Lena, her eyes stuck on where the dealer is feeding a new deck into the shoe.

No words are exchanged as the dealer slides his hand over the felt of the table to indicate final bets.

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Kara is terrible at poker.

Her tells are completely obvious to Lena, if only because her face seems incapable of not reacting to every single hand. Alex, however, is a formidable opponent who only seems to notice Lena after Lena wins the first pot and she arches a surprised eyebrow in her direction.

The stack of chips in front of Kara starts to grow smaller and smaller at a consistent pace until Alex stands up at the table. Tossing a chip to the dealer, she smiles politely at Lena before setting a hand on her sister’s shoulder.

“Try not to lose all your money tonight,” she says to Kara with a little smirk on her face and a laugh.

Kara rolls her eyes and shrugs Alex’s hand off, but she laughs too and both sisters share a smile before Alex walks off.

At that point it’s just her and Kara at the table and Kara looks over from under the brim of her hat, a chip spinning in her fingers.

They play another hand.
Kara keeps her head down as she gets dealt her cards, but Lena doesn’t need to know her expression as soon as she sees her own hand - pocket aces.

When Kara finally looks up to bet, Lena almost feels bad for her. It’s clear whatever Kara’s hand is, she’s pleased with it and that’s only confirmed when she pushes her meager stack to the middle of the table with a soft, “All in.”

She considers folding for a brief moment. There’s little possibility she’s going to lose and if she wins, Kara’s out of the game.

But there’s a deeper need she has not to concede a fight that has her counting out the right chips and sliding them next to Kara’s.

Kara smiles, takes her hat off and leans back in her chair as the dealer closes the betting and Kara flips her cards over - a pair of jacks.

Lena arches a brow. It’s not a bad hand at all, but it’s certainly not going to beat Lena’s unless the river pulls another jack.

When Lena flips over her own pair of aces, Kara laughs a little and they both watch as the dealer flips over the rest of the cards in the game - queen of diamonds, three of spades, ten of hearts, queen of clubs, six of clubs.

“I was finished anyway,” Kara says with a shrug and a smile for the table.

With a lingering look for Lena, Kara stands and nods before pacing away. The dealer looks over at Lena. “Another hand, Miss Luthor?”

She looks at where Kara is rounding the corner, another quick look over her shoulder at Lena, and she gathers her chips up. “Actually, I think I’ll cash out for the night,” she tells him.

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Hat back on and pulled down, Kara’s loitering outside the high roller’s room signing a basketball for a young fan with their dad. She’s explaining something to the girl that involves mimicking a shooting movement, and the young girl seems enthralled by it, her face eager and open as she looks up at Kara.

Lena hovers in the periphery until the fan moves on and Kara picks her head up to spot her.

A brilliant smile crosses Kara’s face - surprising considering just how much money Lena just took from her - and she steps forward towards Lena. If the opportunity presents itself flits across her mind and she throws previous caution to the wind. If she’s going to break all her personal rules then she’s going to break them.

“I was going to go have a drink,” Lena says, the offer clear.

Kara laughs. “You just bankrupted me,” she says with a teasing smirk that has Lena’s cheeks feeling warm. “I feel like you owe me one.”

“That’s not how gambling works,” Lena jokes, but Kara shrugs.

“I can’t buy a drink anyway,” Kara says and she pulls the pockets of her jeans out demonstratively. “I’m broke now.”
“I’m sure,” Lena says dryly, crossing her arms. “Maybe if you learned how to play poker better you’d have some more cash right now.”

“You sound like Alex,” Kara laughs. “Always complaining that I suck at cards, but refusing to teach me.”

“I could teach you,” Lena offers and Kara’s eyes go a little dark.

“Yeah?”

“Sure. Seems like the perfect opportunity to learn,” she says with a soft emphasis on *opportunity.*

They look at each other a moment, the sounds of a busy Saturday night at the casino echoing around them before Kara says, “Maybe we could have a drink at the bar in your room.”

Lena just nods.

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“What should we use for betting?” Kara asks after they pour drinks and make a show of avoiding the obvious reason they’ve retreated to Lena’s hotel room.

Lena shuffles the cards in her hand idly from her seat on the floor. Kara’s opposite, long legs stretched out under the coffee table as she leans back and takes a sip of her beer.

With a quirk of her brow, Lena flicks her fingers over the cards in a trick she had learned years ago from Lex. Kara’s eyes follow the motion. “We can think of something,” Lena says and Kara’s lips turn upward.

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The cards end up strewn across the floor and thankfully they’ve finished their drinks before they get knocked over in a tangle of limbs connecting. It’s just past midnight, but Vegas is still in full swing in the enormous windows the living area looks out on. The bright lights of the Strip dance across Kara’s skin and Lena can’t help but trace them with her lips. Kara’s shirt had been discarded in the very first hand, and so the series of blues and reds and greens that make their way across her neck are unimpeded by fabric. It makes it easy to suck at the juncture of her collarbone and neck.

Kara’s body is as expressive as her face is while playing poker and Lena follows the subtle commands as she blazes a path over her collarbone, down the cut of her abs, over her hipbone. An intake of breath there, an almost-moan here.

It’s all coiled, tense muscle and power underneath Lena and it makes her dizzy when strong fingers grip at her biceps and haul her upward until they’re spinning and Kara’s on top of her.

The feeling of Kara pushing her way between her thighs makes arousal pool there and she cants her hips up, desperate for friction, for Kara to do *something.*

The quiet laughter that she gets in response, puffs of air against her neck under her ear, makes her flush with a mixture of embarrassment and desire. It’s a smug, confident sound and when it’s paired with the feeling of Kara’s fingers trailing up her leg, Lena has to lick the dryness of her lips.

Their kisses turn sloppy and hungry until they’re just breathing against each other’s mouths and Kara’s hips rock, her fingers push and pull and Lena’s back arches. Everything gets impossibly tight, obeying the insistent twist and curl of Kara’s hand.
Her orgasm is right there. Lena can feel it building like pressure at the base of her spine and a buzz in her thighs, but Kara halts her motion right before she tips over the edge and Lena lets out a frustrated groan that just makes Kara laugh again.

“Shhh,” Kara says, lips warm as they travel over Lena’s collarbone. “I’ll take care of you.”

And when her mouth finds its way between Lena’s legs, the frustration burns out of her at the first flick of Kara’s tongue.

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Lena wakes up to a flurry of motion. Her back aches from a combination of the strange position she’d fallen asleep in on the couch and the way she’s just been fucked by an athlete with a good deal of endurance for an hour or two. There’s a blanket half on her and half on the floor, clearly kicked loose by the whirling dervish of activity that’s woken her.

Kara’s trying to jump into her jeans and is hopping unsteadily with only one leg inside them as of yet. Propping an elbow up onto the cushion, Lena sits up and pulls the blanket up her chest. “Hey,” she says, her voice croaking a bit with sleep and strain.

“Hi,” Kara says, her voice just as hoarse and sleepy, but she doesn’t look over, just gets her other leg into her pants and scrambles around looking for --- her shirt most likely.

“In a hurry?”

It’s still dark outside, that much Lena can tell, but she’s not entirely sure what time it is. It’s hard to do the math and figure it out - it seems as though her usual mastery of time disappears in Kara Danvers’ presence.

Kara finds her shirt and pulls it on, buttoning it hastily and finally looking Lena’s direction. “Yeah, sorry if I woke you up. I’m going to be so late to team breakfast and I’m pretty sure Cat will kill me if she finds out.”

Lena feels something akin to affection rush through her as Kara moves quickly through her space and hums, sits up more fully and runs her fingers through her tangled hair. The blanket drops off her chest and Kara’s fingers freeze where they’re fiddling with the bottom button of her shirt.

“Thanks. I should move to a bed before I get permanent back damage, though,” Lena says with a wry laugh. “I can’t believe I fell asleep.”

Kara laughs, a knowing and throaty sound. “Not for very long, don’t worry,” she says and Lena senses something deeper in that sentence that Kara’s not letting on, but she continues talking. “I know you might want to go back to sleep after I get out of here, but I ordered you a coffee and scones on that fancy tablet thing at the bar for around eight.”

“You didn’t have to do that,” Lena replies, affection forming much more fully now. It itches against her chest.

Kara runs her own fingers through her hair, pulling it back off her neck and tying it up in a messy ponytail that somehow looks effortless and put together all at once. Lena envies the ease which which she does it, but doesn’t have time to ruminate on it all because Kara steps forward and kisses her.

The motion presses Lena back against the couch, their lips slanting solidly against each other and Lena feels the warmth of tonight - or was it last night? - surge through her sore, overused muscles. It
causes her hands to come up around Kara’s neck and tug her closer and just like that she’s ready to pull Kara back down on top of her, and Kara doesn’t seem to mind. One knee lands on the couch next to Lena’s hip, her body pressing closer.

Kara laughs a little into the kiss like she knows what it’s doing to her and plants her hands on the back of the couch before it can go much further, bracketing Lena’s head. “I have to go,” she says softly against her lips. “I’ll see you soon?”

It’s a tentative question that Lena answers before she can even really process it. “Yes,” she says quietly and Kara smiles.

When Kara turns, Lena notices it. The dark stain on the back of Kara’s shirt from a spilled glass of whiskey coke, and she gasps involuntarily.

Kara spins and looks at her, confusion clear on her still sleep-addled face. “What’s wrong?”

“You have a small stain on your back,” Lena points out and Kara tries to look at her back, but it’s like a dog attempting to bite their tail and she just turns in place over and over again until Lena stands and stops her, gripping her forearms. The move seems to calm Kara momentarily, her eyes dropping to Lena’s chest.

“Take it off,” Lena orders. “I can have it laundered.”

“I know it’s Vegas, but I need a shirt to at least get to my room,” Kara says, but she’s already unbuttoning it and taking it off. Her eyes go wide when she takes a look at the stain. “That’s not little!”

Lena laughs, plucks the shirt out of Kara’s hands and walks back towards the bedroom where her suitcase is. “I’ll send it out. They can usually do same-day service.”

“My meeting is in like, twenty minutes, and we leave in four hours,” Kara says, trailing after her.

Setting the stained shirt to the side and pulling out something from her suitcase, she hands one of the few t-shirts she brought with her over to Kara and she steps into her own pair of sweatpants. “I don’t leave until the evening,” Lena says. “I’ll get it back to you in National City. You can wear that until you get to your room.”

Kara takes the shirt from Lena’s hands slowly, clearly unsure whether or not she’s agreeing to this, but Lena pushes her with a soft, “You’re going to be late, remember?”

“Yeah,” Kara sighs and she pulls the shirt over her head, leaning forward to press one last kiss to Lena’s lips, and heads back out into the room. “Thanks, Lena.”

“Of course,” Lena says, and tries to ignore the soft flutter of feeling she got at the sight of Kara in her clothing.

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On the flight home, she connects to her plane’s wifi and does some follow-up emails regarding the meetings she’d had in Vegas.

There’s a message from Jack from that morning and she opens it up quizzically. Inside is a link to a picture and she notices it’s Kara - waving at the camera, Lakehawks duffel slung over her shoulder, and stepping onto the stairs of the Lakehawks official plane.
At Jack’s caption, Lena’s heart freezes - *isn’t that your shirt?*

Underneath a nice navy blazer, Kara’s still wearing the t-shirt Lena had handed her that morning. It’s nothing too flashy - a soft grey thing advertising a tech conference from a few years ago - and it probably wouldn’t mean anything to anyone but Jack, who attended the same conference and owned the same shirt.

Which is why she can almost hear the cheeky way he’s asking the question. Kara Danvers has no business owning such a shirt and Jack’s seen it enough to know it’s Lena’s and it’s just too obvious for him not to connect the dots at this point.

She decides not to respond, just deletes the e-mail and closes her laptop.

When the flight attendant passes by, she orders a gin and tonic and tries not to think about the ache still thrumming between her legs and how it got there.

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Jack brings it up again later that week when they have lunch.

“What happens in Vegas stays in Vegas, right?” He jokes and Lena kicks him under the table. It only makes him laugh. “Unless it’s not staying in Vegas.”

It’s said with a suggestive motion of his eyebrows that Lena rolls her eyes at. “I have no idea what you’re referring to.”

“You could do a lot worse than Kara Danvers,” Jack says and Lena glares at him, leaning over the table with a hushed order to:

“Lower your voice.”

Jack looks unaffected. “I don’t know why you’re so up in arms about this. She plays on a basketball team that you own, but frankly have such little interest in you might as well be a silent investor. You’re not her boss. There aren’t any rules explicitly forbidding it.”

“I’m not going to make the same mistakes my brother did,” Lena says and when she stabs her fork in her salad it’s with a little more force than necessary. “The last thing Luthor Corp needs right now is that kind of press. Even if it’s not a big deal as you seem to think.”

“We’re not talking about marriage here,” Jack says, taking a sip of his iced tea and smirking at her. Lena almost kicks him again. “I’m just asking for some of the good details. Like how was she?”

“How would I know?” Lena says, still intent on denying the obvious and hating how well Jack knows her.

“Lena. It’s me,” he says knowingly and she just glares at him.

“Continue this line of questioning and consider yourself uninvited from future Lakehawks games.”

An exaggerated scoff escapes Jack’s mouth and he puts a hand against his chest in feigned indignation, but when Lena doesn’t laugh he rolls his eyes. “Fine, fine, my lips are sealed,” he says, making a swiping gesture over his mouth.

“Thank you,” she says, returning to her salad.

“You’re no fun,” he grumbles, but he’s smiling and this time she does laugh.
Later that night, her phone buzzes where it’s facedown on her bedside table while she reads through some reports on her tablet. When she turns it over, a text from Kara blinks back at her - *i hope you’re treating my shirt as well as i’m treating yours. it’s been through some things.*

It makes Lena laugh, the easy way Kara works with her. Before she can reply, a photo comes through of Kara from the neck down, clearly in bed, wearing those blessed Calvin Klein boyshorts and Lena’s t-shirt. It spikes through her with a sort of deadly precision that she’s only ever felt with this woman.

Before she thinks better of it, she’s pulling off her own sleep shirt and is making a grab for her suitcase, where Kara’s freshly laundered button down is pressed and waiting to be returned. She slips it on, finds a somewhat tasteful angle, and sends her wordless reply.

It takes a moment for Kara to respond, but Lena laughs again when she reads the text.

*you are definitely treating it well. i’m sorry i ever worried.*

She falls asleep with a pleasant buzz of arousal moving across her skin and a smile on her face.
Chapter 3

Lena misses the next home game against Star City because of a last minute trip she has to take to Star City itself, but she catches the highlights on a TV at the hotel bar late that night. The local news shows the Evergreens ones first: Sara Lance and what must be her sister, a more long and lean version of her named Laurel. There’s a glimpse of pregame warmups, and a shot of the two squads at center court chatting amiably. Kara’s laughing and loose, her hands dribbling the ball around her body without seeming to pay much attention to the act.

Jack had taken her seats and used the extra ticket for whatever his flavor of the week was that day and she laughs when she sees him sitting there as the camera pans over the Lakehawks bench.

The team had won - had *dominated* really - and they play a roll of clips, all of them showing Kara outshooting her opponent by an ungodly amount. Apparently Kara had a season high night and she’s glowing with pride in her postgame interview. Lena watches it with a quirk of her lips and doesn’t fight the memory of Kara looking similar - sweaty and hair mussed - as she leaned over Lena’s body and pressed into her.

The show switches over to the sports desk for Star City News, a man in an ill-fitting suit jacket throwing his hands up in the air. The closed caption reveals what’s frustrated him so much: *How on Earth are you supposed to beat Kara Danvers when she plays a game like that?*

Her cell phone sits on the bar top in front of her and she throws back a sip of her martini before reaching for it and texting Kara.

*Great game tonight,* she texts before setting her phone back down and ordering another drink.

Later that night, as Lena’s sliding into her bedsheets at her hotel, Kara’s response comes through. *We missed you there* it says and Lena chews her lower lip a bit, unsure how to respond.

Another text comes through before she can decide. *I’ll try to play just as well next time for you.*

It’s probably not suggestive, but Lena’s having a hard time thinking straight about anything to do with Kara Danvers and her fingers start replying before common sense can take ahold of her again.

*Don’t play that well. I wouldn’t want to make a scene.*

And that’s *definitely* suggestive, but Lena’s already sent it and she blames it on the fact that the memory of Kara’s fingers playing over her body still feels so fresh, or the fact that she can scroll upward in their text chain to find out exactly what Kara would do to her now. All of that, coupled with the cocky smile Kara gave during her postgame interview, Lena’s already starting to feel warm.

A response comes in the form of a phone call and Lena debates for a few seconds before picking up.

“Hi,” she says, sitting up in bed and trying to sound calm. They haven’t really spoken on the phone before and considering what prompted the call...

“So, you watched the game?” Kara asks, her voice low and thick in a way that makes Lena think of soft whispers in her ear, talking her through an orgasm, or wet lips against her neck.

“I saw the highlights,” she says, fingers skittering down her own thigh.

“I broke my season record,” Kara replies, and it manages to come across as self assured, but not
boastful. Her voice is still low, still silky smooth and altogether alluring.

“Congratulations.”

A warm silence sits across the line for a moment before Kara answers. “I can’t stop thinking about Vegas.”

Something throbs between her legs in response – the memory of the way Kara had felt inside her making her lips go dry. “I suppose if I had lost that much money at poker I’d be thinking about it a lot too.”

“That’s not what I meant,” Kara says immediately, as if it needed to be said. Lena swallows against a thick, warm feeling of arousal that presents in her throat.

“I know,” she says softly.

“I broke my season record,” Kara repeats. “And all I could think about is how badly I want to touch you again.”

Lena’s sinking down onto the bed before she can even realize it and her fingers have started to play with the waistband of her soft pajama pants. “I’m back in town on Wednesday.”

“Can I see you?” Kara asks, just as Lena’s fingers dip below her pants and rest there. “Are you coming to the game?”

“I am,” she says and even though they’re not talking about anything particularly explicit, Kara’s voice is making Lena feel languid. She barely restrains her fingers from moving any lower even though all she wants to do is make Kara keep talking until she’s able to stroke a satisfying orgasm out of it.

“Is it tacky to ask what you’re wearing?” Kara says with the sound of a grin in her voice and Lena rolls her eyes up even as her fingers stroke against her hip bone.

“I’ve heard classier lines,” Lena replies dryly and it shouldn’t be working for her, but Kara laughs at that and Lena feels hot liquid pool between her legs.

She should not be this turned on just from a casual conversation, but it’s the knowledge of exactly what Kara could be doing to her if they were in the same room that’s making her feel wet and warm all over.

“I don’t think phone sex is generally very classy,” Kara says and the upfront way she says phone sex makes Lena’s cheeks burn with some combination of embarrassment and arousal.

“We’re not having phone sex.”

“Not yet,” Kara points out with a depth to her voice that flutters over Lena’s skin.

“Aren’t you tired?” Lena asks as some sort of last resort resistance to giving into the suggestion in Kara’s voice.

“Kind of the opposite,” Kara says softly. “I’m usually pretty...hyped up after a game like that.”

The images of how Kara looked in the highlight footage of the game run through her mind – hitting back to back threes with a look of indifference on her face, a particularly glacial look on her face as she stared down her opponent before crossing her over at the key, the victory pump of her arm after
dishing a perfect pass to Alex for her fifteenth assist of the game.

“I can imagine why,” Lena replies and her fingers run north this time, leave the heat of her pants to trail up her stomach, taking her shirt with them.

“So if you’d like to help wear me out,” Kara says, drawing the words out. “In the interest of helping me get to sleep and offering me some much needed rest…”

Lena presses her lips together in a smile even as her own hand plays between her breasts. “Well, when you put it that way what kind of woman would I be if I didn’t help the team out?”

The chuckle Kara lets out sounds a lot like the noise she makes when she’s teased Lena for far too long and Lena’s begun to squirm. It’s full of promise and tease and oh god she’s totally about to have phone sex with Kara Danvers.

“Are you any good at this?” Lena thinks to ask, because she’s never really done this successfully and she’s kind of curious and it feels a little awkward but arousal is winning out and-

“I’m good at like everything,” Kara says and it’s probably supposed to be a joke, but it comes out sounding confident enough that Lena suspects she might be telling the truth. “Haven’t you heard?”

“I’ll believe it when I see it,” Lena teases back.

After a beat of silence, Kara’s voice comes back over the line sounding soft and commanding the way it does when they’re in bed together.

“Take your clothes off,” is all she says and just like that, Lena starts to believe.

--

Attending Lakehawks games becomes something else entirely for Lena over the next few weeks.

What was once a dull waste of her time that she had mostly dreaded becomes some kind of bizarre form of foreplay between her and Kara. It starts with the first look that connects their eyes when Kara comes onto the court for warmups.

A few of the other players have taken to greeting her with head nods and little waves now that they’re familiar with her presence at games, but it’s Kara that just looks at her. A heated gaze that cuts across the court straight into Lena’s chest.

It gets worse as the game begins and Kara goes all focus and determination. The superstar ego that she’s famous for comes out in full force as she commands the Lakehawks with the ease of a well tested veteran.

How basketball has become something overtly sexual for Lena, she doesn’t want to think about. But it’s undeniable that the way Kara moves around the court does something to Lena’s insides.

It becomes something like routine - whether Kara’s home or away, they find a way to come together. And then come together.

--

The first time it happens, Lena’s back in town and the Lakehawks host the Skippers at home.

The look Kara passes her when she jogs onto the court nearly burns Lena from the inside out. It’s brief but significant and Lena’s grateful that Jack is busy unpacking a free bobblehead of Lucy Lane
and showing it to her when she jogs past in the direction of a rack of balls.

Lena’s not entirely sure how she’s going to survive an entire game with the memory of Kara’s voice from last night so fresh in her mind. It’s a struggle just to watch the team warm up with a straight face.

Kara goes through a few drills with her sister, the two of them casually dribbling around each other and half-heartedly defending shots, and Lena’s eyes get stuck on the motions of Kara’s body.

Right before tip off, Kara comes jogging towards the bench, Alex a few steps in front of her and they both pull off the long-sleeved warm-up shirts. It happens just about right in front of Lena and it takes every amount of composure she can muster to take a pointed sip of her drink and look away. If she crosses her legs and fights a blush, it’s not entirely her fault.

They’re close enough to the bench that Lena can hear Alex’s pregame pep talk to her four other starters - hey, this is our game, okay? Let’s focus. Yesterday is yesterday. Today is today. Let’s go out there and take one. Whose house?

The other four women resound in a strong chorus of our house in response and jump up from the bench, putting their hands together in the middle of their huddle.

The house lights black out in the stadium and the pregame video starts to play on the jumbotron - a slow motion video of Kara picking her head up to stare right at the camera.

The whole crowd starts to roar - Skippers games always bring in a little extra energy - and Lena feels herself get caught up in it as Jack pulls her to her feet to cheer on the announcement of the starting lineup.

Kara is last to be announced and when she jogs out onto the court, she catches Lena’s eye. There’s something in her expression that jolts in Lena’s chest, but she can’t put her finger on it. It’s heavy and hot and intent.

And it gets manifested quickly in the way Kara plays.

As soon as the whistle is blown, Kara starts to play like a woman possessed.

Lena might not understand all the mechanics of how basketball works, but considering how many points Kara manages to score in the first quarter alone, she’s fairly certain Kara’s headed to a new season record.

The girl that’s set to guard her - Siobhan Smythe, Lena remembers - gets more and more frustrated as the game goes on, but by the middle of the second quarter when Kara banks back to back threes, she catches Smythe laughing. Kara just gives her a happy smile and a shrug to which Siobhan rolls her eyes.

Leslie Willis, however, looks close to infuriated, but she’s guarding Alex for the time being and seems to have her hands full.

Despite Kara’s contribution, the score is close as they near halftime and Lena actually finds herself watching the game. Like really watching the game - her eyes flitting up to the scoreboard and the gameclock every so often.

Jack’s leaned forward, elbows propped on his thighs as he watches and Lena crosses her own legs and arms, her foot flicking a little nervously as Kara takes a pass outside the arc and the clock continues to wind down.
Smythe guards her well enough, but even from where Lena’s sitting she can see the sheer determination on Kara’s face. Kara tries to juke Smythe off balance, but isn’t successful. Then, just as time is running out, Kara seems to say *fuck it* and goes for the shot. Smythe must read the motion and gets close enough to jostle Kara a little, but the ball goes up towards the basket, Kara’s shooting arm extended in the air as she stumbles backwards a bit.

There’s no reason a shot like that should go in, but Kara is *Kara Danvers* for a reason and when Lena looks at her, Kara’s still got her arm extended and she’s looking away from the basket like she knows the shot will go in.

And it does. Just milliseconds after the clock buzzes at zero.

When her eyes connect with Lena’s, it’s with a smirk that only fades when her teammates swarm her and Alex picks her up in exuberance.

Jack leans close to her, a little of his drink sloshing over the side of the cup and Lena swipes at it, shooting him an affronted glare. He’s completely unaffected as he asks, “Am I supposed to just pretend you guys aren’t eye-fucking on national television?”

It jars her back to the present and her glare goes heavier at his words, but it just makes Jack laugh as he pulls back away from her.

There’s a blush dusting into her cheeks, she’s sure, but Jack’s reminder that there are cameras all around them and the game is indeed aired nationally, helps her keep it in check.

“He honestly, Jack,” she sighs, slapping his thigh in what she hopes looks like a good natured hit, but is really an admonishment.

He keeps laughing. Of course.

--

The eye-fucking during warmups and throughout the game almost always leads to *actual* fucking and they’re forced to become creative in where they hook up.

A particularly memorable post-game meeting occurs in the back of Kara’s car in the team parking lot.

It’s not intentional, but Lena happens to be leaving the arena at the same time Kara is - held long after the game for a meeting with James - and her car is parked in the players’ lot for sake of convenience and there’s *no one* else there because the game ended hours ago and –

“Don’t stop,” Lena pants against Kara’s mouth, cramped up in the backseat of the car. Kara’s Range Rover is spacious, but not exactly designed for what they’re doing. Not that it matters. Lena doesn’t think to care about the ache in her neck because Kara’s got her hand between her legs and her lips up under her chin now and *fuck* she’s going to come. Hard.

Kara’s fingers are working magic, stretching her out deliciously and moving in a rhythm that is totally doing it for her. Lena’s got her own hand down there too, helping it all along because she needs just that little bit more and –

The sound she lets out should probably be embarrassing, but she can feel a smile spread across the lips still pressed up against her neck.

The whole car feels suffocatingly hot and she’s sure the windows have steamed up which isn’t the most discreet way for them to do this, but the lot had emptied by the time they came out there so
they’re probably okay. Hopefully.

Lena can’t see very far past the orgasm still throbbing its way out of her, around Kara’s fingers.

“Can we do this in a bed next time?” Kara asks with a hint of complaint as she pulls away and rolls around the muscles in her back.

Lena laughs, struggling to pull her mostly ruined underwear up her legs. Kara ends up trying to help, her fingers tracing up Lena’s thighs and settling under the rucked up hem of her skirt. Lena works on adjusting her clothing, pulled into disarray by the franticness with which they had met. It’s sticky and mildly uncomfortable, but she’s so sated that she can’t be bothered to care. “Did you really want to wait that long?”

Kara’s look is nothing short of smoldering, her cheeks flushed from their activities, and Lena realizes just like that that they’re not done yet. And she doesn’t quite mind.

“No,” is the only answer Kara gives before she’s shifting closer towards Lena and Lena knows they’re both going to be sore the next day.

Not that she cares.

Judging by the way Kara sounds a mere twenty minutes later when Lena’s got her pressed up against the door, Kara doesn’t care either.

--

The Lakehawks head onto the road to play the Philadelphia Independence and then the Washington Wonders. Kara, when Lena idly asks via text what she thinks of the upcoming games, calls the trip a chance to see Diana, at least. Lena isn’t sure if she should know who Diana is, but when she googles her and Kara, she finds a series of photos of Kara at some sort of charity game getting picked full up off the ground by a woman built like an Amazon, laughing.

It settles oddly in her stomach, but it disappears nearly as soon as Kara sends an emoji-laden text of what are you wearing? Btw, if it’s my shirt, you can have it. Looks better on you anyway.

Lena gets score updates on the Independence game sent to her phone while she wines and dines a potential investor for a new project, but watches the Wonders game in its entirety from her apartment. The commentators spend a lot of the pregame show on Maggie and Alex’s apparent chemistry, even though Maggie is the newest member of the Lakehawks.

Then, before the game, a feature runs about Diana Prince - star player of the Washington Wonders - and Lena tries not to notice just how beautiful Diana is, but it’s not really something avoidable. There’s a series of clips showing Diana dunking over defenders, laughing with teammates and making impossible passes.

It ends with a quick sequence of clips featuring Kara. It’s clear the game is being promoted as a primetime matchup between two superstars.

“Two future hall of famers tonight,” the lead anchor says, when the segment ends. “Both of them lead favorites for MVP, even this early.”

“Not only that, Ken, but this is an early look at what will likely be an Olympic meetup as well,” the other man at the desk replies.

The third anchor, a woman, shuffles some papers and nods and looks at the camera. “We’ve got a
great game coming up for you, folks. We’ll see if Diana Prince and her Wonders have an answer for the way Kara Danvers has been playing the last few games.”

The show shifts to a breakdown in statistics - Kara’s shooting percentages and assist tallies - and shows the Lakehawks record when Kara shoots over seventy percent beyond the arc as she had been in her last two games.

By tip-off, Lena finds herself impressed with exactly how well Kara’s been playing, especially considering Lena’s spent the last week and a half monopolizing her nighttime attentions.

It’s the first time she’s really watched an away game without any other form of distraction. It turns out that with the sound on, Lena learns some useful information about basketball she hadn’t really figured out before. She still spends a lot of the game googling some of the rules on her laptop, but by the end of it she knows enough to text Kara -

*That flagrant on Maggie in the third was atrocious.*

Kara’s response comes much later, after Lena’s turned off her television and settled into reading reports - *totally stupid* - and then a few minutes after that - *what are you doing? Can I call you?*

Lena leaves her laptop on her kitchen island and walks back to her bedroom, pulling Kara’s phone number up on her screen and connecting the call.

“Hi,” Kara greets when she picks up and she sounds slightly out of breath, but happy.

“Hey,” Lena says, pushing aside her comforter to slide into bed.

“You know what a flagrant foul is now?”

Lena laughs. “As an owner, I’ve taken an interest.”

Kara makes a humming noise. “Should I be jealous it was about Maggie and not about that terrible call on me in the fourth?”

“You elbowed that girl in the head,” Lena says drily.

“Not intentionally!” Kara protests and Lena can see the footage of her indignant expression during the game run in her head.

Lena just laughs again until Kara joins in and it tapers off into a comfortable silence for a few seconds.

“Is it tacky to ask what you’re wearing?” Kara asks quietly and Lena’s body tenses with the sudden shift in conversation.

Just like that, Lena feels warm all over and she wishes Kara were there. Wishes she could see that post-game glow Kara has, that excited buzz that surrounds her after a hard fought win. “Is that how you’re going to start this every time?” Lena asks with a slight roll of her eyes.

“Think of it like a code word,” Kara says and Lena can hear the smile in her voice. “Like our secret sex language.”

“You really lean into that dork image don’t you?” Lena asks, but Kara just laughs. And if anything is their secret sex language it’s that laugh Kara has – the one that never fails to make Lena feel hot all over.
“You act like it’s not totally working for you,” Kara says and Lena rolls her eyes.

“I’m wearing pajamas,” Lena says.

“Very sexy,” Kara says, laughing loudly. Lena smiles in return.

“Don’t ask if you don’t want the truth,” Lena says. Kara makes a humming noise punctuated with a small laugh. Silence passes between them for a moment, surprisingly comfortable.

“When do you get back to National City?” Lena asks.

“We’re in Century City next and then we have Metropolis at home on Thursday.”

“Thursday is a long way away,” Lena replies before she can stop the words. They sound needy – girlfriend needy – and not the way you act with your hook-up buddy, but Kara doesn’t really react to it other than:

“That’s why we’re about to have phone sex,” Kara says in a soft, confident tone.

“Are we?” Lena asks but she’s already settling in, the memory of their last go at this making anticipation curl all the way down to her toes.

“Yes,” Kara answers and Lena’s never met anyone that can make her feel this hot just from their voice.

--

The sheets get kicked off the foot of her bed - too hot - and her face presses against the pillow as Kara’s voice in her ear pushes her close.

It’s her fingers rubbing familiar circles and her hips canting down that rips an orgasm out of her. She thinks maybe she hears Kara joining her, but the roar of her own pleasure drowns just about everything else in the room out.

As the urgency of it fades and her body goes languid against the mattress, Kara laughs breathlessly over the line and a hint of embarrassment creeps up upon her. Phone sex isn’t exactly something she’d ever thought she’d be doing.

And yet, she feels relaxed and largely unapologetic about the pleasant buzz humming across her skin.

If she’s going to break her personal rules about mixing business and pleasure than at least it’s well worth it.

--

When she wakes up the next morning, her phone is nearly dead because she had forgotten to plug it in, but she’s able to see that news has broken over who’s been named to the U.S. Olympic basketball teams.

Three Lakehawks players have made the team - Alex Danvers, Lucy Lane and Kara Danvers. The rest of the roster is filled out with the Lance sisters from Star City, two players from Central City Lena’s never heard of and a few Gotham players she remembers Kara talking about - Barbara Gordon, Kate Kane, and Helena Bertinelli.

She sends Kara a quick congratulatory text when she gets into the office and Kara’s reply is nearly
Suddenly their entire text thread is a wall of USA flag emojis and smiley faces. Lena smothers a laugh just in time to put her phone down and smile at Jess who’s entering her office.

--

The Lakehawks have a three day break before their next game and Kara mentions as much in a text that lacks any kind of subtlety. It’s a break from the rhythm of their hookups, to see Kara unconnected to a game, but Lena’s thrilled enough by it that she doesn’t worry too much about it.

Which is how she ends up with Kara in her apartment for the first time. One moment, Kara is suggesting they find the time to meet up, and the next, Lena is texting Kara her address.

It feels intimate. At odds with their arrangement, for sure, and Lena doesn’t know how to make that stop other than not letting Kara get so much as a word in as soon as she steps foot through the door.

Kara spends her first half hour in Lena’s apartment on her knees in the entryway, pushing Lena up against the wall and hooking Lena’s leg over her shoulder.

It stops feeling so personal at that point, with her fingers gripped in Kara’s hair, pulling her in closer until the back of Lena’s head is hitting the wall. Kara’s tongue is warm and firm and so insistent that Lena’s orgasm rips through her body far quicker than she expects it.

Her vision goes a little fuzzy around the edges and her knees buckle as they go liquid with heat, but Kara catches her, keeps her upright with strong fingers under her thighs that keep Lena grounded in the moment.

“You have a bedroom in this place, right?” Kara asks, her voice low and breathless as she makes her way upright.

Lena lets herself go a little limp in Kara’s arms, tries to avoid how the easy way Kara holds her up totally does it for her and laughs. “Yeah,” she answers, gesturing vaguely behind Kara and that seems to be enough instruction.

Without much warning, Kara’s bending her knees and scooping Lena upward until Lena has no choice but to obey the movement, her legs wrapping around Kara’s hips and arms around her neck. It pulls a surprised little squeak out of her, that chokes a bit when the sensitive flesh Kara just spend long minutes torturing, presses firmly against Kara’s still-covered abdomen.

Turning, Kara starts to walk them the direction Lena indicated and good lord Lena should not be this into such a display of strength – it’s never really been something she’s thought about before – but she can’t deny the way her body is reacting to it.

“Don’t distract me or I will drop you,” Kara says just as Lena’s fingers thread through blonde hair and her lips find their way to Kara’s jaw. Kara punctuates the statement with a quick squeeze of Lena’s backside that makes them both laugh.

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“You have a really nice apartment,” Kara jokes later when they’re spent and catching their breath in Lena’s sheets. All of Lena’s muscles feel overused and useless as she stares at her ceiling and licks out at her lips.

“Thanks,” she says with a short laugh, turning her head to see Kara on her back, naked and

instantaneous.
uncovered. Her gaze flits down the toned form before pulling away. As much as her mind thinks they could go for another round, her body would definitely not survive. As it is, she’s a little worried she’s going to get some kind of nerve damage with the way they’ve been going at it.

Kara shifts to her side to face Lena, props her elbow in the mattress to hold her head up. “How long have you lived here?”

Lena counts in her head. “Seven years, I think,” she answers.

“Are you from National City?”

Feeling a little uneasy at the soft, open look on Kara’s face, Lena sits up a bit. “I’m sure that’s on my Wikipedia page.”

Kara’s brow furrows. “Well, sure, but I’m not going to Google you when you’re right in front of me.”

“I think we need to set up some ground rules,” Lena says, looking away.

Kara sighs, sitting up and swinging her legs over the side of the bed. “Rules?”

“Yes, rules,” Lena repeats as Kara reaches over to pull a nearby shirt over her head.

“I thought we already had rules,” Kara says, turning her shoulder to look at Lena. “The no one can know and you can’t stay the night rules.”

“Yes, but there needs to be other rules. Boundaries. To avoid this becoming something more than it is.”

An ominous silence stretches between them as Kara stands and turns, pulling her pants back on with an inscrutable expression on her face.

“So what?” Kara asks, hands out at her sides. “We can’t be friends?”

“I never said that.”

“That’s exactly what you’re saying,” Kara insists, fists propping on her hips. “You want a friend with benefits thing except you don’t want the friend part.”

Lena rolls her eyes. “Don’t be petty.” She stands then too, reaching for a sleep shirt she has hanging off a nearby chair and pulling it over her head.

“Friends know things about each other,” Kara says. “It’s not going to kill you to sleep with me and know that my favorite movie is Space Jam.”

A pause. “Your favorite movie is not Space Jam,” Lena says, fighting a smile, but Kara is a little less amused.

“That’s not the point, Lena!”

“I’m sorry, you’re right,” she replies and she forces her expression into something more neutral. “It’s not about not wanting to be your friend.”

“Then what’s it about?”

“I just don’t want anything to get confusing,” she says. “I don’t want the lines to get blurred. There
are a lot of things to think about.”

“What things?” Kara asks with a heavy dose of incredulity that makes Lena bristle.

“How about both of our jobs?” Lena answers heatedly. “The last thing my family’s company needs right now is some sort of scandal. And this has scandal written all over it. Do you really want to be known as the player that’s fucking her team’s owner? Can you imagine the implications that people will make?”

Kara scoffs. “No one in their right mind is going to think I’m on this team because of some arrangement.”

Lena quirks a brow. “No? I guarantee you that people will think -”

“My game speaks for itself,” Kara argues. “I’m the best player in this league and that’s why I’m on this team. Don’t make this about me.”

“That’s not even -” Lena lets out a frustrated exhale. “If anyone finds out -”

“What does that have to do with anything?!?” Kara asks, voice equally frustrated.

“I’m just reminding you that no one -”

“I already agreed to keeping things secret. I don’t - care about that,” Kara says, voice steel. “I’m talking about behind closed doors. I’m talking about how it’s not going to cause a scandal if we have a friendly conversation about something other than what you like in bed. That has nothing to do with people finding out about -”

“It might start there, but -”

“Oh my god, Lena. I’m not going to fall desperately in love with you just because I know your favorite color.”

A thick silence drops for a beat and Lena quirks a brow. “Well now you’ve jinxed it.”

That, at least, makes Kara laugh and relax a bit. “Look, I’m fine with being casual. You know that. But I think we can at least be friends. Otherwise...I’m basically your like...” Kara makes a gesture, her cheeks pink in a way Lena knows isn’t from sex. “You know.” Lena waits, face expectant for Kara to clarify. “I’m like your sex toy.”

It’s a struggle to smother a laugh. “How is it you could be embarrassed by saying that after what you just did to me in this bed?” Lena asks, eyebrow arched.

Kara’s face manages to go a deeper red. It’s a charming look that presses against Lena’s sternum. “Can we stay on topic?”

“By all means,” Lena says, lips tight in a smile.

“I’d like to be friends,” Kara says softly, sincere. “I think we can do that. I’d like to know things about you. That’s all. Nothing serious.”

With a deep breath, Lena considers that. Fights against instinct to push Kara away, and maybe it’s the satisfied way her body feels right now, but she decides to give an inch in the hopes Kara won’t take a mile. “I don’t want this to get complicated.”

With a soft look on her face, Kara nods, smiles a little sadly. “I don’t know what kind of friendships
you’ve had in the past, but this doesn’t have to be complicated just because I know what your Starbucks order is.”

That makes Lena roll her eyes and laugh.

A playful look crosses Kara’s face and she squints at Lena. “Is it embarrassing? Like a raspberry steamer or something? Cupcake Frappuccino?”

In place of answer, Lena throws one of the last remaining bed pillows straight at Kara’s face and hits her target. Kara lets out a laugh, catching the pillow and tossing it back onto the bed.

On a deep breath, Lena puts up her last wall of resistance. “You know, in my experience people talk a big game about having sex without strings and it almost never pans out that way.”

Kara stares at her, a hint of a smile still lingering on her face. “As soon as it starts to go down that path we can cut the sex part off and just be friends,” she offers and against better instinct, Lena doesn’t argue.

A moment of silence stretches out between them, an easy smile playing on Kara’s lips before she adds, “I like you, Lena.” A pause, a soft blinking of blue eyes. “As a friend.”

An ominous lump presents in Lena’s throat, but she pushes it down. “Me too,” she says and tries not to let her chest react to the way Kara’s smile goes impossibly wide.

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Despite their newly agreed upon friendship, Kara doesn’t try to stay the night. For which Lena is grateful.

But she does stick around for a post-coital cup of coffee at Lena’s kitchen counter. It still makes her feel a little vulnerable to have Kara so firmly in her home like this, but she tries to quell the feeling. They’re friends. This is no different than if Jack were sitting there. Right?

Except it totally is because Kara’s hair still has that just fucked look in it even though she’s tied it back and her skin looks soft and flushed and Lena wants to reach out and run her fingers across her jawline until they’re kissing again. There’s an ache that’s already settling between her legs, a wet and sticky feeling from their previous activities and it vibrates towards the heat of Kara’s body, a mere foot away.

That’s a hell of a lot different from when Jack is sitting across from her.

As a distraction from her wandering thoughts, Lena takes a sip of her coffee and smiles at Kara. “Hey, I wanted to say a formal congratulations. In person, I mean.”

Kara tilts her head. “For what?”

“The Olympics,” Lena answers and a brightness lights up Kara’s eyes. It surprised absolutely no one that Kara was on the roster, but it’s still clearly a point of pride.

“Thanks,” Kara says with a grin. “I’m really excited.”

“Japan, right?”

Kara nods enthusiastically. “Yeah. I’ve never been, have you?”

“A few times, for work,” Lena says. “I’ve always enjoyed spending time there.”
“Do you think you might go for the games?”

At the excited glint in Kara’s eye, Lena feels herself flush a little. “I hadn’t considered it.”

“You should totally come,” Kara insists, leaning over until her hand is covering the one Lena has lying on the counter. “It’s going to be awesome.”

“I’m not much for sports,” Lena says, slowly pulling her hand out from under Kara’s warm palm.

“The Olympics is so much more than sports,” Kara says with a superior sounding scoff.

“Is it not a sporting competition on an international stage?” Lena points out and Kara just pulls a face that conveys how she feels about that categorization of an event she has clear reverence for.

“This is why you should come to Japan and see for yourself. You don’t have to like sports to appreciate that amazingness of the Olympic Games. It’s so much more than sports.”

Lena takes a sip of her coffee to hide her amused smile and shrugs a shoulder. “I’ll consider it.”

“You should,” Kara says. “Doesn’t Luthor Corp have a big sponsorship deal?”

“And?” Lena asks with a quirk of her brow. “I believe we also sponsor a NASCAR team, but you don’t see me frequenting the track.”

Kara’s lips thin, lifting up just a bit at the edges as she takes another sip of her coffee. “Did you know that the Olympics have an official condom sponsor?”

The random anecdote nearly makes Lena spit her coffee out, but she manages to avoid it, both eyebrows going skyward. “Why would I know that?” A pause, her eyebrows coming down together. “Why would you know that?”

“I know tons of stuff,” Kara says, shrugging a shoulder.

Lena rolls her eyes. “Tons of useless information, clearly.”

Kara laughs, leans closer to Lena over the counter, eyes playful. “Just trying to show you that the Olympics are about more than sports,” she says with a mischievous smile and Lena groans at the implication in her expression, reaching out to shove at Kara’s shoulder.

“You’re the worst,” Lena says, though she’s laughing.

“Oh, come on,” Kara entreats, trapping Lena’s fingers when they stop pushing at her. “Seriously. You should come to Japan. I mean, you’d get to watch your favorite Lakehawk in action,” she adds, wiggling her eyebrows with an exaggeration that makes Lena shake her head, lips pursed.

“You’re right,” she replies, pulling her fingers out of Kara’s grasp, but smiling. “I should try to make it out there to see Alex play.”

It takes a second for the words to register, clearly, but when they do, Kara makes an affronted noise, straightening in indignation. A burst of warmth and fondness rips across her chest unbidden and even though she’s bone tired, she still considers reaching forward and pressing a kiss to her lips and dragging her back to bed.

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Excitement for the upcoming Olympics and the three local stars that will be representing the country
spreads over National City like wildfire. All of the local news outlets are covering it in some capacity and it even gets mentioned in her afternoon PR meeting.

“I don’t think it’s a bad idea to capitalize on the publicity,” she’s being told as she flips through some of the numbers her team has polled the last month.

“Connecting your face to the teams in a more tangible way could be good for us,” another man agrees, leaning forward. “Youngest owner in the league. Three Lakehawks representing the country, one Harrier…”

“What are you suggesting?” Lena asks, looking around the table.

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It ends up being a photoshoot. The Lakehawks are just finishing up practice across town, and they send her their way.

Lena thinks to protest. The idea of being photographed with Kara doesn’t sit well with her, but it’s not like anyone knows. Despite the fact that she feels like she’s wearing a big neon sign that says I’m fucking the superstar.

Alex, Lucy and Kara are already scheduled to take some promotional shots in their Olympic uniforms so Lena’s told to stop by during the session. As she gets there, Cat is leaving – dressed so immaculately that Lena fidgets a little in her understated black dress and red soled heels.

“Lena,” Cat greets, her eyes running up and down Lena’s form. The gaze is punctuated by what Lena hopes is a small, approving nod and smile before Cat’s waving casually goodbye and brushing past her.

“Nice to see you too, Cat,” Lena mumbles before pushing into the room.

It’s clear that Kara isn’t expecting her by the way her eyes go impossibly wide the moment her heels click forward. The red, white, and blue of the uniform is a bit of a culture shock to the usual Lakehawks blue, grey, and white, but Lena can’t help but think Kara looks good in the royal blue the photoshoot has picked.

Alex and Lucy don’t seem as affected and they stand to greet her politely. It all feels fine and normal until she’s told to sit on a box prepared for her and Kara’s positioned behind her, close enough that she can feel her body heat against her back.

It’s awkward for the first few shots until Lena takes a deep breath and reminds herself that she’s a professional and she can handle this.

It helps that Alex and Lucy seem about as happy to have their photograph taken as Lena does. The two of them keep having secretive arguments off to the side and are constantly being instructed to act more natural around each other. Lena raises a brow at Kara in question – she’d always heard that Alex and Lucy got along well, that most of the team in general were good friends. Kara just shrugs, clearly as confused as Lena is.

From the way they’re acting, Lena might think that – a memory flits across her consciousness, Kara in her hotel room telling her that Alex and Lucy slept together over the Gotham trip a year ago. A laugh bursts out of her before she can stop it. It brings the attention of the room towards her, but she swallows the sound and waves them off. “Sorry, thought of an old joke. Carry on.”

It actually makes her feel a bit more comfortable – the idea that she’s not the only person in the room
with some kind of secretive gay tension.

They get through a slew of photos in different poses. Most of them with the three players surrounding Lena and a few where she’s made to hold a basketball. Kara laughs when it happens and Lena fights a blush remembering the time Kara taught her how to shoot a basketball in Las Vegas.

They do duo shots as well – Lena with Alex, then with Lucy and finally with Kara. Just touching Kara for an extended period of time even around all these people has Lena’s skin buzzing. Kara’s hand feels hot where it slides across her back to bring their bodies in close.

The shoot ends moments before Lena’s about lose all sense of propriety and find a discreet way to drag Kara to privacy just to relieve the tension building in her gut.

“Thank you for your time, Miss Luthor,” the photographer says, and with that she’s dismissed.

“Hey,” Kara calls out, rounding the corner and jogging towards Lena down the hallway.

“Hi,” Lena says with a soft laugh and Kara looks around furtively.

“What are you doing tonight?” Kara asks and Lena just smiles.

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It’s frankly a good thing Lena spent so much money on a sturdy bed frame because sex with Kara is a test to its integrity every single time.

Like right now, when one of Kara’s hands is curled around a bar of her headboard and the other is buried between Lena’s legs. The metal creaks under the strain of Kara pushing forward and pulling back.

Then later, when Lena’s own hands curl around a bar, cling tightly and don’t move because Kara told her to keep them there. Her fingers ache with the desire to move her hands down into Kara’s hair.

It’s almost disturbing, how good this feels every single time, how quickly she reacts to Kara, how easily Kara plays her body. It’s the best casual hook-up she’s ever had. Which is probably why she keeps having it.

Somehow, no matter how often she comes on Kara’s fingers, or with her voice in her ear or her mouth on her clit, the feeling doesn’t stop being as intense as the first time. It’s like all she can think about is the orgasm that’s ripping through her body, how quickly and severely it sneaks up on her.

Lena wonders if that will ever change. Wonders if there’s some kind of magic orgasm number that they’ll reach and Kara will stop being able to pull her apart so easily.

There’s a smaller voice, one Lena’s trying to ignore, that tells her she might not ever want to reach that number if one exists.

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The post-coital coffee becomes as much a routine as the sex.

Lena doesn’t even ask Kara anymore - just heads into her kitchen and pulls out two coffee mugs as she starts to heat up water and find her french press.
There’s something about the way Kara sits at her counter - redressed in her jeans and the nice button down she’d shown up in. But the shirt’s only half done up and there are visible scratch marks down the center of her chest that Lena wants to place her palm on to soothe. Her fingers twitch a bit around the hot cup in her hands.

Kara seems none the wiser, is focused on looking around Lena’s apartment like there’s something to be found of interest. There aren’t too many personal touches - her interior designer had outfitted the apartment in monochrome modernity that left no room for anything too exciting.

“Is your favorite color grey?” Kara asks abruptly and Lena quirks a brow.

“No.”

Kara narrows her eyes, glances around again. “White?”

“Technically white isn’t a color,” Lena points out and Kara rolls her eyes.

“Are you being intentionally difficult?”

Lena shrugs a shoulder, fights a smile and hides it in the rim of her coffee.

With an exasperated look, but a soft smile, Kara drains the rest of her coffee and sets her empty mug on the counter. “I’ll figure you out someday, Lena Luthor,” she says playfully and Lena laughs.

Kara stands and walks over to her discarded bomber jacket hanging off Lena’s couch. After fishing in one of the pockets, she pulls out her phone and with one hand swipes it open while pulling her jacket back on over her disheveled button down.

“What are you doing?” Lena asks, twisting in her stool to observe Kara. It’s irritating how good she still looks - still a little fucked out looking, clothing all twisted and wrinkled from the way they’d gotten undressed.

“Calling my Lyft,” Kara says, adjusting her jacket over her shoulders and looking down on her phone. Lena manages to convince her legs to work toward standing up and steps closer, and dismisses it with a wave before she can think better of it.

“Don’t be silly. Take my car.” Kara’s eyebrows go up in surprise, but Lena clarifies before she can protest. “My driver, George, will take you home.” Kara doesn’t reply right away and Lena gives her a droll look. “It’s really no trouble.”

A second more of hesitation before Kara pockets her phone. “Okay, if you insist.”

Lena smiles playfully, rests her hand against the toned muscle of Kara’s bicep. “It’s the least I can do.”

Blue eyes run up and down Lena’s form, a hint of a smirk tugging at Kara’s lips, but something more affectionate in her gaze. Kara’s hands reach out for Lena’s hips, pulling her in for a languid kiss that distracts them well enough that Kara doesn’t leave for another twenty minutes.

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“So I heard an interesting rumor,” Jack says to her as they share a plate of appetizers at a charity function Jack had dragged her to.

“What’s that?” Lena asks, picking up a carrot off his plate and biting it with a snap and a quirk of her
“You’ve had a night time visitor.”

Lena stills, sets the half-eaten carrot down on the plate slowly and narrows her eyes. “Is that so?”

“That’s just what I hear,” Jack says with a knowing smirk that only makes Lena’s glare deepen.

“I’m firing my doorman,” is all Lena says and Jack laughs.

“It wasn’t Stan,” he says.

“My driver then,” she ventures, wondering how in the world Jack would have heard such a rumor. They’ve been discreet. Lena’s made sure of it.

“Don’t fire George,” Jack says with another laugh. “He thinks you’re stepping out on me with some woman. He was quite worried. It’s quite the scandal.”

Lena rolls her eyes, picks up her glass of champagne and takes a sip.

Jack leans up against the table and grins at her. “Tell me it’s Kara,” he says in a conspiratorial whisper and Lena’s jaw tightens.

“Shut up, Jack.”

“Is it?”

“It’s nothing,” she emphasizes and before he can press her further they’re interrupted by a photographer at the event who steps up to their table.

“Mr. Spheer, Miss Luthor. Quick photo for the website?”

Both of them put on practiced smiles and scoot into towards each other. Jack’s arm wraps familiarly around her waist and Lena leans in towards him as the photographer snaps their picture with a smile.

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The Lakehawks lose to San Diego in a stunner. Lena doesn’t make it to that game - she has a previous commitment with the visiting head of her London office - but she catches some of the recap later that night on the local news. Kara’s face tells it all without needing to see the score.

Cat ends up throwing a clipboard on the ground - it cracks in two - and at one point Maggie gets a technical foul for charging at a player. Alex doesn’t even attempt to stop it from happening like she usually does.

Phoenix are in town the very next day and she and Jack make it to their seats just as the game is set to tip off. The Lakehawks look vengeful, ready to take out their frustration from the previous evening on the new opponent.

And so they do.

They take an early lead and never lose it. The whole team seems to be playing on another level - including the bench players. Kara leaves the game early, sits for most of the second quarter and then the fourth.

That apparently has left plenty of pent-up energy in Kara, considering Lena barely manages to close
the door that night before she’s being pushed onto her living room couch. Kara’s wearing her post-
game media outfit, a gray button-up covered by a leather varsity jacket. When Lena’s hands slip
underneath the jacket, Kara’s body is warm, solid, strong, and she sinks into the way Kara touches
her quickly.

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Later, Lena has only just managed to sit up in bed and throw on a shirt when Kara ambles in with
their customary coffee, dressed only in her Calvin Kleins.

“Nice shirt,” Kara says with a grin, shuffling her way onto the bed and offering Lena’s coffee to her.
She grips it and lets its warmth seep through her, glancing down at the shirt she had picked up
blindly from the floor. It’s got an enormous Lakehawks logo on it, along with a sponsorship logo
from a local grocery chain.

“You know, before I started this whole ownership endeavor, I had a lot less free t-shirts floating
around my apartment,” Lena mutters.

“Well it looks good on you,” Kara says, slipping her legs under the duvet and sipping her coffee.
There’s a moment of soft silence as they drink their coffee together, Kara’s legs crossing and
brushing against Lena’s thighs.

“You played well tonight,” Lena comments, realizing they didn’t even exchange pleasantries before
ripping each other’s clothes off.

Kara makes a noise into her coffee, shrugs a shoulder. “I don’t love it when Cat benches me just
because we’re destroying someone,” she says, a bit softly, like she’s confessing something she
shouldn’t.

Lena laughs shortly, reaches over to stroke a palm over the warm bare skin of Kara’s thigh. “Well it
worked out for me,” she says with a teasing grin.

Kara arches a brow, tilts her head a bit in inquiry until Lena clarifies.

“I assume that’s where all the extra energy came from,” she says, glancing over to the destruction of
her bedroom - the majority of her pillows are strewn across the floor, their clothes make a path out
the door towards the living room, a lampshade is tilted where it sits on her dresser and a footstool she
keeps near her closet is upside down.

Kara herself has a matching look - adorably ruffled, shoulders red and hair in disarray. She looks like
a piece of the picture of Lena’s bedroom, too, in a way that makes Lena’s stomach tighten and
heartbeat quicken.

Rolling her eyes a bit and flushing, Kara chuckles. “It was either you or the gym,” she says, a dry
look towards Lena that makes her laugh.

“Good to know I’m more exciting than a treadmill,” Lena says, and Kara snorts into her coffee mug.
Lena can’t help but smile back.

“So much more exciting,” Kara says, sounding a bit too sincere to still be teasing and they’re caught
regarding each other for a quiet moment before Lena’s reaching forward to pluck Kara’s coffee out
of her hands and move it to a safe distance for what she’s planning to do next.

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Luthor Corp sponsors a massive booth and the National City Pride Fest every year. It’s something Lena’s always taken on personally and this year is no different.

Of course, the universe seems keen on constantly playing jokes on her because the Lakehawks have their booth set up right across from Luthor Corp’s. A setup that’s new to Lena – usually the Lakehawks and the Harriers have booths on the other side of the park.

It’d be fine, really, if Kara hadn’t shown up to the event in cutoff jean shorts and a black tank top with a play on the Lakehawks slogan scripted across the front in rainbow text – *Up, Up, A Gay!* A snapback hat is sitting backwards on her head and Lena can see it’s got the Lakehawks logo on it, but instead of powder blue it’s filled in with a rainbow.

The entire ensemble is in stark contrast to Lena’s more conservative pair of capri slacks and seasonable sleeveless blouse, and it is also distracting to the point of incoherency for Lena.

Kara spends the day handing out Lakehawks schedules and signing autographs. Lucy and Alex are there too, working the booth and organizing raffles. M’gann stops in for an hour and helps out at the booth before she taps out. Some time that afternoon, Maggie shows up in an out of season leather jacket and sunglasses. She stays for all of thirty minutes before she seems to pick up a girl at a neighboring booth and heads off.

Lena tries her best to focus on her own booth and not on Kara’s legs or biceps or smile or the way Kara keeps throwing suggestive glances her direction. It’s also considerably difficult to ignore the throng of men and women that seem to throw themselves at Kara.

Kara takes it all in stride. Poses for pictures when asked, lets fans kiss her cheeks for selfies and signs a number of body parts without skipping a beat.

Lena feels a particularly inappropriate burn of jealousy when one good looking female fan requests Kara’s signature on the swell of her breast.

“Classy,” Lena murmurs under her breath as she tries to remind herself that she has no hold on Kara and if Kara wants to sleep with all her groupies then she very well can.

Eventually, Kara strides across the path between their booth and approaches Lena – hands in her pockets and smile on her face. Her eyes are hidden by aviators and for that Lena’s a tad grateful.

There’s a proprietary satisfaction in the fact that a few of Kara’s fans watch as Kara ignores them in favor of speaking to Lena.

*Because I’m her boss* Lena reminds herself as she tries to quell the feeling.

“Hey, Lena,” Kara says softly, glancing to the side where Lena’s booth assistant is speaking to someone about Luthor Corp career opportunities.

“Hi,” she says, crossing her arms over her chest to stop herself from reaching out to Kara, to gripping ahold of her by the waist and feeling over her ribs. “Happy Pride.”

“Happy Pride!” Kara returns joyfully, rocking up on the balls of her feet.

“I didn’t know you’d be here.”

“Surprise appearance,” Kara says. “I mean, we usually come to the festival in general, but it’s a surprise to the booth. If we announced it, we could get swarmed and stuff.”
That much looks already to be true, the crowd around the booth has grown considerably larger as the day has gone on and word’s gotten around that the Lakehawks are there. “I see.”

“You should see the boys’ booth,” Kara says with a laugh. “Mon-El said one year a guy knocked the whole tent down trying to get a picture.”

Lena’s eyes go wide. “That sounds barbaric.”

Kara just shrugs. “Pride, right?”

“I suppose.”

“Are you doing anything after this?” Kara says, this time taking her glasses off and looking at Lena earnestly. “Alex and I usually have people over to my apartment and order a ton of food we’re not supposed to eat and like a lot of vodka.”

The mention of the elder Danvers sisters drags Lena’s gaze that direction to where Alex is in fact sneaking glances towards them with a slight furrow to her brow. Lucy Lane, however, keeps redirecting Alex’s attention back to something on her phone.

“I don’t think that’s a good idea,” Lena says slowly because sure they’re friends, but how many times do they need to have the we need to be discreet discussion for Kara to understand?

“Oh,” Kara replies, following Lena’s gaze and thankfully her train of thought. “Right, yeah, good point.”

There’s disappointment both in Kara’s voice and her expression and Lena feels an answering emotion in her chest as well. But then Kara brightens a bit, steps closer to the booth and lowers her voice. Thankfully the other booth volunteer has moved out of earshot, helping someone sign up on their guest log.

“I could be free after everyone leaves,” Kara says. “If you’re not doing anything.”

Lena takes a look at the skin revealed over Kara’s collarbone and makes a decision with her gut instead of her brain.

“Call me.”

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Kara does call much later that night and texts Lena an address only a few blocks from where Lena herself lives. It makes her feel a bit ridiculous for insisting George take Kara home most nights she spent at Lena’s.

It’s her first time in Kara’s swanky apartment but she sees next to none of it - the minute she gets inside, Kara has her pressed up against the door. Kara tastes like flavored vodka and something sugary, but her hands are strong and sure as they slip to Lena’s waist and just barely glance against the skin there. Lena sinks against Kara’s body at the first feel of it pressing against her own.

This shouldn’t feel so good after this many times, but it does. It hasn’t gotten old yet. The fiery feeling that had overtaken Lena after that first kiss in the elevator still hovers in her stomach, still burns whether Kara was chasing her through orgasm with her fingers, mouth, or voice.

Kara’s mouth trails a hot path down her neck and her fingers play with the fabric of Lena’s clothing and before she can even think about anything else they’re stumbling towards a couch in Kara’s living
room and scrambling to get naked.

Kara shoves a good deal of rainbow-themed items off the enormous couch just before she pushes Lena onto it, and Lena thinks to be concerned about the crashing noise something makes, but then Kara is tugging at the waistband of her jeans and her mouth is sucking at her hip bone.

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They make it to the bedroom eventually, and into Kara’s massive bed.

Which is how Lena ends up taking six inches with Kara behind her, both hands on her hips and pushing forward so deliciously that Lena feels a million sensations at once.

It’s a race to orgasm, a frantic pace of thrusting that has Lena’s head pushing down into the mattress and her knees slipping on the sheets to spread herself open and take whatever Kara wants to give her.

But Kara doesn’t seem as quite in a hurry as Lena, because she stops and pulls out so she can twist Lena around. Her back hits the mattress and her calves bracket Kara’s hips. She can see the slick of her own desire glisten on the toy jutting out from Kara’s hips, but her eyes get pulled up to Kara’s face and suddenly it’s almost too intimate.

This time, when Kara’s hips drop down and push forward, Lena’s gaze connects with Kara’s blue eyes and she feels incapable of breaking the stare. Her body opens up to take Kara inside, a slow delicious stretch with this new angle, and Lena’s jaw drops open a bit with a sharp inhale.

“You okay?” Kara asks, her voice rough and hips slow as she slips deeper inside of Lena. It feels good, feels like she’s being overwhelmed. She nods, her hips bucking to take more.

Kara pushes inside, leans over Lena until they’re fully connected and something warm and tangible threads between their chests. A surprising spike of heat hits Lena in the backs of her eyes and she closes them in reaction.

It’s better then, with her eyes closed, and she settles down a little as Kara picks back up in rhythm. Just like that the pressure is back, tugging at her clit and her low abdomen and god Kara is good at this. She tries not to think of why Kara would be so adept at such a thing and definitely avoids thinking about why she might even care about that.

It’s easy to push all other thought aside the minute Kara brings her fingers between them to play in Lena’s flesh, rubbing delicious circles and quick flicks. Her orgasm feels like it’s going to devastate her. It starts with a shake in her thighs that make her want to close them, but Kara’s body is in the way, holding her open and forcing her to feel everything, every slick inch of unerring fullness.

She opens her eyes again to see Kara staring down at her intently, and she just wants to come and not think about anything else. So she reaches up to tug Kara’s face down and kisses her hotly, pushing her hips up into Kara’s thrusts and sinking into the tumbling feeling of her orgasm racing through her body.

Their kisses devolve into something open mouthed and sloppy as Lena comes with a sharp little noise and an arch of her back.

Kara grins – pleased and almost smug – but Lena doesn’t let the expression last, kisses against it as the aftershocks tremble through her limbs, doesn’t stop kissing until Kara has started moving her hips again.
They end up in Kara’s kitchen much later, drinking coffee out of Lakehawks mugs at the counter. Lena takes the time to actually look around Kara’s apartment. It’s not very often she can be impressed by someone’s home, but Kara’s space is massive and well decorated. There are bursts of color that she can sort of pick out in the dim light, odd knick knacks worked into the decor. It’s so Kara.

It has floor to ceiling windows around the living room area and a massive fake fireplace and Lena can spot a display of awards on a far wall – MVP, rookie of the year, a bunch of trophies Lena doesn’t recognize.

“This is a nice place,” she comments honestly, taking a sip of her coffee and looking back at where Kara’s leaning forward on her elbows.

“Thanks,” Kara says simply, smiling.

There’s something unsettling about the soft, affectionate way Kara is looking at her. So much so that Lena has to look away and clear her throat.

“How long have you lived here?” Lena asks.

Kara laughs, sits up a bit. “I’m sure you can find that information on my Wikipedia page,” she says in mocking tone that takes Lena a second to catch.

When she does, she rolls her eyes, lets an exasperated scoff escape that ends up more like a laugh. “You think you’re so funny.”

“Only because I seem to be able to make you laugh all the time,” Kara points out with an arch of her brow that flutters against Lena’s chest.

Lena gives her a droll look. “I’m laughing *at* you, darling. Not with you.”

A loud, pleased laugh bubbles out of Kara’s mouth, her cheeks still a little flushed from earlier and her hair a tangled mess on her head. It’s such an attractive look that Lena finds a happy smile spread over her own lips.

--

Pride Night with the Lakehawks is set for the game that week against the St. Roch Flyers - part of a back-to-back stretch of games. All the fans at the game get specially made league sponsored t-shirts. Jack is practically *giddy* when he sees his draped over the back of his seat.

They’re coming off a big win over the San Diego Rays, but the team looks energized as they jog onto the court.

Kara plays out of her mind, but it’s still a closely contested game.

St. Roch’s star player, Kendra Saunders, seems to have been tasked with mitigating Kara’s effect on the game, but she’s only slightly successful. Kara shifts her playstyle from sharpshooting to playmaker and tallies up assist after assist.

It clearly frustrates Kendra and the matchup gets physical towards the end of the fourth.

Kara takes a nasty spill almost right in front of Lena. Her legs get tangled with Kendra’s and she hits
Maggie and all three of them go down hard.

She and Jack both jump up, startled by it just as Cat calls a timeout with an angry gesture right in the ref’s face.

“What the fuck, Saunders?” Maggie shouts as she scrambles up off the court and looks like she’s going to charge the other player. She’s stopped only by Alex wrapping a hand around her waist and scooping her backward. Maggie doesn’t seem too fazed by it - just continues to struggle in Alex’s hold for a few more seconds before she relents with a frustrated roll of her eyes.

Lucy offers a hand to Kara, who gets up a little more gingerly. Lena watches the motion with laser like focus.

Maggie’s still seething, but Kara and Kendra seem unperturbed by it. Kara just pats Kendra on the back good naturedly and shakes out her body.

It looks like Kara’s limping just the slightest, but Cat doesn’t take her out of the game and Kara winks at Lena as she jogs back out onto the court.

--

After the game, she and Jack head to their usual steakhouse bar and have a martini.

“Happy Pride,” Jack says, clinking his glass against hers.

“Happy Pride,” she parrots with a smile and an affectionate shake of her head.

The television, as it usually does, is playing the highlights from the game. Lena watches a series of clips of Kara’s assists, then M’gann hitting back to back three-pointers and a particularly flashy moment when Maggie got a steal and hurled the ball downcourt to a waiting Alex Danvers.

The bottom scrawl talks about the brief altercation between Maggie and Kendra and shows the nasty fall that preceded it. Lena watches again as Kara gets up with an uncharacteristic lack of elegance.

Even though she had seen all of this in person it feels very different to see it on television – especially with the slowed down footage and close up images of Kara’s expressions.

A particularly telling clip of Kara limping down the tunnel towards the locker room and punching the wall in pained frustration makes Lena pick her phone up without thinking too much about it.

Come over tonight is all Lena sends as the television switches to highlights of the National City Skippers victory over the Gotham Grenadiers.

Kara doesn’t send anything back apart from a thumbs up emoji that both excites and worries Lena.

--

The Lakehawks winning has become linked with an exuberant, energized, overly sexualized version of Kara Danvers in her mind.

But when Kara shows up at her door later that night, showered and dressed casually, Lena reads nothing but exhaustion in her face despite her heavy-handed win earlier.

That doesn’t seem to stop Kara from trying though. She steps over the threshold and kisses Lena immediately, arm wrapping around Lena’s waist. “Hey, friend,” she murmurs teasingly and Lena laughs.
“You look tired,” Lena comments when Kara pulls away a bit and Lena strokes some hair off Kara’s forehead.

“I’m fine,” Kara dismisses, but when she disengages from Lena’s body to set her bag down in the kitchen, her gait is strained.

“Is your ankle bothering you?” Lena asks.

“No,” Kara answers - too sharply to be believable.

Lena tsks disapprovingly and moves past Kara to grab a hand towel from one of the drawers. When Kara tries to follow, Lena just points towards the living room.

“What?” Kara asks with a confused glance towards where Lena’s pointing.

“Go sit down,” Lena instructs as she opens her freezer and pulls out her ice drawer. “And we’ll ice your ankle.”

“My ankle is fine. They already took care of it at the arena.”

“You’re limping,” Lena says with a pointed glance at Kara’s leg.

At the accusation, Kara makes a very noticeable effort to appear uninjured that makes Lena roll her eyes.

“Just sit on my couch and rest for a bit. I’ll pour us a glass of wine.”

“I can still do things,” Kara insists and Lena realizes what that means pretty easily. It makes her laugh.

“Ice your ankle a bit and you can do all the things you want,” Lena says with an amused tilt to her lips.

Kara’s cheeks go a little pink, but she obeys Lena’s instructions and heads for the living room after taking the makeshift ice pack from Lena’s hand.

When Lena makes it to the couch with two glasses of wine, Kara is relaxed across it with her leg propped up on the coffee table. “It’s cute that you’re worried about me,” she says with a happy little grin, clearly no longer put out at being forced to ice her ankle.

Lena ignores the way her stomach flutters a little. “Your leg is expensive,” she says dryly. “And I’m a businesswoman. I protect my investments.”

Taking the offered glass of wine, Kara makes a show of looking hurt. “Ouch.”

“Now if it were your fingers,” Lena says with clear suggestion that makes Kara laugh.

“I assure you that they are in top working order,” Kara says, wiggling the fingers of her free hand with a wink.

--

They don’t fuck that night.

She doesn’t even realize it until much later when Kara’s fallen asleep on Lena’s couch with the late night edition of SportsCenter she had insisted upon watching playing on the television.
A soft snore drops out of Kara’s mouth as she shifts in her sleep and Lena’s stuck staring at her wondering how the hell she got herself into this situation.

For a long moment, she considers waking Kara up and escorting her out of the apartment. If anything, Kara’s going to be sore in the morning considering the awkward way she’s positioned. As she considers her options she sips at her glass of wine and absently watches the television.

Kara shifts again, falling to the side on the couch until her head is bumping into Lena’s shoulder. It’s a warm, comfortable motion and Lena reaches just enough to set her wine glass down before grabbing for the blanket strewn across the side of her couch.

She manages to maneuver out from under Kara and adjust her position so she’s more fully lying on the couch. That’s how she leaves her, snuggled under a soft cashmere blanket and snoring into the cushions of her couch.

In the morning, Kara’s already gone. The blanket folded nicely where Kara’s head had been and the empty wine glasses from last night set next to the sink in the kitchen.

Lena thinks to be grateful they don’t have to share an awkward morning after, but something twists in her chest when she runs her fingers over the cold feeling of the couch cushions.

--

The Lakehawks go on the road for the next two games and Lena tries not think about how that means she won’t get to see Kara for a substantial length of time.

“Are you going to miss me while I’m gone?” Kara had asked with a teasing scrunch to her nose and Lena hated how the truth jumped up in her throat.

It took an extra thought to tease Kara back and lie. “No, of course not.”

This was the kind of thinking she had been trying to avoid from the get go.

So she makes a concerted effort not to text or call Kara and doesn’t even watch the Houston game.

Instead, she throws herself into some extra work until Jack finds her in her office and drags her out for a late dinner and a drink.

“What did you see that bid for Landcomm?” Jack comments as he cuts into his steak.

Lena hums into her glass of wine and glances at the TV near the bar. There’s a bit of relief that runs through her when it’s merely playing the news and not sports highlights. “I don’t think it will go through?”

Jack shrugs, takes a bite of his food. “My friend says they’re looking to reject it. Especially in light of finalizing that Tivoli acquisition.”

“You have friends other than me?” Lena teases with a playful smile over the rim of her glass.

A smirk takes hold of Jack’s lips and he takes a drink from his own glass with a knowing look in his eye. “Well since you’ve gone out and acquired your own new friend…”

“Jack,” Lena draws out with clear warning as she sets her drink down.

“Are we really just not going to talk about it?”
“There’s nothing to talk about,” Lena insists, pointedly focusing on her dinner and not on Jack’s face.

“See now when you say that it makes me feel like there is something to talk about,” he says.

“What could there be to talk about when it’s clear you already think you know something?” The question is punctuated by an arch of her brow and a severely dry look his direction. On most people it’s enough to have them cowering under her stare, but Jack just chuckles.

“What I know and what you’re willing to tell me are clearly two different things,” he says. “And I wish you knew that you could talk to me.”

The last bit is said with a seriousness absent from their previous discussions on the topic.

Lena sighs. “It really is nothing,” she says quietly, shaking her head.

“Can you just blink once for it’s Kara and twice if it’s not,” he says, back to the joking nature of before.

With a laugh, Lena rolls her eyes. “It’s Kara,” she says quietly, mindful of any listening ears. The bartender is far down the other side of the bar talking to the only other two patrons there. “And it’s still nothing.”

The smile on Jack’s face reaches up to his eyes and he lets out a delighted laugh. “So you took my advice?”

“What advice is that?”

“You got it out your system?”

Lena blows out a breath. “I’m currently working on that,” she admits because that urgent need to be with Kara hasn’t abated much since their first coupling.

“It’s an ongoing thing?” Jack asks with audible interest.

“It’s a when the opportunity presents itself thing,” Lena tells him and that feels a little bit of a stretch considering just how often they’ve managed to hook up. Nonetheless, there’s something relieving about telling someone any form of the truth.

“And how often has this opportunity presented itself?” he asks with a smile that would look smarmy on anyone other than him.

“I’m not telling you that.”

“But more than once?”

In lieu of an answer, Lena’s phone rings from its place on the bar and she looks over to see Kara’s contact come up on the screen as if summoned by Jack’s line of questioning.

“Is that your lover?” Jack teases and Lena turns her phone over on the bartop.

“Shut up, Jack,” she says and she’s considering getting the phrase tattooed on her forehead.

--

A picture shows up on Lena’s Instagram feed the next day of Kara out and about in Houston with
some woman Lena doesn’t know.

The outfit Kara has on sends a bit of a jolt through Lena - she’s wearing all black, from the backwards hat on her head to the sneakers on her feet. Her jeans are ripped a little at the knees, practically painted on. The t-shirt she’s wearing is loose, but clearly damp, sticking to her stomach as she ducks her head away from the flash of the camera. It says *Let’s Do Bad Things Tonight* in a retrowave font. Everything about it looks disturbingly good.

But Lena’s initial spark of attraction disappears when she takes in the rest of the image. Kara and - the caption identifies the other woman as Traci Thirteen of the Dallas Demons - are walking out of the club arm in arm. Kara’s cheeks are flushed and Traci’s got this look on her face as she grins at Kara and Lena closes her phone as quickly as she can.

*We’re just friends* she repeats like a mantra in her head. If Kara wants to screw around, that’s perfectly acceptable and she doesn’t care. If Kara wants to look at other people like that or make other women laugh that’s *fine*. She doesn’t care.

She *doesn’t*.

She makes a vow to go on a date sometime in the near future to shake the feeling like she’s becoming way too attached to Kara.

As soon as she gets attached it has to end.

And she doesn’t want it to end.

That doesn’t stop her from texting Kara - as a *friend*. A quick *having fun in Houston?*

Kara’s reply comes far quicker than Lena expects it to - she wonders if Kara is ignoring some other woman in favor of texting her and she tries very hard not to process that idea. It’s a picture of Alex face down on what looks to be a soft mat at what looks like some kind of bar. Lucy and Maggie are standing over her - Lucy with a wide expression of mirth and Maggie looking like she’s trying valiantly not to laugh.

The caption explains the scene: *Alex fell off the mechanical bull. It was awesome.*

It doesn’t really soothe any true curiosity about what Kara might be getting up to on the road, but it does make her laugh and she sends back an emoji from the set Kara had installed on her phone. One she hopes indicates her own amusement.

--

When the Lakehawks return to National City, Lena makes a concerted effort not to text Kara even though she knows she’s back in town.

If Kara wants to hook up then *she* can be the one that reaches out. Not Lena.

Kara *does* end up texting her – one night after Lena’s finished a late night at the office and is flipping through food delivery options on her phone – but it’s not to hook up.

Instead it’s a picture of Kara, Alex and Lucy in oversized cowboy hats, grinning at the camera and posed like Charlie’s Angels. The text reads: *new hawks promo?*

*You three look ridiculous*, is what Lena sends back before thinking twice about it.
Kara’s response comes quickly. Another picture, but this time just of herself. It’s not a selfie, because Lena can see Kara’s entire figure and she’s dressed the part for the ten-gallon hat on her head – her flannel tucked into her jeans, a slightly oversized belt buckle and her thumbs tucked into her belt loops.

Her head is ducked down, face hidden behind the brim of her hat by the pose and the text comes next – *I look great. I should have been a cowboy instead of athlete.*

It takes a few seconds for Lena to reply – a few seconds in which she rolls her eyes at herself for being attracted to such an image – but she manages a simple yes, *two equally lucrative career choices.*

*It’s not about money, Lena. It’s about getting to ride horses and wear cool boots.*

Declining a response, Lena smotheres a laugh and closes her phone, fights the tight feeling against her sternum as she pulls her laptop closer to order dinner.

--

After the San Antonio game - the Lakehawks win in overtime - Kara shows up at Lena’s door holding a pizza box and a bottle of wine.

Trepidation must show on Lena’s face because Kara laughs softly. “This is just because I didn’t get to eat after the game and I never have sex on an empty stomach.”

It relaxes Lena just a bit as she allows Kara entrance. “And the wine?”

“That’s so you didn’t have to watch me eat pizza with nothing to do.”

“Oh, so that entire pizza is just for you?”

“Is Lena *I eat salad without dressing* Luthor going to eat pizza with me?” Kara asks with exaggerated incredulity.

Lena rolls her eyes. “I ate nachos on our-” she trips over the words a bit “-when we had dinner that first time.”

If Kara notices the stutter she doesn’t show it. “You ate maybe four nachos and only after you picked most of the toppings off it.”

They walk into the kitchen where Kara sets the food down and moves to a drawer in Lena’s kitchen where she keeps her corkscrew. It strikes her that Kara doesn’t hesitate - seems to know where things are in the apartment.

“How was work?” Lena asks, watching as Kara’s arms flex when she pulls the cork out of the wine bottle with a pop.

With a laugh, Kara pulls out two glasses and starts to pour. “You were there.”

“I’m being polite,” Lena says dryly. “Wasn’t it you who wanted to engage in small talk?”

Kara purses her lips and shoots Lena a look. “Work was fine. We won,” she says. “And there was this distractingly attractive woman sitting courtside.”

“Is that so?”
“Yes,” Kara says, reaching to the pizza box to flip it open and grab a slice. “And after I eat this pizza, I’m going to do the same to her.”

Despite the way the words pump straight between her legs, Lena rolls her eyes and makes an exasperated groaning noise. “You have the worst lines.”

Kara just grins around a mouthful of pizza. “And yet they always seem to work on you.”

--

Lena ends up having two pieces of Kara’s pizza and a glass of wine and finds that she’s not especially eager to get to the naked part of their evening like she usually is.

It’s not that her body isn’t practically thrumming with the promise of a Kara Danvers delivered orgasm, but she finds that she genuinely enjoys Kara’s company in quiet moments like these.

Kara talks about the game from a perspective that Lena’s come to find interesting – like a general picking apart battles she’s won and lost. When Kara talks about basketball it no longer just seems like a bunch of people throwing a ball through a hoop like she’d always categorized it before. Instead it’s full of strategy and skill – a lot like a good chess game. The more she understands it, the more she seems to like it.

When they’re finished with the food and the drink, however, Lena’s body reminds her that as interesting as Kara Danvers may be, there are more pressing things on the menu. The minute Kara gets the pizza box in the garbage and Lena puts the empty wine glasses in the sink, they’re colliding together like they’d been dying to do it the entire time they were talking.

Maybe they were. Maybe desire for Kara has become something so second nature for Lena that she doesn’t even really notice it anymore.

“Bedroom?” Kara asks as Lena pulls Kara’s hair out of her ponytail and enjoys the way Kara’s hands sit at her hips, pulling them close.

“Too far,” Lena says against Kara’s lips and without further prompting she pulls back to sit on her kitchen counter, hooking her ankles around Kara’s waist to bring her in with her.


“Yes,” Lena says with a smirk. “Didn’t you mention something about eating when you were done with your pizza?”

She delivers it with an arch of her brow that has Kara’s eyes narrowing heatedly. Strong hands grasp behind Lena’s knees and pull her forward on the counter.

“I did.” Is all Kara says before kissing Lena again and delivering on her earlier boast.

--

“Are you going to the Vegas game?” Jack asks her as they’re walking downtown to a lunch spot they frequent.

“Pardon?”

“The Lakehawks game in Vegas on Monday,” he clarifies. “Are you going?”
Hands in the pockets of her slacks, she eyes Jack warily. “No, I hadn’t planned on it.”

There’s a look of faux innocence on his face that worries Lena and he plays with the button of his suit jacket as they walk. “There’s a tech show that weekend that I was thinking of going to and I thought we could make a trip out of it. Catch the game on our way out of town.”

It’s suspicious if only because Jack has that look in his eye like he’s hiding something, but Lena’s not in the mood to pull it out of him. “I’ll check my schedule,” she says and he looks far too happy at the prospect of her attendance.

--

They arrive in Las Vegas Friday night and she lets Jack drag her down to the casino floor to sit at the blackjack tables with him for a few hours.

Four cocktails and a stupid amount of money later, they retreat back up to their rooms.

Jack’s tie is all kinds of askew, the top button of his collar undone and an adorable flush in his cheeks that makes Lena laugh whenever she catches him grinning at her.

They’re not drunk, but they’re certainly not sober and Jack tucks his arm around her as they make their way to the elevators. He’s making some joke about poker and sex when Lena hears a soft commotion coming from the direction of the hotel entrance.

Her heart stops a bit when she realizes what’s happening and she tugs Jack to a stop as a bus drops off the entire Lakehawks team to a small crowd of paparazzi waiting for them.

“Hey, your team,” Jack points out, his finger waving in their direction. She slaps at his hand, but it just makes him laugh and she’s had just enough vodka that now she’s laughing too and then -

“Lena,” a surprised voice interrupts them and Lena turns to see Kara watching them with a furrow in her brow, a duffel bag over one shoulder. She’s dressed for travel - a slim fitting pair of jeans and a nice looking Lakehawks pullover. Her hair is down around her shoulders and she’s wearing glasses. Lena always forgets that Kara wears glasses and every time she’s reminded…well…it’s probably better for her health that she forgets quickly afterward.

“Kara, hi,” Lena says, elbowing Jack when he won’t stop laughing. He’s practically hanging off her side and she just barely restrains herself from pushing him off under Kara’s stare.

“I didn’t know you’d be here,” Kara says, looking a bit hurt.

“It was a last minute decision,” Lena says and her mind won’t stop yelling act sober act sober act sober as she stands there. Kara looks some mix between adorable and incredibly attractive – Lena can’t stop being distracted by her glasses, slipping a bit down her nose before Kara reaches up to adjust them.

“We’re here for a tech show,” Jack tells her, straightening a bit and running his fingers through his disheveled hair. “Thought we’d have a little vacation.”

It sounds decidedly coupley to Lena’s ears and it must to Kara too because she frowns a bit. “Are you coming to the game?”

“Of course,” Jack replies immediately. “Wouldn’t miss it. Go Lakehawks! Up, up and away!”

An impatient looking Alex Danvers wanders over to them after that and a wash of surprise flashes on
her face when she notices Lena. It’s punctuated by a more neutral expression. “Miss Luthor, nice to see you.”

“You too, Miss Danvers.”

Alex’s eyes flit between Kara and Lena for a moment. “Kara, I need to talk to you about room assignments.”

“Now?” Kara asks, dragging her eyes away from Lena.

“Yes, now,” Alex says with a pointed glare for her sister.

Jack sags into Lena’s side and Lena doesn’t miss the way Kara’s eyes scoot towards where Jack’s hand is hanging low on her lip.

“Yeah, okay,” Kara says and Lena bumps Jack a bit until he straightens against her side.

“Good luck,” Lena offers as a goodbye and Kara turns to follow her sister back towards the rest of the team.

Jack starts to laugh softly as they move back towards the elevators and away from where the Lakehawks are gathering. “You sure you’re getting that out of your system?”

--

It isn’t until Saturday night that Lena runs into Kara again.

Jack has a ridiculous obsession with playing the slot machines that Lena’s never understood, but she indulges him for a bit after they eat dinner one of the twenty-five hotel restaurants.

“I don’t understand what you get out of this,” Lena says with a hint of complaint as she sips at the drink in her hand. “It requires no skill at all.”

“It requires luck,” Jack says, leaning back in his chair and slapping at the spin button. The cartoonish depictions of mermaids dance on the video screen above his head as the wheels spin and Lena rolls her eyes.

Just as the machine is informing Jack of his winnings - and bonus spins - a body drops into the chair next to him and slides a card into the machine. It takes a second for Lena to recognize Lucy Lane, but she certainly does as soon Alex Danvers comes walking up.

“The slots, really?” Alex is complaining, all but dragging her feet as she comes closer - hands in the pockets of her jeans.

“This is my lucky machine,” Lucy explains, pulling the oversized lever to her right. “You won’t be complaining when you’re drinking off my winnings later.”

“The drinks are already free here,” Alex says, coming up next to the machine and leaning up against its side. It’s then that she notices Lena and her eyes react first before she straightens up.

A new voice rings out with, “Hey, you guys have to try these slushies. They are awesome.” When Lena turns it confirms what she already suspects and Kara Danvers saunters towards them holding a massive plastic cup filled with a neon green drink.

All five of them seem to notice each other at the same time.
“Miss Luthor,” Alex and Lucy manage to say together just as Jack jumps up from his chair with an exclaimed, “The Lakehawks!”

It makes Alex and Lucy both turn confused yet amused expression towards Jack and gives Kara and Lena enough cover to look at each other and exchange soft nods. Kara’s eyes bounce over to Jack and back to Lena as she sips at the drink in her hand.

“Thought you were more of a cards player, Miss Luthor,” Alex says and it feels uncomfortable to be addressed that way here in Kara’s presence.

“Please, call me Lena,” she says with a polite smile for Alex and then Lucy. “And I much prefer the cards tables, but my friend Jack here-”

“I like shiny lights,” Jack jokes with an expressive gesture of his fingers that makes Lucy laugh.

“Right?! Winning is just so much more satisfying,” she agrees and Alex rolls her eyes in an expression familiar to Lena.

“Have you three eaten?” Jack asks and Lena narrows her eyes at him, confused. They just finished a very expensive five star meal.

“We haven’t yet, actually,” Alex says, though her eyes draw slowly to where Kara is still silent, sipping at her drink. “As Kara has reminded us more than once in the last hour.”

“Superstar can wait,” Lucy says with a fond look for her teammate. “Mama needs some new shoes.”

“You have a bigger shoe collection than Kara,” Alex says as Lucy turns back to her slot machine and pulls the lever down to make the wheels spin. “And she gets a free truckload of them every month.”

“You can afford new shoes without gambling,” Kara adds – the first words she’s spoken since arriving and Lena can feel the way Jack is watching them with far too knowing eyes.

“Well, after Miss Lane has conquered the slot machines would you three like to join us?” Jack offers and if they weren’t being watched by the three Lakehawks players, Lena would reach over and slap him.

“We were going to try that Italian place – Rosse?” Alex says, half her attention being drawn to the gleeful way Lucy is cheering on the slot machine.

“If we can get in,” Kara says and Lena smiles a little.

“The famous Kara Danvers has trouble getting a table somewhere?” It comes out teasing and half flirtatious and she’s sure if Lucy’s slot machine hadn’t erupted with sound at the same time everyone else would have noticed.

As it is, Jack and Alex look towards Lucy, and Kara is the only one looking at Lena with a soft blush in her cheeks and a smile.

“We heard it was really popular,” Kara says. “And almost impossible to get into.”

Jack, who has tuned back in after observing Lucy’s winnings, grins at her. “Oh, well, good thing we know the owner of the hotel, eh?”

--
It manages to not be nearly as awkward as Lena thought it would be. Apart from the hyper aware buzz that thrills across her skin being this close to Kara in public, dinner passes easily.

Lucy and Alex take up most of the conversation, helped along by Jack who orders them a round of shots with the kind of flourish that makes Lena roll her eyes. “You’re like a frat boy sometimes, I swear,” Lena says under her breath, but affectionately.

He slings an arm across the back of the booth they’re sitting in and grins cheekily at her the way he always does. It makes her smile back and laugh when he winks. “You like that about me, love.”

When Lena turns her attention back to the table she notices Kara’s eyes watching Jack’s movements intently for a moment before her eyes flit away.

Alex and Lucy are hovered over Lucy’s phone on the table, flipping through pictures in an attempt to find the right one – a snapshot to accompany the story they’d just told about Kara’s rookie road trip hazing incident.

There’s something guilty that pools in Lena’s gut at the look on Kara’s face and for the first time ever Jack’s close presence starts to make her feel slightly uncomfortable. It makes her shift just a bit away from him and thankfully, Lucy is passing him her phone the next second and he moves his arm away to grab for it with a laugh.

They’re not dating and Kara really has no right to look – threatened – by the friendly way Jack always is with her, but Lena’s common sense seems to have abandoned her long ago because she moves her foot across the space between them under the table and lightly hits Kara’s toes with her own.

It jerks Kara’s gaze back up to hers and Lena’s grateful for the way their other three companions seem completely engrossed in each other.

All Lena can think to offer is a reassuring smile that she shouldn’t have to give someone she’s just sleeping with, but it eases the lines of tension on Kara’s face and god she can’t deny how much better she feels at seeing it.

“Lena, look at this,” Jack is saying with a whiskey induced chortle as he moves back in close to her and shows her the picture displayed on Lucy’s phone.

A laugh pulls out of her immediately. In the picture Kara is sporting a heavy frown and is dressed in a mismatch of clothing items – ridiculous gold parachute pants, a cat-print button down shirt and a multicolored oversized baby’s bonnet.

“Stylish,” she deadpans as she tries to suppress her laughter.

Kara grins – an expression Lena had been waiting for since they bumped into each other – and it flutters warmth across her chest.

There’s something else in her face too. Something more intent and promising and just like that Lena starts thinking of ways to be alone with Kara and wonders if it’d be too obvious if she just told the rest of the group to fuck off and dragged Kara up to her room.

--

It doesn’t end up being a problem. After dinner Jack announces he’s had about three whiskeys too many and leaves them to return to his room.
Lucy – who has probably also had three whiskeys too many but doesn’t seem like she’s going to stop – tells them that she’s feeling lucky again. Which apparently means she’s returning to the slot machines because she just walks off that way without further word.

The three of them – Alex, Kara and Lena – watch her go for a second before Alex rolls her eyes. “I better make sure she doesn’t do something stupid,” she grumbles and without so much as another look at either of them follows Lucy through the casino floor.

That leaves Kara and Lena alone, staring at each other for a long moment before Lena can’t help but smile slyly and see an answering expression pull across Kara’s lips.

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They end up in Lena’s massive suite - the same one she stayed in before - but this time Kara doesn’t even blink at the basketball court or any of the other luxurious amenities in the room. Instead, she stays focused on pulling fabric away from Lena’s skin, of guiding them towards the nearest horizontal surface - the couch in front of the bank of floor to ceiling windows.

The connection feels electric even though it’s been less than a week since they did this. Lena’s back hits the cushions of the couch and Kara presses in swiftly afterward. It makes her back arch and thighs pull farther apart.

“I like Vegas,” Kara murmurs, lips hot against Lena’s neck as she continues to do ridiculous things with her fingers.

Lena tries for a laugh that goes breathless when Kara’s fingers scissor inside of her and a third one joins the first two. “Kara,” she sighs, her hand gripping at Kara’s bicep so hard she’s sure it will bruise.

“I know,” Kara whispers, the confident sound of her voice making Lena’s gut turn liquid.

No other words are exchanged as Kara’s fingers get more insistent and her lips push firmly against Lena’s. Their kisses get frantic and sloppy and Lena brings her knees up to give Kara better leverage and god Lena’s sure this feeling will never get old.

How she’s going to get this out of her system, she has no idea.

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The hotel room is quiet apart from the sound of both of them attempting to catch their breath. Distantly she can hear the sound of the Vegas Strip below them, the hustle of the casinos and the people on the street. Lena’s fingers trace idly against her own stomach, up and down, up and down as she blinks at the ceiling and tries to get her muscles to work again.

It’s Kara that ends up breaking the silence.

“You know, I’m not sleeping with anybody else,” Kara says softly. The words drag through Lena’s mind slowly, but when she registers them she tenses a bit and the languid feeling of the afterglow races away from her.

“Oh kay,” she says in a drawl of the word. Her heart feels like it’s going to start pounding but she can’t tell if it’s a good feeling or a bad feeling.

Kara props up against the mattress to look at Lena. “I don’t mean it like that, I just mean.” Kara shakes her head, looks away. “I want to be up front that I haven’t been sleeping with anyone else
recently. So there’s not any confusion.”

Lena swallows against the sudden surge of thickness in her throat. “I don’t care who you sleep with,” she says soft and slow though it makes her think back to the pictures she’s seen of Kara out and about, different women smiling at her like she’s hung the moon and the stars.

When she looks over at Kara’s eyes they’re hard and serious and Lena has to force herself not to flinch away.

“I just think it’s important to be clear about it,” Kara says. “I like to practice safe sex and everything.”

Lena nearly laughs, but there’s something in Kara’s face that makes it easy to smother that urge. “I’m not sleeping with anybody else either,” she says and pauses briefly before she adds. “At the moment.”

Kara nods, eyes skittish. “Okay, good to know.”

A thought nags at the back of her mind for a moment and she nearly asks a question that will definitely come across like she cares who Kara sleeps with. Which she doesn’t. Thankfully Kara’s slipping out of bed and pulling her strewn clothing off the floor before the words pull unwillingly out of Lena’s mouth.

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The game on Monday sneaks up on Lena. For a bit there, she’d forgotten that was the entire point of her trip to Las Vegas.

They get pregame drinks at a bar outside the hotel because Jack insists they go somewhere where everyone isn’t fawning all over them – *you own too many businesses, Lena.*

A game in Las Vegas is always a different experience than one back home in National City and not just because they’re on the road.

There’s a certain heightened fanfare to the entire thing – whether it’s because of the bright lights of the strip or the way the Las Vegas Aces fans always show up for games Lena’s not sure. Along with the thrum of excitement leading up to tip-off, there’s a seeping tension between the teams.

Lena remembers the last time the Lakehawks traveled to Las Vegas and tries to bury the memory of what happened after the game farther back into her mind. At least until she’s no longer with Jack and in public.

“Think we’ll see a fight?” Jack muses as they take their seats behind the Lakehawks bench.

“I certainly hope not,” Lena says, but with the way Alex is already glaring at the Aces bench and Kara is pulling her sister away as if Alex is liable to jump that direction at any moment Lena’s not so sure.

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The Lakehawks manage to take control of the game early, but Cat still stalks up and down the court with a sour expression.

Alex gets called for a bad foul – her third of the game – and Cat gives her a look so withering that even Lena reacts to it.
When she gets called for a fourth late in the third quarter, Cat just puts her fingers up in the air – four of them – and stares at Alex before subbing her out of the game.

Kara watches her sister leave the court with a frustrated expression on her face, hands on her hips as the Aces sink a free throw.

It’s clear Kara’s upset that her sister has been goaded into nearly fouling out of the game and that the Lakehawks have managed to lose a hold on their double-digit lead. Midway through the fourth quarter they’re only ahead by three points and Alex is finally subbed back into the game – to retake the lead Lena imagines.

That’s about when Kara goes scrambling after a wild rebound – fighting with another player toward center court. The ball bounces away as Kara leaps forward, practically diving, and trying to body the other player out of the way.

She’s successful – though not very gracefully – and manages to tip the ball in Maggie’s direction who crosses past her defender and drives for an easy layup.

Kara, however, is bent over at center court, holding her hand against her stomach with an expression of pain.

Cat notices immediately and calls a timeout and Lena watches as Alex jogs over to help her sister, leaning over close to her.

“That can’t be good,” Jack comments casually, sipping at his beer while Kara gets pulled over to the end of the bench with the team trainer.

“What happened?” Lena asks Jack, eyes trained on Kara’s form. It irks Lena that they’re not at home where her usual seats would be inches from the Lakehawks bench. For now she’s stuck watching from across the court and without the benefit of being able to hear the usual team chatter. “I couldn’t see.”

“Looks like her hand,” Jack says and Lena feels a pull of sympathy for Kara’s pinched face as the trainer stretches out her fingers.

“I hope it’s not serious,” Lena says softly and Jack bumps his shoulder into hers.

“I’m sure you don’t,” he says in a low suggestive tone.

It takes Lena a second to understand his meaning, but when she does she shoots him a glare, shoves at his leg and says the only thing she can ever seem to say to him these days. “Shut up, Jack.”

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It’s a mild finger injury – or so the news reports the next day when Lena’s catching her flight back to National City.

Kara had texted her of course – *jammed my finger, I’m fine* – but the news alert she gets on the sports app Kara had forced her to download a few weeks ago indicates it’s a finger sprain and it’s serious enough to affect her playtime.

*Kara Danvers out for a week* the alert reads and Lena raises her eyebrow at the news.

When she next sees Kara – the following Thursday when the Lakehawks arrive back in town after a game in Phoenix – she’s wearing a small splint on her finger and has a look of complete irritation on
her face.

“I can’t believe Cat benched me because of a jammed finger,” Kara complains as Lena pours them wine.

“The Olympics are coming up,” Lena points out, handing Kara her drink and joining her on the couch.

“I can still play,” Kara says, putting her injured hand in the air and giving it a look of distaste. “It’s not even my shooting hand.”

“Don’t you use both hands to shoot?” Lena asks with a laugh and a short sip of her glass.

Kara’s eyebrows make a suggestive movement up on her forehead. “I don’t need to.”

It makes Lena laugh again. “What does that even mean?”

Kara doesn’t answer, just sets her wine glass on the coffee table in front of them and scoots close enough on the couch towards Lena that she knows she’s going to spill her own wine if she doesn’t set it down soon.

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Their coffee is enjoyed considerably later and Lena can’t keep her eyes off Kara’s injured hand, checking it for any further injury sustained during their activities.

Kara sips idly at her coffee and scrolls through her phone. “Is your favorite color red?”

It’s then that Lena notices what Kara’s looking at. “What are you doing?”

Without thinking of it, Lena darts a hand out to snatch the phone, but Kara pulls it away in time with a playful smile. “I’m trying to narrow down your favorite color.”

“By looking at pictures of me?!”

Kara shrugs. “Seemed like a fun way to do it,” she says and she turns the phone around to show Lena. It’s a picture taken at a gala a few years back - she’d been wearing a knee length red dress with a revealing neckline.

“Why is it even important to you to know my favorite color?” Lena asks with a roll of her eyes.

Smiling, Kara looks back at her phone, swipes to a new picture. Lena thinks it’s one of her and Jack at the Luthor Corp Christmas party last year. “It’s only important because you won’t tell me,” Kara teases, glancing up just to wink at Lena.

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The next away game is in Midway City and Kara complains so much about how boring it’s going to be considering she’s not allowed to play yet that Lena reluctantly agrees to go to the game just to get her to shut up. Luthor Corp has a partnership there with a local manufacturing company and it’s a good excuse as any to make the trip.

Kara’s noticeably surly during warmups when she’s not even allowed to dress. When she tries to even touch a basketball, Cat swats it out of her hands and glares at her, pointing towards the end of the bench in clear instruction.
It’s the first time Lena’s seen Kara wearing normal clothes for a game – a slim cut pair of slacks that expose her ankles, low cut dark loafers and a matching sport jacket with a no-nonsense black t-shirt underneath. It’s different than seeing Kara in her jersey, exertion glistening over exposed skin and a focused look in her eyes, but it’s no less distracting.

The game is noticeably different without her presence on the court, but by the time they tip-off, Kara stops pouting enough to cheer her team on and do what she can from the bench. Lena’s attention gets split between watching the court and watching the way Kara talks to her team, moving down the bench to give advice and talk to Cat about gameplay.

Kara’s a natural leader. It’s clear in the way the team seems to listen to her without question – even the more veteran players. Even Cat takes Kara’s counsel a few times during the game, calling her over from her spot on the bench to talk or showing her something on the small clipboard she uses to write out plays.

The Lakehawks manage to eek out a win. It’s clear there had been some awkwardness as the team tried to adjust to playing without Kara, but they hit their stride midway through the third quarter.

Kara looks happy with the win, but not the way she normally does. A consequence to not tangibly contributing in a way she’s used to, Lena assumes.

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“Thank you for coming,” Kara tells her when they go out to a late dinner after the game.

Lena smiles at her. “That’s what friends are for,” she says and Kara laughs.

They’re halfway across the lobby of the hotel when Lena thinks to stop at the front desk and check for any messages. Kara lingers behind her, playing with her phone.

“Actually, Miss Luthor, these were dropped off for you today,” the desk manager says, sliding a white envelope across the counter. “They’re your usual seats.”

Lena picks up the envelope and peaks inside at the tickets. “It’s Hamilton now, right?”

“That’s correct,” the manager answers and Lena recloses the envelope. She’s always getting offered tickets to shows every time she’s in the city – Luthor Corp invests in a few of the downtown theaters – but she rarely has time to take one in. Usually she gives the tickets to Jack or to a local subsidiary executive she feels deserves the reward.

“I don’t think I’ll have time this-”

“Hamilton?” Kara interrupts suddenly, having shown up abruptly at Lena’s side. So abruptly in fact that the manager across the desk jumps in surprise.

“Tomorrow’s show,” Lena says, watching as Kara plucks the envelope off the counter and peeks inside.

“Whoa,” Kara exclaims. “These are box seats!”

The manager is watching them with enough interest that Lena decides to pull Kara away from the desk with a polite smile. “Perhaps I’ll consider it, thank you,” she says, leading Kara towards the elevators.

“Seriously, how do you have box seats for Hamilton? This show has been sold out all week, I
“Perks of investing in theater, I’d imagine,” Lena says, pressing the button for the elevator and glancing back to the front desk to see if they’re still being watched. It’s unclear whether or not the desk manager recognized Kara, but Lena’d prefer not to take any unnecessary chances.

“And you weren’t going to go?!”

“I usually don’t have time to take in a show,” Lena says.

“This is Hamilton,” Kara says with emphasis that she’s sure is supposed to mean something, but Lena just quirks a brow.

“I take it you’d like to go,” she says with a laughing smile that just increases when Kara nods enthusiastically as they step into the elevator.

Kara’s eyes are bright and excited and it’s the first she’s seen Kara this distractedly happy since her injury. Something tugs at Lena’s chest and pulls the next words out of her mouth. “Then I’ll take you.”

“Really?!” Kara says, like she can’t believe this is happening.

Lena just nods, presses the button for her floor and leans back against the wall of the elevator car. “Yes, really. You’re here another night, right?”

Kara doesn’t respond with words, just slides the tickets into the back pocket of her jeans and pushes into Lena’s personal space until they’re nose to nose. “You’re my new best friend,” she says quietly and Lena laughs, but the sound cuts off a bit at the feel of Kara’s fingers sliding over her hips.

“Because of my connection to musical theater?”

With a grin, Kara pushes somehow closer. “Yes,” she says before nosing forward until they’re kissing, and it’s hot and filled with intention, just like the first time they pressed together in an elevator.

The ding of the doors arriving at Lena’s floor breaks them apart and she pushes off the wall, grabbing Kara’s hand on the way and dragging them both towards her hotel room.

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It feels like a date. That’s all Lena can think when they meet up for dinner before the show and Kara puts her hand against the small of Lena’s back as they’re lead to their table.

It’s at least a restaurant Lena is fairly familiar with and known for its discretion. It helps too that it caters to a clientele that would likely fail to recognize Kara and would dismiss her easily. Though Lena second guesses that presumption for just a moment as she takes in Kara’s perfectly tailored slacks and the pressed light purple button down she’s sporting.

A hint of collarbone is exposed where Kara has her top buttons undone and she’s shrugging out of a well-cut blazer and Lena has to look away towards her menu to avoid the cliff her thoughts threaten to fall off of.

The restaurant would certainly take notice if Lena pulled Kara across the table and pressed their lips
Kara seems oblivious, settles down in her chair and studies her own menu with a look of glee on her face at the opportunity to try out a new restaurant. Kara’s managed to accumulate a library of takeout menus in a drawer in Lena’s kitchen on her current quest to try every restaurant in National City. Lena supposes Midway City is a new and exciting dominion.

They order a bottle of wine and Kara orders the biggest cut of meat on the menu – laughing when Lena makes an intimidated face as she does it.

“Go big or go home,” Kara jokes and Lena rolls her eyes – orders the shrimp salad.

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“So,” Kara starts as she cuts into her steak and Lena takes a gentler approach at stabbing her salad. “Last time we had dinner together like this you didn’t like basketball.”

“I assure you nothing has changed,” Lena teases, smiling at the look of exaggerated hurt on Kara’s face.

“Come on,” Kara entreats with a smug look on her face. “Watching me has had to have an influence. Even on you.”

“That confident in yourself?” Lena asks with a challenging arch of her brow.

“No one learns what a flagrant foul is without at least enjoying themselves.”

“I learned that from repeated forced exposure,” Lena counters, abandoning her fork to reach for her wine.

Kara’s foot kicks out a bit, bumps into Lena’s. It’s flirty and warm and Lena sinks into the feeling, doesn’t feel like dispensing it for the moment.

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They go to the show and Kara is like a kid in a candy store – excitedly commenting on everything, thanking Lena about fourteen times before they even make it to their seats.

Kara buys them both drinks at the concession stand and a full stock of snacks then proceeds to spend the entire musical mouthing along to nearly every word. Lena’s kind of amazed, to be truthful.

Not unlike the first time they had dinner together – a lifetime ago – Kara has insightful things to add about the musical. She’s smart, and funny and every time she turns a disarming smile on Lena, Lena’s entirely charmed.

It makes her wish – in a moment of weakness – that things were different. That Lena had never had to take over ownership of the Lakehawks, that she had met Kara randomly out at a bar or a club, that she could sink into the way Kara’s arm sits on the back of Lena’s chair and just enjoy the attention of an attractive woman.

She lets herself imagine it. What it would be like if this were actually a date the way it feels like it is. Kara might let her fingertips brush absentmindedly over Lena’s shoulder, might kiss her on the cheek just because or whisper things in her ear - something affectionate, maybe something inappropriately sexy that would make Lena cross her legs and Kara laugh.
They might get drinks afterward at a nearby restaurant, Kara with a protective arm over Lena’s waist, a happy but territorial smile on her face if anyone were to notice them. A fan might approach and ask Kara for her autograph and Lena would just smile proudly and allow Kara her due praise. Lena could find satisfaction in that, if that’s the way it was.

But that’s a fantasy. It’s not how it is. And Lena knows that the satisfaction she could imagine them finding is out of reach. Not something worth dwelling on.

Of course, that doesn’t it mean it doesn’t still feel like a date when Kara follows Lena all the way up to her hotel door after the show and lingers there, a little hesitant.

There’s something happening between them and Lena knows she needs to shift this into more familiar territory before it gets worse. So instead of speaking, she tangles her fingers in the fabric of Kara’s shirt and pulls her forward until their lips are slotting against each other.

Kara reacts immediately – instinctively it seems like – and presses Lena against the door, her hands taking a familiar hold on her hips and bringing the rest of their bodies together.

Lena lets out a little noise into the kiss, the kind of noise Kara understands because she pulls away from Lena’s mouth and plucks the keycard out of her hand to open the door and push them inside.

It’s a flutter of clothing after that and they leave a trail of it from the door to the bed. By the time the backs of Lena’s knees hit the mattress she’s in nothing but her underwear and Kara’s stepping out of her pants.

“The usual rules?” Kara asks just as she’s about to push Lena down onto the bed.

If Lena had been more aware, less affected by what Kara’s hands had been doing to her or the heat she can still feel between them, she would have heard the undertones of the question. Would have questioned why Kara even asked it, considering how often they’d done this without having to speak of it. As it is, however, all she can think about is the throb between her legs that’s screaming for Kara to touch her and the way her lips feel swollen and used. How gorgeous Kara looks in the low light of the hotel room, her hands reaching for Lena.

“Whatever,” she husks out before hooking her hand around Kara’s neck and pulling their lips back together.
Something feels different.

That’s all Lena can think. She can’t figure out what exactly it is, if it’s just one thing or a combination of things, but whatever it is, it feels different.

Most of the time their coupling is nothing short of frantic. Two people colliding together in search of the same goal. Usually it’s Kara that takes the lead, that presses Lena down and pulls her apart.

But this time there’s this insistent, overwhelming urge that tickles in her fingertips. It makes her want to be the one to push Kara back against the sheets, to peel the well tailored slacks off her hips and make Kara’s back arch.

Kara’s already stepping out of her pants – so that thought is fruitless – but she’s advancing on Lena, going with the tug of Lena’s hand around her neck, and Lena just stops resisting the urge.

With a show of strength she knows surprises Kara – a uncharacteristically cute sounding yelp escapes Kara as it happens – Lena manages to twist them around until Kara’s falling onto her back and Lena’s tumbling on top of her.

“Lena,” Kara gasps out and Lena shushes her before she has time to think too much about it.

It’s slower than they’ve ever really gone. Lena traces her lips down the strong muscle of Kara’s collarbone and lets her fingers dance down the lines cutting across Kara’s abdomen. When she sets her hands on the muscles there, they ripple under her hands. It’s something magnetic, something heady and hot. Kara makes a little noise when Lena scratches from the top of her ribs down to her hips.

She starts to notice things about Kara’s body that she never had the time to before, or things she hadn’t bothered trying to notice. Like a pale scar Kara has on her chest – a longer gash that stretches from her collarbone to her sternum. Another one closer to her hipbone. Two small incisions from what must have been a surgery at the top of her shoulder. She finds herself pressing kisses to them, tracing over them, enjoying Kara’s reactionary shivers and whines.

And then there’s the series of…tattoos Kara has on her side, just under the line of her bra. How Lena has never noticed them before now she’s not sure. They’re small, but distinctly there and Lena traces the black lines of what looks like trophies over Kara’s ribs. Kara makes another noise, her hands clenching against Lena’s ass.

“You have a tattoo,” Lena says, unable to keep the surprise out of her voice.

Kara laughs a little breathlessly, her hips moving when Lena’s lips hit her skin again. “Yeah, can we talk about it later maybe?”

In silent agreement, Lena just smiles against the hard cut of Kara’s abs and continues her descent down Kara’s body. It’s the first time she’s given such singular attention to touching Kara and just the feel of Kara reacting to what Lena’s lips are doing makes Lena’s insides feel liquid. She’s responsive, her body moving like a livewire underneath Lena’s lips and hands.

She gets it now. Why Kara likes to do this. Why she’s always seconds away from coming the minute Lena touches her after her own orgasm. She hasn’t even done anything significant yet, but the sound Kara makes when Lena’s mouth finds its way to her hipbone is enough to make something heavy
pull at her clit.

By the time Lena’s pulling Kara’s underwear down her legs, Lena feels like if she touched herself for just a few seconds she could come just from that and it’s an embarrassing and startling realization. For a second it distracts her enough that she has to set her forehead against one of Kara’s thighs to center herself away from how much she wants.

It doesn’t work. The moment she takes in a deep breath all she senses is the clear cut of arousal emanating from Kara’s body and quite suddenly there’s a hand in her hair. No pressure, but with silent plea for Lena to move. After another moment, she obeys the call and buries herself between Kara’s legs.

And she’s done this before, sure. She’s done it with women before Kara, has even done it enough times with Kara that it should be an entirely familiar experience.

Yet somehow it’s not. It’s just different. Lena isn’t still half-drunk on her own orgasm while going through the motions of reciprocating. This time she’s aware of every small detail of Kara, every shift and breath. The hold Kara has in Lena’s hair – clenching briefly every time Lena does something particularly effective – only makes the experience feel that much headier.

Kara can only be described as eager, responsive, hot. Her hips jump when Lena hits a spot she hasn’t found before, her breath skittering loudly above Lena’s head. Lena presses further into it, exploits the new discovery and lets the sound of Kara’s gasps beat a rhythm of insistence between her own legs.

It doesn’t take much to push Kara over the edge. A careful play of tongue and fingers and Kara locks up, back bowing. The sharp gasp Kara lets out as she comes bursts through Lena like a shot.

Kara’s thighs are shaking and she’s clenching hard around Lena’s fingers and oh god Lena wants to make it happen again. When Kara lets out a laugh that’s unfettered, bright and delighted, a resolve settles in Lena’s chest because now she has to do it again.

But she doesn’t get a chance.

Instead, seconds later, Kara’s abs go tense again as she reaches to pull Lena back up her body and twist them so Lena flops on her back.

Kara’s eyes have gone dark and blown out with arousal – visible even in the dim light from the window. Lena feels the stare smack into her chest, hot and solid. Kara’s lips hover over hers just as her thigh slides between Lena’s leg and Kara gets a taste of just how ready Lena is.

She expects it to be over quickly – from the way her center is throbbing for any kind of attention she knows she doesn’t have much say in that – but Kara doesn’t seem to be in any kind of hurry. Instead, she smirks a little and traps Lena’s hands when they move towards Kara’s body.

“You had your fun,” Kara says – voice thick with satisfaction that does nothing to quell the liquid insistence dripping down Lena’s legs. Kara’s eyes flit down Lena’s body, her thigh pressing forward just hard enough to make Lena gasp.

“You,” Lena begs softly when she can’t stand it anymore. Kara mouths a path down Lena’s jawline and then her neck and Lena’s eyes roll upward, her hips pressing forward against Kara’s body.

Strong hands keep Lena’s trapped together even as they struggle to move and damn if that doesn’t make the want thrumming through her deepen.

“Keep your hands here,” Kara mutters, her eyes dark and tone heavy. Her hands trace all the way
back down Lena’s arms, goosebumps trailing in their wake, until her hands arrive at the front closure of Lena’s bra. They make quick work of the clasp and soon Lena’s shivering at the chill of exposure.

Across the skin of her collarbone Lena can just make out the way Kara’s lips are curling up into a grin at the petulant sounds that are escaping Lena’s mouth and she sighs, rolls her eyes out of Kara’s view.

“What exactly did I do to deserve this kind of punishment?” Lena asks, voice feeling thick.

Kara’s chuckle puffs warmth across her skin and is deep in that sexy way Kara gets when they’re naked together. “This isn’t punishment,” Kara murmurs and her hands slip from where they were pressed against Lena’s to travel hotly down her arms, her lips trailing south as well.

“Moving at a snail’s pace after I –” the sentence strangles in her throat when Kara’s lips latch onto a particularly sensitive part of her chest and her tongue flicks out in a motion that makes Lena arch her back against it.

“Some things are meant to be savored, Lena,” is all Kara says before moving further down her body with a trail of kisses. Her hands are warm, strong as they pull Lena’s underwear down her legs so slowly that Lena whines again.

Lena thinks to form a retort, but suddenly Kara’s head is ducking down further and her legs are being spread up and apart and what are words again?

It barely takes a minute. Kara plays Lena body with devastating efficiency. If her orgasm wasn’t ripping so quickly through her, Lena might spare a thought for how damn well Kara seems to know her body – where she likes to be licked or sucked and how hard, how soft, how long.

When she comes, it’s sharp and almost blinding. Her back snaps with the force of it and a quick cry gets torn out of her lips. Kara doesn’t even pause, doesn’t even stop to wipe at her mouth before she’s moving upward to kiss Lena, hard and swift. Their mutual arousal mingling between their lips. It makes her eyes roll back a bit and her body press in closer to Kara’s.

It shouldn’t feel different. Lena’s kissed Kara so many times at this point and in so many different places and scenarios that she’s lost count. But just like everything else, Kara’s kiss goes somehow soft, warm and slow where it slackens against Lena’s mouth.

Her orgasm is still ebbing and flowing throughout her body and it’s making her feel languid as Kara settles atop her and keeps their lips pressed together. The kiss is thorough and distracting and so all-consuming that she doesn’t even notice that Kara’s shifted to put her hand between them until deft fingers are swiping across her clit.

A reaction gets muffled by Kara’s mouth and her hips buck up when Kara’s fingers play a familiar rhythm between her legs.

“Kara,” she murmurs into the kiss, unsure if she’s asking for mercy or more.

“You’re so hot,” Kara replies between kisses, her fingers tracing up and down in a tease. “So wet and open right now. How many?”

It’s a familiar question. One Lena doesn’t always need to answer because Kara seems to always know just how much Lena can take and how much she can’t. Any reply she has to the question gets choked when Kara dances a fingertip down to her entrance and then back up again.

“How many?” Kara repeats, still kissing Lena, her voice sounding low and thick and dangerous.
“Three,” Lena manages to get out, though the word comes out strangled and she has to clear the thick feeling out of her throat to speak again. “Three.”

“I bet you could take four right now,” Kara whispers, almost to herself as two strong fingers work downward. The words do something to Lena’s head and her fingers clench against the muscle of Kara’s shoulders, her nails surely leaving a mark.

“Start with three,” she instructs needlessly – Kara is nothing if not attentive and respectful – but anything else gets swallowed back up by Kara’s mouth as her fingers press forward and Lena lets out a moan into the kiss.

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Later, after they’re too tired to continue – sweaty and satisfied – Kara practically collapses on top of Lena, head tucked against her shoulder, panting breath against the skin there.

It’s a familiar arrangement of their limbs and they settle in easily enough, Lena stroking light fingertips up the warm skin of Kara’s back, tracing her spine up and down. They lie there for several silent moments as their breathing starts to get back under control. Lena feels like she could sink through the mattress straight to the floor at this point.

Kara’s weight is heavy, but comfortable against her side and she lets it ground her to the bed, her fingers continuing to stroke and her brain starting to boot up back to normal functioning.

Which is when memory strikes back into her consciousness and her fingertips dance to the small black lines at Kara’s side, just barely visible in the low light.

“How have I never noticed these before?” Lena asks, completely bewildered that she’d miss such a detail.

Kara laughs, cranes her neck around to look at the tattoo in question. “They’re usually hidden by my bra,” she says.

“Still,” Lena insists, trying to catalog how often they’ve had sex where Kara’s never taken her bra off. Has it been that often?

“You’re not really supposed to notice them,” Kara adds. “That way I don’t have to worry about it when I do photoshoots for CK and stuff.”

“They’re trophies?” Lena asks, trying to get a better look at them in the dimness of the room.

Kara hums an affirmative. “One for each championship,” Kara says. “Alex has them too.”

Idly, Lena wonders what other details she’s not seen of Kara’s body, feels a sudden urge throb through her to discover them all.

“We’ll be adding a third at the end of this season,” Kara points out after a few beats of silence and Lena smiles.

“Careful, you might jinx it,” Lena says with an arch of her brow, but Kara just laughs and shifts somehow closer to Lena’s body, picking her head up to prop it on an elbow in the mattress.

“You can’t jinx destiny,” she says with a teasing lilt to her voice and lips that makes Lena chuckle.

“Your ego is ridiculous,” Lena says with a roll of her eyes that just makes Kara smile wider and
knock her head heavily into the bone of Lena’s shoulder. It’s playful and warm, and Lena can’t help but smile.

“Hey, thank you for tonight,” Kara replies, voice soft and sincere. As she speaks, her lips brush against the skin of Lena’s shoulder.

Lena sinks into the comfortable feeling of lassitude in her bones and laughs softly. “For the orgasms or the Hamilton tickets?”

Kara makes a humored sound through the stretch of a smile on her lips. “Both,” Kara answers, but after a second her expression shifts to something more inscrutable. A smile still lingers on her lips, but her blue eyes are searching Lena’s face like she wants to say something else. The air feels tense for a moment and Lena’s heart thuds in anticipation, but nothing ever comes.

Instead, Kara just thins her lips before threading forward and kissing Lena again. “I think Wicked is coming to National City next month,” Kara murmurs before settling back against Lena’s shoulder and Lena laughs. Kara does the same, the sound puffing breath against Lena’s collarbone in a comforting feeling.

She could fall asleep like this. Easily. The lull of it pulls hard at the back of her mind and she finds herself scrambling for an excuse to let Kara stay.

Against better judgement she settles on *friends sleep over all the time* as a justification. She knows that the version of her that’s not still recovering from a toe curling orgasm will hear just how thin that is, but the present version of her that still feels warm and sticky and content with Kara’s weight against her side…that version doesn’t really care.

Kara shifts again, a toned leg sliding against Lena’s in a manner that would be suggestive if Lena’s entire body didn’t feel like it could sink through the mattress. “I should go,” Kara says softly and it comes out sounding as reluctant as Lena feels.

It’s the orgasm, she’ll tell herself in the morning. And sympathy for a friend. That’s all.

“Yes you can stay,” she whispers as if staying quiet will mean the words hold less meaning. “If you want.”

Kara doesn’t respond, but her body stiffens for a tense moment before sagging back down against Lena. “Okay,” she murmurs, shifting so that her lips tickle Lena’s neck.

It’s the orgasm, she repeats in her head. The lingering thrum of pleasure that’s making every press of Kara body anchor her to bed in a seductively comforting way. She’s tired and languid enough that even with the heat and weight of Kara’s body, she falls asleep quickly, Kara’s breath puffing against the skin under her chin.

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It’s technically not the first time she’s woken up with Kara, but she firmly does not count the other times. This time is – she can only think *different* and has to mentally roll her eyes at her lack of eloquence on the matter.

But when she wakes up Kara’s still there – naked and facedown on the left side of the mattress, snoring softly into her pillow and her arm outstretched, hand high on Lena’s abdomen. The sun is just beginning to rise, the sky a dusky purple, revealing Kara’s post-sex, post-sleep hair and the relaxed muscles of her back as she breathes deep.
It feels so natural. It feels like if she shut her eyes and shifted closer to Kara she’d fall back asleep in a heartbeat.

Oh god is all she can think because this is exactly what she had been trying to avoid from the outset. Kara’s next to her in bed looking sleep mussed and gorgeous and Lena’s brain won’t stop telling her that Kara belongs there.

Anxiety takes hold of Lena’s throat and she does her best to slip away from Kara’s hand and off the bed without waking its occupant. The room feels suffocating. Oppressively warm. Lena scrambles for the nearest articles of clothing that she can find.

It occurs to her just as she finds her underwear and gets it on that there’s nowhere to run to. This is her hotel room and it’s not like she can just leave Kara here.

The thinking turns moot anyway when a grumpy mumble sounds out from the bed and she turns to see Kara shifting against the sheets, turning over and running a sleepy hand through her hair. “Lena?”

It takes considerable effort to compose herself and she’s grateful for the relative darkness of the room. As it is she has to clear the sleep and anxiety out of her throat before responding. “Hey, good morning,” she manages to say, pleased that she sounds normal and not like she’s contemplating bolting out the door half naked. “I was just going to make coffee.”

The mention of coffee seems to wake Kara up more and she sits up, the sheets falling off her body and even in the dim light Lena can make out a naked form she’s become far too familiar with. Her hands ache with the memory of what Kara felt like last night, and coupled with the soft perfect feeling of waking up next to her Lena feels like a weight drops in her stomach.

She has to do something about this. Sooner rather than later.

“Actually, there’s this awesome independent place around the corner. I can go grab us something,” Kara is saying, sliding out of bed and reaching for her discarded pants from the night before.

“You don’t have to,” Lena protests and as Kara stands, Lena reaches immediately for a shirt she has laying on top of her suitcase and pulls it on like it will protect her against unwanted feelings. It doesn’t. Kara stretches downward, touching the floor, then reaches high above her head, putting far too many of her lean muscles on display.

“That’s literally the least I can do after you took me to Hamilton,” Kara says, punctuating it with a wink and Lena flushes just remembering last night.

In lieu of answering, Lena shuffles in her suitcase for a pair of jeans and pulls them on just for something to do. Kara’s spinning in place in the middle of the floor with her brow furrowed. “Have you seen my shirt?”

Lena has zero idea where Kara’s shirt could have landed. There’s a scattering of clothing all over the room. Kara’s just standing there, topless and confused and Lena just needs her to put on something so she grabs into her suitcase for a sweatshirt and chucks it at Kara.

“Just put this on,” she says and Kara laughs as it hits her in the face and she catches it.

“Aggressive,” she jokes, but she pulls it over her head and Lena realizes this isn’t really much better – Kara in Lena’s clothing does about as much for her as Kara topless does and if that’s not damning enough…
“I’ll be right back,” Kara says, shuffling into shoes and striding over to kiss Lena soundly on the mouth. “Soy latte right?”

“Right,” Lena manages to answer though Kara doesn’t really wait for a response before she’s pocketing her phone and slipping out the door.

Lena just sits on the end of her bed, fingers tapping against her lips as she tries to figure out the best way to break this off with Kara without breaking her own heart.

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As she’s waiting for her plane to take off later that day, she sees an Instagram post from the official Lakehawks account. It’s of the team stuffed into their own plane, Kara still wearing Lena’s plain olive crewneck and grinning happily at the camera as the whole team holds up individual popcorn bags. The caption is probably a cultural reference Lena is too busy running a company to understand – when in Midway. You know we had to do it to ‘em.

But she finds herself staring at Kara’s face, the angle of her body as she’s leant over the seat with her sister in it. It’s hard not to stare. It’s hard not to think of Kara last night, her arm slung around the back of Lena’s chair, the way she had frantically tried to list her top five favorite musicals during intermission. How she had felt in the dark underneath Lena.

It’s harder still to pretend the image of Kara waking up with an adorable frown isn’t just as powerful. As though the kiss Kara had pressed to her lips in goodbye didn’t make her heart flutter.

It’s too much. And it’s dangerous. She shuts the app down before she goes down another rabbit hole of looking through it for pictures of Kara Danvers.

When she opens Twitter, she finds a photo of them from last night, at the show. She was surprised, honestly, that she could grow more uncomfortable.

Nothing too terrible. Just a grainy picture of the two of them at their seats in the theater, heads bowed together as they looked at a program Kara was holding between them, tweeted out by some National City basketball fan account.

Except Lena remembers the moment with a warm flush. The way Kara had smelled as she moved in close, the sound of her voice, excited and low, and the comfortable feeling of being seemingly alone with the other woman. A private, intimate feeling that was clearly a slight illusion considering the shaky cell phone picture she’s staring at right now.

Kara Danvers takes in a show with friend over Midway City trip.

Lena arches a brow at the lack of her own name, but she spares a moment to be grateful. Her face is mostly obscured by the way Kara’s hair is falling forward and Lena’s shifted to say something. She supposes that though her name is easily recognizable, her face is likely not. Certainly not in the way Kara’s is.

It doesn’t change her decision though. If anything, it solidifies it.

They look like a couple. She can tell, just from looking at the photo, that if she had seen the photo from outside herself, that she would have thought it. It doesn’t help that the replies to the photo are all from Kara Danvers fan accounts exclaiming over the possibility of Kara having a girlfriend.

Lena felt like a girlfriend last night, and that’s way past when she said she’d stop this thing.
Maybe if she just avoids Kara, just stops sleeping with her, they can salvage their friendship and everything will be fine.

The next time they’re together they just won’t fuck. No matter how much Lena’s body wants to.

And then she can explain to Kara in a calm no nonsense way that they should probably cool off for a bit – the Olympics are coming up anyway and Kara shouldn’t be distracted.

Yeah.

Flawless plan.

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Halfway through lunch the next day her phone rings – the display flashing an unknown number – and Lena sighs heavily before picking it up.

“A call in the daylight hours. To what do I owe the pleasure?”

Her brother’s laugh comes down the line, soft and easy. “Daylight hours for you maybe,” he says and she rolls her eyes, fingers fiddling with a pen on her desk absently.

“Good to hear you’re enjoying your exile,” she replies dryly.

Lex laughs again, like he doesn’t have a care in the world, and sometimes Lena envies her brother’s relatively easy-going attitude. He had always been the one to give a shrug before going off to do something daring or dangerous. And he had never been too concerned when the results were poor. Case in point.

“I consider this a vacation, Lena. Not an exile. What a dirty word. As if I’m some kind of Edward the Eighth.”

“I seem to recall he was the one who abdicated the throne and left his younger sibling in charge on the verge of a crisis,” Lena points out in an unimpressed tone.

“For love,” Lex argues with an exaggerated sound of righteousness that makes Lena laugh.

“A vacation generally has an end date,” she says, trying to keep him on track before he goes off on the virtues of his affairs.

“Don’t you worry,” he says and suddenly his voice sounds a bit more serious, but no less mysterious. “I have something in the works. I wouldn’t leave you in a lurch for too long now would I?”

Lena’s eyes go skyward a moment. “I wait on bated breath.”

“However, that’s not what I was calling about.”

“Please,” Lena says, eyes flitting to a television she has mounted against the side wall that’s playing the midday news. Clips of the opening game of the Harriers’ season are showing, including a rather amusing lowlight of Mon-El missing a dunk. “Enlighten me.”

“I was curious as to how long you’ve been sleeping with Kara Danvers. Is that some kind of owner privilege I wasn’t aware of before?”

Anxiety drops like a rock in Lena’s stomach and she feels like her whole face drains of warmth. “I’m sorry?” It’s a wonder she doesn’t choke on her own tongue.
This time Lex’s laugh is bemused and low. “I still get the Internet where I’m at,” he says. “And according to all the experts out there Kara Danvers has been seeing a new woman. A woman that suspiciously looks exactly like my baby sister.”

After only another moment of blinking at the far wall of her office, Lena clears her throat and finds her composure. “You believe everything on the internet now?”

“I believe a very cuddly picture I saw of Kara Danvers in a box seat at the Lincoln Theater. Seats I know for a fact belong to Luthor Corp and next to a –”

“Lex,” Lena interrupts with a soft clearing of her throat.

“Yes?”

“It’s not what you think,” she says and nearly facepalms at how trite and lame that sounds. Isn’t that what people say when it’s exactly what they think?

Lex chuckles. “It’s not a big deal, Lena,” he says, sounding genuine and soft. “I just want to check in and see how you’re doing. It seems I’m missing quite a lot.”

“You’re not,” she denies and hears him sigh in reply.

“I hope you’re being careful is all. I’m supposed to be the wild child that makes the family look bad. You’re the rules follower.” He pauses a bit. “People have begun to put it together, you know. They’re aware you two have grown close.”

“Nothing is happening between Kara and I,” she says, the lie feeling thick in her mouth. “I took her to the show in Midway City because she was injured and out of sorts for not playing in the game. It was a player morale issue more than anything.”

Silence hums for a moment. “Word of advice,” he says. “You might want to treat the rest of the team that way before someone starts to realize you play favorites.”

“It’s not playing favorites,” Lena denies with a scoff. “She’s the face of the franchise. I’d be remiss as an owner if I didn’t devote resources to her well-being.”

It sounds so ridiculous to her own ears, but she remembers her mother once telling her to never blink. When they back you into a corner, Lena, you can’t blink.

“You’re quite the hands-on owner then,” he comments, sounding thoughtful.

“I care about the team. They’re great PR for us right now, considering my older brother has skipped off to some unknown location with little regard for how that might affect our stock prices.”

This time, Lex’s laugh is back to the easy casual sound of before. “Letting you take your rightful place in the company did nothing but wonders for our stock prices and you know it,” he says and Lena allows herself a smile.

The conversation turns to more neutral topics about how Luthor Corp is doing and Lena’s obligatory pestering for Lex to just come home already.

Her mind, however, can’t leave Lex’s earlier comments and the anxiety that’s making her heart continue to pound quicker than normal just solidifies her earlier decision.

It’s not long after she hangs up the call with her brother that Kara texts her asking after her plans the
following weekend when the Lakehawks return from their road trip. Kara won’t be back in National City for another three days and Lena can already feel a pang of missing her take root in her chest.

Something bitter pools on her tongue and she has to pour herself a tall glass of water to get rid of the taste.

She sends Kara a vague text message about her busy schedule, a week full of meetings and a big project on her desk followed by *a good luck against Phoenix tonight*.

It’s time for this thing with Kara to end before it gets too far.

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When the Lakehawks do finally return to start their three-day home stand, Lena contemplates not attending the first game against St. Roch.

Seeing Kara in her natural habitat at an event that’s usually punctuated by a late night tryst is probably not the best way to start her new plan to avoid this whole entanglement. It doesn’t help that she manages to catch the Lakehawks Instagram most recent post – a seventy-second montage of Kara Danvers highlights with a caption announcing her return to play after injury.

The comment section is a slew of emoji-laden excitement and Lena has to exit the app after the seventeenth enthusiastic offer of marriage she spots on the post.

Maybe she’ll just give her tickets to Jack under the guise of some work-related excuse.

She has a text all typed out and ready to send out when she’s interrupted by an incoming call – *Lana Lang* shines back at her on top of a picture of the two of them from college and Lena blinks at it a moment before a plan starts to form and she answers the call with what’s likely a far too enthusiastic, “Lana!’”

Lana laughs a bit, clearly taken aback by Lena’s greeting, but moving past it quickly. “Hey, I was just calling to let you know I’m going to be in town for the night. I was hoping you might be free for dinner,” Lena says.

Lena tries for a casual laugh, isn’t entirely sure she’s successful, but pushes through. “Actually, if you don’t mind there’s an event tonight I have to attend. I’d be happy to take you as my plus one.”


“Yes.”

“That’s particularly vague,” Lana jokes. “Am I assuming correctly that the Lakehawks are in town?”

“We can go to this new restaurant I’ve been meaning to try downtown.”

Silence threads down the line for a second and Lena can almost imagine Lana’s skeptical expression. Perhaps she hadn’t thought this plan all the way through. “Don’t you usually take our wayward third wheel to those things?”

“And this time I’d like to take you,” Lena replies entreatingly. “Your far better company than Jack.”

Lana laughs and this time it sounds genuine enough that Lena relaxes, can feel Lana’s acquiesce in the sound. “That’s very true.”

“So what do you say?”
“It’s still...sports,” Lana says with an exaggerated amount of distaste that makes Lena chuckle.

“Liquor is all-inclusive,” is all Lena responds with and Lana’s happy laugh down the line is all the answer she needs.

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“You know,” Lana starts as they’re waiting for the bartender to finish pouring their drinks. The tone of her voice already has Lena on edge. “A little birdie mentioned that you’ve taken a special interest in the Lakehawks number one star.”

For half a second, Lena’s eyes glance over to the mural across from the bar of the Lakehawks players doing ridiculously athletic things – Kara front and center. But she retracts her eyes on the vodka sodas being handed to them across the counter, and makes an effort to keep her expression neutral. “I do wish you and Jack would find something more interesting to talk about than my personal life.”

“Well if you’d just stop having such a drama-filled one then we’d move on.”

She should have realized that having Lana at these games isn’t all that different from having Jack there and perhaps this wasn’t her best strategy against confronting all that’s happening between her and Kara.

“There’s no drama,” Lena scoffs, taking a sip of her drink and walking over to a high top near a TV playing the pre-game warmups. On the screen, M’gann is draining shots from the free throw line while Maggie valiantly waves her hands in her face.

“So you and the superstar...” Lana trails off suggestively, makes a strange motion with her finger that Lena rolls her eyes at.

“Are nothing. We’re acquaintances.”

“Really?” Lana asks skeptically, a teasing grin on her face that makes Lena’s lips thin. “Because I happened to have seen a very interesting photo of a certain basketball powerhouse taking in a musical in Midway City the other week and she happened to have a very familiar companion with her and –”

“Quit it,” Lena hisses, glancing around them for any listening ears.

“Oh come on, Lena. It’s me. And this subterfuge is so unnecessary. So you’re sleeping with her. Isn’t that what we’ve been telling you to –”

“Will you lower your voice please?”

Lana sighs. “I’d think that getting laid on the regular would have loosened you up a little, but clearly Kara Danvers isn’t as good in bed as it might have seemed.”

Scrubbing a hand over her face in exasperation Lena ponders the virtue of dumping her drink over Lana’s head to get her to shut up. It’d likely not work anyway – Lana’s not deterred by much and she hasn’t cowed to Lena’s bad mood since they were teenagers. “Would you please stop?”

Something in Lana’s face shadows quickly and stills. “Lena,” she says softly with a hint of wonderment in her tone. “Is it serious?”

“What part of nothing translated to serious to you?” Lena asks incredulously, taking a long sip of her
drinking and wishing it were stronger.

“The part where you made a face,” Lana says and her face still conveys some kind of shock that’s making Lena itch all over.

“It’s not serious,” she says intently, looking Lana in the eye. “It’s not anything at all.”

There’s something in Lana’s expression that tells Lena she’s not being very convincing and that’s only confirmed when Lana replies with, “Is this like that time it wasn’t serious at all with she who must not be named because I seem to recall —”

It’s hard to resist slapping a hand across Lana’s mouth, but she manages and just drops her expression into something more stern as she says in a hushed voice, “We slept together, but it’s really nothing.”

Lana’s eyes search Lena’s own for a few tense seconds before she laughs and lifts her drink up to clink against Lena’s. “Okay, sure. But you might want to tell your face that.”

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Kara’s return from injury in front of the home crowd goes well. The stadium feels more packed than usual – though Lena knows it’s not – and the noise is nearly deafening when Kara’s announced in the lineup.

It’s not long before Kara is draining her first shot – a deep three pointer that has the crowd on their feet and screaming. Kara’s face is some kind of mixture of beaming smile and complete focus. It entraps Lena, just like always, and she tries to stop the way it makes her chest feel.

The game goes well. The team adjusts effortlessly to having Kara back in the lineup and seem to recapture the kind of chemistry that’s made them so loveable all these seasons.

There’s a buzzing excitement in the building that Lena can’t help but react to and it doesn’t help that Kara glances her direction every so often – after a particularly impressive shot or when she retreating back towards the bench for a timeout or a late substitution.

Their eyes connect and Lena doesn’t know how to stop the way her whole body softens just a bit, the way her cheeks feel warm and how her fingers clench a little against the urge to reach out and twist against the fabric of Kara’s jersey.

It’s only the realization that Lana keeps glancing at her with a dangerous level of interest that helps her find a better grip on her restraint. Instead of looking at Kara, Lena focuses on downing the double vodka sodas Lana keeps ordering them from the courtside server.

By the end of the first half she’s well and truly buzzed and realizes she should probably switch to water. The last thing she needs is to be inebriated tonight. Not when Kara looks so good back in her natural habitat – sweat glistening on the strong line of her neck, hair escaping from her ponytail in curls at her temples, and biceps on full display, seemingly more defined than usual.

She makes sure to order a bottle of water the next time Lana tries to get them another round and ignores the way Lana’s lips press together into a smile when it happens.

Which is about when Kara comes strolling to the sideline, right in front of Lena and Lana to inbound the ball out to M’gann and she fucking winks at Lena like that’s not the most obvious tell in the universe.
Lena schools her features into not responding because she’s a *professional* and she has enough practice at remaining neutral in tense situations. Lana, however, is not so fooled, and even after Kara’s thrown the ball in and jogged to the other half of the court, Lana’s still looking at Lena with a mischievous smile.

“Nothing, huh?” Lana asks knowingly and at this point Lena doesn’t know how else to respond other than sighing and letting her eyes drift towards the ceiling.

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Over the course of the game Lana manages to make a thousand different comments about how well Kara is playing and how attractive she is in her jersey and *Lena knows that thank you very much*. The last thing she needs is a reminder.

Lana, however, seems to know exactly what she’s doing and Lena should have known better. Lana’s always enjoyed poking at proverbial bears.

They head to a nearby bar for a postgame drink and Lana is *relentless*.

“You know, if you’re really not going after the superstar, do you think you could introduce us?” Lana says as the bartender sets down their drinks and Lena’s brows come together severely as her gaze snaps over to her friend.

“Excuse me?”

“Kara Danvers,” Lana clarifies like *that’s* what has Lena perplexed. A dangerous smile plays at Lana’s lips, but there’s still enough vodka in Lena’s system that she doesn’t really care at picking apart what it could mean.

“I know who you meant.”

“So you’ll introduce us?” Lana pushes, arching a brow.

“You hate sports,” Lena points out, trying to bite against a wave of possessiveness that’s creeping up her throat.

“Well I don’t plan on playing any *sports* with her,” Lana jokes, swirling a straw in her cordial.

“You can’t date Kara Danvers,” Lena says before she can think twice and Lana laughs.

“I just asked for an introduction.”

“Nevertheless,” Lena replies and she takes a sip of water just to get her mouth to shut up.

Something shifts in Lana’s expression and she relaxes a bit on her barstool, looking at Lena with surprisingly genuine eyes. “You know, you can talk to me if you want.”

The offer is so sincere that Lena can feel herself responding to it, but she holds firm, clings to her earlier resolve to end things with Kara and tries to convince herself that there’s *nothing* to talk about. It’s over anyway.

“I know,” she says, reaching out to grip Lana’s arm in a friendly gesture. “Thanks.”

Lana observes her for a moment long before turning away and taking a sip of her drink.

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By the time Lena gets back to her apartment, she’s worked herself into a foul mood. Helped along by
the budding headache in her forehead. Between Lex’s comments and Lana’s persistence throughout
the game, Lena’s ready to bite the head off the next person she sees.

Which, of course, happens to be Kara Danvers.

Kara had texted her before the game to let her know she’d be free later if Lena was and without even
thinking of it, Lena invited her over. It’s part of the plan anyway – have Kara over, under no
circumstances have sex with her, and then have a rational adult conversation about how they have to
stop their arrangement.

Irritation over the conversations with Lex and Lana have made her start to pace back and forth in her
kitchen as she waits for Kara. She goes over scenarios in her head, decides what she’s going to say
to Kara and doesn’t stop the bubble of anger seep into the plan.

By the time the doorbell rings and Lena’s striding forward to open the door she’s ready to snap at
Kara before she can even get in the apartment.

A carefully crafted tense expression is on her face, but the second the door swings open to reveal
Kara standing there – black wash jeans, clean white t-shirt and a fitted black jacket, bag slung over
her shoulder and a smile – Lena’s face relaxes against her will.

“Hey,” Kara says – soft and intimate – a familiar smile on her face as she steps forward and presses a
warm kiss to Lena’s cheek. Kara’s hair is still damp from a shower and it tickles against Lena’s face.
Her arm comes around Lena’s waist in a half hug that Lena feels herself sinking into.

“Hi,” Lena says and tries to summon up her previous irritation, but Kara smells fresh and clean and
her lips are soft. Her heart gets fluttery against her will. She can’t even find it in herself to feel
panicked, now that Kara is standing in front of her with an arm around her.

“You okay?” Kara asks, reading right into Lena’s mind, but Lena dismisses it with a shake of her
head.

“Of course,” she says with a soft, casual laugh as she allows Kara into the apartment and shuts the
door behind them.

They move into the kitchen and Kara sets her bag down on a bar stool before shrugging out of her
jacket and running her fingers through her hair. “Have you eaten?”

Without even waiting for Lena’s reply, Kara moves easily through the kitchen, pulls a bottle of wine
off the wine rack in the corner and inspects it for a few moments before holding it up to Lena for
approval.

Lena nods, pulls the corkscrew out of the drawer and hands it to Kara wordlessly.

“How was work?” Lena asks, settling her hip against the island and watching as Kara expertly
uncorks the wine bottle and pulls two glasses out of a nearby cabinet.

“Good. Hand feels good,” Kara shrugs, pouring the wine and handing Lena a glass. They clink their
drinks together softly and smile at each other. Kara sits on the stool next to her and takes a sip of the
wine. “Who was that with you?”

Lena blinks at the question and her gut sours a little at the memory of her conversation with Lana
Kara smiles, the expression somewhere just short of genuine. “Like a friend or a friend?”

The waggle of Kara’s eyebrows makes her laugh and the nature of the question almost makes the tension in her chest relax. “Like a friend,” she says with monotone emphasis on the word. “We’ve known each other since grade school. Lex has always had a thing for her, truth be told.”

“She’s definitely pretty,” Kara comments and Lena narrows her eyes a bit, a teasing smile on her lips.

“Shouldn’t you be paying attention to the game and not the people on the sidelines? Is that not your job?”

Kara laughs. “I’m a great multitasker,” she says with a brush of confidence and a lift of her chin that makes Lena’s smile widen.

“Well I’m sure I could give you her number if you’d like,” Lena offers, a bit of heat turning in her stomach just like when Lana had insinuated interest in Kara earlier. But Kara just sets her wine down and wraps an arm around Lena’s waist again. Lena feels herself being pulled into Kara’s orbit, her hip sliding against the granite of her kitchen island until her body is settling in between Kara’s legs.

“I barely have enough time for basketball and you at this point,” she says, plucking Lena’s glass out of her hand and setting it down on the counter as well.

Kara doesn’t wait for a reply, just presses forward and kisses Lena soundly.

A sound escapes Lena’s mouth to float between them when Kara pulls away and it spreads a warm smile on Kara’s lips that Lena finds herself mirroring. The tension that’s built up in Lena’s gut all day starts to coil into something different, more welcome, and her fingers grip into the strong muscle of Kara’s biceps as Kara stands up from the stool.

“You never answered my question,” Kara says in between short kisses, her hands taking hold of Lena’s hips and starting to walk them backwards.

“What question was that?” Lena asks, arms twisting to wind around Kara’s neck, her fingers moving from biceps up into the hair at the back of Kara’s neck. She tries to ignore the fluttering of her heart when Kara blinks her eyes dreamily at the feel of it.

“Have you eaten?”

Lena laughs, but it’s a little breathless and her eyes flutter closed when Kara starts to trail kisses down her jaw. “I’m not hungry,” she manages to say against the liquid feeling threading up her throat.

“Good,” Kara says before bending to scoop Lena up off the ground and carry her the rest of the way to the bedroom. Lena squeaks a little as Kara does it, arms tightening around Kara’s neck so quickly that Kara laughs.

The sound cuts off when they make it over the threshold into the room and Lena pulls Kara into a kiss – the kind that vibrates intention and makes itself known low in Lena’s gut. Kara nearly stumbles with the feel of it, sets Lena down on the ground by the bed and takes a hold of her hips.

“You’re lucky I didn’t drop you,” Kara says with a hint of tease when they break apart, but Lena just rolls her eyes, scratches her fingers softly against the back of Kara’s neck and lets her hips press forward when Kara’s fingers find the zipper of her dress.
It feels unfairly seductive when Kara pulls the zipper down slowly, smile on her face as she does it and a warm palm sliding against newly exposed skin. Just like that and Lena wants to be naked now.

Kara must read her mind because she laughs softly and pulls the dress the rest of the way off. The black fabric drops around her feet and Lena steps out of it. Kara looks as if she’s going to say something – tease Lena again most likely – but suddenly her eyes go wide as they rake down Lena’s matching set of underwear – black and lacy, complete with a garter belt and thigh highs.

“Did you have this on at the game?” Kara asks, her palms running over Lena’s hips, gaze following the trail. Her voice is low and thick and makes Lena’s skin heat up.

“Yes,” Lena answers with a bit of a laugh.

Letting her head fall forward until her forehead bumps against Lena’s collarbone, Kara groans a bit, slides her hands down until they’re cupping Lena’s backside. “I so did not need to know that.”

“Why is that?” Lena asks, hands tangling into Kara’s hair as Kara pushes them onto the bed.

“That’s my place of business, Lena,” Kara says, going for stern, but the expression fails, not at all helped by the reverent way Kara’s fingers are tracing fabric.

“It’s just what I wear,” Lena replies, her voice breaking a little as Kara’s fingers start to wander across her skin.

Another groan leaves Kara’s lips. “You’re making it worse,” she complains, but Lena can feel a smile starting to form where Kara’s mouth is hitting her chest.

Lena laughs again, pulls Kara’s chin up until they’re kissing. “Think of it as motivation,” she murmurs against Kara’s lips and after that not a lot more is said.

It occurs to Lena much later – after Kara’s stretching out tired muscles and pulling her shirt back on – that her master plan to have Kara over and not sleep with her lasted all of ten minutes.

She thinks to be upset about it, or maybe even mention something to Kara about the shift in their arrangement, but Kara’s running fingers through her hair and she’s moving to the kitchen to make coffee and Lena decides it can wait for another day.

Nothing has to change just quite yet.

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Two nights later, she and Jack go to the Houston game and the crowd loses their mind when Kara tallies her umpteenth triple double of the season. The jumbotron announces it towards the end of the third quarter after it happens and even Jack springs to his feet clapping enthusiastically as Kara gives a quick, casual wave to the arena.

Lena doesn’t really understand what a triple double is *exactly*, but she googles it later when she escapes to the restroom midway through the fourth quarter. Twitter is gushing over Kara’s performance, there’s about five pictures of Kara doing her signature fist pump with intensity in the cut of her jaw and eyes.

When she and Jack retreat to their usual postgame bar, ESPN is still raving about Kara and the Lakehawks. A commentary about the upcoming Olympic Games is tagged on at the end and there are quotes from Kara’s USA teammates on her post-injury performance. Sara Lance in particular is seen in her own postgame presser, smirking at the camera and shaking her head. *Impossibly good,*
the closed captions read. *I’ll have what she’s having.*

Lena tries not to let her brain conjure an image of Kara Danvers with her head between Lena’s legs, but it’s difficult.

Thankfully, Jack saves her by asking for the check and complaining about his own early morning meeting he’s not prepared for.

It’s when she gets into the back of her town car that she gets a text from Kara asking if she wants to come over. Lena can almost feel the exuberant buzz jumping off Kara’s text, can imagine the kind of energy Kara must have after giving the home crowd such a performance.

Against better wisdom, Lena lowers the privacy partition and tells George to take her to Kara’s apartment.

It’s a warm night in National City, and this is Kara’s explanation for how they end up taking their drinks onto the large patio that wraps around Kara’s corner apartment. She and Kara share space on the large, plush daybed and take in the skyline. It’s comfortable in a way that makes Lena’s skin feel warm and tingly all at once.

As they sit there, Lena quietly sips at her wine while Kara seems energized from her earlier performance at the game. It’s how Lena ends up just sitting there, feet tucked up under her thighs as Kara talks endlessly about whatever topic seems to come to her mind.

By the time they’ve both set their empty wine glasses to the side, Kara’s got her arm across Lena’s shoulders, pulling their bodies together as she rambles on about some ridiculous prank she and Alex pulled on the Evergreens over their road trip.

Something about the warm night air, the taste of merlot on her tongue, the feeling of Kara’s fingers brushing over and over again at the skin of Lena’s arm and the clean crisp scent of Kara flittering up into her brain makes Lena forget all about her brilliant plan to emotionally distance herself from Kara, to put an end to their arrangement.

Which is how she ends up pressing a kiss to Kara’s jawline, just solid enough to convey her intent. Kara’s story drifts away into the night when she moves to look with serious eyes at Lena.

It’s a familiar dance after that. Kara pulls Lena swiftly into her lap, holds her there with strong hands on the backs of her thighs and Lena drops her head down enough until they’re kissing – hot and wet.

Lena’s fingers trail over Kara’s cheeks and up into hair where they tangle in the blonde strands to keep their lips pressed together. Kara kisses so thoroughly and single-mindedly that Lena often gets lost in the sensation. Their noses brush against each other and Lena’s hips press downward and *god.*

It shouldn’t feel this good, a voice in the back of Lena’s mind murmurs. It shouldn’t feel so satisfying just to kiss someone. But Lena knows without a doubt that she could spend the whole night doing just this with no regret.

Kara, thankfully, has better ideas and it’s not long before she’s coaxing Lena off the patio and into the bedroom where she pulls open a drawer Lena is intimately familiar with.

“You okay?” Kara asks into a kiss when Lena feels so stretched out and full of *Kara* that she’s sure she’s going to come any second.

All she can do is nod and arch her neck to keep kissing Kara, a noise escaping her when Kara’s hips press down just right.
An unstoppable urge comes over her then. One that’s new, but no less demanding.

It’s an urge that has her pressing back on Kara’s shoulders and murmuring a firm, “Turn over.”

Kara looks confused by the words, her hips faltering, but she obeys at Lena’s softly added, “Please.”

Strangely, they’ve not done this in this exact position before, Lena straddled across Kara’s lap the way she is. It’s a new angle that has Lena taking in a sharp breath as she settles down. Kara sits back against her headboard and watches Lena with blown out eyes full of interest and arousal. It makes Lena feel powerful, connected to the moment.

“Lena,” Kara whispers, licking her lips and squirming a bit as Lena adjusts to riding Kara, her hands coming to take a hold of Kara’s neck and balance herself.

Her forehead pushing forward to settle against Kara’s, Lena just moves up and down again with a softly murmured, “Shhhh.”

The new position is doing something to Kara as much as it is Lena. She can tell as much by the way Kara’s fingers dig into the sides of Lena’s thighs and her hips come up to meet Lena’s motions.

The sounds Kara makes when Lena presses down firmly is enough to have her head swimming, though she can barely distinguish it from the sharp ache of pleasure she’s feeling between her own legs. Pulling away a bit, Lena braces a palm against Kara’s sternum, her fingers tracing the scar there as she starts to move in earnest.

“Fuck,” Kara lets out lowly as her hips jolt upward and the combination of sound and feeling is really doing it for Lena.

It nearly breaks her back when Kara seems to gather enough presence of mind to shift her hand between them and press firmly between Lena’s legs. Her hands grip tighter into the hair at the nape of Kara’s neck. The sweat slick feeling of their bodies pressing against each other is so much. She feels so much, Kara’s lips pressing forward to capture hers in a kiss that doesn’t seem to end so much as it drifts onto an exchange of breaths.

“So good,” Lena murmurs. Kara groans, her hips pressing upward insistently and her fingers tracing through Lena easily. Her unoccupied hand moves from Lena’s hip up her back to the skin of her neck, pressing them even closer, and Lena can feel her release coming at her like a freight train. Kara seems aware as well, her hips jumping more solidly, her lips pressing hot into Lena’s.

“I’ve got you,” Kara gasps out. The combination of the sound of it, the hot feeling of their bodies crushed together, the fullness – Lena falls apart. She hears and feels Kara’s hips press upwards, working her through it, feels Kara groan against her as she comes. All the while, her hand presses heavily against Lena’s neck, keeping them together. Keeping Lena there.

Lena falls asleep - passes out really - sometime after Kara rolls them back over and fucks a second orgasm out of both of them. It can’t be helped really. Lena’s body and mind are exhausted and it’s not long after Kara pulls out and cleans up the mess they’ve made that Lena’s curling around Kara’s sheets and yawning.

The pull of sleep drops over her so suddenly that she can’t help it and she’s only vaguely aware of Kara returning to bed and sliding in close.

It isn’t until much later - about the time she’s left Kara’s apartment at five o’clock the next morning and sliding into the back of her black town car that she thinks to berate herself for spending the night like that. For someone that resolved some time ago to leverage some emotional distance between
herself and Kara, she’s sure doing a bang up job of it.

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The Lakehawks go on the road and Lena makes a valiant effort at not noticing Kara’s absence. It’s something that’s growing harder and harder the more they spend time together and it helps just a bit in strengthening her resolve to put some distance back into their friendship.

At her office, Lena manages to catch the Star City game as it plays muted on her television while she goes through late night paperwork. The match is closely contested, it seems when Sara and Laurel Lance are in their zone, they’re quite the match for Kara and Alex. A highlight plays over and over of Sara deftly crossing Kara over and Kara giving her a look of frustration and amusement after she hits her shot.

The Lakehawks still manage to win. The Evergreens seem to have a good answer to Kara Danvers’s ability to outscore opponents, but Kara knows how to adjust her game and by the end of it her team is on top, Lucy Lane leading the table with thirty points.

On her ride home, Lena scrolls through her Twitter feed and catches some of Kara’s postgame antics. Winn, who always posts something after a Lakehawks win, has a link to an Instagram post. It’s a picture of Kara, Sara, Alex and Laurel all changed out of uniform and walking out of the arena together. Kara has her arm slung across Sara’s shoulders and Sara’s laughing at something Laurel seems to be saying, hands in the air as if gesturing. Alex trails behind them, eyes on her phone and the caption reads Foes to Friends.

Lena doesn’t expect to hear anything from Kara that night. Anticipates she’ll likely hit the town with her sister and the Evergreens and Lena tries not to wonder what exactly that will entail.

However, just as she’s turning into bed, her screen lights up with a call and she spots Kara’s name flashing at her.

“Hi,” Lena greets, unable to keep the surprise out of her voice.

“Hey!” Kara’s voice is bright and energized as it often is after a victory and Lena’s body warms at the sound.

“Good game tonight.”

“Sara keeps giving me a hard time because she had more points than me,” Kara complains, but it comes out with an affectionate laugh. “But I told her to watch SportsCenter Top 10 tonight because that dunk I had on her is going to be playing all night.”

“I’m sure she really appreciated the reminder.”

Kara tsks unapologetically. “She’ll survive.”

Something occurs to Lena then. “Are you not all out together?”

“Sara and Alex went to some place in The Glades, but Sara has historically the worst taste in bars. Really more Alex’s style than mine. I think maybe Maggie went too.”

“I’d think you want to be out celebrating your victory,” Lena comments, going for casual and hoping she’s hitting her mark. She really doesn’t care how Kara spends her nights on the road – or in National City for that matter – but she is curious.
“Nah,” Kara says easily, the sound of movement making Lena think maybe she’s settling into bed. The image does something fuzzy to her brain. “I’m more of an ice my hand in the hotel room and watch something sleazy on late night cable kind of girl.”

Lena laughs. “That’s not what the tabloids say.”

“Lena Luthor reads the tabloids?” Kara says with an exaggerated amount of incredulity.

“Be careful or Lena Luthor will buy a tabloid and only print gossip about Kara Danvers’s exploits.”

The laugh Kara lets out is loud and warm and flushes intently across Lena’s chest. “Can Kara Danvers buy Lena Luthor lunch Saturday and try to talk her out of it?”

“Only if you stop talking in third person,” Lena says dryly, slinking down onto her bed.

“You started it,” Kara protests and Lena makes a noncommittal noise in the back of her throat.

“You’re back Saturday, then?”

“Yup,” Kara says and Lena can hear the smile in the word. “So can I buy you lunch?”

There’s probably something telling about how much her mouth wants to immediately respond yes, but Lena sets aside thinking of that for another time. She can certainly sit through a lunch with Kara Danvers and not sleep with her. That shouldn’t be hard. Perhaps it’s a good opportunity to have the talk she’s been meaning to have about distancing themselves.

“Sure,” Lena answers. “But nowhere that serves nachos or hot wings.”

“You just love sucking the fun out of everything, don’t you?” Kara teases and Lena rolls her eyes.

“I’m hanging up,” Lena replies in a deadpan, but she doesn’t move the phone from her ear.

Kara laughs, clearly well aware the threat is empty and as the sound tapers off, Kara adds. “Don’t hang up. I haven’t even asked what you’re wearing yet.”

Something tightens between Lena’s legs at the words and she hates that those words are all it takes to get her going sometimes. A silence stretches over the phone for a moment before Lena lets out a shaky breath and asks, “Well? Go on then.”

Kara laughs again, but this time the sound is thick and low and spikes heat in Lena’s stomach.

Saturday. She’ll end this dance on Saturday.

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It doesn’t end on Saturday.

They end up skipping lunch entirely because Kara shows up at Lena’s door wearing these white jeans ripped at the knees, a loose-fitting chambray shirt and purple tinted aviators perched on her nose and Lena’s only human.

The clothing ends up scattered across the foyer of Lena’s apartment making a trail to the couch in the living room. Lena pushes Kara back on the cushions forcefully enough that Kara looks surprised at the aggressiveness, but Lena can’t help herself. Kara looks so good and the memory of their phone call a few days ago is still buzzing over her skin and she just needs to touch her.
So she takes her time between Kara’s legs, lets her appreciation channel into quick strokes of her tongue and a careful twist of her fingers and the feel of Kara tightening up and breaking apart does something to the rhythm of Lena’s heart.

A laugh drops out of Kara as the orgasm flushes through her and it’s not long before she’s sitting up, and pulling Lena up her body until she’s straddling Kara’s lap in what’s become a familiar position. “Hi to you too,” Kara murmurs, but she doesn’t give Lena a chance to respond before she’s taking them both back to the bedroom and spreading Lena out against the mattress.

They order takeout from Lena’s bed and Lena tells herself she can end it the next time. No reason to rush it at this point.

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They get invited to the same club opening. Some trendy new place on the west side of town called APT.

Kara had spotted the pretentiously discreet invitation on Lena’s kitchen counter after the Las Vegas game while they were having their usual post-orgasm cup of coffee and Kara insisted they attend together.

Despite feeling weak to the tangled mess of Kara’s hair, the lingering flush in her cheeks and the ache Lena can feel presenting between her legs, Lena manages to talk Kara out of it. All it takes is a carefully worded proposal about how it might be better to accidentally run into each other there.

Her only concession is that she doesn’t invite Jack. Kara gets this twitch in her face when Lena mentions he was invited too and she barely suppresses a laugh at the way Kara goes for casual but mostly fails.

They end up finding each other in the back of the club near the restrooms. Kara’s leaned up against the black brick wall in a line of other girls, studying something on her phone and Lena’s whole being warms up at the sight of her. She’s wearing all black, complete with a leather jacket and a polka dot button down that shows off enough collarbone that Lena suddenly wants to press a kiss there.

Kara doesn’t seem to be aware that the girls to her left are full-on staring and giggling at her, wearing tight dresses that barely cover their asses. She finds herself charmed, knowing Kara is probably playing a ridiculous cartoonish game on her phone instead of paying attention to girls who are about ready to throw themselves at her feet.

The heat of her stare seems to pull Kara’s gaze up because she hones in on Lena, pockets her phone and straightens up.

Without so much as a glance around, Kara steps away from the line. Lena, however, does look at the other occupants of the small dark hallway, worried over their observation of the scene, but the pack of girls who had been ogling Kara have shuffled into the restroom, and no one else seems to pay much mind as Kara comes in close and smiles warmly.

Lena can’t stop the expression from mirroring on her own face and she leans up a bit to let Kara press a friendly kiss to her cheek. “Hey,” she murmurs in greeting, enjoying the waft of fresh, clean scent that lingers as Kara pulls away.

“Hi,” Kara returns, a playful little grin on her lips. “Fancy running into you here.”

Lena arches a brow, lets a secretive kind of smile tighten over her own mouth. “Indeed.”
“You look gorgeous tonight, per usual,” Kara comments, still leaning in close. Lena tries to stop her body from reacting and looks up at Kara with a thin, but warm smile.

“Smooth talker,” she says, pushing her fingers against Kara’s abs as if to shove her, but Kara just laughs.

“It’s not a line,” Kara says, an easy smile that pulls Lena’s own smile wider. “Just the truth.”

Lena rolls her eyes and lets out a little groan, but there’s heat in her cheeks she can’t deny. “You’re the worst. Does that work on other women?”

Shrugging, Kara laughs softly, seemingly unaffected by the accusation. “I don’t know. Haven’t tried.” Her face freezes a second, brows coming together before a hasty look enters her eyes. “Wait, that makes it sound like I lie to women all the time, which I don’t. I was just trying to tell you that I’m serious when I say –”

With a finger to Kara’s lips, Lena stops the sudden flow of words with a laugh. “I was teasing, Kara.” There’s some undeniably endearing about the innocent, honest look on Kara’s face and the effortless way Kara seems to constantly make Lena feel like she’s the center of all Kara’s attention though she knows that can’t be true.

“Right, yeah,” Kara replies, faint blush in her cheeks visible in the dim light of the club. “Duh.”

Glancing around them, Lena lifts an inquiring eye to Kara. “So were you spending your night hanging out in the bathroom or…?”

“Come on,” Kara says, rolling her eyes. She puts a hand at Lena’s elbow and the warmth of the touch bleeds so quickly up Lena’s arm she has to take a sudden deep breath. “We’ve got a spot towards the back.”

Thankfully, Kara doesn’t seem to register Lena’s reaction and just tugs her out of the hallway and back into the throng of people at the club.

The VIP section of the club is just a roped off set of couches and tables, but it’s hidden just a bit by a thick velvet curtain and is tucked away to the side of the dance floor. It’s smoky and there are an absurd amount of lasers populating the room as a crowd bounces along to the heavy beat pouring out of the speakers.

Kara leads Lena there with a hand at the small of her back that bleeds heat through the thin fabric of her dress. There are a scattering of people already there, spread across a circular booth and when Lena recognizes one of them she halts.

It’s Sara Lance.

She hasn’t noticed their entry yet. Instead, she’s turned towards a man sitting next to her and looking at him with a confused tilt to her brow while he gestures expressively with his hands. Next to him, Lena recognizes another woman – Lucy Lane – and she turns incredulous eyes towards Kara.

“Kara,” Lena says, as softly as one can when in a crowded club, with a hint of warning, but Kara doesn’t look concerned, instead she pulls Lena off to the side, back toward the curtain. Safely ensconced behind it, they’re hidden from view, unless someone just entering or exiting the VIP section happened to turn their head. Kara leans closer, her lips ending up near Lena’s ear so they can speak to each other easily.

“No one cares,” Kara says. “I promise. They know we’re friends. It’s not weird for the owner to
hang out with players.”

But that doesn’t do much to assuage the paranoia building in Lena’s head, and she finds her anxiety rocketing upwards as every reason she had for why they should end this whole arrangement comes crashing back in. “Kara,” she repeats, this time sharp. Kara looks at her with calm in her blue eyes and takes a deep breath as she hovers nearer to Lena.

“Everyone in that booth knows what it’s like to get their name dragged through the mud,” Kara says softly, putting a hand on Lena’s hip, the one furthest from the walkway. “None of them are going to say anything untoward or go running to the papers because I ran into you tonight. Like I said, they know we’re friends. It’ll be fine. I swear.”

There’s something honest and soft in Kara’s blue eyes that has Lena relaxing just enough to hear her words. She supposes there’s some truth to what Kara’s saying. It’s not as if they’ve created much of a scandal so far and Sara had already seen them socialize months ago at Seven. Lena finds her hands getting caught up in the bottom of Kara’s open leather jacket, letting the feel of it anchor her.

“If you want to leave, that’s fine. We can go somewhere else, go home, wherever. But I seriously promise you it’s not a big deal,” Kara says, quiet and sincere. “We can do whatever you want. No pressure.”

The decision wavers for a moment in her brain – a desire to stay with Kara, to relax with her friends, to not think so much, pulls heavily in her chest and starts to quiet the hesitation that had stopped her feet earlier. With a deep breath and a nod, she gives Kara a small smile and a quiet, “Okay,” that prompts a wide smile on Kara’s face.

The happy reaction threatens to spike indecision back into her being, but before she can think more, Kara’s pressing a light, quick kiss to her hairline and wrapping an arm around her waist in a loose hug. “You sure?” Kara asks, close to her ear and though Lena breaks away from the dangerous feel of Kara so close, she nods again, strong and sure.

“Yeah,” Lena says with another breath and a little laugh as turns back towards the booth. Kara steps immediate to the side and then in front of her to lead them towards her friends.

“Hey, look who I found,” Kara announces loudly as they step forward and the table turns.

Sara glances first at Kara and then at Lena with a surprised smile. She stands. “Lena,” Sara greets, extending her hand across the table. “Good to see you again.”

“Hi,” Lena returns, taking Sara’s hand in a warm shake. She nods to Lucy, who’s smiling widely at her, but seems completely unsurprised to see her.

“All alone tonight?” Sara asks, still smiling, but letting her eyes go sideways towards Kara quickly.

“I am,” Lena answers, trying to read into the changes in Sara’s expression.

“Well, not anymore it seems,” Sara says in what could be a friendly manner, but she punctuates it with a wink that Lena doesn’t know what to do with. Kara’s right. Lena can acknowledge that the likelihood of Sara Lance running to the tabloids with some suspicious tip that Lena Luthor and Kara Danvers are fucking is low. But there’s something in Sara’s expression that feels worrisome for different reasons.

The man next to Sara stands and Lena finds herself craning her neck to watch his ascent. He’s tall. Another basketball player, maybe?
“This is Barry,” Kara introduces. “Barry Allen. He plays for Central City.”

Barry’s smile is large and happy as he extends his hand to Lena’s. “Hi, nice to meet you.”

Kara introduces her to the rest of the group – another blonde at Barry’s side, Felicity Smoak, a man Lena recognizes from one of the first time she ever saw Kara at a club – Mon-El – and another man that Barry introduces as Wally West.

“Barry and Wally are in town to play the Harriers tomorrow,” Kara says as they find seats in the booth and Kara pulls a bottle of champagne out of a chiller in the middle of the table. “And Sara and Felicity are here because the Evergreens played the Skippers last night.”

“Correction,” Sara says, leaning towards their conversation with a smirk. “We destroyed the Skippers last night.”

Kara rolls her eyes, but concedes the point. “Not hard to do with Siobhan injured,” Kara says, with a pointed look towards Sara.

This time it’s Sara that rolls her eyes and Barry laughs. Mon-El jumps up from his seat and points at everyone. “Shots?”

Sara and Barry both nod immediately, but Felicity starts to shake her head in the negative, looking to Wally and then Kara for help.

“You have a game tomorrow,” Kara points out, but Mon-El dismisses her with a wave and the other two men at the table don’t seem that concerned with it either. Lena arches a brow at their nonchalance, but doesn’t comment.

Before anyone else can protest, Felicity starts waving frantically at someone out of view and Lena turns to see Alex Danvers approaching the table with another woman recognizes as Laurel Lance.

Out of the corner of her eye, Lena notices Lucy grab for the bottle of Belvedere on the table and pour some into her glass as Felicity whispers something quietly into her ear.

Alex looks a little more surprised than Lucy to notice Lena, but definitely doesn’t seem put off by it in the least. Instead she offers a friendly smile. “Hey, Lena,” she says. “Good to see you.”

“You too, Alex,” she says and Sara introduces her sister with a proud little smile Lena warms at.

“Nice to meet you,” Laurel says politely before hugging Kara and greeting the rest of the group.

They all settle back into the booth and Mon-El makes a show of counting them. “We’re doing shots, Alex, you in?”

“Yes,” Alex answers immediately, settling in between Sara and Laurel with a smile. Laurel shakes her head, but Sara answers for her – “Everyone is doing shots. That’s the rule.”

“That’s not a rule, Sara,” Laurel says, shaking her head with an exasperated roll of her eyes.

“Yes, it’s called the Sara Rule.”

“The Sara Rule?” Wally asks with a half-grin.

Sara looks pleased that she’s been asked to clarify and she straightens a bit. “Yeah, the Sara Rule. When I say drink, you drink. Easy.”
“Easy way to get alcohol poisoning,” Felicity adds and Sara shrugs, unrepentant.

“Okay, shots,” Mon-El says definitively, not waiting for further conversation before he goes off in search of their server.

The loud beat of the music and the hot feeling of being pressed into a booth with Kara starts to beat over Lena’s skin. Sara and Mon-El start to argue about what kind of shots they’re going to order – Mon-El wants a round of Buttery Nipples and keeps grinning every time he says it. Sara is heavily advocating for something straight, but when Felicity makes a face she concedes and offers something called a Mind Eraser.

Lena is only vaguely aware of the rest of the details. The leather of Kara’s jacket is warm and almost sticky where it presses into Lena’s shoulder, and she’s trying valiantly to not notice the way their legs are up against each other as well.

It grows easier as the group turns their attention away from her and towards each other. They continue to banter back and forth until Mon-El seems to cow under the weight of Sara’s authority and orders the first round of shots. It gets easier to just listen to the group talk, to join in when she finds the room to and her anxiety flows away the more unaffected everyone clearly seems by her presence.

Kara stays pressed up against her, but even that’s starting to feel far more normal. She lets herself laugh when Barry nearly spills a bottle of vodka in Alex’s lap and even joins in ribbing Kara for not being able to take their second round of shots – Red Headed Sluts – as quickly as Lucy does it.

Beyond that, Kara keeps her champagne glass topped off and smiles at her almost friendly-like and Lena lets herself relax inch by inch. It’s really not all that different from being with Jack. Apart from the awareness she has to the way Kara’s body brushes against hers every so often, it’s a fairly standard night out at the club with a group of friends.

Eventually, Sara stands suddenly, throws back the rest of her fifth drink as if it were water and offers Kara a sly smile. “Dance, KD?”

Kara laughs a little, but she glances at to her left, as if she’s looking onto the dance floor. But Lena feels her eyes land on her anyway. Lena focuses on looking disinterested as soon as it happens because Kara certainly doesn’t need her permission to do anything and Lena certainly doesn’t care if Kara wants to go bump and grind with Sara Lance.

“Nah,” Kara says, sitting back against the booth and letting her head fall back. The line of her neck distracts Lena even peripherally. “I’m good.”

Sara’s eyes bounce between her and Lena a bit, her smile only growing deeper and Lena wants to hit Kara with something. “Sure,” she says, turning towards Alex. “What about the other Danvers sister?”

Alex laughs into her beer bottle. “As a consolation prize?”

Sara arches a brow. “Prove to me you’re not,” she challenges but there’s a teasing thread between all of them and Lena wants to hit Kara with something. “Sure,” she says, turning towards Alex. “What about the other Danvers sister?”

Still laughing, Alex takes another long pull of her beer before standing and taking Sara’s offered hand.

It’s a blur of more drinks after that. Eventually, Wally and Barry are the first to go – citing their game
tomorrow as the reason – and they drag Mon-El out with them against his heavy protesting.

“Good sports,” Lena comments as it happens and Kara laughs – a sound that drags through Lena’s ears to settle in her chest. They’ve somehow drifted closer, with Kara having abandoned her jacket and pushed her shirt up her forearms. It’s doing things to her system that their third round of shots is not helping to quell.

Before long Lena’s feeling the telltale signs of intoxication though it’s nothing too threatening yet – just a pleasant little buzz in the back of her head that she knows will easily tip into full on drunk if she keeps up the pace the group is setting.

The entire experience isn’t nearly as uncomfortable as she thought it would be, with Sara occupied on the floor with Alex – no one seems to think twice about her presence or put together that she’s there with Kara.

But as the drinks continue to flow, so does that warm feeling of arousal she always gets when she’s around Kara for long enough. Kara’s body is excessively close to hers, the heat of it and the club fuzzing up Lena’s brain, and she knows she can’t do anything about it until they leave.

Her palms itch with the urge to run a hand down the length of Kara’s spine, to pull her to a dark corner and let Kara press her against a wall. It settles so thickly in her throat that she knows she needs to do something about it before the alcohol and the arousal combine to take a hold of her better senses.

So, with Felicity, Laurel and Lucy all distracted by conversation, Lena pushes in closer to Kara, drops her head and uses the excuse of the loud club to put her lips indecently close to Kara’s ear and ask, “Do you want to get out of here?”

Kara’s only answer is the intensity of her gaze when she pulls back to look Lena in the eye. She’s standing before Lena can blink, giving a wave to the group assembled on the other side of the booth. They give lazy waves back, uncaring, and Lena can’t find it in her to mind when Kara grabs for her hand as she stands up. She grabs for Kara’s discarded jacket, hanging off the back of the booth, and drapes it around her own shoulders, lets Kara wrap an arm around her waist to lead them through the club.

A black town car is already waiting on a side street for Lena when they exit and Lena makes a beeline straight for it, keeps her gaze ahead of her and slips inside the back door without hesitation, Kara right after her.

The door is barely closed and privacy partition just sliding upward when Kara’s pushing all the way across the backseat and right into Lena’s personal space. The press of her lips is nearly as intoxicating as the shots, warm and wet. She had known she wanted the feeling, but it was shocking how much she had apparently needed it.

“Last time we did this in a car I had a back ache for a week,” Lena murmurs against Kara’s lips, but doesn’t stop her from pressing forward.

“It was worth it,” is all Kara says before hooking a hand behind Lena’s knee, up under her dress, and pulling until Lena’s slumping farther in the seat.

“Do you think anyone knows we –?” Lena starts to ask, but the question cuts off at the feel of Kara’s fingers climbing higher. Rational thought is quickly bleeding out of her brain to gather between her legs.
“I told you,” Kara says, lips hot on Lena’s jawline. “No one cares.”

She lets herself believe it as she works her fingers along the buttons on Kara’s shirt and Kara works her fingers against Lena. It’s a nice thought to imagine that no one really cares. That Lena and Kara have professional obligations or easily recognizable public personas.

And yet the idea of it is somehow terrifying too. To think of really letting herself fall for Kara, to sinking into the easy way it is to be with her.

Swallowing against the tumult of thought and emotion, Lena decides to push it all aside and focus on the task, quite literally, at hand.

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A picture of them shows up on her Twitter feed the next day and Lena’s not sure what to make of it entirely.

It’s the first time she’s ever been properly identified with Kara – *Lena Luthor, Kara Danvers, Alex Danvers and Lucy Lane at APT opening*. Put like that, it’s nothing at all implicative.

Suddenly, Lena starts to believe Kara’s mantra that no one cares about them. Starts to rethink her position on the necessity of full discretion.

Jack is next to her when she spots the picture and he glances over her shoulder. “You went to APT?” He asks, sound a bit put off and she knows it’s because she didn’t invite him.

“I’ve already seen the pictures of you at Fever, so don’t act like you were at home eating ice cream.”

He puts an exaggerated look of offense on his face as he brings a hand to his chest. “Still,” he says and she just rolls her eyes and goes back to her phone. “You went with Kara? Instead of me?”

“I didn’t *go with* Kara,” she protests, clicking her tongue disapprovingly against the lie. “I ran into her there.”

Jack’s smile is nothing short of smug and she nearly shoves him off his stool. “I’m sure.”

“It’s true,” she emphasizes firmly, but she can tell Jack doesn’t buy it.

“Well, speaking of running into people at clubs, you’ll never believe who I saw last night,” Jack says and Lena can tell he means to do it casually, but Lena’s known him most of her life and she catches the way his eyes dart around.

It draws her attention back fully to his face and a swoop of anxiety goes low in her stomach as she asks, “Who?”

“Sam.”

The name makes Lena’s chest go painfully tight as a thickness gathers in her throat. “Sam,” she repeats, hoping maybe there’s another Sam she’s not remembering and not the Sam that she sort-of dated for three years in college.

“Yes,” Jack says, looking at her straight on. “Sam. Your ex and the former love of my life.”

He looks mostly joking when he says the last bit, but Lena knows there’s a hint of truth there and she closes her eyes briefly sighing. “Jack,” she says softly, pleading and he chuckles a bit.
“I’m not joking,” he replies. “I mean, not about running into her. She was at Fever.”

“I didn’t know she was in town,” Lena says, focusing back on her phone and making a show of swiping through her Twitter again.

“I think Allied Industries is making some moves. At least, that’s the way it sounded from Sam.”

“You spoke with her?”

“Briefly,” Jack answers with a casual shrug like they’re not talking about someone that was once at the epicenter of all their personal drama.

“I don’t care,” Lena says and Jack laughs abruptly at that.

“Lena, I know you like to live in your little world of delusion about these things but come on,” he says with a knowing smirk on his lips.

Lena shakes her head and looks at her nails in a bored gesture. “I really don’t care. That was a chapter of my life best left behind me.”

Jack studies her for a moment, eyes going a bit more serious. “She looked good, you know,” he comments, clearly ignoring her wishes.

“Yes, well you’ve always cared more about that than me.”

Jack rolls his eyes. “I just thought you might want to know before you run into her in a club just like I did and worse, you’ll probably be with Kara.”

The reintroduction of Kara into the conversation twists something uncomfortable in Lena’s gut and honestly this is part of the reason she’s been so adamant at avoiding emotional entanglements.

“I don’t go out with Kara enough to be worried about such a thing.” At least focusing on Kara feels easier to do than entertaining the thought of running into Sam randomly at some night club with Kara looking like…Kara…standing next to her.

“You were at APT with her just last night,” Jack points out with a laugh.

Lena thins her lips, sets a glare in his direction. “Like I said. I ran into Kara at the club, I didn’t go with her. You’d be surprised by how little we talk, honestly.” Lena asserts with as much confidence as she can muster. Jack looks as though he believes very little of the bluster, and her case is only weakened when her phone on the table vibrates with a text message from Kara.

“Right,” Jack says, taking a sip of his drink and wiggling his eyebrows until Lena can’t help but laugh.

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Ever since Lena’s decision to break this whole thing off with Kara, it just seems like they’re having more sex than before. Even when Lena tries to avoid it, tries to see if she really can just be friends with Kara without the sex, they almost always end up fucking.

Kara comes over after landing back in National City from a road trip and finds her way to Lena’s couch. Lena pours them wine, they put something on the television as background noise and somewhere between laughing at a dumb joke Kara’s told and allowing Kara to coax her feet into strong fingers for a foot rub, they end up kissing.
Lena can’t be blamed though. Kara’s got her glasses on and they were falling down her nose, her hair was tumbling over her shoulders and her cheeks were slightly pink as she laughed at herself in that self-deprecating way she has. A strong thumb was running up the arch of Lena’s foot and sending pleasure up her leg and Lena couldn’t resist it anymore.

They don’t make it to a bed. But then again, they often don’t the first time.

And Lena tries not to think about how every time they come together it’s never just once. It’s as if this thing with Kara really is a drug and Lena just can’t help herself.

They fuck slowly, Lena taking Kara apart first with her fingers and then Kara doing the same. It’s almost soft against the plush cushions of Lena’s couch and when it’s all over they tangle together easily and nearly absentmindedly.

Kara sags on top of Lena’s body, her cheek pressing up under Lena’s chin to rest against her chest and they turn towards the television where sports news is playing. It makes Lena groan a bit into a laugh.

“Tell me we didn’t just have sex while your highlight reel played on my television.”

Obediently, Kara does as she’s told. “We didn’t just have sex while my highlight reel played on your television.”

Lena rolls her eyes, stretches to reach the discarded remote and changes the channel despite Kara’s light protesting of, “Hey, you didn’t even see that shitty call on me in the fourth!”

“I already saw it,” Lena points out, dropping the remote back down when she settles on some late cable news.

Kara lifts her head up, holds her entire upper body up with the strength of her abdomen and Lena tries not to feel the evidence of that between her legs, but her eyes still flicker downward. “You’re totally a basketball fan now aren’t you?”

Lena shoves Kara lightly in the shoulder, makes as if she’s going to squirm away, but Kara holds her still with a solid pressure that is really making Lena start to calculate how much sleep she’s going to get if she convinces Kara into another round. “Don’t be rude.”

It makes Kara laugh and the sound of it pulls a smile onto Lena’s lips before she can stop it. “You’re watching all the away games, having sex to sports highlights –” Lena’s palm cuts off the words as it lands over Kara’s mouth, but she can still see the smirk on Kara’s face in the cheeky arch of her brow.

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The Lakehawks are marching through another victory a few days before the Olympic break is scheduled to begin.

Per usual, she and Jack retreat to the Courtside Club in the arena for halftime and post up at a corner booth with refilled drinks. Jack fills the time scrolling through his Twitter feed and showing Lena ridiculous posts about the game while Lena sips idly at her drink and glances at the television screen nearby that’s broadcasting the halftime show.

It’s some man stacking chairs higher and higher as he balances on the top. Lena watches it for a few moments and wonders whose job it is to pick halftime entertainment – she makes a mental note to ask James about it at their next meeting.
“I think we should go to the Star City game this weekend,” Jack says randomly, pulling Lena’s attention from the screen to where he’s sitting.

“And why’s that?” Lena asks, a bit perplexed until she spots his phone screen. “Are you just looking at pictures of the Lance sisters?”

Jack pulls the phone away from her line of sight and straightens, looking at her with fake innocence. “No.” The word is delivered with a telling quirk of his lips and eventually he laughs, turning his phone back over and showing it to her.

It’s a picture of Sara and Laurel during a game, arms around each other as they walk towards the sideline. “Cute,” she says, shooting him a knowing look.

He just shrugs, pulls his phone back and swipes to the next picture. Lena can just see well enough to know it’s a picture she’s seen before – one of Sara, Laurel and Kara at some women in sports charity event. All three of them are dressed impeccably and smirking at the camera.

Lena turns away before she falls down the same hole Jack seems to have already jumped into, but when her eyes float back to the television Kara’s face is there too. It seems the jumbotron is playing some kind of video tribute and she watches as pictures of Kara as a child start to float across the screen.

“Oh,” Jack says softly when he looks up as well and Lena turns a quizzical look his direction. “I forgot it was the anniversary. I read about it in the paper this morning.”

“The anniversary?” Lena asks, turning back to the television where the video is showing a sequence of clips of Kara playing basketball as a young girl. It’s undeniably adorable and Lena fights a smile.

The affection growing in her stomach, however, cools, when Jack answers her. “The anniversary of her parents’ death,” he tells her.

Intellectually, Lena had known that Kara’s parents had passed when she was young – that was the reason she had been adopted by the Danvers. All of that information had been in the file Lena had originally read when she first took ownership of the team. But it’s a different beast to see the pictures from Kara’s childhood, the videos.

The camera splits the screen to show Kara – back on the court for warmups – glancing up at the screen with an unreadable expression. Before it cuts away, the feed catches Alex coming close to her.

As the tribute ends and the television switches back to showing both teams warming up for the second half, Lena can’t stop the flood of emotion she feels twisting in her chest.

“Nice that they do that,” Jack comments, going back to his phone.

Lena doesn’t see Kara that night after the game and can’t decide if she should text her or not. Something deep inside her can barely stamp out the urge to reach out – if only to check in.

Instead, she spends the night in her bedroom with her laptop and does something she told herself she wouldn’t do. She Googles Kara Danvers.

Most of the information had been included in the file she had first been given about the Lakehawks, but a lot of it only went surface deep. Only a few minutes on the internet tells her as much.

It’s mouse click after mouse click down a rabbit hole she usually tries to avoid.
Which is how she stumbles on some sort of ESPN special documenting Kara’s journey to the league. The video begins with the same pictures she had seen during the tribute at the game and Lena only gets about two minutes in before she closes out of it and shuts her laptop.

For whatever reason it feels wrong to find these things out about Kara this way.

Questions burn at the back of her brain the next time she sees Kara. An unstoppable curiosity just sitting there, invading every thought.

It isn’t a game day, but Kara had an early practice and a free evening and had texted Lena to see if she was available. When Lena shows up just after work, Kara opens the door wearing low slung grey joggers and a soft looking grey t-shirt that makes Lena’s fingers itch against the urge to tangle in the fabric.

“Hey,” Kara says softly, pushing her glasses up her nose and stepping aside for Lena to enter.

They exchange quick kisses on the cheek and Lena pulls quickly away from the intoxicating scent of a freshly showered Kara Danvers. “Have you eaten?” Lena asks, striding into the kitchen and setting her purse down on the counter there.

“I thought we could order Chinese food or something, see what’s on Netflix.”

Lena arches a brow and turns to send Kara a teasing smile. “Isn’t that what the kids call Netflix and chill?”

Shrugging a shoulder, but laughing, Kara steps forward to place a hot hand on Lena’s hips, the warmth of it shooting up Lena’s side. “I’m not against the concept.”

Lena just rolls her eyes and fights a blush at the suggestive look in Kara’s eye. Thankfully, Kara relents with another laugh and moves to scoop her phone up from the counter. “What do you want to eat?”

They decide together on what to order from Ping’s – a Chinese place Kara swears by around the corner from her building. Lena’s gaze wanders around the apartment while Kara busies herself entering the order information into her phone.

With the added impulse to find out more about Kara’s life, her eyes start to settle on details of Kara’s apartment she hadn’t noticed before – a scattering of what look to be family pictures become the most interesting objects.

Kara’s intent on her phone, typing away, when Lena strides in front of a picture she recognizes from the short tribute at the game. “Are these your parents?” Lena asks, the question bursting out of her so quickly she’s almost alarmed at the sound of it.

Kara, however, is distracted enough by finishing their food order that she makes a noncommittal questioning hum and barely looks up from her phone. “What?”

Pointing at the picture and waiting for Kara to glance up, Lena repeats the question. “Are these your parents?”

As Kara seems to register the question, her body stills, eyes pulling up from the phone to look to where Lena’s standing. “Yeah,” she says softly, brow furrowed a bit but not looking closed off like Lena might have expected.
Nerves coil in Lena’s stomach as Kara continues to regard her, phone now discarded on the counter. “They,” Lena starts, licking dryness off her lips. “I mean how did they – yesterday was the anniversary, right, of when they –”

Kara laughs softly, shaking her head and moving around the counter to where Lena’s standing. “You can say died,” she says with an amusement in her tone at odds with the topic of conversation.

Lena blinks. “Right,” she says, feeling foolish as warmth creeps up into her cheeks. She doesn’t know why she’s turning into a stuttering idiot right now. It’s not as if she’s any stranger to death or to serious conversation on the subject.

Turning to the picture in question, Kara smiles, a sad look on a usually happy face. “Yesterday was fifteen years. Sometimes it feels like days.”

A tight squeeze takes hold of Lena’s chest and she spares a thought for her own father, for the way he looked before he died and how sometimes she’ll wake up and just forget he’s gone. “I know what you mean,” she says, reaching out to tangle her fingers with Kara’s.

The words pull Kara’s gaze away from the picture and she looks at Lena as if she’s seeing her for the first time. “Your dad, right?”

Lena nods, doesn’t trust the thickness in her throat, but manages to answer, “Yes.”

“How did he die?” Kara asks, fingers squeezing Lena’s in a firm gesture.

Lena shrugs. Never knows how to answer that question other than, “He got sick.”

Another sad smile crosses Kara’s lips before she looks back at the picture of her parents on the wall. “Mine died in a fire,” she says softly and it takes Lena a second to realize she’s getting answers to questions she had been itching to ask before.

“Your house?” Lena asks, remembering the small crumbs of information she’d already gathered.

Kara nods. “Yeah. We were all asleep when it happened.”

The next question comes out before Lena can stop it, “Why aren’t you dead then?” It’s brusque and perhaps too blunt a question to ask someone on the anniversary of such an event, but it’s already out there and Lena can’t pick the words back up.

Kara, however, doesn’t seem affected, just laughs softly. “My mother threw me out a window,” she answers, something like mirth widening in her eyes. “Can you believe that?”

Lena can’t, honestly. “She what?”

“She threw me out a window,” Kara repeats. “Like full on threw me out. I landed on the lawn, blacked out and woke up with a wicked concussion and orphaned.”

“Wow,” Lena breathes out, an ache in her chest twisting out towards Kara with the unstoppable desire to protect and comfort.

“Yeah,” Kara agrees, blowing out a low exhale. “That’s how I got the scar on my chest, actually,” she says, bringing up a hand to her collarbone. “The glass on the window.”

Lena squeezes the hand still holding on to her own and breathes in and out against the emotion pounding against her ribcage.
“They said that popping open the window was probably what killed them,” Kara says, this time so impossibly soft that Lena nearly strains to hear it. Blue eyes have taken a glossy, lost look in them as if Kara’s recalling the memory acutely. “Fire races for an escape, you know?”

There’s a childishly broken quality to Kara’s voice now, and Lena regrets bringing the entire thing up, wants to do anything to take away the look in Kara’s expression. “I’m sorry,” Lena says when she can’t think of anything else more useful. She brings her free hand up to thumb at the well of tears threatening to escape Kara’s eyes.

“Don’t be,” Kara says quickly, a quirk of a smile making her face take on a bit of her usual attitude. Lena can’t think of much else to do other than step closer and press a comforting kiss to Kara’s jaw, her hand coming up against Kara’s chest, right over her heartbeat.

Kara lets out a soft sigh that does something to Lena’s brain and before she knows it they’re just standing there in a loose embrace, Kara’s hands on her hips keeping her in close.

They stand there so long that it’s not until the doorbell is ringing with the promise of food that Lena realizes what they’re doing.

They both startle, break apart and exchange soft laughs before Kara kisses Lena’s temple and goes for the door. Lena looks once more at the picture of Kara’s parents and tries to steady the beating of her heart.

They don’t fuck that night. Not for any reason other than that they stuff themselves with far too much food and Kara has the worst taste in movies and that’s why Lena ends up falling asleep on the couch, head slouching down to bump into Kara’s shoulder in a pair of sweatpants and oversized shirt Kara had lent her.

At least she thinks she falls asleep on the couch, but she somehow wakes up in Kara’s bed, fully clothed yet entirely comfortable. It doesn’t occur to freak her out at first. Not really.

Instead, she sinks in to the plush feeling of Kara’s massive bed and doesn’t shrink away from the way Kara’s hand suddenly reaches out for her the moment Lena shifts.

It’s not until much, much later that Lena thinks seriously about what happened. Not until after they wake up together and Kara makes them coffee and some ridiculous fruit smoothies. Not until she’s kissed Kara’s cheek goodbye and headed back to her own apartment to get ready for work. Not until she’s sitting at lunch about to take a bite of the sushi she had Jess grab for her that morning.

That’s about when she realizes what happened. Or rather when it occurs to her how much more emotionally compromised the evening made her feel than the thousand hookups before it. How even though she didn’t sleep with Kara – a plan she’d been attempting to execute for weeks – it certainly feels like they did so much more than that.

Her heart starts to pound as she thinks back to the night, to the way Kara’s eyes had looked as she talked about her parents and to a sleepy recollection of being coaxed to bed at some midnight hour, Kara’s hands resting on her hips and pressing a quick kiss to her lips as they climbed in bed.

A flush takes place in her cheeks and she sets her chopsticks back down into the container, eyes trained on the far wall of her office, but not really seeing anything.

“Fuck.”
It isn’t until the itinerary lands on her desk one morning that Lena remembers she’d bought tickets to Tokyo for the Olympic Games.

It had been a late night decision after half a bottle of wine with Jack and one too many pictures of Kara on her Instagram suggestions page, after a phone call from Kara on the road.

Luthor Corp owns enough facilities in Japan that it’s easily written off as a business trip. Lena had been to the country multiple times, in fact, just for that reason. But she knows that’s not why she’s going and something unhinges in her chest at the thought of why she’s really doing it.

It certainly doesn’t help that Kara spots the itinerary on her kitchen table that night and gets this unstoppable excitement in her eyes. Things have felt different between them lately. Dangerously different, and Lena knows she’s playing with fire the longer she puts off some kind of conversation about where their relationship is going.

But it’s too hard to start that discussion when Kara’s grinning like she is and her hair is pulled back into a messy bun, glasses just slightly askew in that attractive, dorky look she always manages.

“So you really decided to go?” Kara asks, eyes bright. She’s already dressed the part of the Olympic athlete – a deep blue collared zip up with TEAM USA on the back – and she’s leaning against Lena’s kitchen counter in that casually irresistible way she has.

“I have some work meetings scheduled. We have a lot of infrastructure in Japan.”

Kara’s lips press into a smile and she nods her head up and down even as her eyes take on a disbelieving narrowed look. “Right, yeah, totally.”

“The Olympics being in town is a happy coincidence.”

Kara laughs, sets the itinerary she’d been reading down and skips forward to press a quick kiss to Lena’s cheek. “Totally,” she repeats and before more conversation can be had, Lena steers Kara’s attention away by a well placed hand low on her hip and a blinking of her eyelashes.

It does the trick just like always, and Kara’s face goes from playful to serious moments before she’s nosing forward to kiss Lena heavily and lift her up onto the countertop.

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Domestic training camp for the Olympics starts at the end of July and Kara becomes what can only be described as giddy. Lena comes over one night to help Kara pack, though she mostly ends up supervising Kara’s haphazard throwing of things into her suitcase while drinking a glass of wine.

“I haven’t seen Iris in like forever,” Kara is gushing much as she has been for the last hour as she details USA’s Olympic roster and how excited she is to be playing with them. “And Diana!”

“Diana Prince?” Lena asks, remembering the photos she’d seen of Diana lifting Kara up into an exuberant hug.

“Yeah, she plays for Greece.” Kara’s blue eyes seem to go brighter than normal.

“You’re very excited,” Lena comments for lack of anything better to say.

“Well yeah,” Kara says with a shrug and an awed looking smile. “It’s the Olympics. And I get to represent the country. It’s like…” Kara’s eyes go wide and she makes some kind of explosion gesture around her head, cheeks puffing out in a manner that just makes Lena laugh.
“Mind-blowing?” Lena ventures and Kara nods.

The moment goes quiet for a few seconds before Kara’s face turns serious. “I’m really glad you’re coming.”

Lena is too. And she’s trying to blame that on soaking up some of Kara’s excitement for the games and not the realization that if she didn’t go, she wouldn’t be seeing Kara for nearly a month. “It should be fun,” Lena says softly, struggling against the heat in her cheeks.

“I don’t know how much we’ll be able to see each other,” Kara says. “Coach Waller is way less strict than Coach Grant about off-time activities, but you never know.”

“Don’t compromise your run for Olympic Gold on my account. I assure you I know how to entertain myself in Tokyo of all places,” Lena says, leaning back slightly on the bed, palm propping her up on the mattress as she sips at her wine.

“Hardly,” Kara says rolling her eyes and throwing a sweatshirt in the vague direction of her open suitcase. “Tokyo is going to be overrun by athletes and – ” Kara turns with a mischievous grin, “ – sports people. I know how much you love those sports people.”

This time it’s Lena who rolls her eyes, but she laughs at Kara’s grin. “Well I hear these sports types come with their own condom sponsorship, isn’t that what you said? That should certainly keep things interesting.”

A barking laugh escapes Kara as she stands from her dresser and drops four pairs of sweatpants on the floor next to her suitcase. “That’s just in the Olympic Village,” she says, pointing an accusatory finger at Lena. “Where you are not allowed.”

Lena arches a challenging brow. “Because of all the condoms?”

“Will you stop saying condoms?” Kara asks, propping her hands on her hips with a laughing grin. “You’re ruining all the good that dress is doing for you.”

Kara makes a gesture up and down as if to indicate the casual navy dress Lena had worn over that night. Lena glances down at herself and when she picks her chin back up, Kara is suddenly considerably closer. Startling at the new proximity, she nearly spills her wine until Kara plucks it out of her hand and sets it onto the bedside table.

“Kara,” Lena says, drawing the name out slowly and feeling a heat at the intention in Kara’s smile. “Yes, Lena?”

“Don’t you need to pack?” Lena asks even as Kara comes close enough to start to push Lena backward onto the bed.

“You distracted me with all that condom talk,” Kara replies, nosing forward until she’s pressing a quick kiss to Lena’s lips.

Lena’s nose scrunches a bit in distaste. “I thought you said that wasn’t working for you.”

Kara shrugs. “I’ll muddle through.”

“You really know how to charm a woman,” she says with a soft laugh that Kara returns before kissing across Lena’s jawline. A feeling flutters across Lena’s chest and settles lower in her gut.
“Yes,” Kara says, running her palm up Lena’s leg until it’s pushing up the fabric of her dress. “You seem thoroughly uncharmed.”

“You know, your ego is really—” Kara’s lips cut out the rest of her sentence and Lena forgets what she was going to say anyway because Kara’s body presses more firmly on top of her own and her thigh pulls Lena’s knees apart and all her brain power goes to ignoring just how much she’s going to miss this while Kara’s at training camp.

That night, after Kara procrastinates far too long with Lena in bed, Lena lingers there, lets the satisfaction of their coupling pull her against the mattress while Kara stands and half-dresses.

It’d be far too easy to stay. Lena can feel the desire in the depth of her bones. Kara’s pulling her tangled hair up off her neck, pulling a tank-top off a pile of laundry and observing her barely-packed suitcase with hands on her hips.

It’d be easy to just laze in Kara’s bed and watch her pack until she’s finally ready to rejoin Lena under the covers. They’d tangle up together, kiss goodnight, fall asleep. The fantasy is right there whispering in Lena’s brain.

But she resists. Manages, just barely, to find the strength to sit up and pick her discarded dress up off the floor. She must give it a look of enough distaste that Kara notices with a laugh before throwing Lena a pair of yoga pants and a t-shirt.

“All right, boy, let’s go.” Lena murmurs politely and Kara smiles, kisses Lena deeply once more before letting her retreat out of the apartment and into the night air.

George is waiting for her on the curb, black car tucked discreetly next to a tree outside Kara’s building. He looks disturbingly unaffected by being kept out so late and Lena spares a thought to up his pay, but for now she just slides into the back seat of the car and slinks down, trying to lick the taste of Kara off her lips.

It’s mostly radio silence the moment Kara leaves for camp.

They don’t get a chance to talk on the phone at all, but Kara sends a few text messages here and there – pictures of the team and comments about how they’re going to dominate the games. Kara attempts to ask how Lena’s doing, but it’s hard to even form a conversation with how busy Kara seems to be at camp.

On Thursday night, Kara manages to sneak away from some team bonding activity to give a thirty second phone call and it takes everything in Lena not to let out a miserable-sounding I miss you. Kara doesn’t seem to have the same reservations, blurting out a, miss you see you soon I have to go Babs is about to tackle me for hiding - before the call cuts out.

It’s impossible to ignore the ache she feels at Kara’s absence and she curses herself for letting it get this far. Missing Kara Danvers is certainly something she’d been trying to avoid all these months, but here she is, sitting at her office desk and daydreaming about what Kara’s doing down at camp, wishing their reunion in Japan would come sooner.

She should have ended it before the Olympics began.

Dropping her head into her hands she blows out an exasperated breath, internally berating herself for being so weak.
After a few moments of contemplation, she sits back up and stretches out her neck. No use overthinking it now. She’s certainly not going to drag any personal drama with her to Japan while Kara’s competing on the biggest stage in the world. No. She’ll wait until they’re both back stateside to break things off officially.

For now, all there is to do is go to Japan and enjoy her last few weeks of Kara Danvers.
The night before she’s set to leave for Japan, it’s Jack that’s lounging on her bed sipping at wine while she’s the one pulling outfits out of her closet and folding them up in her luggage. Jack is less than helpful and has spent the last few hours all but pouting while he drinks his way through Lena’s wine cellar.

“Traditionally you inform your best friend when you’re planning on fleeing the country,” Jack says, eyes on Lena as she shuffles through a series of dresses.

“I didn’t know I had to inform anyone not in my employ of my work schedule,” Lena replies and Jack makes a disapproving sound.

“You really do live in your own little world, don’t you?”

“Jack,” Lena sighs, letting her head fall back as she does it, eyes closing. Jack laughs, but it tapers off into a sigh. “I’m just worried about you. This whole mess with Kara.”

“It’s not a mess,” Lena immediately denies, opening her eyes to level a hint of a glare at Jack that does nothing to affect him. He flops more onto her pillows and stares at her as if she’s being an idiot.

“I told you to get her out of your system, and then you said you were working on that. Flying across the globe to be with her isn’t quite –”

“I’m not going to Japan to be with her,” Lena says, clicking her tongue at the end of it. “What gave you that impression?”

“She’s going to be there, is she not?”

Lena presses her lips together a moment. “The Olympic Games are there.”

“I’ve never seen you care about a sport in your life,” Jack says. Lena glares.

“I own two sports teams, and Luthor Corp sponsors the U.S. team and plenty of athletes.”

Jack sits up to prop his elbows against his knees and regards her more seriously than earlier. “Can you stop acting like you’re talking to a journalist?”

Something flips in Lena’s stomach, something light but anxious and she sighs, turning to run her fingers over a pair of skirts sitting on top of her dresser. “Yes, Kara will be there. But this thing with her,” she pauses, twists her lips a moment before turning back to Jack. “I’m ending it as soon as the games are over.”

Before he can react she turns around, back to a tray of jewelry she’d pulled out and she begins to thumb through it under the guise of picking items out though she feels like she barely sees anything.

Silence sits over them a moment before Jack lets out a short bark of a laugh. “You can’t be serious.”

“About?” She glances at him over her shoulder.

“You’re flying all the way to Japan…to break up with her?” Jack asks, incredulity lifting up his eyebrows.
“That’s not – no – I’m not,” Lena says, hating the way she has to clear her throat as she says it.

“You are,” Jack says pointedly.

“Can you really call it a break up if we’re not together?” Lena says, focusing on the earrings in the tray in front of her.

“Lena, are we really still here? After all this time?” Jack asks, and this time he stands and Lena turns to see the exasperated motion of his arms. “Is your delusion that significant?”

“I haven’t the faintest idea what you mean,” Lena dismisses even as her rib cage feels like it’s twisting around herself. Evasion seems to be a hardwired tactic she consistently reverts to. Even with Jack. He’s right. She does talk to him like he’s a journalist.

“You’ve been dating Kara Danvers for months. It doesn’t matter if you decline to put a label on it or not,” Jack says, crossing his arms over his chest. He reminds Lena of Lex in that moment, with his chest puffed out, chin lifted and seeing right through her.

“I have not,” she denies, turning to face him. “We’ve been sleeping together. And now it’s time for that to stop.”

“Because of some ridiculous professional code of ethics you’re sticking to and your inability to move past –”

“You were the one who told me not to dip the pen into company ink, Jack,” Lena interrupts, gathering a few pieces of jewelry to put in her bag. Her hands barely feel connected to her body. For half a second, she wishes Kara was here, warm and at her side. But the feeling gives way to panic.

“I said that a long time ago,” Jack says. “This is absurd.”

“It isn’t. I’m ending what should have never started.”

“You care about her,” Jack says. “You have feelings for her. Real ones. You’d pursue her if she didn’t play for the Lakehawks.”

A thick silence falls over the bedroom for a long moment before Lena finds a reply. “Yes,” she admits, forcing the truth to come out. It’s hard, and it almost hurts, but she can acknowledge that she feels things for Kara that are real, and big.

Jack doesn’t seem fazed by the admission, though his face softens sympathetically even as his mouth shifts into a soft smile.

“Have you considered the alternative of just telling her how you feel and maybe she feels the same? You should –”

Lena cuts him off with a palm outstretched his direction and a narrowing of her eyes. “Jack,” she says, her tone low and frosty. “When I want your advice on the matter, I will ask for it.”

A look of resignation presents on Jack’s face, a sad tilt to the corner of his eyes. It makes her feel guilty for a moment, want to take it back. Jack has been nothing but a supportive best friend this entire time, but Lena doesn’t want to have a heart to heart about her feelings right now.

All Lena wants to do is spend some time in Japan, enjoy a little bit more of Kara Danvers before she has to return to reality and get a better grip on her responsibilities. It’s certainly stupid, but a part of her needs it.
“Be careful, Lena,” is all Jack says, his voice warm, but full of warning. It wraps around Lena’s body painfully. “You spend all that time in your head. The only person you’re going to end up hurting is yourself.”

“I know what I’m doing, Jack,” Lena says, jaw clenching.

Jack nods, but the smile on his face betrays his disbelief. “I’m sure you do.”

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Before her flight, Lena sits at the bar in the First Class lounge and reads a long article previewing the upcoming games. There’s a complex breakdown of which nations are represented around the NWBA and a few predictions about some of the match ups.

Team USA is heavily favored in most of their games and there’s a long writeup regarding just how dangerous a Danvers-Lance sister teamup can be, packed with quotes and stats on previous tournaments where they’ve played together. There’s even a video clip of Kara and Barbara Gordon, from Gotham, in college playing against each other.

It’s interesting to see the older clip, how much younger Kara looks. It’s been readily apparent most of the time that Kara is the most talented player on the floor with the Lakehawks, but watching her play in college makes the difference in skill that much more obvious - she speeds through the defense when Barbara isn’t on her, and her teammates defer to her for almost all plays. There’s barely an offensive play in the highlight package where she doesn’t at least touch the ball. Her face is intense, sweaty, and Lena is endeared all over again. It makes something go bitter on the back of her tongue, her heart starting to palpitate.

A text interrupts her thoughts, her phone buzzing in her hands and Kara’s contact dropping down from the top of the screen.

It’s a picture of the team – Lena recognizes Sara, Laurel and Felicity easily enough along with Alex and Lucy and of course Kara. She looks ridiculously excited, her smile big and adorable. They’re congregated around what looks like a mascot Lena doesn’t recognize, but Kara clarifies in the text that follows.

*Olympic mascot sighting!*

With another sip of her drink, she resolves again to just - relax, and to enjoy Kara for the little bit of time she has left.

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It’s a good thing the flight from National City to Tokyo takes more than ten hours because Lena has all that time to get her emotions under control. The lingering unease from her conversation with Jack starts to ebb away after her third glass of wine and she manages to zone out watching some ridiculous in-flight movie that she finds on the tiny screen in her first class seat.

By the time she lands at Haneda Airport, she feels free of the shackles of National City and ready to enjoy a quick vacation in one of her favorite cities. Tokyo is hot and busy when she finally arrives at her hotel. It’s in the Ginza district and not too far from the Olympic Village. She’s stayed there a few times and was lucky enough to secure her usual suite – large by Japanese standards, but fairly standard compared to what she stays in stateside.

After the long trip and the sudden onset of jet lag, her bed looks ridiculously inviting. As she unpacks some of her suitcase and gets settled, she sends it longing glances and wonders if maybe
she’d be okay with a quick power nap. There’s nothing on her schedule until tomorrow and even that’s nothing she has to prep for – a quick meeting with a local company liaison. A nap couldn’t hurt.

But just as she’s about to do just that, her phone is lighting up with a text from Kara and suddenly her exhaustion starts to melt away in favor of smiling down at the words.

*You here yet? You hungry? Where are you staying?*

It’s a perfect distraction from her sleepiness and she runs quick fingers through her hair to straighten it in the mirror before swigging some mouthwash and texting Kara back.

*Just got to my hotel.*

Seconds later her phone is ringing and she’s answering it to the excited voice of Kara Danvers. It makes her smile and she does all she can to just let it happen, free of worry.

“We have the afternoon free,” Kara tells her happily. “Do you wanna do something?”

“Aren’t you supposed to be getting ready for the opening ceremonies tomorrow?” Lena asks even though she knows how Kara will respond. Her travel fatigue starts to disappear as she finds her shoes near the door and slips them on.

Kara makes a noise between a laugh and a scoff. “Because walking into a big arena and waving a flag takes a ton of practice?”

“You’re carrying the flag?!” Lena says, stopping suddenly at the prospect.

“No,” Kara says, her tone not lacking a grumpy quality. “It’s some soccer player, I forget her name.”

Lena laughs a little. “How dare they give it to her and not you.”

“Right?!” Kara says and they both laugh.

Lena leaves her hotel room and starts the journey to the elevator. “Where are you now?”

“Walking around,” Kara answers. “Send me your location. M’gann gave me a tip on this really good ramen place. I hope you’re hungry.”

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It’s easy to pick Kara out of the crowd. Despite the busy push of people on the street, Lena spots the white Team USA tank top half a block away as Kara comes sauntering towards her, glasses obscuring her face and a bright smile.

She looks alarmingly good in her light wash jeans and clean sneakers, arms out and soaking in the Tokyo sun. Lena can’t suppress the smile and decides, quite irrationally, not to rebel against the fluttery feeling in her stomach either. They’re half a world away from their old lives. What’s the point of worrying?

“Hey, how was your flight?” Kara greets when she gets in close enough to press a quick kiss to Lena’s cheek. “Did you sleep? Watch any good movies? Are you hungry?”

The rapid fire of the questions makes Lena laugh and she presses her palm to the exposed skin of Kara’s biceps, enjoying the play of muscle there. “It was fine. And yes, I could eat.”
“Great!” Kara replies brightly, not waiting a moment before she’s reaching for Lena’s hand and turning to tug her down the street.

It takes her a good two minutes to fully realize they’re walking down the city street hand-in-hand, but when she does, she doesn’t pull away. It makes her think of Midway City, suddenly, of the moments she let herself imagine what a normal relationship might look like with Kara. It’s funny, to look back on their arrangement and see all the moments Lena had dug herself deeper and deeper, where she should have ended it. And soon, it will have to be over for certain.

The inevitability of their parting makes her feel reckless and she sinks into imagination again, intertwines her fingers with Kara’s and smiles when Kara glances over.

There’s something anonymous about the crowded streets of Tokyo. On a normal day, they might stick out more, but with the Games in town the city is bustling with people from all over the world. She and Kara blend into the crowd like any other tourists. It feels undeniably freeing.

Kara still gets some attention – a few passing glances at her obvious team-issued USA gear – but it’s not the same as back home. Kara laughs a bit when Lena observes as much.

“I’m not much of a novelty here,” Kara says, checking her phone again to look down at the map there. The familiar, adorable crinkle between her eyebrows forms as she tries to understand the streets there. “There’s literally an entire village of me in the middle of Tokyo.”

It makes Lena laugh. She doesn’t think that’s entirely accurate – Kara Danvers, Lena has come to learn, is very much one of a kind – but she catches Kara’s meaning. The anonymity of the entire thing starts to ease any anxiety Lena might normally have when Kara wraps an arm around her waist as they navigate a particularly busy street, or puts her hand at the small of her back to lead her to the door of their destination.

They end up sitting side by side in a ramen shop waiting for their food. Kara’s completely fascinated by the whole process – from ordering the food off a machine to attempting to read the words on the tiny tickets they hand the chef. Lena’s suddenly grateful for her passable Japanese as Kara litters questions around the entire time they wait for their food.

“M’gann has great taste in food for a Canadian,” Kara mumbles around a mouthful of gyoza when their food arrives.

Lena arches a brow and sips gently at her small glass of water. “What does that mean?”

“She’s Canadian,” Kara says, narrowing her eyes and snatching another dumpling with her chopsticks. “She’s the enemy now.”

“Was she not Canadian before?”

Kara pops the food in her mouth and shrugs a shoulder. “It’s the games, Lena. Lines have been drawn.”

There’s a teasing glint to Kara’s eyes that tells Lena she’s mostly kidding and it makes Lena chuckle.

“It’s like Diana,” Kara continues, sitting back a little as the chef places a bowl of ramen in front of her. “I love Diana. But for the next few weeks I’m going to try my best to destroy her and her country.”

Lena picks up her chopsticks and observes her own bowl of food, laughing softly. “Sports,” she replies with enough distaste in her tone that she knows Kara will react to.
And Kara does, with a scoffing sound loud enough that the person two seats down looks over. It’s punctuated by a light little tap with her foot against Lena’s leg that warms her all the way to her fingertips.

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They walk out of the ramen shop full and satisfied and Kara slides sunglasses back on her face as she steps into the sunlight again, arms stretching out over her head in an attractive motion. Even the little side street is packed, and so they stand close together as they linger.

Lena fishes her own aviators out of her purse just for something to do other than stare at Kara’s arms and blush.

“What are you doing tonight?” Lena asks, grateful for the way the sunglasses hide her eyes.

“We have some media prepping to do and a team meeting, but that’s it,” Kara answers, rolling her head around her neck and propping her hands on her hips.

Lena licks against the dryness of her lips, feels the urge to kiss Kara thrum through her. She wants to kiss her badly and she wants to do it here, out in the open, in the middle of the street where anyone can see.

Something shifts in Kara’s expression and though her eyes are hidden behind teal tinted lenses, Lena has a feeling Kara’s getting the same urge.

“All of that stuff isn’t until tonight if you still want to hang out,” Kara offers, sounding about as casual as Lena feels.

“Sure,” Lena says, laughing a bit and looking away from Kara’s face as much she can. “I need something to do so I don’t just go home and fall in bed.”

Kara swallows visibly and Lena blinks, feels heat that has nothing to do with the summer air around them. Is this how it always is? Lena feels something overwhelming wrapping around them, something that hasn’t been like the other times.

“I got my own room,” Kara says and another spike of heat hits Lena in the chest.

It occurs to her, however, where exactly Kara’s room would likely be. “In the village?”

“Yes,” Kara answers and then seems to realize Lena’s meaning. “Right.”

“I’m staying at the Park Hyatt,” Lena says as a counter offer. Her palms itch with the urge to drag Kara into the nearest taxi. How it got from sharing a friendly meal to an unstoppable urge to tear Kara’s clothes off, Lena’s not sure. But it’s there, and she’s so beyond fighting it. “I have a suite.”

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They end up spread across Lena’s bed. Clothes strewn across the room, sunglasses discarded on the end table and Kara’s lips kissing a path down Lena’s torso, hands holding Lena’s arms down as she does it.

Lena was sure that sex with Kara couldn’t get any better, but it seems somehow that either crossing an ocean or the excitement of the Olympic games has given Kara some kind of edge in the bedroom. Her hands are everywhere, and Lena can’t seem to keep her own in one place for very long either. Kara’s pressed so close, the sheets draped over them and forming a cocoon, and it feels like she
could be anywhere in the world, really, if she still got this.

In a lethal combination of fingers and tongue, Kara rips an orgasm out of her shockingly fast. Her hands clench against Kara’s hair and her hips press up into Kara’s mouth as everything in her gut goes tight and releases.

She blames it on the fact that they haven’t had sex in what feels like months. Lena’s body had gotten used to more frequent orgasms and the moment Kara left for training camp all that had ceased. Even when Kara had been on the road, they had called, and the absence of it had made her feel like she was going crazy.

The feeling of lips on her clit after a long break is making Lena’s head swim and she has to tug against Kara’s hair to get her to stop stroking overly-sensitive skin.

It certainly doesn’t help, however, that when Kara obeys the pull she just smiles at Lena from between her legs, arousal visible all across her mouth. It’s an image that steals the air out of Lena’s lungs and makes her want to lick across Kara’s lips with a depth of desire that’s almost disconcerting.

As if sensing Lena’s thoughts, Kara’s smile deepens and she shifts upward just a bit between Lena’s legs. “I wish I could have packed the…” Kara’s words cut out with a faint flush, her forehead dropping to Lena’s hip as if in embarrassment.

It’s ridiculous, but not surprising. Kara often manages to be agonizingly seductive and sheepish in the same breath. Considering all they’ve done together and to each other, Lena’s not sure how she accomplishes such a thing, but nonetheless, she finds herself endeared to it.

“Actually,” Lena says with a soft clearing of her throat. Her own embarrassment starts to creep up her neck. “I did.”

Kara’s head shoots up, blue eyes intent. “You did?”

Lena nods and glances to her suitcase across the room. The particular item in question had been a last second addition, and maybe a case of wishful thinking. Long after Jack had left her apartment and Lena’d been lingering around her room making sure everything was ready.

In a swift motion, Kara’s pushing up Lena’s body and kissing her quickly on the lips with a murmured, “You’re a genius.”

Then Kara’s up and gone to fish around in Lena’s suitcase until she’s found her treasure. Lena can’t help but delight at the image of her, naked and pulling perfectly folded clothing around in her search. She thinks to protest at the mess, but doesn’t have a chance before Kara’s pouncing back on the bed with a look that has Lena’s heart rate increasing.

It probably shouldn’t be that sexy, but watching Kara maneuver around the bed in preparation makes Lena feel hot all over, desperate for something she doesn’t know how to articulate.

Words aren’t needed, however, because Kara seems to have her own plans. Plans that involve flipping Lena to her stomach with Kara behind her, pressing in full and deep and making Lena’s fingers twist tightly around the bedcovers under her hand.

The position always spreads her open in a way that leaves her breathless and Kara’s fingers curling around her hip makes Lena have to smash her face into the mattress beneath it to muffle a low groan that threatens to come out.

From the way Kara drops across Lena’s back, it seems she’s just as affected. A low murmured fuck
punctuates a series of rapid thrusts that jolt Lena’s hips against the pressure. From there on, it’s quick, heated, and Kara is pressed close enough that it feels like Lena is overheating.

It doesn’t take much until Lena’s panting for more, arching against the way Kara’s fucking into her. Kara submits to Lena’s demands, reaches around with her fingers until Lena’s crying out and shaking through a second orgasm that has her vision blurring for a few moments.

That’s all it seems Kara needs. Teeth against Lena’s shoulder and fingers stuttering against Lena’s clit, Kara follows right after, groaning her own orgasm against Lena’s skin and slumping heavily onto Lena’s back.

This has ruined me for sex with other people, Lena thinks, the thought popping into her mind irrationally and slashing something cold across her chest. How she’s going to give this up at the end of this trip, she’s not sure. But what she is sure of is that sex with Kara could very well kill her and if that’s the case, it’s as good a way to end this arrangement as she can think of.

Kara slowly withdraws, helping Lena flop onto her back. Lena mostly just enjoys the sound of Kara moving around slowly for a few moments, her eyes shut, and then Kara is slipping back into bed, pressing close to her. The sheets get drawn back up, and Lena hums when a kiss is pressed to her neck.

“We’re pretty good at that,” Kara says, after a second. Her voice is hoarse, and her head shuffles closer until she’s settling on Lena’s shoulder. Absentmindedly, Lena reaches to trace along Kara’s spine.

“I’ve had better,” Lena says, and Kara makes an affronted huffing noise that has Lena laughing hard.

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The Opening Ceremonies occur the following evening and Lena watches it casually from her hotel room as she goes over her itinerary for the trip and double checks meetings and locations.

The Parade of Nations is currently on the screen and Lena only has one eye on the television, not very interested in the content, but curious to see the United States appear.

They’re further down the lineup than she’d expected, but the commentators explain that the English alphabet is being used to order the nations instead of the usual practice of following the host country’s language.

It puts the United States towards the end of the parade between the Ukraine and Uruguay. Just as Kara’d mentioned, a slim woman the television identifies as one of the soccer team’s stars leads the contingent of athletes, beaming as she bears the flag forward.

The group is massive, the largest of the entire parade, and they’re all clad in almost obnoxious red, white, and blue hues, blazers over bermuda shorts. It’s not long before Lena spots Kara, the camera shifting to the group of the women’s basketball team.

A lot of the team is recognizable, either from games Lena’s attended or, admittely, from having seen them photographed with Kara. Alex and Kara are walking next to each other and as the camera pans them, a woman Lena recognizes as Iris West comes popping up between them holding a small camera and waving.

Scattered nearby is Sara and Laurel Lance, excitedly taking selfies with Felicity Smoak and, behind them, Lena recognizes Leslie Willis, Traci Thirteen, Barbara Gordon but the rest of the women Lena has to wait for the commentary to identify – Helena Bertinelli and Kate Kane.
Immediately after comes the men’s team – Lena recognizes Mon-El, Barry and Wally easily enough, but she pauses a moment when the camera zooms in on an attractive put-together looking man with slicked over hair and a wide smile. The commentator mentions it’s Clark Kent – Kara’s cousin whom Lana had mentioned ages ago. For half a second, Lena wonders why they aren’t enjoying the moment together, and she considers the fact that she hasn’t ever heard Kara mention him - but the thought passes when someone nearly tackles Clark in excitement, all of them mugging for the camera.

Lena can see the resemblance almost immediately and the cheeky smile he gives the camera – so reminiscent of Kara – makes Lena want to smile in return.

It’s a scary feeling she’s come to get used to and though she doesn’t resist the warmth in her chest, she does click the television off before it gets any worse.

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Team USA opens against Senegal and Lena gets a seat in the second tier of the stadium to watch the game. It’s a little different view than her usual courtside one, but there’s comfort in the distance and anonymity of these seats.

Even from her distant seats, Lena can make out details and differences between the Lakehawks and the current Olympic team. Coach Waller, for instance, isn’t as expressive as Cat Grant. While she does pace up and down the sideline disapprovingly just like Cat, she doesn’t vocalize the majority of her displeasure.

It’s clear the team itself is still working out some chemistry adjustments. Kara’s unsurprisingly in the starting lineup along with her sister and Lucy Lane. A trio that’s been the highlight of a significant portion of Team USA paraphernalia.

It’s not exactly the mismatch she’d been expecting and the game is close going into half time.

Halfway through the third quarter a man sits down two seats away from her. He’s got a blue USA baseball cap slung low over his face, but his t-shirt is clearly displaying the colors of Team Greece, a little flag on his sleeve indicating as much. Lena eyes him with a bit of confusion until he glances over and notices her staring.

Quickly, she turns back to the game, just in time to see Alex hit a particularly inspiring jump shot from the baseline, but not quick enough that the newcomer doesn’t react.

“I’m a bit of a turncoat, I know,” the man says with a chuckle, and Lena turns back to see him grinning at her from under the brim of his hat. He gestures to it and then to his shirt.

She laughs with him, eased a bit by the gentle expression on what she can see of his face. “If you’re trying to spy on the Americans for Greece, you’re not doing a great job at disguising yourself,” Lena jokes and he laughs again.

“American by birth, Greek by marriage,” he says and he extends his hand across the empty seat between them. “Steve.”

Lena takes it, shakes it firmly. “Lena,” she returns. “Pleasure.”

Before anything else can be said the crowd erupts in a loud cheer, the row a few in front of them jumping to their feet to clap. Lena turns her attention to the jumbotron hanging over the center of the court to watch the replay – Kara preventing a basket by swatting away the layup attempt of a Senegal player. The ball gets batted towards the stands and the entire team reacts enthusiastically,
Alex in particular jostling her in celebration as the bump into each other in some kind of barbaric victory ritual Lena’s seen happen at games.

“That Kara Danvers,” Steve says next to her in a breathy kind of awed voice, but loud enough for her to hear. “She sure is something.”

On instinct, she flushes a little as if she’s been caught doing something she shouldn’t be. It’s a ridiculous reaction, but always seems to be the one her body has when someone mentions Kara to her in public.

But it only takes one breath to calm it down and put an easy smile on her face as she turns to Steve. “She really is, isn’t she?”

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It’s a different experience.

She doesn’t see Kara after the game like she might if they were back in National City – sometimes in the long tunnel leading back towards the locker rooms. They don’t meet up hours after the game is concluded – Kara with damp hair and fresh clothes, flush with victory. Instead, Lena heads out for a late night bowl of ramen and a drink and spends the rest of her night in her hotel room going through her inbox and making sure she’s prepped for her early morning meeting.

The television is on mute across the room and it’s running through Olympic highlights of the day. Alex is being featured for earning a double-double – something Lena’d only just learned about from Kara. It’s followed by an interview with Diana Prince – the gorgeous and apparently talented woman Lena’s seen laughing and hugging Kara in the media quite frequently.

She’s wearing the blue and white uniform of Greece this time instead of the red and mustard colors of the Washington Wonders and she’s grinning disarmingly at the much shorter man interviewing her.

The closed captioning indicates she’s being asked about the prospect of coming up against some of her friends on Team USA and Diana’s smile never falters. *I assure you we’re up to the challenge* she’s saying with a wink towards the camera.

Lena returns to the project files she’d been reviewing for her meeting tomorrow and tries to ignore the flutter of irritation at how good looking Diana Prince really is.

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In the morning as Lena’s returning from an early meeting with a team of her factory managers, a familiar contact comes flashing on her screen and while a passerby wouldn’t recognize it as Kara Danvers, Lena smiles on reflex and picks up the call.

“Hello.”

“Hi,” Kara replies immediately and sounding breathless, but happy. There’s the distant sound of cars and a faint windlike whisper through the connection. Lena puts two and two together easily enough.

“Are you out running?”

“Yes,” Kara answers, more like a pant of the word, but understandable.

“Why?” Lena asks without thinking, her nose curling up in distaste at the idea. There isn’t much that
could convince her to go out jogging in the oppressive Tokyo heat right now.

“Practice was light. Lots of noncontact stuff,” Kara answers and Lena can just about hear the smile in her voice. “Plus, it’s a cool way to see a new city.”

“Each to her own I suppose.”

Kara makes a humming noise caught somewhere between agreement and amusement and though Lena can’t see her face, she feels a blush coming on. It’s a tad irrational, but just the thought of what Kara looks like right now, hair windswept from running, a flush of exertion and a smug look of pleasure across her lips, makes Lena feel warm across her chest and up into her cheeks.

“I’m assuming you spent your entire morning in meetings?” Kara asks, sounding a little less breathless now as if she’s paused on her run.

“A much more enjoyable endeavor than running,” Lena returns, enough tease wrapped around the distaste in her tone that Kara laughs.

“I’ll take my work day over yours any day.”

“Likewise.”

Over the connection, Lena hears what sounds like the ding of an elevator and the small hum of conversation as if Kara’s stepped off the street.

“Have you just gotten back to the village?” Lena asks

There’s no response immediately, just an odd too-long sort of silence that prompts Lena to ask, “Kara?”

“Funny coincidence,” Kara replies, but Lena’s able to recognize a sheepish tone in her voice. “I’m really close to your hotel right now.”

Though Kara can’t see it, Lena arches a brow and glances to the window at her right as if Kara might be right outside and easily visible. “How close?”

A sudden knocking is her only answer and Lena’s heart leaps in surprise as she startles enough that she nearly drops her phone.

“I’m guessing that isn’t housekeeping outside my door,” Lena murmurs, taking a breath and laughing silently as she shakes her head.

Kara doesn’t answer, not that Lena waits for one. Instead she disconnects the call and throws her phone to the bed, walking to the door and taking a moment to glance through the peephole and confirm it’s Kara.

It is. And when Lena swings the door open, there she is. In a nondescript black tanktop and matching shorts with white stripes down the sides. There’s a small bag hanging across her back and she’s smiling a bit guiltily beneath the curve of a white baseball cap.

“Is this okay?” Kara asks her hands planting on her hips and an entreat ing smile starting to take the place of hesitance in her smile.

Lena manages to give her a short eye roll before turning her body to allow Kara entrance into the room. “Funny coincidence,” Lena says dryly, mocking Kara’s earlier words.
Kara laughs. “It really was,” she insists. “I was just running around, and suddenly I recognized where I was.”

At Lena’s unimpressed look, Kara just laughs again and shrugs a shoulder though the flush in her cheeks goes noticeably darker. It’s an attractive look. As it always is. Not unlike the way Kara looks after a game when Lena catches a glimpse of her in the tunnels near the locker room or on a postgame interview.

Scratching the back of her neck, Kara looks down at herself as if noticing Lena’s lingering stare and smiles. “Can I use your shower?”

Lena laughs, shakes off the urge itching across her palms to tug Kara in by the damp fabric of her tank top. “Your true motives make an appearance.”

Kara tsks, but laughs too. “I just realized I probably look disgusting,” Kara says. “I didn’t think this through.”

“You look fine. It doesn’t bother me,” Lena says, hoping to sound nonchalant, but knowing immediately she’s failed. The words come out lower than casual, and her eyes rake up the exposed skin of Kara’s biceps and by the time she’s made it back to Kara’s face, she knows Kara’s picked up on her trailing thoughts.

The smug tug of Kara’s lips makes Lena’s stomach flip over and Lena’s suddenly very glad she didn’t set up any more meetings for the day.

“I can shower after,” Kara says, dropping the bag she’d had on her back onto the floor and tugging the baseball cap off her head to discard it nearby.

Lena crosses her arms over her chest and arches a brow even as she can feel her body start to respond to the idea of falling into bed with Kara. “After what?”

As if in answer, Kara laughs softly and takes a step forward. Instinctively, Lena’s arms drop away from her chest and when Kara’s close enough they find their way up around Kara’s neck just as strong hands fit against Lena’s hips. It’s too easy to slide together like this, but Lena doesn’t take time to think about it like she might back in National City.

Instead she enjoys the sudden rush of warmth that Kara’s proximity floods over her and smiles against the kiss Kara presses to her lips. It feels alarmingly good to do something as simple as just kiss Kara, but Lena doesn’t deny the unstoppable feeling that she could do this for hours and be completely content.

Kara kisses her with a kind of familiarity that Lena sinks into. The skin under her hands is hot and a little damp from Kara’s earlier exertion and it spikes a desire into Lena’s stomach that has her tugging at Kara’s tank top with clear insistence.

It’s a dance after that. One they easily maneuver through together.

And then Lena’s back is hitting the plush mattress behind her and Kara’s crawling over her with dark eyes and swollen lips and lord it’s going to be hard to give this up when they get home.

The feel of Kara fitting in between her legs brushes that thought aside and Lena’s grateful because the way Kara’s fingers are sliding across the skin of her thighs is a much more pleasurable thing to focus on.

Motivated by the way Kara feels and the heat wafting off her body, Lena flips them over, delighting
in the surprised look Kara always gets whenever Lena suddenly decides to take the reins of their coupling.

“I don’t want you to exert yourself too much,” Lena teases, kissing a path across Kara’s sternum, over the scar there and down towards the small tattoos at her side. “You have a job to do here after all.”

Kara laughs, the sound curling into a gasp when Lena’s tongue finds a sensitive spot on her chest. There’s something thrilling about the way Kara reacts to her, the sounds she makes and the way her limbs twitch when Lena does something particularly pleasurable.

It drowns everything else out around them and Lena allows her focus to distill into the feeling of Kara arching against the movements of her mouth.

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Lena’s seconds away from falling asleep. There’s still a buzzing between her legs but her limbs feel heavy, like her orgasm is physically weighing her down into the mattress. The warmth of the body next to her is only feeding the desire to pass out.

Kara, however, seems to have none of the same lassitude and she’s turning on her side next to Lena to prop her head up on an elbow and grin down at her with an eagerness that Lena finds herself respond to despite her exhaustion.

“Do you want to go watch a match or something?” Kara asks suddenly and Lena blinks, trying to get her brain back to normal wakefulness.

“Watch a match?”

“Yes,” Kara says, nodding slowly and shooting Lena a look one might give someone supremely inept. “The Olympics are here. In Japan. Like right outside, not too far.”

Lena rolls her eyes, shoves at Kara’s arm until she’s falling back onto the bed with a laugh. “I know that, ass.”

“Well?” Kara says, expectant as she sits up in bed and reaches for her discarded clothing to fish her phone out of the pile. The line of her back distracts Lena. “Do you want to go see something?”

Lena follows her lead and sits up in bed as well, running her fingers through her now tangled hair. “Isn’t that a bit risky? People might wonder what you’re doing out and about during the Olympic games with the owner of your team instead of your teammates.”

Kara waves her off. “No one is going to be paying attention that hard. You worry too much.”

“You don’t know that,” Lena insists, but most of her experience in Japan so far has largely confirmed what Kara’s saying.

“It will be fine,” Kara entreats, already scrolling through her phone at the schedule of the games. “We just can’t go to any of USA’s games. Or like, basketball obviously.”

“Fencing?” Lena offers, thinking of one of the few sports she’s actually somewhat familiar with – Lex had taken fencing lessons when they were children and she’d sat in on them a few times.

“You would pick fencing,” Kara says with a scrunch of her nose. “Should we watch golf right after?”
“What’s that supposed to mean?” Lena asks with a challenging arch of her brow, but Kara doesn’t seem affected by the expression.

“Fencing isn’t happening today anyway,” Kara says, looking back at her phone. “Our options are kind of limited.”

“Well then pick something else,” Lena replies, standing and stretching her arms over her head. “If you insist on going out.”

“If you’re so worried about it, wear a disguise.”

“A disguise?” Lena laughs shortly. “I’m sorry. I think I left my costumes in another handbag.”

Kara tsks exasperatedly. “I meant like a baseball hat or something,” she clarifies, throwing her phone aside and standing to round the bed until she’s next to Lena, the two of them still stark naked.

“Do I look like someone who owns a baseball cap to you?” Lena asks dryly, resisting the urge to roll her eyes.

Kara, however, doesn’t resist and her eyes sway in a circle before she’s fishing in the bag she’d left on the ground near the bed to pull out a navy Team USA cap. With a quick motion she’s tugging it over the mess of Lena’s head and laughing.

“Good thing you have me around for these things,” Kara says just as Lena’s swatting her hand away and taking the hat off to inspect it.

It’s the same hat the rest of the team has been wearing and it has Kara’s initials and a stitched 7 next to it – the number she wears for Team USA. “Why do you wear a different number here?”

Kara shrugs, looks at Lena like it should be obvious. “Michael Jordan did.”

“You changed your number because of Michael Jordan?” Lena asks with a hint of laughter in her voice.

Kara stares at her blankly for a moment before letting her expression break and shaking her head. “When I was first on the team you couldn’t have a number higher than fifteen so I had to change.”

“Oh, I see,” Lena says, tracing her finger over the number on the hat before settling it back on her head. “Well, how does it look?”

“Good,” Kara says definitively with a little grin, her eyes roam up and down Lena’s body. “You should wear exactly this.”

Lena swats at her stomach, hitting the muscles there with a tsk of her tongue. “Hilarious,” she replies dryly. It makes Kara laugh, hard enough that now Lena’s the one rolling her eyes.

“Sorry,” Kara says between chuckles, striving to compose herself.

“No you’re not,” Lena says, chucking the hat off her head and maneuvering around Kara as she smoothers a smile. “I’m taking a shower.”

She barely gets two steps away before Kara’s suddenly behind her, scooping her off the ground and into a carry that startles her enough she gasps. She winds her arms around Kara’s neck, enjoys the slide of their skin together.

“Good idea,” Kara says as she carries Lena forward, smiling down at her with clear intent.
Lena’d been fairly confident that after their shared shower, Kara would have given up on the idea of heading out to watch some of the games, but as soon as they’re dried off and dressed again, Kara’s just as eager as before to venture outside.

“It’ll be fun, I promise,” Kara says as Lena lingers around under the guise of getting ready – a tried and true stall tactic that apparently does not work on Kara Danvers. “There’s table tennis in like an hour.”

“Table tennis,” Lena repeats. “You want to go watch ping pong?”

Kara shoots her an unimpressed look at that description, but doesn’t reply, just tugs her Team USA cap back on Lena’s head. “There, with some sunglasses, no one will know it’s you.”

Lena’s not so sure about that, but it’ll do for now. It’s not like anyone is expecting her out at the Olympic games and with a low brim and her glasses, Kara’s right. She wouldn’t be recognizable at first glance.

“Now, are you ready?” Kara asks, impatience sneaking into her tone.

“Yes, dear,” Lena teases with a roll of her eyes and a laugh.

Kara huffs but it’s exaggerated and punctuated by a smile. “I just don’t want to miss the start.”

“It’s ping pong. How exciting can it be?”

Blue eyes go comically wide. “You’ve never seen professional table tennis, have you?”

It turns out Kara is right. Though Lena doesn’t admit it.

Olympic-level table tennis moves at a pace Lena wasn’t prepared for and she finds herself mesmerized by the easy way the players move back and forth as they play. The small arena they’re in is dark, all lights and eyes focused on the play in front of them, and so Lena doesn’t worry so much when Kara wraps an arm around the back of her seat and settles closer than they really need to be.

An awed sounding wow escapes her lips at some point and Kara rewards the admission with a delighted smile and a, “I told you.”

“Don’t be smug,” Lena says, pushing at Kara’s knee as an admonishment. “It’s unattractive.”

It’s a lie. Kara looks entirely too kissable when she smiles at Lena like that and goes about explaining the different rules and matchups of the day. How Kara keeps all that information in her head, Lena has no idea, but it makes the matches that much more interesting. At one point she even finds herself cheering, launching to her feet at a fairly heroic volley, and slapping her palm against Kara’s in a high-five when offered.

Which is how Kara convinces her to go to a water polo match next – the arena not that far from where table tennis is taking place.

They take the train there, though Lena’d tried hard to persuade Kara to hail a cab. It’s part of the authentic Tokyo experience, Kara’d argued which Lena had thought was ridiculous, but maybe it
was the three orgasms from earlier that made Kara that much more persuasive. It’s also pretty amusing to watch Kara stare hard at the train map with the Olympic venues to figure out where they need to be going.

Lena doesn’t end up minding the train. It’s not overcrowded like she’d expected, but just full enough that they have to stand, Kara hanging onto an overhead rail in front of Lena while Lena leans against the door between stops.

Kara’s dressed in a soft grey USA t-shirt and shorts, her white team-issued warm-up tied around her waist. Her cap from earlier is on her head, much like Lena’s is, but her hair is down around her shoulders.

The press of people on the train means they have to stand in close together and with nothing but Kara to hold onto, Lena’s hands continue to find purchase at Kara’s sides every time the train sways. Kara doesn’t seem like she pays any mind to it, her eyes bouncing around the train and the passing landscape of Tokyo. There’s curiosity there, and Lena finds herself wondering what’s happening in Kara’s mind.

They don’t talk at all, but Lena’s eyes hover around Kara’s lips, the way her tongue sometimes darts out to wet them.

It’d be so easy to shift forward and kiss her. She almost does, when the train hits a bump and she tumbles into Kara more fully. Reacting quickly, Kara has an arm around Lena’s waist to steady her and they exchange a soft smile as they slide into the next stop. She lets the moment pass when they have to step to the side to let people out. But the feeling sits in her brain like a real, physical thing.

Thankfully, before Lena can take it into action, they’ve arrived at their destination and Kara’s ushering her out of the train with a hand at her back, a gesture Lena’s becoming so used to she hardly notices it anymore.

“Should you really be spending your whole day with me?” Lena says as they walk towards the arena housing the water polo pools.

“As opposed to…?”

“Well what’s Alex doing?” Lena asks. “Or the rest of the team.”

Despite the brim of her hat and glasses, Lena can make out the weird expression Kara makes at the question. “Alex and Lucy are hanging out. Apparently it’s a thing, I don’t know.”

Lena arches a brow. “What?”

“Yeah, I know, right? Some like player meeting thing, but just them? I don’t even know. Alex wouldn’t say. And the rest of the team, they’re…doing other things.”

The intonation Kara uses gives Lena some clue as to what the team might be doing and as she arches a brow a short laugh escapes her. “Other things, huh? Together?”

Kara makes a face. “I don’t want to know. Laurel, Barbara and Helena leave me out of it and that’s all I care about.”

Against her will, a picture conjures in her brain that Lena has to shake away with another short laugh. “Team bonding?”

Kara chuckles at the joke, shrugs. “Some version of it. So, Sara’s off doing whatever it is Sara does
when she disappears and Iris is hanging out with Barry and I think Felicity went along with them and Leslie is doing her best to avoid me per usual and –”

“Other things,” Lena fills in, interrupting the flow of words.

“Yes,” Kara says, with an abrupt nod and another laugh.

“Sounds like a lot,” Lena comments and Kara tilts her head in agreement.

“Yeah, it’s better to not be around all the drama, trust me.”

“You guys don’t have practice or anything? Or team meetings?” Lena asks. It’s hard to believe that during the most prestigious tournament in the world, Kara’d have all this free time.

But apparently that’s exactly how it is because Kara laughs and slings a casual arm around Lena’s shoulders. “They call it the Olympic break for a reason,” she says, fitting Lena against her side.

“That’s not why it’s called that,” Lena says, shaking her head at Kara’s little smirk.

“Okay, maybe not, but seriously, this is basically vacation for me. Less practice, not as many games, essentially no travel and none of Coach Grant’s crazy curfews or rules.”

“If you say so.”

“I do say so,” Kara says, her hand shifting lower until it rests on Lena’s lower back. They drift close to the ticket booth, heading into a line. “You should listen to me. This is my area of expertise, after all.”

“I do listen to you, darling,” Lena says absently, attention drawn to the scroll of Japanese announcing the strangely shaped building as the water polo center. “I just don’t want you to waste your time with me if you need to be doing something.”

“I did all I needed to do earlier,” Kara says. Even though she’s wearing sunglasses, Lena can read perfectly well the smirk on her face and she sighs, shoving at Kara’s hip until she’s feigning pain and stumbling away, laughter loud and smile free.

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They watch Croatia play Australia in water polo. Kara has a bizarrely good grasp on the rules of water polo and though Lena has some familiarity with the game, it’s still interesting to hear Kara explain rules and strategy.

That, and Kara gets ridiculously invested in the game, even yelling at the referee at random intervals until Lena’s pulling her back down into her seat by the back of her shirt.

“I can’t believe this,” Kara mutters. Thankfully she remains in her seat, her hand tapping on Lena’s ankle where it rests on her thigh. “What a bad call.”

“Were you always this competitive?” Lena asks, laughing when Kara lets out a loud groan after an Australian score on a power play.

“Yes,” Kara says, glancing Lena’s way and grabbing for the water bottle she’s taken from Kara’s bag. Lena watches the line of her throat as she swallows for a moment too long and has to look away. “Well, no. Alex says I wasn’t.”

Her voice goes a little soft on the last part, and Lena finds her eyes drawing back to the woman next
to her. Kara seems to notice her eyes and shrugs.

“She says it started after, you know,” Kara says, her hand reaching up to rest over her sternum for a quick moment. Lena’s fingers ache to touch the spot for a second. “But I don’t know.”

“I saw a clip of you from college a few days ago,” Lena says, drawing Kara’s attention back away from the past. “You were pretty intense.”

“It wasn’t that clip of Helena punching me, was it?” Kara asks, looking pained at the very thought. Lena laughs loudly, immediately reaching for her phone from Kara’s bag in an attempt to find that footage. Kara tries to stop her, laughing too as she gathers Lena’s hands up to stop her from opening her phone.

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Waller has Kara, along with a few other starters, sit for the match against Serbia. Lena finds that while watching the game her attention wavers quite often away from the actual match and more towards the bench where Kara is sitting in full Team USA warmup gear.

Lena had expected Kara to be surly about sitting the way she had when her finger injury put her on the bench just a few weeks ago, but Kara seems nothing of the sort. She stays involved in the game quite exuberantly and it seems she and the other bench players have choreographed celebrations prepared for big moments.

When Helena Bertinelli hits a monster dunk over two defenders, Laurel immediately picks Sara up from where they’re standing on the bench and Sara mimes a hoop with her arms in which Kara subsequently fakes a dunk into as they all cheer.

It’s ridiculous, but Lena laughs at how much fun they seem to be having and it hypes up the crowd and the rest of the team. The game winds its way to finished quickly enough and Lena finds herself heading home thinking about how happy Kara has seemed. She’s barely stepped into her hotel room when she’s getting a text.

_Do you want to meet tomorrow and go watch some more sports? I will sit through fencing if you promise we can go watch canoe slalom._

Lena, for a second, wonders why she’s interested at all in a person who wants to go watch something called canoe slalom.

_I think you might be overestimating how much I want to watch fencing._

Kara sends back a series of emojis Lena can’t really interpret followed by a _does 8 work?_

It occurs to her to continue to protest, but she can already feel herself relenting and doesn’t have the energy to put up a façade. Instead, she just rolls her eyes at herself and texts back, _come with coffee or don’t come at all_

A winking emoji is the only response she gets and it isn’t until she’s seconds from falling asleep that she realizes why.

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Kara does, indeed, show up at eight with Lena’s coffee order in hand and a bright smile on her face. She’s wearing a dark navy polo that sits well on her collarbones, light wash jeans that are ripped a bit around the knees and bright white tennis shoes. Her eyes are hidden behind sunglasses, but she slides
them up into her loose hair when the door opens and gives Lena an obvious once over.

“You do not look ready,” Kara chastises as she hands over the coffee and plops onto the couch in Lena’s suite. “We’re going to miss shooting.”

With a soft laugh, Lena looks down at her soft pajama shorts and tank top ensemble. “Not ready to go out, maybe,” she says, looking back up at Kara with a hint of a smirk.

Kara’s lips thin like she wants to smile, but her eyes narrow as if continuing her earlier admonishment. “We can have sex in National City. This is the Olympics.”

Sipping at her coffee, Lena lets her eyes roll over as she pads to her suitcase with the intention of finding clothing. A tiny spike of anxiety hits her in the chest at the thought of returning to National City, the realization that Kara’s wrong. They won’t be having sex again when they get back.

Deciding to push that thought as far into the back of her mind as possible, she focuses her attention as much as she can on the suitcase in front of her. The hat Kara had loaned her the other day is sitting on top of her mess of clothing and she sets it to the side with her coffee before digging in for something suitable.

“Plenty of people have sex at the Olympics,” Lena reminds Kara, shooting her a look and swallowing against the thick feeling in her throat. “The condoms, remember?”

Kara makes a face, her nose scrunching up adorably. “I should have never told you that.”

Lena laughs, tugs her tank top up off her head and tosses it towards the bed. Unmindful of Kara sitting a few feet away watching, her shorts follow and she props her hands on her hips as she continues to scan her clothing options.

“Is it hot outside?” Lena asks absently, deciding if she wants to sweat through a pair of jeans or not.

There’s no immediate answer and when Lena looks over, Kara’s left the couch, glasses discarded off her head and a look in her eye that makes a flush run over Lena’s entire body.

At Lena’s expectant arch of her brow, Kara manages a smile and a shrug of her shoulder. “It’s pretty hot,” she answers as she gets to Lena’s side and her palm finds its way to Lena’s hip.

“Is that so?” Lena asks, sensing quite clearly that she’s not getting dressed any time soon.

It sends a thrill up her spine when Kara just pushes forward until they’re kissing, pulling Lena in with an arm around her waist and a smile.

There’s something victorious about how even when Lena gently reminds Kara, “I thought you didn’t want to miss shooting,” Kara doesn’t hesitate for a moment, keeps their lips firmly together as she backs them towards the bed.

It makes her laugh against Kara’s mouth when Kara lifts her up off the floor to set them back on the mattress, but the sound gets swallowed and lost when fingers dip into what remains of her clothing and swiftly tugs it off.

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“We missed shooting,” Kara says, with a grumpy little huff as Lena backs up near the door of the train and Kara reaches up to put two hands on the overhead rail. It makes Kara’s biceps go tense and her shirt pulls up a little from where it’s tucked into the belt of her pants. It’s altogether too attractive
and Lena has to shift her eyes away lest she step forward and press bodily against Kara.

“Yes, because that’s my fault,” Lena replies with a pointed look that Kara rolls her eyes up at. “I’m so sorry.”

She is not at all sorry, and Kara can tell, because her jaw gets that tightness it always does when she’s glaring. Though sunglasses obscure her eyes and her baseball hat is curled low on her face, Lena can read the expression easily enough.

“It is a little your fault,” Kara says and Lena makes an indignant noise, swaying a bit as the train starts to move. It forces her fingers to grip lightly at the loose fabric of Kara’s polo to steady herself.

“How?”

Kara makes a show of looking her up and down and it makes Lena’s cheeks go hot as she pulls her own hat further down on her head and glances around. “It just is.”

“There are other events,” Lena dismisses and Kara huffs again.

“It was a medal event,” she says and she takes a hand off the rail to fish in her pocket for her phone and show Lena some notification on her screen. “An American won it.”

“And I’m sorry,” Lena repeats, trying to muffle a smile at the way Kara’s lips twist in exasperation. “How can I make it up to you?”

As if waiting for the offer, Kara perks up, sliding her phone back in her pocket and retaking her grip on the rail above her head. “Beach volleyball,” she answers as if bargaining for something.

Lena laughs. “You should have gone for something better, Danvers,” she says. “I will happily watch scantily clad women be athletic all over a beach.”

It’s not entirely true. Even after all this time, sports still hold very little thrill to Lena, but at least in beach volleyball the view is more interesting than most.

Kara scoffs, the noise evolving into a chuckle and a fond shake of Kara’s head.

The train sways again and Len tightens her grip on Kara’s shirt, not resisting when their bodies collide ever the slightest.

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It turns out they’ve missed the women’s games for beach volleyball and the only game starting when they arrive is the men. Kara tells Lena as such with a triumphant kind of smirk that makes Lena laugh even as she smacks her in the stomach with the back of her hand.

They end up with seats near the top of the thankfully somewhat-shaded stadium, Kara happily eating her way through some lukewarm stadium nachos that she acquires on the way in.

“Quite the healthy breakfast,” Lena comments, even as she nabs a chip from Kara’s container. One of the shirtless men on the sand does something that prompts a gasp from the crowd. Kara makes a noise of frustration, though whether it’s at the sport or Lena criticizing her food is unclear.

“I would have had us stop somewhere for real food if you hadn’t been so distracting,” Kara says, adjusting her hold on the chips so that the bowl is more between them. “I hate running in sand. This looks exhausting.”
“It was your idea,” Lena says, and Kara rolls her eyes.

They don’t even end up staying until the end of the match – Kara insists that if they want to see the big fencing matches, they have to leave to catch a train. Getting around Tokyo is something she usually does in an air conditioned car with a hired driver for company, but it is certainly different with a Kara Danvers who wants to stop and take a picture of every interesting thing she sees. These range from train station mascots to random vending machines to the giant Godzilla head on top of a building.

The fencing arena is quiet and dark, and a far cry from the warmth of the volleyball stadium. It’s a sport she knows at least something about and therefore doesn’t totally mind being forced to watch it.

This time it’s Lena explaining to Kara some of the rules and it’s an odd experience.

“Did you actually ever do this?” Kara asks, voice a whisper in the relatively quiet arena.

“Lex did,” Lena answers. “I tried it in boarding school, but it lost its appeal rather quickly.”

“So you do like some sports,” Kara replies and Lena makes a face, failing to follow that logic.

“Don’t get too excited,” Lena replies, chuckling softly and shaking her head. “I only tried it because of a girl. And once the appeal of that wore off, I was finished.”

Kara laughs, her knee pressed to Lena’s thigh warmly when she shifts closer. “That feels more believable about your brother than you,” she jokes.

With a fond smile at the thought of her brother, she shrugs. “It must run in the family.”

They’re quiet a moment, eyes on the floor ahead of them where the next match is being set up.

“Do you miss him?” Kara asks softly, glancing over at Lena.

It takes a second for Lena to catch her meaning before answering. “All the time,” she says and a soft, exasperated laugh escapes her. “It’s too bad he had to grow up to be such an idiot.”

Kara snorts a bit, keeps her voice low as the next bout begins. “He was a good owner, but I like your methods better,” she says, delivering the last bit with a suggestive waggle of her eyes that would normally make Lena laugh, but instead chills something under her ribcage.

She hates the reminder of their professional relationship, of the reason why all of this is going to end in a few short days, but tries to shove all that away in place of the feeling of Kara’s body drifting close and the smile on Kara’s face Lena attempts to return.

Thankfully, she must succeed, because Kara’s smile never falters and she turns back to focus on the fencers in front of them. Lena lets her eyes linger a moment longer, traces the sharp line of Kara’s jaw and the tense muscles of her forearms as she shifts forward, intent on the match.

A mixture of feelings curdle in Lena’s stomach so uncomfortably she doesn’t know which to pay attention to. Swallowing against the bitterness on the back of her tongue, she shifts her attention away and tries to settle the pounding of her heart.

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They go to a late lunch at a restaurant that allows one to grill your own meat – yakíniku, Lena explains to Kara. It’s not that far from the ridiculous waterworks of the alleged canoe slalom course
Kara’d been eager to check out.

Hung up over the bar near their table is a wide television airing a basketball game. It takes Lena a bit to realize that it’s the U.S. men’s team squaring off against France and she only figures it out by how intently Kara keeps looking at the screen.

It’s clear Kara’s attempting to look casual, as if she’s not darting glances at the score every two seconds. It makes Lena laugh and with a fond sigh she pats Kara’s hand to grab her attention.

“You can watch the game, you know,” she tells her with a quirk of her lips.

“We’ve been doing that all day,” Kara says, even as her eyes continue to dart back towards the screen. “I don’t want you to feel like I’m ignoring you.”

“I don’t,” Lena answers truthfully. A waiter sets down a plate full of their selected meats and Lena waits until he leaves to continue. “Clark is playing, is he not?”

Kara blinks as if not comprehending and Lena’s brow furrows a bit as she looks back at the screen. “Clark Kent,” Lena clarifies, voice a little softer.

The name shakes something off Kara’s face and she smiles though it doesn’t quite reach her eyes. “Yeah, sorry. He is.”

A cold wisp of worry wraps itself around Lena’s ribcage like maybe she’s overstepped. “I didn’t mean to bring up something…unpleasant.”

“It’s not,” Kara says, laughing as she waves Lena off and reaches for her drink. Though Kara seems to soften some, Lena still feels like she opened a door she shouldn’t have. “Sorry, I just – I didn’t realize you knew who he was.”

“Doesn’t everyone know who Clark Kent is?” Lena asks, remembering Lana’s words from months ago. A glance at the television shows a replay of Clark throwing up a ball towards someone named Hal Jordan who slams it into the basket with considerable flourish.

“I suppose,” Kara says with a laugh that sounds unnaturally self-deprecating.

Lena reaches for a piece of meat just to have something to do and goes about setting it on the small grill between them. “You don’t have to talk about it if –”

“It’s fine,” Kara interrupts.

“It feels like it’s not,” Lena says, wishing she could pull all the words back and return to any moment earlier – smiling at each other on the train, pressing together in her hotel room.

“It really is,” Kara assures her, looking considerably more relaxed than when she first brought it up.

“It’s none of my business.”

Kara tsks, reaches forward to grab for Lena’s hand. “We’re friends,” she says, careful emphasis on the word – or maybe that’s just Lena’s paranoia. “It can be your business.”

Lena opens her mouth to protest further, but Kara’s already continuing, drawing her hand back away and sitting back in her seat.

“Clark and I have just always been kind of weird,” she explains with a shrug. “He was about to go to college when my parents died and he had a lot of offers to play basketball, obviously.”
Somewhere in her lexicon of knowledge is Clark Kent’s story – it had been included very briefly in one of the many information packets she’d studied about the Lakehawks – but she can’t seem to draw it forward.

“He was really good,” Kara continues with a soft laugh and a smile.

“Better than you?” Lena jokes, hoping to lighten the mood and it seems to do the trick when Kara lets out an exaggerated scoff.

“Please,” she says and then she leans forward to grab her own pieces of meat and set them next to where Lena’s flipping hers over. “I actually thought he might defer a year to stay around with me after my parents.”

Lena blinks, studies the careful expression on Kara’s face as her eyes stay trained on their food. “But he didn’t.”

“No,” Kara answers succinctly, reaching for her drink.

“And you wanted him to,” she supplies, feeling irrationally angry at a young Clark Kent’s inability to be there for Kara.

“I was a kid,” Kara says sounding like she’s reading off a script she’s practiced numerous times. “I didn’t understand it then, but I do now. It’s not like I’m one to talk.”

Lena arches a quizzical brow at that until Kara clarifies, “There’s pretty much nothing that I’d put before basketball.”

“Nothing?” Lena asks.

Kara shrugs, purses her lips in consideration for a moment. “Alex, probably, but that doesn’t really count.”

“I’m sure she’d love to hear that,” Lena says dryly, smiling a bit so Kara knows she’s teasing.

With a crooked smile, Kara pulls a piece of meat off the grill with her chopsticks and plops it in her mouth. “Alex knows she’s a close second,” Kara says around the food, winking at Lena.

“Lucky girl,” Lena jokes.

They’re interrupted by a sudden smattering of clapping from across the restaurant and they both turn to the television where a replay of Clark crushing a deep three over his opponent is playing. Lena looks to Kara, sees blue eyes focused intently on the screen and softens far too much at the fond, almost sad smile that plays on the other woman’s lips.

“I’ve seen better,” Lena comments, drawing Kara’s attention away and smirking at the quizzical expression on her face. “Have you ever heard of Kara Danvers?”

It makes Kara laugh – a loud and free sound – and a foot kicks lightly at Lena’s shin in an affectionate gesture. “You’re a really good friend, you know that?” Kara says softly, but the words feel like they drop heavily against Lena’s chest.

With more effort than she’d like, she swallows thickly and returns Kara’s smile. “You too.”

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After canoe slalom, which is exactly as ridiculous as Lena expects it to be, and includes Kara
enthusiastically trading Olympic pins with a group of Swiss tourists in front of them while simultaneously cheering very loudly for a French duo, they head back to Lena’s hotel.

They find their way to the top floor of the building where a restaurant, The New York Bar, resides. It’s a fortunately relatively empty – a rarity considering how popular the bar is for tourists.

It’s an elegant space. Dim lighting and floor to ceiling windows that overlook the sprawling cityscape of downtown Tokyo. A piano sits next to the windows in the middle of small intimate tables and a jazz singer stands at a microphone filling the space with the light sounds of old standards.

They find a table next to the windows but far enough away from the music to hear each other and order drinks. Kara spends the first few moments looking awed at the vast dance of lights across the expanse of Tokyo. It makes Lena smile.

It reminds Lena of the first time she ever spent significant time with Kara. Up on the rooftop of Seven after a date that Sara Lance managed to sweep out from under her. Just like that night, they end up sharing a bottle of wine and talking over nonsense topics.

Kara fills her in on the new drama going on around the Olympic Village and Lena is content to sip at her wine and just listen, nodding at the right points and asking questions at any opening.

“I don’t get why Sara doesn’t just talk to Nyssa. It’s not like she can avoid it. Moira owns the Evergreens and Oliver is on the archery team with Nyssa, and Laurel and Oliver are like childhood best friends and this whole thing is just going to blow up in her face.”

Lena nods, unsure what to say to the rant Kara’s been on for the last few minutes about Olympic Village love triangles. “They broke up, didn’t they? Shouldn’t that be the end of it?”

“They broke up,” Kara clarifies by making an air quote gesture on the last words.

“I don’t know what that’s supposed to mean,” Lena says with a laugh.

“Neither do I!” Kara replies, throwing her hands up in the air with exasperation. “That’s just how Sara always says it.”

“I sense that’s part of the problem,” Lena jokes and Kara agrees with a chuckle and shrug of her shoulder.

“Probably,” Kara agrees. “Sara’s usually pretty whatever about this kind of stuff, but something about Nyssa totally distracts her.”

“Serious relationships can be pretty distracting,” Lena says, teasing tilt to her lips.

Kara shrugs. “I guess. I wouldn’t know.”

It shouldn’t hurt, but something tweaks in her chest that she has to take a sip of wine to ignore. “No?”

Though Kara’d been clear from the start that she was about as interested in anything serious as Lena was, that doesn’t mean that was always the case. And Lena finds herself curious, probably to her own detriment.

“Nope,” Kara answers with a pop of the word as she pours more wine into Lena’s glass. “The only serious relationship I’ve really had is with basketball.”
Lena smiles. “I’m not sure that counts.”

“You sound like Alex. But it does count,” Kara says sounding somewhere between serious and joking.

There’s enough wine in her system that Lena feels her usual filters drop just enough to admit, “I was in a pretty serious relationship once.”

“Really?” Kara asks, lifting a brow and swirling the wine around in her glass. “I’m guessing it didn’t end well. Not in a, you know, mean way - just, you’ve never mentioned anyone - ”

“It’s alright,” Lena says, smiling, before letting out a soft sigh. “We had different priorities.”

“Both of you?”

Tongue scraping the top of her teeth a moment, Lena shrugs a shoulder. “She did.”

Silently, Kara observes her a moment, seeming conflicted, before asking, “What happened?”

Lena smiles, no longer nearly as pained over the memories as she might have been a year ago. “I was young,” she answers, not sure how much she wants to honestly divulge. “We were at different places in our lives.”

“Isn’t that kind of a canned answer?” Kara teases, clearly giving Lena the choice of continuing the conversation or shifting it.

“Maybe,” Lena concedes. “But it doesn’t make it any less true. I was young and she was more career focused than I realized and that was that.”

“She used you to get ahead?” Kara asks, frowning at the suggestion.

“No,” Lena replies with a shake of her head, remembering that last conversation with Sam. I’m sorry, Lena. I didn’t know you felt that way. “She got an offer to relocate to Metropolis and I stayed in National City.”

“And you broke up.”

“Yes.” It’s a condensed version of the story, but all she feels like divulging at the moment.

“Mutually?”

Lips Pursed, Lena tries for a casual smile and slinks the tiniest bit down into her chair. “Not entirely.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara says, so soft that it flutters over Lena’s chest.

“Don’t be,” Lena replies. “I may have loved her once upon a time, but it feels so long ago by now that I can hardly remember the feeling.”

It’s not entirely true. But lately, encompassed by the slow crawl of feeling she’s had for the woman across from her, everything with Sam feels so distant, muted by time. Instead it’s been replaced by the heart stopping realization that she’s falling in love with Kara Danvers and that nothing will come of it.

As if sensing Lena’s sudden melancholy, Kara sits forward a bit, puts on an exaggerated lecherous smile. “Was the sex any good?”
It’s said so ridiculously that Lena laughs, shaking off the emotions that threatened to take over. “Yes, very much so.”

Kara brings a hand to her chest as if offended, jaw dropping. “Better than me?”

Bring her wine to her lips in a prim motion, Lena smirks over the glass at Kara. “A lady never tells,” she says before taking a sip.

Blue eyes narrow intently, a smile playing across Kara’s lips. “What was her name?”

“Sam,” Lena answers promptly and then arches a brow at Kara’s expression and teases, “Why? Jealous?”

Kara scoffs. “Of a woman that no longer gets to see you naked? Please.”

Absurdly, the look of feigned indifference on Kara’s face just makes Lena want to kiss her. There’s a moment when Kara looks at her that Lena thinks maybe Jack was right. Maybe she should just tell her and deal with the consequences of that, whatever they may be.

“So is that why you’re anti-relationships?” Kara asks, looking interested.

Brow furrowing, Lena shakes her head. “I never said I was anti-relationship.” True as it may be to some extent.

“You know what I mean,” Kara replies, touch exasperated.

“It doesn’t have anything to do with it,” Lena says, tasting the hint of a lie in the back of her throat, but clinging to what she’s been telling herself this whole time. “Relationships are time consuming and in my position it’s hard to find anything genuine or to do it outside observation for that matter and –”

“Lena,” Kara interrupts with a laugh. “Chill.”

Flushing at the amusement in Kara’s smile, Lena darts her eyes away. “Sorry,” she murmurs, picking her wine glass up again for something to do.

“No, you just don’t need to explain it to me. I get it, remember? That’s how we got here in the first place.”

It’s said as a joke, one Lena manages to laugh at even as her chest gets a little achy. “Of course. I’m the other woman in your marriage to basketball,” she says, happy with how light her voice sounds.

Kara’s laugh is full and genuine. “It’s true, very scandalous.”

They share a smile, Kara winking at Lena before taking another sip of her drink and Lena feels compelled to ask. “What’s your excuse?”

“For cheating on basketball?”

Lena kicks her under the table. “For being anti-relationship.”

“I’m not,” Kara says with a shrug. “I mean not like, theoretically. I just…my life is about basketball. I love basketball. I live for it. I don’t really have time to think about anything else. I’ve never really considered it.”

“Never?” Lena asks, a touch surprised.
Another shrug. “Maybe I will some day, I don’t know. Like I said, my life is –”

“Basketball,” Lena supplies with a short laugh.

“Exactly.”

“Well, I feel so special you take the time away to see me naked,” Lena jokes.

Kara’s smile makes Lena feel tingly. “You should,” she says, tone low enough that Lena finishes her glass of wine and turns to hail a passing waiter for their check.

They don’t see each other the next day. Lena spends it bouncing around the city meeting with executives and talking over sponsorship deals. Several athletes they’re sponsoring have won medals, and she signs congratulatory letters to be given to them. For a second, she imagines signing one to Kara, knowing the somewhat impersonal letter won’t touch what Lena might feel seeing Kara win something so prestigious.

Kara gets put back in the lineup for their next game against Canada. There’s a cute moment during warmups in which M’gann crosses center court to greet her Lakehawks teammates and Kara jokingly makes a throat cutting gesture after hugging her that makes M’gann laugh.

The game is considerably closer than the previous ones, but by the fourth quarter Team USA starts to pull away and by the end of the game their margin of victory is considerable.

Lena doesn’t see Kara after the game. Instead, she catches a late drink with a team of engineers working on a big local project. On the way home from the small bar they’d stopped at, she calls Jack and enjoys the grumpy sound of his voice telling her there’s a time difference, love.

“And the lovely Miss Danvers?” Jack asks after they’ve caught up on each other’s lives. “How is she?”

“Fine,” Lena answers, sliding her keycard into the door and stepping into her hotel room.

“She’s been playing well it seems. From what I’ve caught on the news.”

Lena makes a noncommittal noise, focuses on throwing her purse on a side table and pulling her shirt out of the tight waistband of her skirt. “She’s Kara Danvers,” Lena answers rolling her eyes at the smug way Jack laughs.

“Indeed,” he says and Lena can picture his smirk. “Have you seen much of each other?”

“Jack,” Lena sighs, but she finds herself laughing despite herself. “Find a new hobby.”

He just laughs again. “I do miss you, hope you’re enjoying yourself over there.”

“I miss you too.”

They disconnect and Lena goes about undressing and sliding into bed. She doesn’t fall asleep right away. Instead, she scrolls through her phone and catches the latest Team USA Instagram posts.

There’s an amusing series of the basketball team attempting ping pong ball trick shots before their game earlier. It has Iris West bouncing the ball off three different surfaces and then Kara’s forehead before it bounces into a small plastic cup and the team goes crazy in celebration.
Lena gets lost scrolling through her feed and clicking on profile after profile until she’s watching a post on Lucy’s feed of the Lakehawks trio going through some kind of elaborate dance routine. Lucy is front and center and Lena can imagine that she’s the one that instigated the entire thing. Kara’s behind her, keeping up with the routine, but clearly not invested with the way she keeps laughing at Alex’s attempts to follow the moves.

The video ends with Lucy turning to shove Alex out of frame and Kara sliding towards the camera with a little dance of her head and a laugh before putting her palm to the lens and blacking the screen.

She watches it twice more, ends up down a rabbit hole of the Lakehawks Instagram account posting Kara highlights to fill the void of the Olympic break.

It’s absurd, how much she wants to see Kara. Even when she’s seen her physically in person in the last twenty-four hours, she still wants more. It feels even more crazy in the face of the end looming ahead of her. But she doesn’t stop herself.

It’s maybe a bad decision, but she falls asleep thinking about Kara Danvers trying to ignore the heavy feeling in her chest that tells her exactly how deeply she’s fallen for Kara.

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USA qualifies for the knockout round and though no one seems particularly surprised by this, Kara is undeniably excited.

“Shouldn’t you be celebrating with your teammates?” Lena asks as they stroll down a small alleyway in the heart of one of Shinjuku’s drinking districts, Golden Gai.

“No one is really celebrating,” Kara says, laughing softly as she peers around them in search of a suitable bar to stop at. “Everyone pretty much expected to make it out of groups.”

They manage to find a place that isn’t already packed and doesn’t seem put off by the entrance of two foreigners. The bar, like most in this area, is incredibly small. Small enough that Kara has to duck a little when she walks in behind Lena. They squeeze on to two bar stools towards the end and order drinks.

It’s comforting to be tucked into a little corner in close proximity to Kara. It feels a bit like their own little hideaway. There are only two other patrons – that’s about all that can fit in the place – and they’re locked in a lively conversation with their bartender.

It leaves Kara and Lena to themselves and Lena enjoys the soft feeling of sitting in Kara’s company and sipping at a well made gin and tonic.

“To the knockout round,” Lena pronounces, holding her glass up.

Kara clinks her own rum and cola against Lena’s and smiles. “To victory.”

There’s something about the self-assured way Kara always talks about basketball that has started to become Pavlovian to Lena. The way her smirk turns upward, the little ridiculous wink she punctuates the cheers with, it all makes Lena’s body feel warm and it has nothing to do with just how close they’re sitting together.

Kara must catch on to her trailing thoughts, mirth shading her expression as she sips at her drink. “You know, I don’t have to be anywhere until noon tomorrow,” she says casually, her tone low, secretive almost.
“Is that so?” Lena replies, fighting the way her cheeks get hot even after all this time. “Any big plans tonight then?”

Kara laughs, one of her hands finding its way to Lena’s thigh in a gesture that manages to straddle the line between casual and suggestive. “Still feeling it all out, I’ll let you know.”

“See that you do,” Lena murmurs, the gin in her system allowing her eyes to linger a little too long on the darkening look in Kara’s eyes and the way her shirt pulls against her arms as she picks her drink up from the bartop.

In the end, Lena manages to make it all the way back to her hotel room before physically assaulting Kara, but it’s a close one.

They stumble across the threshold, Lena pulling Kara in close by the lapels of her shirt and Kara just managing to kick the door closed behind them and keep kissing Lena on their journey towards the bed.

They trip over themselves before they get there, their legs tangling, uncoordinated by the way they’re pressed together and Lena laughs against Kara’s mouth when they fall over onto the mattress.

“That could have been smoother,” Kara admits, chuckling along with Lena.

“Don’t worry,” Lena jokes, hands at Kara’s biceps and hips pushing upward. “You’re still getting laid.”

It makes Kara laugh louder this time. “I wasn’t worried,” she says and when it registers, Lena scoffs, offended.

“Rude,” she manages to mutter, but anything else is lost when Kara’s fingers find the zipper of the skirt she’d been wearing and begin to slide it down.

Not for the first time, Lena’s quickly spiraling mind seems to recognize just how good it feels when Kara touches her. Too good. It’s like liquid heat pours straight over her head and all the way down her skin.

Insistence twists between her legs, itches to her fingertips and spikes desire in her gut that has her pulling at Kara’s clothing in turn, tugging so aggressively she nearly tears Kara’s shirt in the process.

As if realizing the integrity of her clothing is in danger, Kara laughs softly and captures Lena’s anxiously moving hands.

It certainly doesn’t help when Kara holds her wrists together with one strong grip and uses her other hand to continue stripping Lena of her outfit. If anything, it just makes the pressure between her legs worse and has her squirming ever the slightest in an effort for any kind of friction.

Kara kisses her as soon as she’s divested Lena of skirt and blouse and then, thankfully, releases Lena’s hands to pull her own shirt off and toss it aside.

They slide together in a quick tangle after that, Kara full bodily pressing Lena back into the mattress and kissing her in a way that has Lena sighing against the feeling.

It’s going to be over too soon. Lena can tell. Whether it’s all the gin she’d consumed or the earlier exposure to that smug, seductive aura Kara seems to have after a good victory, Lena’s not sure, but whatever it is, she’s falling headfirst in to a release she’s not sure she can stave off.
It must be obvious to Kara. Likely from the way Lena’s shifting against her and the noises she can’t prevent escaping from her lips.

A strong palm is sliding up the outside of her thigh, moving around to cup at her backside and pull their hips in tight together and Kara’s making shushing sounds between kisses. “I’m going to make you feel so good,” Kara whispers between their lips and just the sound of certainty in her voice is nearly enough.

“Then get on with it,” Lena replies before she can catch herself, the need in her gut pulling the words out of her mouth.

“Trust me,” Kara says with a smirk – the words somehow sounding both sincere and exaggerated all at once. “I will.”

Lena can’t manage a reply when Kara’s fingers start to shift and her mouth moves downward and everything in Lena’s brain distills to the pressure building in her body.

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It takes her longer than usual to recover. Her orgasm feels like it gets pulled from somewhere in her body she didn’t know it was possible to feel pleasure from. It might be because that’s exactly the case.

Her limbs feel heavy and her brain feels like it’s barely capable of base functioning and, quite uncharacteristically, Kara seems just as affected. Her blue eyes are lidded with the good kind of exhaustion and her fingers are trailing listlessly up and down Lena’s side.

“I’m glad we decided to do this,” Kara murmurs after a few seconds of just lying there trying to catch their breath.

Assuming Kara’s referring to their earlier activities, Lena feels herself blushing – an impossible deepening of heat in her already flushed cheeks. Without meaning to, Lena’s hand drifts to her own side, her fingers tapering over the still sensitive flesh of her backside. She laughs softly, regards the lazy way Kara smiles at her. “I wouldn’t say we decided to do that so much as it just happened.”

A frown tugs at Kara’s smile. “I thought it was mutual.”

“It was mutual,” Lena reassures her, hands reaching up to cup at Kara’s cheeks. “I enjoyed it. A lot. Much more than I expected.”

Brow furrowing, Kara stares at her a moment. “I’m talking about being friends with benefits,” Kara says and her confusion starts to bleed into something more self-satisfied, eyes darting downward. “What are you talking about?”

Cheeks feeling as if on fire, Lena squirms the slightest. “That too.”

A confident, pleased expression cements on Kara’s face that only escalates the heat in the lower half of her body and makes her want to slide her legs together. “More than you expected, huh? Does that mean you’d do it again?”

Lena’s eyes narrow. Though she’s given up on fighting the way her face has gone hot, she still pushes at Kara’s shoulder and rolls her eyes upward. “I’ve told you a million times that the arrogant look isn’t attractive.”

Instead of an answer, Kara’s hand glides down Lena’s side, shifts under her ass until she’s sliding
back between her legs and pulling their hips back together. At Lena’s swift intake of air, Kara’s eyebrows lift and she fails miserably at smothering a smile. “And yet…” Kara says, drifting off with a cocky glint to her eyes that is combating any post-orgasm weariness Lena might have felt.

“Stop,” Lena says, but she laughs and shoves at Kara’s shoulder again until Kara’s shifting to her back and Lena’s sliding on top of her, palm pressed between Kara’s breasts above her sternum. “You’re the worst.”

Unrepentant, Kara just shrugs a shoulder and the abs between Lena’s legs go tense as Kara sits up enough to kiss her. “You’re the one in bed with me, what does that say about you?”

“That I have terrible taste,” Lena jokes, but the words get swallowed by Kara’s lips, strong fingers are spreading out across the skin of her lower back and the rest of the world gets drowned out for a little while longer.

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“I’m probably going to have a lot less free time now,” Kara says when she leaves Lena’s hotel room in the early hours of the next morning. “Knockout round is when things kind of go on lockdown, I guess.”

Lena hums a little, lingers in Kara’s airspace and lets the combination of fatigue and Kara’s warm presence lull her into contentment. “Probably for the best. People might start to catch on to where you’ve been spending all your time.”

“As if anyone would blame me,” Kara comments and Lena feels pleased for a moment before Kara adds, “My bed at the village is tiny. And hard.”

Eyes rolling, Lena scoffs into a laugh. “An awful combination.”

“It is,” Kara insists good-naturedly with a smile that has Lena laughing harder.

“Get out of here before someone notices you,” Lena tells her, pushing her fingers into the firm plane of Kara’s stomach.

“You worry too much,” Kara says, but she goes about sliding her wallet into her back pocket and checking her phone quickly before pocketing it as well. “No one cares that we’re friends.”

“Yes, because friends do things like that,” Lena points out before thinking twice of it, glancing obviously at the twisted sheets of her hotel bed.

Kara laughs. “Well we are friends and we did just do that, so,” she says, smiling easily in a way Lena doesn’t know what to do with anymore. Anxiety feels like it’s starting to bubble back up her throat and she swallows it back down into a smile.

“Good point,” she says.

Laughing again, Kara darts forward and presses a warm kiss to Lena’s cheek. “You coming to the game tomorrow?”

“Of course,” Lena replies.

The skin around Kara’s eyes crinkles in a teasing expression. “You’re totally becoming a basketball fan.”
Lena shoves her towards the door. “Maybe I just like the way your sister looks in her uniform,” she jokes and Kara makes an exaggerated show of pretending to gag.

“Gross, forget I said anything,” Kara says pulling the door open, but laughing.

“Good luck tomorrow,” Lena says softly, leaning against the open door to watch Kara exit.

Kara turns towards her and walks backward with a wide grin. “How many times do I have to tell you it’s not about luck when you’re as good as I am?”

With a fond roll of her eyes, Lena shakes her head and moves back into her room. “Good night, Ego,” she calls out, shutting the door on Kara’s laughter.

--

USA faces Canada again in the semi-finals and it’s nothing like their meeting in the group stages. There’s not jovial hugging at half court or good-natured jabs exchanged between the two teams during warmups.

Kara, for her part, seems to be much more focused than the earlier games which is certainly saying something.

It’s during warmups before the game that she’s finally spotted by a camera. A glance at the large arena screen hovering above center court reveals her own image, name captioned under it along with National City Lakehawks Owner.

It’s only a few seconds before the camera moves on to another woman in the crowd that Lena recognizes easily enough despite the caption under her picture – Olivia Marsden, NWBA Commissioner. She’s seated next to members of the IOC and FIBA that the screen names one after the other.

Lena’s undeniably a bit unsettled at having just been outed during the game though there seem to be no reactions from anyone around her. A few glances here and there, but nothing else. Paranoid, however, she pulls her phone out and checks her Twitter.

There’s not much, but there are a few tweets mentioning she’s been spotted in Tokyo and how cool it is that she’s supporting the members of her team representing their country. Apparently a spattering of other NWBA owners have been seen out and about during the tournament and no one seems to think twice of it.

Still unnerved, she texts Jack. Has there been any mention on the news about me the last few days?

He doesn’t respond right away, but seconds after tip-off she feels a buzz in her pocket. It’s the middle of the night, Lena. I don’t have time for your ego.

Scoffing before she can help it, she looks around to see if anyone caught her before back at her phone. You’re watching the game aren’t you?

I can neither confirm nor deny. How’s your girl looking?

Lena watches as Kara pulls up to shoot a full six feet back from the three point line and it rainbows directly in. Good, she texts back and when Jack continues to be unhelpful, she refocuses on the game in front of her.

In the end, USA demolishes Canada and though Kara plays well, the most talked about player on the
television that night is Helena Bertinelli who, according to commentators, became the unlikely star when Canada seemed to have Kara’s number on defense.

After the highlight package, Kara and Helena make an appearance on set, both looking fresh after a relatively easy game. They seem to be laughing about whatever is being asked and Lena turns it up in time for one of the interviewers to direct a question at Kara.

“And Kara, you’ve been having an amazing season this year, with all-time best stats both for your career and in league history. What’s changed?”

Kara shrugs, a loose, happy smile on her face.

“I don’t think that anything’s changed,” Kara says. “I wish I had an answer for you.”

“It’s awful, isn’t it?” Helena says, leaning forward conspiratorially and prompting laughs from the set. “You want her to say she’s been doing some new training thing or eating Wheaties every morning, and she’s got nothing.”

“Well, both of you have already turned in some spectacular basketball this tournament. Have you had any time to enjoy the games outside of that?”

“Oh, for sure,” Kara says, her elbow jamming into Helena’s side in such a way that it reads as an inside joke. Considering what Kara’s told Lena of alleged exploits, the nervous laughter that comes from Helena is fair. “Tons of stuff. It’s really cool.”

“Caught any other events?”

Kara shrugs, her smile secretive and it makes Lena’s chest feel expansive. “I’d highly recommend canoe slalom to anyone that has the chance.”

The room returns her suggestion with laughter and Helena makes a fond showing of shaking her head at Kara before the interview segues back into more heavy basketball discussion.

Lena stays tuned in for the entirety of it, though most of the sports analytics goes over her head with disinterest. Later, when the interviews are over and the station has turned back to other Olympic news, Lena pulls her phone out and sends Kara a quick text.

You looked cute on TV just now.

The response comes quickly: a wordless selfie of Kara with her tongue stuck out and someone’s middle finger intruding into the frame.

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USA is set to face Greece in the gold medal game. The media hypes up the matchup of Kara and Diana for most of the days beforehand and there’s a continuous highlight reel playing of their performances during the group stages. Kara sends a few texts, but Lena is mostly left to her devices - she spends the days leading up in meetings and catching a few other sporting events and sending pictures to a very jealous Kara.

The game is intense. Greece is seemingly much better suited for playing USA than many of the other teams USA has had to face and it seems Diana Prince has Kara’s number for most of the game. Every shot Kara makes is contested heavily by Diana, and she looks frustrated by it for most of the first quarter.
Lena sits much closer to the court this time – though not all the way courtside. Instead, she’s comfortably sat in the lower bowl a good ten rows behind Team USA’s bench. A few rows ahead of her, she spots the man she had met at the very first U.S. match - Steve - screaming over every call going against Greece. It’s rather amusing, even though Lena finds herself wanting to disagree loudly with him.

In the end, the game is tipped in USA’s favor by a vicious combo of Kara’s thirty-five points and sixteen assists that begin to pile on after Kara manages to work out a strategy against Diana and a ridiculous showing of intensity on defense from Sara Lance. When the clock hits zero, the packed arena descends into chaos.

Lena has never been much of a sports person. Even after having owned the Lakehawks for half a season, she still can’t say she’s become much more endeared to sports. Not even sleeping with a megastar professional athlete has done the trick.

But she can’t deny that when USA wins gold in women’s basketball, she gets swept right up into the hype. The stadium erupts in a loud U-S-A chant and Lena gets jostled a bit when everyone around her starts jumping around in jubilation.

On the floor, Alex and Kara are hugging each other intensely, rocking back and forth with their faces buried in each other’s necks. Sara Lance soon joins the embrace, vaulting up so high on Kara’s back that she nearly falls on top of them. Laurel is close behind, grabbing her sister when she comes down and lifting her up into the air from behind.

Across from them Barbara Gordon has fallen to the floor on her back, fists pressed to her face as if she’s crying. Kate Kane has jogged over to her, falling on top of her.

Soon most of the team comes together, cameras surrounding the huddle and Lena has to watch the celebration on the jumbotron to get a good look at it. There’s a lot of shouting, from the looks of it, and then a lot of jumping. The medal stand is assembled fast, and when the team steps up onto it, it’s apparent that Kara is crying, along with most of the team. Lena finds herself tearing up too, ridiculously proud and happy to see Kara achieve something so important to her.

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Lena doesn’t expect to hear from Kara that night, much less see her – there’d been talk of the team heading out to some popular bar in Shinjuku to celebrate. Lena had even seen a few pictures of Alex pouring champagne down Lucy’s throat already surfacing on Instagram.

Which is why she’s so startled when there’s a knock at her door nearing midnight and when she looks through the peephole, Kara’s standing there.

Her hair is down, but tousled, and her cheeks are pink either from exertion or the alcohol Lena can smell wafting off her. Peeking out from beneath the half un-zipped zipper of Kara’s Team USA podium jacket is the shiny gold medal Lena’d watched Kara receive just hours before.

“Hi,” Lena says, her surprise showing but apparently not deterring Kara from smiling and pressing forward to step into the room and kiss Lena swiftly on the cheek.

“Hey,” Kara says and that’s all she says before she’s pulling Lena further inside the room, shutting the door and then pressing Lena against it, mouth suddenly insistent when it slides across Lena’s.

It seems regular Olympic sex has nothing on I just won a gold medal sex because Kara’s ripped an orgasm out of Lena before Lena’s even fully processed Kara’s presence in the room.
“We fucking won,” Kara whispers when she finally pulls back enough to look at Lena, her smile crooked and awed in an infectious expression that has pride pulling at Lena’s ribcage.

It tugs Lena’s gaze back down to Kara’s chest and her fingers pluck the zipper of her jacket down until she can finger the gold circle hanging between Kara’s breasts and nod. “You did,” she says.

The medal is rippled, a strange design that had garnered plenty of commentary during the ceremony. It’s strange to see an Olympic gold medal in person, slung around the neck of a person Lena knows like she knows Kara.

“Here,” Kara says softly, lifting it off from around her neck and placing it around Lena’s. It pulls against her neck and she looks down, marveling at how shiny it is, how heavy.

“Shiny, right?” Kara adds in a conspiratorial whisper, seeming to read Lena’s mind.

Lena laughs. “Maybe I just like gold,” she jokes and Kara gets an intent look in her eye.

“Why am I not surprised that gold is your favorite color?”

Lena scoffs. “I never said that,” she protests, warming at the smile creeping across Kara’s face. “I just said I like it.”

“Because it’s so shiny,” Kara adds and Lena rolls her eyes.

“I’ve seen shinier.”

“Well, give it back then,” Kara says immediately and she reaches out as if to tug the medal back off Lena’s neck, but Lena resists, swatting at Kara’s hand.

They both exchange a chuckle.

“It looks good on you,” Kara says, voice intimate, pulling heavier at Lena’s chest than the medal around her neck. It draws Lena’s attention back to the situation at hand, the way their bodies are pressed together and how her bed is only a few feet away. She starts to reach for the fabric of the medal to pull it off, but Kara stops her, her fingers playing with it.

“Keep it on,” Kara says, and the heat of her voice makes Lena’s head spin.

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“I wish I could take a picture of this,” Kara says, far too smugly, sitting on the end of the bed and eyeing Lena with a smile. The medal is still very much on Lena’s neck, the heavy weight resting on her chest.

“If you don’t think I could hack your phone, you’re crazy,” Lena says, voice a little hoarse as she pulls the medal off her neck and sets it to the side. Kara shuffles closer, reaching for Lena’s thigh and pressing her hand up it until she’s grasping Lena’s hip.

“I’m just saying. It could go in my trophy case next to the medal,” Kara says. She’s shuffling closer still, until she’s leaning forward to kiss at Lena’s neck.

“You think you’re so smooth,” Lena comments dryly, rolling her eyes and laughing when Kara smiles against her neck.

Kara shrugs. “How many other people have you slept with who are Olympic gold medalists?”
“I can’t stand you,” Lena says. Kara laughs, and then she’s leaning forward until Lena finds herself on her back, Kara hovering over her and settling between her legs. The warmth of it is so good, even though they’ve spent the last few hours tumbling around together. Her hands track across the scar on Kara’s chest to the nape of her neck, and she watches as Kara’s eyes flutter under the ministrations.

“I can’t stand you either,” Kara murmurs, her eyes blinking shut and her body resting more fully on top of Lena’s. It’s comfortable and warm. “Are you flying back soon?”

“Tomorrow,” Lena says, and a cold feeling settles in her stomach at odds with the warmth of Kara settled against her. She brushes her fingers into the hair at the back of Kara’s head. “When do you get back?”

“Few days from now,” Kara says. She sounds half-asleep, worn out by what must be a roller coaster of adrenaline. “I’m gonna get up and leave, I promise.”

Lena sighs, and lets herself have one last thing. Before tomorrow. Before it’s really over.

“You should stay.”

Kara does, in fact, stay the night, sprawled across the majority of the bed and radiating warmth where Lena’s pressed into her side. When she leaves in the morning it’s with a lingering kiss to Lena’s temple and a casual see you later like it’s not the goodbye Lena feels settle painfully in her chest.

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The pictures don’t really surface until Lena’s already been back in National City for a day and even when she sees them they seem mostly benign. At least to an uneducated eye.

Jack points it out as they’re lounging around his apartment one night – Lena fighting valiantly against her jet lag.

“You know, for something I told you to get out of your system you two certainly look a lot like a couple.” He says it in such a way that Lena is fairly aware that he’s trying to sound casual while scrolling through something on his phone.

It takes Lena a second for the comment to make even a bit of sense, but it gets through the fog of exhaustion in her brain and she straightens up from where she’d been slouched in one of Jack’s oversized armchairs. “I’m sorry?”

Something freezes on Jack’s face though his gaze stays trained on his phone for a long moment before pulling up. “You’ve seen the pictures, right?”

“The pictures?” Lena hasn’t, but she’s getting an idea of what they could be.

Jack seems to hesitate before he’s standing to move closer to her and handing her his phone.

The picture isn’t particularly damning. Kara’s image is in clear view, her hair down around her shoulders and pristine white USA warm-up jacket on. Lena is next to her, but it’s likely not obvious to anyone that doesn’t already know that. The cap on her head is pulled low, etched with Kara’s number, shadowing her face that’s already hidden behind a pair of aviators and she’s dressed uncharacteristically casual – a pair of soft wash jeans and a white polo shirt with a big navy pony on one breast.

No one has likely realized it’s her – certainly not the person who has posted the picture if the caption
– Kara Danvers enjoying a water polo match with friend – is anything to go by. Absently, she wonders if the press is really that oblivious to what Lena looks like or if someone’s been keeping her name out of it intentionally.

But that doesn’t matter. It’s not really what has Lena’s heart pounding so suddenly in her chest.

The picture is one of a series. There are four in total. The first is Kara’s face morphed into a furious scowling expression that Lena actually remembers vividly. It leads into the second picture – this one displaying a Kara Danvers that is clearly yelling something – *that’s a freakin’ foul ref, are you blind?*

The third photo is where Lena’s face starts to feel warm. And she remembers the moment perfectly.

“*Would you stop it?*” Lena says with a laugh, reaching forward to tug at the fabric of Kara’s jacket and pull her backward.

“*It was a foul,*” Kara insists, gesturing at the pool and looking at Lena incredulously. A man in front of them turns over his shoulder and nods at her. “*See, he agrees with me.*”

But Kara’s face lost its indignation fairly quickly and they’re both just smiling at each other, trading laughs.

By the fourth photo, Kara’s leaned in close to Lena’s ear, is very clearly whispering something there and a shiver runs through Lena’s entire body just like it had then.

They look like a happy couple. Jack’s right.

“You guys have fun?” Jack asks, pulling Lena back to the present.

Confronting something she’s steadfastly avoided the last – however long – is making her heart to start to pick up. But she knows it’s time to just face facts, acknowledge a truth she’s tried to avoid.

“Yeah,” she admits in a soft whisper. “*We did.*”

Jack’s face is soft, open, understanding. Lena wants to flinch away from it, but she doesn’t. He smiles. “I’m guessing it didn’t go the way you planned it,” he says, voice quiet.

Lena chews softly at her bottom lip a moment before letting out a heavy exhale. “Not exactly.”

“Did you not end things then?”

There’s something hot and insistent in the back of her eyes, but Lena blinks it away and takes another breath. “No, not yet.”

“But that was the plan.”

“It still is the plan,” she says and Jack gives her this pitiful expression she has to look away from. “Don’t, I don’t want to hear it.”

“Lena, have you thought this through?”

Lena laughs, but it comes out a little thicker than she expects it to and she swipes at the corner of her eye a moment. “Honestly, all it feels like I’ve done is thought about this.”

“And you’re sure you don’t want to just –”
“Jack, I can’t,” she interrupts, not wanting to entertain the idea of something she knows she shouldn’t pursue.

This time it’s Jack that releases a heavy sigh and paces in front of Lena to put comforting hands on her biceps. “While I disagree with you,” he says. “ Entirely. I’ll support whatever decision you feel you need to make.”

Blowing out a breath that’s punctuated with a bitter laugh, she just looks at him, shrugging. “I don’t know what to do about anything anymore.”

His eyes go soft and sympathetic. “Maybe you should talk to Kara.”

She’s been trying to talk to Kara for what feels like months now, but every time she thinks to do it, she chickens out. Japan felt like a dream – an alternate existence in which the Lakehawks didn’t exist and she and Kara were just two people, happy to be together.

“It’s not as if I haven’t been trying.”

“I meant talk honestly,” he clarifies and she rolls her eyes a bit, but his expression makes her laugh. “Tell her that you have feelings for her. See what she says.”

“It wouldn’t matter anyway,” Lena says, after a second, clearing her throat. “I won’t date my own employee.”

Jack stares at her for a second, before he sighs.

“That’s bullshit, Lena,” he says, bluntly. “Look, I get that it was messy with Sam, but this isn’t the same. Kara isn’t Sam, and you’re in a completely different place in your life and at Luthor Corp.”

“I wish you’d stop bringing Sam into this,” Lena utters softly and Jack sighs again, his face so soft it makes Lena feel like she might cry.

“I just want you to be happy. She makes you happy,” Jack says with a sad kind of smile. “Call me crazy, but as your best friend I think you deserve that.”

“It’s not really the point,” Lena replies with a shrug of her shoulder.

“Then what is?”

“I own the team, Jack,” Lena says, the reasoning feeling thinner than ever before. “I won’t do this. I have responsibilities, and I won’t neglect them over a girl.”

“And your responsibilities are more important to you than being happy?”

“I can have both. Just not with Kara,” Lena replies, the words sitting like acid against her tongue. “There are other women.”

Jack stares at her for a few moments longer, blinking, before he nods, slowly, a sad look on his face that burns at Lena’s chest.


And that, somehow, is when it really becomes real.

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Lena texts Kara – almost types *we need to talk* before realizing how that reads – and asks her if she can come over. The thought of having to do this on her own turf should have given her more confidence, but Kara in her home always unsettles her just a little and it feels better to do this somewhere she can turn and walk away from.

Her resolve wavers a bit when Kara opens up the door with a bright smile and a happy look in her eyes, pulling Lena inside and kissing her swiftly. It spikes straight into Lena’s heart. Makes her wonder and wish for things she knows she cannot have.

“Is it weird that I missed you?” Kara says, as she steps further into the apartment. “It’s only been two days, but after Japan it feels like forever.”

“Yeah,” Lena says, hearing how awkward the chuckle she lets out sounds and nearly cringing.

Kara shoots her a look, but doesn’t comment. “How was your flight?”

“Fine,” Lena answers with a tight smile.

Though Kara looks confused at the tension Lena knows is flowing off of her, she seems to shrug it aside in favor of threading forward to kiss Lena.

It feels too good not to let her. Kara’s hands go to her side and slide to the small of her back, their noses bump slightly as they kiss and when Lena tastes the smile on Kara’s face a spike of guilt mixes with the pleasure in her stomach.

It’s that guilt that has her pulling away from Kara’s mouth and softly, but firmly, pushing Kara away until there’s space between them.

Kara looks surprised. Perhaps rightfully so. “Sorry,” Kara says quietly, swiping a thumb at the corner of her mouth and looking at Lena with concern. She takes a few steps back until she’s leaning against her counter.

Lena shakes her head, hates how tight the grip of anxiety is on her chest right now. It feels like she might start shaking. “No, I just. I was hoping we could talk.”

Brow arching, Kara’s face softens just the slightest though the concern never wavers in her eyes. “Sure, what’s up?”

Swallowing to ensure her words come out in a coherent manner, Lena takes a deep breath and decides to just cut to the chase. “I think it’s time we stop,” she says, barely able to rip the words out into a full sentence. It feels like she has to drag them out of the thick slob of emotion in her throat.

“Stop what?” Kara asks, something innocent in her expression.

Lena takes a breath, tries to keep everything under control. “This,” Lena clarifies, gesturing between them.

It’s clear Kara doesn’t understand for a few uncomfortable seconds before her face clears with realization and her brows pull together. “What?”

“We shouldn’t sleep together anymore,” Lena says as succinctly as possible.

Kara blinks, her expression frozen with confusion. “Why?”

“Because we said we would,” Lena answers, hoping Kara hears what she’s really saying.
But it seems Kara doesn’t understand because she continues to just blink at Lena clearly confused. “I don’t get it.”

It takes another deep breath before Lena feels like she can really say what she needs to say. “We agreed to break this off if it went anywhere other than –” Lena gestures between them as if that explains anything but realization clears again across Kara’s face almost immediately.

“I don’t have feelings for you,” Kara says in a hurried whisper that’s so forced sounding Lena almost laughs. “Honestly. Swear.”

There’s something true in Kara’s face, earnest even, and Lena contemplates a rather painful realization that Kara’s not lying. Kara isn’t the one that ended up compromising their stringless arrangement. Just Lena.

Though it’s something Lena’d expected before, it’s another beast to confront the reality of it so head on.

Kara takes a step forward and it pulls a sharp inhale through Lena at the prospect of having to talk about this while Kara touches her. It seems Kara understands Lena’s reaction and with a soft smile she puts her hands out in front of her as if trying to soothe a wounded animal. “Lena, seriously. You’re one of my closest friends. But that’s…”

Something hot wells in the back of Lena’s eyes and she can feel her throat start to ache. “It’s becoming more than that for me,” Lena confesses, hating the look of abject confusion all over Kara’s face. “And I can’t do this anymore. It’s only going to get worse.”

“You have…” Kara’s eyes dart all over. “You have feelings for me? Like romantic feelings?”

Lena laughs even though it hurts, tightens painfully in her chest and throat. “Yes,” she manages to say, the words feeling thick as she pulls them off her tongue.

Something breaks across Kara’s face, something Lena doesn’t know how to identify and she puts her hands on her hips, looking around again as if more answers are hidden somewhere in the room. “Okay, so, okay, so that’s fine.”

“Kara, it’s not fine, I told you we had to stop –”

“Lena, it’s just a feeling,” Kara says, with some kind of off-sounding chuckle. “It’s a feeling, friends have feelings for each other.”

“Is there such a thing as just a feeling?” Lena asks with a pointed look.

“Yes,” Kara answers quickly and Lena sighs, she pinches the bridge of her nose. She honestly didn’t think this was going to go this direction, arguing with Kara over her own emotions.

“Well this isn’t just a feeling.”

“It is. Look friends can have feelings for each other and it’s not like you –”

“Kara, I’m falling in love with you,” Lena interrupts in a sharp, even tone that cuts off Kara’s words so abruptly it looks like she chokes on them a little.

Kara blinks, her entire being still before she asks, in a whisper, “What?”

It feels easier now that the truth is out there and she’s not hiding from it. “I’m falling in love with
you,” Lena repeats, this time softer and with the hint of a sad smile. “Maybe I already have.”

Kara looks nothing short of stunned and though Lena’s chest feels heavy with emotion, she manages a laugh at the situation and adds, “It’s not just a feeling for me.”

“You, I mean, you’re falling in, you’re…” Kara says, the words coming out of her slow and unsure.

“We need to stop this before it gets any worse,” Lena says and tries to keep her tone even, but it feels like she might start shaking at any moment. The knowledge that her feelings are largely one sided is sitting painfully in her stomach and she tries to set it aside as best she can. That’s something to process at another time. Like alone in her apartment with a bottle of scotch.

“Nothing needs to change, okay, you said you were falling in love with me, but not that you’re currently at this moment in love with me,” Kara says, sounding a bit more sure of herself like she’s going to logic her way out of this.

“We said we’d end this the minute it got anymore than it was supposed to be,” Lena points out and Kara’s lips pull into a frustrated line.

“We’re friends, Lena. You’re just confusing your feelings and –”

Indignation washes away some of the pain in her chest and she levels a glare at Kara. “I’m not confusing anything,” she says.

“You care about me as a friend, okay, and that’s normal, we don’t’ need to –”

“I don’t think of you as a friend,” Lena interrupts forcefully, begging Kara to understand so this can be over and she can leave and deal with her emotions alone.

“You don’t?” Kara asks, something heartbroken in her tone that Lena doesn’t know what to do with.

“I do,” Lena amends. “But also, as more than that.”

Kara looks so lost. Her eyes dart across Lena’s face as if searching for something there. “Okay,” she says quietly, seeming to finally process exactly what Lena’s saying.

“I’m trying to do the responsible thing,” Lena says, knowing she needs to get out of this conversation before it escalates any further and she ends up doing something embarrassing like crying.

“Developing feelings for someone who plays for a team I own and I’ve been casually hooking up with is certainly low on the list of responsible things to do.”

There’s something happening again on Kara’s face, something complicated and confused. Lena wants to reach out, wants to stroke her fingers over Kara’s cheekbone. Her fingers twitch a bit and she tries not to think about how she’ll probably never get to touch Kara Danvers again. At least not in the way she had.

“This was a bad idea from the start,” Lena adds softly and she thinks about that moment in the elevator all those months ago. The way Kara had looked leaned up against the wall, the smell of her in the small confined space. “And now it’s over.”

It looks a lot like Kara’s about to argue some more, but after a few seconds of just looking at Lena’s face she must see something that stops her. The laugh she lets out sounds watery and broken in a way so at odds with her stance this entire discussion. As if Kara is just as affected by their parting as Lena feels.
Which, maybe she is. For different reasons. Her regular guaranteed hook up is about to end.

“Right, of course,” Kara manages to say. “I’m sorry.”

Lena smiles, shakes her head and fights valiantly against the tears threatening to fall. “Don’t be. You’re not the one who screwed this up.”

A look of continuing confusion stays persistent in Kara’s expression and her lips waver around a bit as if trying to find words to say. Frankly, Lena doesn’t really relish this conversation continuing any longer than it has to.

“We can still be friends,” Kara whispers and it sounds like a plea, beats across Lena’s chest with heavy, suffocating pressure.

Heat feels like it’s boiling in the back of Lena’s eyes and an ache forms in her throat. “Of course,” Lena replies, knowing it’s maybe the biggest lie she’s told in a long time.

Unable to quell the urge any further, Lena crosses the remaining distance between them and pushes up on her toes a bit to press a warm, final kiss to the corner of Kara’s mouth. “I’ll see you around,” Lena murmurs there and when she pulls away Kara’s blue eyes look lost as they search Lena’s face.

“Yeah,” Kara says, nodding and Lena turns to stride away as quickly as she can before she loses her willpower to leave.

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For as much as Lena’d like to delude herself into thinking that it’s not a breakup – because to break up you’d have to be together – it still feels very much the same.

After she leaves Kara’s apartment she makes it back to her own building as quickly as possible and fights the way her chest aches and her eyes burn.

“It’s the right thing to do, it’s the right thing to do,” she tells herself as she changes out of her clothes and gets straight into the shower. The best thing to do is wash herself both emotionally and physically of Kara as best she can. But, even if it’s the right thing to do, the reminders of Kara burn. There’s the jean jacket Kara left once, the mug Kara favored for their late-night coffees.

She lies in bed that night and thinks about the confusion written clean across Kara’s face, a mix of swirling is it weird that I missed you and I don’t have feelings for you. Honestly. Swears in her head. The distraught look Kara had given her when she left.

“It’s the right thing to do,” she repeats, into the darkness. It doesn’t ring like a truth or a lie, really, in the end. It just sounds like something she’s saying to get through. And maybe it is.

She wakes up to an email from the Lakehawks PR team reminding her that All-Star Week begins in two days, complete with an itinerary of events she’s committed to appear at.

Kara’s smiling image is front and center on the letterhead at the top of the e-mail and Lena finds herself clicking out of the message without really reading any of it.

It’s the right thing to do. It has to be.
Chapter 6

All-Star Week arrives before Lena’s really prepared for it. As a result of National City hosting the game – and thereby the Lakehawks and Harriers – Lena’s got three meetings set up in one day just to deal with housekeeping and administration.

James is gracious enough to spend an extra fifteen minutes after one meeting explaining the format to her. Two captains are selected from each conference, East and West. This year it’s Diana Prince from the East and, unsurprisingly, Kara Danvers from the West.

Or perhaps it is surprising, as James tells her it’s Kara’s first year being selected as a captain. Last year it had been M’gann and the year before Laurel Lance. It makes Lena want to call Kara, want to congratulate her on achieving yet another milestone in her career. The realization that she shouldn’t do that aches heavily in the back of her eyes and she tries to focus on what James is saying instead of the burning awareness of her phone in her pocket.

The two captains are tasked with alternately drafting players for their own teams from the pool of players selected for the game. It’s a new format they’re trying this year to break up the talent between East and West. Apparently the last few years the West has been so heavily favored that fans have protested.

The coaches of each team are chosen by record, and so Cat and the Wonders’ head coach, a woman named Julia Kapatelis are in. James explains that coaching in the All-Star Game isn’t exactly the most intensive thing, but it’s still an honor. The winningest coach is assigned to the team with the captain who garnered the most votes. Though it’s a close one, it puts Cat with Kara – a fact the Lakehawks have been promoting heavily the last few days.

There’s a cute shot of Kara with her arm around Cat and smiling. Cat’s got her arms crossed over her chest and though her lips are resisting a smile, her eyes look happy. It’s a pretty accurate depiction of their relationship, Lena thinks idly. It’s strange to stand on the outside of Kara Danvers’s aura and realize just how much she had come to know about the league’s biggest superstar.

“Coach is making me go in two hours before practice to watch film,” Kara says, swiping at the pile of discarded clothing on the floor next to the bed. “Apparently, I’ve been lackadaisical on defense lately.”

“She said that? You had two steals and three blocks last game.” Lena is lying in her bed, splitting her attention between the stocks rolling in from Japan on CNBC and Kara’s movements. There’s something distracting about the ruffled way Kara looks right now, hair sloppy on top of her head and button-down only half on her shoulders as she tries to pull up her pants.

Amusement plays across Kara’s face as she pauses in her motions and looks at Lena critically. “You sound like someone that cares about basketball,” Kara teases, her brow lifting as if in challenge.

Lena rolls her eyes, returns her attention to the television. “My lack of interest doesn’t affect my ability to intake information. Don’t mistake it for something else.”

“Sure,” Kara says with a laugh before resuming the act of redressing. “In that case, I’ll tell you that two steals and three blocks doesn’t make up for leaving my assignment and a child’s amount of effort on trying to stop the fast break.”

The last bit is delivered in a snarky voice Lena assumes must be an imitation of Cat and she chuckles.
at it, looking back at Kara to see her sliding her phone and wallet back in her pockets. “Cat clearly doesn’t know what she’s talking about,” she offers in solidarity.

With an affectionate lift of her eyes and a smile on her lips, Kara shifts close enough to kiss Lena swiftly on the cheek as a goodbye. “The worst part is that Cat is like the best coach of all time and she knows it too.”

As Kara walks out of the bedroom, Lena laughs. “Can’t imagine what that combination is like.”

There’s enough obvious sarcasm in her voice that Kara turns around and lazily flips Lena off, but she’s smiling as she does it and when she puts her finger back down she says, “Just kidding,” in such a contrite tone that Lena’s chest feels heavy.

“Have a good practice,” Lena calls out and Kara winks at her as she walks backwards, further down the hallway.

“Always.”

The idea of texting Kara stays persistent in the back of her mind. There are a slew of things she wants to say – a congratulations on making All-Star captain, an inquiry into her recent trip to New York to appear on the Today Show with the rest of the All-Stars, a hello, I miss you.

She reins it in, but just barely. It feels as though there are hundreds of little reminders of Kara around her every day. The only thing that stops her is the fact that she did the responsible thing and considering the way Kara had reacted – the innocent and entirely believable I don’t have feelings for you. Honestly. Swear. – there’s nothing to be done regardless.

It’ll be better once they get through All-Star Week.

If she tells herself that enough, maybe it will start to be real.

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The days leading up to the game feel a little like how Tokyo did during the Olympics.

There’s advertising for the game on every street corner, the local news has every Lakehawk and several Harriers on in the weeklong lead-up. Her schedule is suddenly filled with meeting other league owners, approving promotional initiatives like dropping a series of enormous banners across Luthor Corp owned properties around the city. She goes to the marina one morning to meet with someone in the freight department only to find Kara Danvers’s arms stretched wide across the side of the building.

The streets get packed with tourists in town for the game. Lena spots a different basketball jersey on every other person as she goes to work each morning or takes a break to visit a coffee shop down the street over her lunch. Quite a few of them are Kara’s jersey, but she catches a spattering of others.

The gigantic billboard that used to host Kara’s Calvin Klein ad has been plastered with a promo for the game. Though Kara is still featured, she’s dressed in the red uniform of the West and staring intently at the camera as she holds a basketball in front of her chest. Diana is next to her in the contrasting blue of the East and instead of mean mugging the camera like Kara is, she’s smirking, holding a ball forward with one hand.

Luthor Corp Plaza hosts the All-Star Game Experience for the week and it’s packed with kids running around with small basketballs doing assorted games. Midway through the week, the plaza is the busiest she’s seen it yet and curiosity makes her pause for a second on the perimeter to see what
all the commotion is about it.

It becomes obvious quite quickly. A familiar voice sounds out from the makeshift basketball court set up on one side of the large open square. There’s some kind of three point contest carrying on and the crowd parts just enough for Lena to make out Kara’s form.

Against all better judgment, she finds herself scooting closer to hover near the corner of the small court and watch as Kara narrates the contest into a microphone. Some young boy is valiantly throwing shots towards the basket. According to Kara’s running commentary, he’s attempting to hit over thirty shots in three minutes.

The boy doesn’t seem to be doing all that bad. He’s sinking shots more often than he’s missing and Kara seems swept up in the excitement as she really commits to the role of MC, narrating every shot he takes, her voice climbing in clear excitement.

“He’s in the corner spot again, looking good, squaring up, rainbow shot – and it bounces out! Are we sure this basket isn’t rigged?” Kara asks. She’s wearing a bright red polo with obnoxious stripes and a large W on the breast, along with a pair of slim-fit black pants and sunglasses that cover most of her face in the early morning sun.

The boy grabs for the ball and tries again from the same spot, time winding down. “He needs one more, can he do it?” It swishes in just as the loud buzzer sounds – the crowd goes crazy, as Kara lets out a loud yell in excitement. “He can!”

The boy jumps up and down in exuberance and the mic catches Kara’s bright, happy laugh. The sound of it feels like it’s stabbing into Lena’s throat even as her mouth stretches into a smile.

“Can you believe it, folks? Our boy Zack here is a winner!” Kara’s announcing, her arm slung around the boy’s shoulders as she presents him to the crowd. “Okay, Zack, you get a free jersey, any one you want on the wall.”

Behind the basket is an arrangement of jerseys – players Lena recognizes and some she doesn’t. Kara’s is towards the bottom left and Lena realizes she instinctively expects the young boy to run that direction, but he rushes forward to grab a bright red Central City jersey with QUICK sewn into the back.

Kara makes a show of looking affronted and the crowd, along with Lena, laughs. “I get it, Zack. Jesse is pretty good.”

Zack beams up at her, clutching his jersey with one hand and reaching up to high-five her with the other before scampering away towards a couple that must be his parents. “Let’s give it up for Zack, people!”

Kara glances around the crowd as she claps for Zack, and Lena is perfectly aware of the moment Kara spots her. Her body freezes for a half a second, the slow scan of her eyes zoning straight in on Lena.

Lena’d like it if she could get her heart not to react so abruptly to the sudden attention, but it starts to thump heavily against her wishes and her mouth goes a little dry.

Seeming to remember what she’s doing, Kara widens her smile and turns back to the crowd. “Hey, everyone, thanks for coming out to the All-Star Experience here at Luthor Corp Plaza,” she’s saying and the crowd groans as if they know what’s coming. “I’m switching out, but I’ve got a special treat for you.”
There’s a woman walking towards Kara – one Lena recognizes, but can’t quite place the name of – she’s wearing a polo like Kara’s, but in the bright blue of the East and she looks the kind of beautiful Lena’s beginning to get used to around the league.

“Let’s hear some cheer for Donna Troy!” Kara exclaims, her arm outstretched with considerable flourish.

Donna, who Lena absently remembers plays for Coast City, takes the microphone from Kara with a smile nothing short of flirty and familiar. “Thanks, KD,” she says, putting her hand at Kara’s bicep in a friendly gesture that Lena tries not to focus on.

It helps that Kara then starts to make her way to the side of the court and her eyes go straight back to Lena. It’s clear Kara intends to walk right up to her, directly through the crowd until they’re face to face.

The idea forms an anxious knot in her stomach and it seems to unroot her feet from the ground. She does what she should have done minutes ago when Kara first spotted her, and turns to head inside.

She spares a glance just before she’s completely out of view and sees Kara signing autographs for a gaggle of kids trying to swarm her. There are still sunglasses covering her eyes, but Lena can make out the frown that’s formed on Kara’s lips across the distance.

Apart from promotional material, Lena’s done a fairly good job at avoiding Kara’s image across social media. She doesn’t unfollow any of the Lakehawks accounts – that might garner speculation – but she does a good job of just looking right through it all when it shows up on her feed.

There’s not much, anyway. The Lakehawks have clearly taken a backseat so that the whole league can shine, and even for being a captain of the West, Kara isn’t around much on social media. Her last Instagram post is from a yacht in Greece, her and Alex looking tipsy with their gold medals slung around their necks, an easy grin on Kara’s face. It’s easy to imagine that Kara might want some time away from social media in consideration of how busy her life is at the moment – Lena is busy enough not playing in the game.

The other Lakehawks, though, and other All-Star Game players are far more prolific. She gets sent a gossipy article from Jack detailing the torrid love affairs of the past and present on the teams, complete with updating social media posts. The players are all through the city, at charity events, at league sponsor events, out paddleboarding in bikinis, in clubs. What she sees of Kara is Lakehawks and league obligations, but when it comes to the bikinis or clubs – hardly anything. She must be doing a good job of keeping out of the camera’s way.

But then Lena accidentally catches sight of a picture that makes her stop. It’s deep in her timeline late one night as she’s having trouble falling asleep.

It’s some selfie Lucy seems to have taken out at a nightclub. Alex is next to her, their faces pressed together and though Alex’s eyes are hidden behind sunglasses, she’s smiling. In front of them is Helena Bertinelli who looks nothing short of intoxicated. She’s making a face as if she’s yelling something at the camera and her arms are spread out, one hand holding a drink. The caption is simple – *All-Star Week* and a series of alcohol related emojis.

But that’s not what catches Lena’s eye.

Tucked behind the trio, but clearly visible, is Kara, and she’s sitting in a booth they’re posed in front
of. Next to her is a woman Lena recognizes immediately as Diana Prince even as her flowy brown hair is obscuring part of her face. Kara is dressed in dark jeans, a black leather jacket that Lena can remember loving the smell of, and a blue button down. And Diana – she looks like what one might imagine a Greek goddess dressing like, a flowy but club-ready dress on.

Kara and Diana have their heads tucked in close and from what Lena can make out of Kara’s profile they look to be engaged in something serious. The line of Kara’s jaw is tight and her eyes are focused on a cocktail in her hands. Diana’s hand is pressed into her wrist, her eyes soft as she looks at Kara. It twists something awful in Lena’s stomach.

Lena clicks out of it before she can overanalyze anything and hates the sudden pounding of her heart.

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Though Lena’d never really been thrilled to have to attend Lakehawks games, realizing she’s going to have to sit courtside for the All-Star Game not much more than a week after breaking off an arrangement with its star player is giving her a kind of anxiety she has no idea how to quell.

“You’re coming, right?” she asks Jack for about the fifteenth time one night. He’s come over with wine and an order from her favorite Italian place, a look in his eye that she’s been steadily avoiding all week.

Jack clicks his tongue at her. “Of course I am, I already have my jersey.”

“You’re not wearing a jersey,” Lena protests, shooting him a look.

“It will be stylish, don’t worry,” Jack assures her with a laugh. “You won’t be embarrassed to be seen out in public with me.”

Lena rolls her eyes. “Don’t make promises you can’t keep,” she says and laughs at his deep look of indignation.

“You say that as if you’re not so nervous you’ll likely need to be sedated just to attend,” Jack says. “I’m sure I’ll be the one embarrassed.”

She directs a look his way that has him raising his hands in surrender.

“Maybe I could send someone else in my stead,” Lena says, rubbing at her eyebrow and taking a long sip of wine.

“Ridiculous. Exposing yourself to the pain continually will numb you to it eventually,” Jack says with a friendly smile as he leans back against the daybed on her patio.

Lena stands near the railing and looks out over the city, tries hard not to remember the last time she and Kara were on this small balcony sipping at wine. “You think I’m broken up about this far more than I actually am,” Lena replies, keeping her eyes on the lights of cars below them. A warm breeze ruffles across the space and she takes a breath against the feeling.

“No, I don’t,” Jack says and she hears him shift off the furniture to stand next to her. “I think you haven’t actually processed any of it.”

“I promise you I have,” Lena says with a noise caught between a scoff and a laugh. It feels like a lie the moment she says it. In the days since seeing Kara that last time, all she’s done is try to avoid thinking about it and focus on literally anything else.
Jack observes her critically a moment, takes a sip of his wine before replying. “So if Kara rang the doorbell right now, you’d invite her in for a night cap like the good pals you are?”

Just the thought of Kara showing up at her apartment makes her blood start to race and she can feel the heat creep into her cheeks. It’s enough of an answer for Jack who just laughs, albeit a bit sadly, and looks away.

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The game is a spectacle unlike one Lena has ever seen. It’s very different than a regular season match or even the Olympics. Though the game is made up of the top athletes in the league – likely around the world in some respects – it’s clear the game isn’t being taken too seriously.

Each player gets their own highlight package and song for their introductions. Though the crowd is still obviously biased towards Lakehawks players, there are loud cheers for nearly every player, even the Skippers. Kara’s is particularly loud and as she’s captain, she’s introduced last.

The loud booming sound of her introduction song makes the crowd go wild before her name is even announced and Lena feels herself get swept up in the sheer grandeur of it. Kara waves to the crowd and runs out from the tunnel, high fives her way down the lineup of her team and takes her place for the singing of the national anthem.

It’s the first time she’s seen Kara on a court since the Olympics and though that wasn’t that long ago by most standards, it feels like so much has happened and changed since then. Even if it hasn’t.

She had expected it to be torturous – to see Kara in her element again from so close up – and it certainly meets expectations. Kara checks into the play right in front of her, looks gorgeous with her hair pulled back and her eyes focused on what’s happening on the court. She’s tucking her jersey into her shorts as she passes Lena to head for the scorer’s table. Lena tracks the movements with a degree of familiarity that makes her cross her legs and take a deep sip of her drink.

For what feels like the first time, Kara doesn’t even look at her, not even a moment’s glance. Her gaze stays on her fingers where they’re tying off her shorts and then on the pile of chalk lying on the scorer’s table that she pats her hands with.

It’s different than a normal Lakehawks game when Kara would let her gaze linger perhaps a touch too long to be anything other than suggestive and Lena would have to make a concerted effort to look away.

Instead, Kara seems completely engaged in the game to a degree that isn’t quite matched by the rest of the players on the court.

In fact, if anything, everyone seems to be playing the game as if it were nothing more than a scrimmage or an exhibition match. Lena supposes that’s exactly what it is, but it’s still a bit jarring at first to see none of the players take the contest that seriously.

Everyone is far more showboat-y than she’s used to, launching alley-oops from the backcourt to the net and throwing dunks they wouldn’t normally try. There’s a particular play in which Alex crosses over Lucy so effectively that Lucy falls to the ground and after sinking the shot, Alex makes a show of taunting her for it. It’s good natured and Lucy just laughs, shoving at Alex as they jog to the other end of the court.

There’s not a lot of defense being played on either side, but Alex and Lucy seem determined to stop the other from scoring and soon Lucy is the one hitting a well-contested three over Alex’s
outstretched hand. After it goes in, Lucy keeps her arm in the air and makes a gesture at Alex that has both women laughing again.

“You’re trash, Danvers,” Lucy says loud enough that Lena can hear her. Alex laughs, almost delighted sounding, before grabbing the back of Lucy’s jersey when she tries to run a route towards the basket.

“Take a shower, Lane, your game stinks,” Alex returns and Lucy makes a pathetic sounding groan that trails into a laugh as she slaps Alex’s hand away and they both jog down the court.

It’s fun to watch, Lena must admit. All the players seem loose and like they’re enjoying themselves. There’s still an air of competition around the game, but it’s a fun one. Nothing like the intensity Lena’s grown used to at Lakehawks games.

But where everyone else is laughing, making jokes, fake-arguing with refs for calls, Kara is simply playing. Lena’s seen more joy on her face in Lakehawks losses. She doesn’t look totally out of it, and she isn’t playing poorly. She’s just – there. At some point she goes in for a layup that turns out to be a pass off the backboard to Alex, a play that has the crowd in hysterics, but by the time Alex is let free from Barbara Gordon’s excited hug, Kara is already jogging down to defend.

Her face is some mixture of impassive and bored. They catch eyes at one point. Kara’s walking over to inbound a ball right in front of Jack and Lena and there’s not much to stop them from looking at each other.

It’s the first change in Kara’s expression Lena’s seen nearly all game – a quick upturn of her lips and a barely perceptible nod of her head. Lena manages to react with a polite smile of her own but the entire millisecond interaction feels forced and unnatural and Lena hates this.

The game continues as if nothing happens and Lena supposes that in the grand scheme of things nothing really did. But Jack’s hand is on her thigh and it’s squeezing there with the kind of sympathetic warmth that makes her want to shove him away.

Instead Lena focuses on the vodka soda she’s been nursing the last hour and keeps her eyes on the game. Down the court Diana is making a show of picking up Sara Lance as if she can’t reach the basket for a dunk. The crowd is laughing and even Kara has a smile on her face.

All in all, the game proceeds with little incident. That is until Leslie Willis decides quite randomly to play a normal amount of defense.

Just as Alex is driving into the lane, Leslie hip checks her, sending Alex tumbling down. It would barely register in a regular game. Lena thinks that Alex probably wouldn’t even fall had she been expecting it, but it’s clear from the player reaction that no one’s expecting to get hit like that. There’s a ripple of shock and some indignation that seems to go across the crowd. Leslie, for once, looks semi-apologetic, hovering over Alex and offering a hand. Lena can hear her say sorry, my bad.

But as everyone else jokingly starts jostling at each other, moving on from their surprise to start play again, Kara’s moves quickly to her sister’s side. Lena catches her expression, sees the almost palpable anger radiating off it and it puts something ominous in the air for a tense second.

Instead of helping Alex from the ground as Lena half expects, Kara all but charges Leslie, shoving her away so violently that Leslie nearly falls, stumbles backward a few feet. When she regains her balance, she shoots Kara a look of fury and looks ready to lunge at her.

Fist clenched at her side, Lena can tell Kara’s hoping Leslie does just that. She looks seconds from
taking a swing at the other girl. It’s Diana that steps between them, a palm on Kara’s chest to push her away and another hand outstretched towards Leslie. There aren’t a lot of words exchanged from Kara’s end – Lena can vaguely remember Kara telling her she wasn’t a big fan of trash talking – but something Leslie says has Kara pushing forward against Diana’s hand.

Alex, having returned to her feet, pulls Kara away by her arm and Lena can just make out Alex’s hushed words *what the hell, Kara* as they back away from the confrontation. The other players on the court look understandably confused by the entire ordeal, but move on at the ref’s whistle blow.

Play resumes, but Cat pulls Kara out of the game immediately. She doesn’t say anything to Kara, but Lena can tell that the glare Cat levels is just as effective. Kara has a look of clear frustration and lingering fury on her face as she snatches a towel from a waiting ball boy and drops into a chair far down the bench.

It’s all over the news later that night – *Danvers-Willis Feud Strikes Again* – and Lena thinks to text Kara about it. Has gone as far as pulling her phone out and opening up their text thread, but her eyes linger on their last exchange and she thinks better of it.

Nevertheless, she catches herself glancing at her phone every so often, perhaps out of habit. There’s still a small part of her that expects Kara to call as she used to do after a game, or at the very least send a quick message.

It grates at her so much that she shoves her phone into her bedside drawer and vows not to look at it until morning.

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Pictures of the players out partying after the All-Star Game end up on Lena’s feed. There’s a series of Alex, Lucy, Sara and Laurel, with captions referencing their back to back Olympic and All-Star victories. There’s one of Kate Kane and Maggie Sawyer grinning for the camera. And another of Iris with Barry lifting her up off the ground.

A couple of trashy tabloid accounts show up on her recommended page, and that’s where she finds Kara. It’s another photo of Kara and Diana, this time much clearer. They’re leaving one of the clubs together. Kara’s head is ducked down, sunglasses on. In the photo, Diana is turned back to look at her, her hair down and flowing, legs long in tight jeans. The next one in the series is Kara standing at the door of the car and waiting for Diana to slip into the seat.

It’s hard to fight the memory of what she’s done with Kara in the back seat of cars and as she clicks through the photos to another series of Sara Lance pressing exaggerated kisses to Kara’s cheek as they stand at a taxi stand, she knows she needs to stop.

She made her choice. She has to live with it.

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In an effort to avoid having to deal with her own emotions, Lena throws herself into work. It helps that the Lakehawks go on a weeklong road trip and Lena doesn’t have to worry about having to watch Kara play basketball any time soon.

She manages to get through the entire next week and then some without having to think much about the team or Kara. She doesn’t catch any of their away games and avoids as much press about the team as she can apart from checking the stat sheet and reading her Lakehawks e-mail dumps in the morning. Kara is playing well, as usual, though her stats aren’t quite so extraordinary as they were
before the Olympic break.

There are a few meetings on her schedule, but they’re nothing so important that she can’t send her assistant to them as her proxy and she generally doesn’t have to worry about it.

Instead, she spends her time down in the basement labs of Luthor Tower where she can tinker among projects and keep her brain and hands occupied.

When the Lakehawks get back in town she takes an impromptu business meeting in Metropolis and gives her tickets to Jack. Though he looks at her with a touch of disappointment, he doesn’t comment.

Lana, however, makes sure she registers her disappointment with Lena nearly the second they see each other.

“Jack told me everything,” Lana says, frowning, and Lena blows out an irritated breath.

“You two really need to find something more interesting to bond over. It’s been like this since we were eleven.”

“I knew it was serious between you and the superstar,” Lana continues as if Lena hasn’t said anything.

“It wasn’t serious,” Lena denies and at Lana’s look of skepticism Lena adds, “I stopped it before it went there. That was the point.”

Lana’s quiet a moment, contemplative even. “That still sounds like it got more serious than you intended.”

Lena’s lips thin with a touch of displeasure, her chest starts to get that achy feeling it always gets when thinking about Kara for too long. “Serious or not,” she says, voice quiet. “It’s over between us.”

This, at least, makes Lana’s face go still, her eyes getting that same soft look Jack’s had the past few weeks. “I’m sorry, Lena,” she says, sincere.

“Don’t be,” Lena replies with a little laugh that comes out far more bitter than she intends. “It should have never started in the first place.”

Lana looks appropriately skeptical of the casual shrug that accompanies the words but doesn’t push back against them. “Well, if you need a good rebound, I know plenty of eligible women in Metropolis,” she offers with a teasing kind of smile.

It makes Lena chuckle even though the idea of sleeping with a stranger makes her squirm just the slightest. “I’m okay for the moment, but I’ll certainly let you know.”

“You do that,” Lana says with an exaggerated wink that has them both laughing.

They go out to dinner and don’t discuss Kara or basketball or anything related for the rest of the evening. Lena presses Lana on her own love life for a change and they talk about an upcoming project Lana’s been stuck on at work. At the end of it, Lena feels recharged and grateful to her friend. When they say goodbye, Lena hugs her a bit tighter than she normally might, but Lana doesn’t say anything, just hugs her back.

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Back in National City, Lena continues doing her best to throw herself into work as much as possible and not acknowledge anything happening related to her personal life or to a basketball team she happens to own.

It works as about as well as can be expected. The upside is that she’s been incredibly productive as of late. Her time spent down in the labs at Luthor Tower have resulted in the completion of multiple projects that’d been collecting dust and she’s so overprepared for a board meeting that she can sense the way her board sits up straighter in response.

Three home games pass that she doesn’t attend, but no one seems to comment on her absence. She makes sure to keep her seats filled and lodge a decent enough excuse as to why she can’t make an appearance even if all she’s doing is spending her night at her computer combing through code for a new navigation system in the Model L cars.

Everyone seems properly fooled as to what’s really happening. Everyone except Jack, of course.

Ever the persistent best friend, he continues to attempt to cajole her into drinks or dinner and she knows she can only cancel so many times until he calls her out on it. It reminds her a bit of college when she’d take to spending far too much time in the engineering labs and not nearly enough time learning the intricacies of some game called flip cup that Jack considered himself somewhat of a professional at.

Sure enough, after cancelling on him for the second night in a row – fourth in three weeks – he finds her in her office running some test on a few new lines of code she’d written earlier. He’s got a bottle of tequila in his hand as he strides in and a look of admonishment.

“I told you I had work to do,” Lena says in lieu of a greeting, sparing him just enough of a glance to purs her lips at the liquor in his hand.

“It’s nearly nine, Lena,” he says, walking over to the wet bar she keeps on the side of her office and picking up two glasses there. “This has gone on long enough.”

“I’m aware of the time, Jack,” she replies, glancing up from her computer screen to where Jack’s setting down a glass in front of her.

“Then you’re aware that the work day officially ended hours ago?”

“For you maybe,” Lena says, but she laughs when Jack pours a finger’s worth of tequila in her glass. “I’m not doing tequila shots in my office.”

“You act as if it’s the first time,” Jack says with a conspiratorial smile that has Lena shaking her head fondly.

“I have work to do,” she protests though she’s been staring at her screen for so long her eyes feel dry. “As I mentioned in my text.”

“You can’t cancel on your best friend three times in a row without expecting some push back.”

Lena sighs, pinches the bridge of her nose. “It’s just been busy here.”

Settling in the chair across from her, Jack leans back, legs crossed and observes her with a soft but obviously skeptical smile. “There are more fun coping mechanisms than overworking yourself, love.”

“Like tequila?” Lena asks with an unimpressed arch of her brow at the two shots on her desk.
“Yes,” Jack replies succinctly, sitting forward to pick up his glass and hold it aloft.

“I’m not overworking myself,” she denies, feeling an irrational need to protest the obvious. “Nor is it a coping mechanism.”

Jack shoots her a look that makes her sigh and despite her objection she pulls her own shot of tequila forward and eyes the liquid sloshing against the sides. “Tell that to someone that doesn’t know you.”

“Jack,” Lena sighs, but she can feel her resolve slipping away in light of Jack’s persistence.

“The best part of any break-up is getting absolutely pissed with your best friend and finding someone ridiculously hotter than your ex for revenge sex,” Jack says with a crooked grin that has Lena laughing. “I let you try it your way for a bit, with the whole complete avoidance thing, but now it’s time for mine. It’s processing and drunkenness time, Lena.”

Silence stretches between them, Lena observing the determined look in Jack’s face before relenting with a fond sigh.

“I’ll get drunk,” she says, pointing at him as if in warning, but picking up her glass. “But I’m a no-go on the revenge sex.”

Jack shrugs, clinks his glass against hers. “I’ll take it.”

The tequila burns pleasantly down her throat to burn in her chest. She sinks into the feeling, smiles at Jack and decides maybe a night of forgetting could do her some good.

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They end up at a club called Academy. It’s a spot they used to frequent years ago when Jack still lived in this part of town, but they haven’t been back in a few years. Lena agrees to the location because it’s far from their normal nightlife circle and there’s little chance she’ll run into someone she knows.

They buy another round of shots the second they get there and a round of vodka sodas before finding an empty high top against the wall they can linger around.

Jack leads her there with an arm around her waist and she leans into the feeling of him – comforting and warm. She has to admit it feels good to be out with him like this, not caring for a moment about work or Kara or anything other than the drink in her hand and her best friend. Jack comments on the dancefloor with amusement, engages Lena in discussion on whether a club’s use of lasers is acceptable or not. It distracts her well enough, along with the alcohol.

They stand at their table for two more rounds of drinks. By the third vodka soda, Jack tries to sweet talk a nearby table into buying them shots in such a blatant manner that Lena slaps at his arm.

“Would you stop it?” She chastises, pulling him away from the group and laughing. “I’ll go get us shots.”

Threading her way through the increasingly dense throng of people towards the bar, Lena makes a note to thank Jack for taking her out tonight. It’s the longest she’s gone in a good while without thinking of Kara or checking her phone as if expecting a call.

There’s a smile on her face when she finally makes it to the bar and leans over it to flag down a bartender, so of course that’s when a sudden presence makes itself known to her left and she feels her heart drop like lead into her stomach.
Lena?

The voice is immediately familiar. It wraps around her throat like a vice and for a long moment she debates not turning towards it. In the end, her manners win out and she plasters on what she knows is a fake smile, but it’s all she can muster before feigning surprise with a, “Sam?”

Though she expects it, it still shocks her system to take in the very real image of Sam Arias standing before her. Hair down around her shoulders, black loose sleeveless blouse exposing her arms and a fond surprised smile on her face that makes Lena’s lips go dry.

“Oh my god, hi,” Sam says, shaking her head in disbelief.

“Hi,” Lena says, feeling useless and just drunk enough not to care.

“I was wondering when I’d end up bumping into you,” Sam says as if it’d been something she’d hoped for.

Lena nods and goes for a polite smile. “Jack mentioned you were in town.”

“Yes, I – well I’m sure you heard I left Luthor Corp,” Sam tells her and Lena nearly laughs at her. As if she wouldn’t be aware of something within her company, especially when it has to do with an ex-girlfriend.

“Congratulations,” is all she can think to say, and Sam must hear how insincere it is because she frowns the slightest and laughs, all self-deprecating.

“It’s been a long time, hasn’t it?”

Years, really, and Lena nearly rolls her eyes at the trite expression. “It has,” she replies, running a hand down her side and idly wishing she had changed into something more appealing after work. She’s sure her hair looks a mess right now and she honestly doesn’t care what Sam thinks in general, but it’s never fun to run into an ex and not be looking like your best.

“How have you been?” Sam asks, leaning in closer as if it’s at all appropriate to engage in this kind of small talk at midnight in the middle of a nightclub.

“Great, good, yeah,” Lena replies, and she turns to search through the crowd for Jack, hopes he’ll come to her rescue soon.

“You look great,” Sam says, her eyes running up and down Lena’s body. It makes her shift self-consciously.

“You too,” Lena replies because it’s true. Sam looks great. Just like Lena remembers, but older and only more attractive with time.

It’s not the same as it used to be when just the thought or sight of Sam could make her heart twist emotionally. Some of it’s still there. A twinge of heartache she doesn’t think she’ll ever get rid of, but it’s muted, nostalgic more than anything.

Sam is silent a moment, her gaze critical almost as it levels with Lena’s for a long few seconds. It makes a curl of anxiety tumble around in her stomach, not sure she wants to know what Sam’s thinking about.

“Hey, do you think we could talk some time?” Sam asks, eyes sincere as her head ducks close. It’s a lot how Lena’d always fantasized Sam would be years ago, regretful of a decision that tore them
apart and begging Lena to take her back.

Right now, it only makes Lena feel like she wants to laugh while simultaneously run as far away from this conversation as physically possible.

Unsure how to answer, Lena takes a deep breath, looks away a second and searches for a way to get out of this. “Sam,” she sighs, laughing a bit at the end of it.

“Just to catch up,” Sam clarifies and when she shifts even closer Lena starts to feel trapped. They’re standing tight in the crowd of people at the bar and Lena can’t back up any more than she already is, but it turns out she doesn’t need to, because suddenly an arm is sliding over her shoulders and a warm, familiar body is pressing in close.

“Hey,” is the only warning she gets before Kara is kissing her temple swiftly and smiling down at her. “I thought maybe you got lost on the way to the bar.”

A flood of emotions seems to drop on Lena’s head at once. Shock, confusion, chiefly a kind of warm contentment she’d come to associate with Kara’s confident presence. It feels like the chill in her chest thaws out at the touch of Kara’s hand at her back.

“Hi,” Lena says, and her expression must convey her confusion because Kara winks at her conspiratorially before turning to Sam.

“Hi, I’m Kara,” she says, offering Sam a handshake.

Sam, who looks about as confused as Lena feels, still takes Kara’s hand politely. “Sam Arias.”

“Nice to meet you,” Kara says with a grin that falls just short of genuine. “Sorry to interrupt, but I sent this one to the bar for drinks what feels like hours ago and I was afraid maybe she got lost.”

Despite all the complications that Kara’s mere presence presents in her chest, Lena can’t deny the comfort just having her there makes her feel. It’s not the rescue she’d anticipated, but perhaps it’s somewhat better.

“Sorry, darling,” Lena replies softly, and though her heart feels like it’s taking off to the races, she presses in closer to the strong feeling of Kara’s body next to her own, wraps an arm around her waist. Kara doesn’t act put off by it, just continues on with her arm around Lena’s shoulders. “Sam is an old friend.”

“Wait, I’m sorry,” Sam says suddenly, her gaze intent on Kara. “Kara as in…Kara Danvers?”

Kara laughs, pulls Lena even closer to her. “That’s me.”

“The Calvin Klein model,” Sam clarifies and this time Lena laughs, a sharp crack of sound at Kara’s sudden frown.

“Kara plays basketball,” Lena explains, a hand going to Kara’s stomach in a familiar gesture that Sam’s eyes track to immediately. “Professionally.”

It’s the first time Lena doesn’t think twice about being romantically linked with Kara by someone in public. In the moment, she just doesn’t care. It’s not like Sam will necessarily make the connection anyway, and it’s certainly not as if Sam’s going to go off to expose them to some trashy gossip column. It just feels safer to ensconce herself away in the fiction Kara's created. Safer, surely, than continuing a conversation with an ex-girlfriend she hadn't been prepared for.
“Yeah, of course,” Sam says, shaking her head and laughing a bit. Even in the dim light of the club it looks like she might be blushing. “I knew that.”

They all observe each other for an awkward moment – Sam and Kara doing a poor job of acting like they’re not sizing each other up – until Sam takes a noticeably deep breath and smiles at Lena, resigned.

“Well, I’ll leave you two alone,” Sam says, and she looks like she might reach out to Lena, but puts her hand in the pocket of her pants instead.

“It was good to see you, Sam,” Lena offers, feeling a bit guilty at the look on Sam’s face, but grateful she’s been rescued from the conversation.

“You too. I was serious about catching up,” Sam says, eyes darting to Kara. “My number hasn’t changed.”

“Okay,” Lena replies vaguely, feeling Kara’s hold tighten on her shoulders. Sam nods once more before pushing away from the bar and disappearing back into the crowd.

It’s a relief to watch Sam walk away, but that feeling is quickly dismissed when she realizes it leaves her alone with Kara, who thankfully slides her arm off Lena’s body and shifts to take Sam’s place in front of her. They’re pressed in much closer than Sam had been and Lena feels tingly where Kara touched her and she’s had way too much vodka to be dealing with this right now.

“Sorry,” Kara says softly. “You looked like you needed a rescue.”

It occurs to her that it’s a bit odd Kara’s immediate thought of how to rescue Lena would be to fake being her girlfriend, but she decides not to comment. “I did, thanks.”

Kara’s smile is soft, small even. “That’s what friends are for, right?”

A series of questions pop into her mind and she glances around them again, wonders why Jack hasn’t found her yet. Not surprisingly, Kara seems to easily read her mind.

“We ran into Jack and he said he sent you to the bar for shots,” Kara tells her.

“We?” Lena asks, brow arching and trying not to sound too invested in the answer.

Kara’s smile is crooked. “Alex, Lucy and Maggie,” she answers. “We came here because we thought it’d be somewhere we wouldn’t run into anyone we knew.”

Lena laughs. “Us too,” she admits and they share a smile.

It’s painful in the kind of way Lena wants to lean into. Kara looks fantastic as always and it’s such a far cry from the feeling she had when she saw Sam. Her eyes rake up Kara’s black skinny jeans, the soft looking grey t-shirt under a black bomber jacket with white detailing. The ensemble makes Lena want to press back in closer, want to nose into Kara’s neck and pull her hair out of the high ponytail it’s twisted back into. To put her hand on the exposed skin of Kara’s collarbone and press a kiss to her jaw.

“So that’s Sam, huh?” Kara asks, glancing in the direction Sam disappeared. “The one you used to…”

“Yes,” Lena answers, watching the careful play of emotion across Kara’s face. “That was Sam.”
Kara nods, lips pressed in a thin line and eyes still searching the crowd for a moment. “You want me to go punch her or anything?”

It’s unexpected enough that Lena laughs, though she’s startled by how serious Kara looks as she offers it and without thinking Lena reaches forward to touch Kara’s forearm. “Don’t punch anyone,” Lena says, remembering the way Kara’d nearly swung at Leslie Willis during the All-Star Game.

Kara looks put off by the idea of not being able to fight Sam, but she relents, shoulders relaxing. “If you say so.”

Her hand is still settled on Kara’s arm and she snatches it away when she realizes it, the tingle of warmth from the contact travelling up her arm and into her chest despite her best efforts. Kara seems to notice, her eyes following the motion as her lips push together.

They’re silent a moment, just idling in each other’s airspace as the club continues to party around them and Lena feels rooted to the spot in front of Kara despite knowing it’s dangerous to stay there. She should go. Get far away before she gives in to the nearly unstoppable urge to kiss her.

“How have you been?” Kara asks just as Lena’s moments from bolting. Her fingers are twisting together in front of her, eyes open and eager as the search Lena’s face.

It’s telling that it’s the same question Sam had asked just minutes ago and yet Lena feels entirely different about the trajectory of this conversation.

“Fine,” she answers.

“You haven’t been to the games lately,” Kara replies, eyes narrowing just enough to be critical.

Lena realizes abruptly that she doesn’t have a good answer to that - knows her normal excuses won’t work on Kara - but she’s saved from saying anything by a man to her right interrupting them with a brusque, “Are you guys going to fucking order?”

It occurs to her that they’ve just been taking up space in front of a very busy bar and she thinks to apologize and move away but Kara turns a scowl the man’s direction that has him cowering immediately.

“Walk away, buddy,” Kara orders, standing to full height and letting her hands drift to her hips.

It seems to do the trick and the man turns away without further comment. Kara does, however, shift back to the bar and flags a bartender who responds to her immediately and paces over. “What are you drinking?” Kara asks Lena.

Lena waves her off. “I’m fine. I can buy my own drinks.”

“What are you drinking?” Kara repeats with a pointed look. “Vodka soda?”

“Yes, please,” Lena says, relenting.

Kara orders – as well as a round of shots for the group – and then turns back to Lena as the bartender moves away to get their drinks.

“Can we talk?” Kara asks suddenly, eyes intent in a way that has Lena’s heart thudding into her throat.

“About what?”
The answer is obvious even before Kara says, “About us,” and Lena can feel her chest start to go hollow in anticipation.

“I don’t think there’s anything to talk about,” Lena says carefully, looking to where the bartender is mixing their drinks and silently willing him to move faster.

“There is,” Kara insists and when she shifts closer Lena doesn’t move away even as the sudden sensation of warmth and the clean fresh scent that always wafts off Kara threatens to overwhelm her.

“Like what?” Lena asks, trying not to remember Kara’s innocent, _I don’t have feelings for you. Honestly. Swear._

If anything, Lena half expects Kara to argue again for reestablishing their previous arrangement, to insist that they’re still friends and Lena’s feelings doesn’t mean they have to stop sleeping together. Irrationally, it’s what she’s prepared for.

What she’s not prepared for is for Kara to lean in even closer, brow furrowed and eyes open as she says, “I lied to you about my feelings.”

A shock twists Lena’s ribcage and she blinks up at Kara, confused. “I’m sorry?”

Kara’s expression scrunches up suddenly and she shakes her head. “Okay, no, that sounds bad. I didn’t lie necessarily. Well I did, but not on purpose. I think I’ve just been confused, and I think we should revisit the idea that – ”

The bartender interrupts the flow of words when he sets a tray of shots down on the bar along with two vodka sodas in plastic cups. “All on one?”

Though Kara looks frustrated at the interruption, she nods politely and fishes in her back pocket for her wallet to slide the right amount of cash forward.

It gives Lena a second to gather her thoughts, try to process what the hell Kara is trying to say. And then Kara’s turning back towards her and handing her a drink. There’s a look on Kara’s face stuck between confusion and hope that has Lena’s stomach fluttering against her will.

“Kara, I really don’t think this is the time or the place,” Lena says because she has no idea what’s really happening and it’s hard enough to be this close to Kara after so long. The amount of alcohol she’s already consumed feels like it’s burning through her veins and it’s making her feel reckless.

With the first sip of her vodka soda she feels like she’s going to end up in bed with Kara at the end of this. Her skin is buzzing with desire and just being near to Kara is pulling feeling from parts of her body that threaten to take over rational thought.

For a heart-stopping second she doesn’t care that there are all these complicated feelings and realities surrounding their relationship. She doesn’t care that they’re in public or that she just had a tense run in with an ex or that sleeping with Kara tonight with be about the worst decision she could make.

It all feels small compared to the way Kara’s looking at her, to the way Kara smells and feels and to the desire pulling hard at her gut that’s screaming at her to make all the bad decisions she can.

“You’re right,” Kara says, interrupting the spiral of Lena’s thoughts. “I’m sorry.”

There’s a sad softening of Kara’s eyes, a frustrated twist of her lips that Lena feels like she understands and Lena knows she needs to remove herself from this situation before everything gets that much more confusing.
“Jack’s probably wondering where his shots are,” Lena jokes, hoping to lighten the mood and Kara laughs, but she jerks her head to the side and when Lena follows it there’s a clear line of sight to where Jack’s standing at a table with Alex and Lucy.

“I think he’s okay,” Kara comments and Lena rolls her eyes at the way Jack’s expressively telling some story, Lucy laughing at him and Alex shaking her head at both of them.

It occurs to her that returning to the table means spending more time in Kara’s close proximity and the idea gives her a spike of heat as well as anxiety. She has to do something.

“I think I’m going to run to the restroom,” she informs Kara, handing off her drink and going for an easy smile. “I’ll meet you over there.”

Though Kara looks somewhat skeptical, she accepts Lena’s drink and returns her smile. “Okay,” she says and with that Lena moves away, heads towards the bathrooms at the back of the club.

When she’s sure she’s out of sight she makes for the exit, calls her driver and texts Jack when she’s already three blocks away.

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Jack calls her the next day sounding supremely hungover, but equally concerned about her, which is the only reason she forgives him for not checking up on her earlier. It’s also amusing enough to hear the way he suddenly sounds far more awake the moment she details her run in at the bar.

“Sam?!” Jack exclaims halfway into a laugh. “You’ve got to be kidding me.”

“Yes, Sam,” Lena says, shuffling through items in her fridge to get to the coffee. “So you can imagine how well timed it was that you sent Kara to the bar to find me.”

Jack makes a noise, a bit of a laugh. “While I’d love to take credit for that genius plan, I assure you that I didn’t send Kara anywhere. Kara Danvers does what she wants.”

“You couldn’t have warned me?” Lena says, testy despite acknowledging it’s not really Jack’s fault.

“Warned you about what? The second I told Kara you were at the bar she was already walking that direction,” he tells her. “And frankly, had I known you were talking to Sam, I would have sent her over.”

“Because you want me to get double teamed by my exes?” Jack chortles and Lena sighs at his sudden laughter, regretting her choice of words. “You know what I mean, don’t be a child.”

“At least you’re acknowledging Kara is an ex,” he says as his laughter dies out.

“Was I not acknowledging that before?”

Jack sighs, but it’s a fond sound that makes her want to hug him. “Can we wade through the depth of your delusions over brunch or something? I think that sixth B-52 Lucy made me do is trying to swim back upstream.”

“I feel like we should make a concerted effort to avoid you and Lucy Lane hanging out, for both your safety and the health of my basketball team,” Lena says. Jack makes a noise of annoyance.

“Whatever, you have your favorite baller, I have mine,” Jack says. “And it was hard to avoid her power, considering Kara and Alex left after like, two drinks.”
“Poor baby,” Lena says, and Jack whines.

“Brunch?”

Sparing a glance to her schedule, Lena laughs. “I’ll meet you at Julio’s, but you’re buying.”

Brunch with Jack ends up being just what she needed and a bit more enlightening than she’d expected. Though it takes Jack a full stack of pancakes and two mimosas to feel capable of carrying on any kind of real conversation, he runs her through what she missed at the bar.

Chiefly, the way Kara seemed extremely put out by Lena’s sudden flight from the club as well as some unsolicited gossip about Alex Danvers and Lucy Lane.

“I’m telling you, they’re sleeping together,” he insists, stabbing at his second meal of the morning – eggs benedict. How Jack is able to eat this much while hungover, Lena’s not sure, but it reminds her of early Sunday mornings in college when Jack would take her to his favorite diner and recount his Saturday night exploits over a pot of coffee and more bacon than Lena’d ever care to be around.

“You think everyone is sleeping with everyone,” Lena dismisses with a laugh as she pushes her eggs around her plate and thinks about the way Jack talked about Kara when they first met - woman in every port he had said. Something about Kara being upset about Lena’s leaving just didn’t jive with it. If she thought hard on it, so much about what she knows about Kara doesn’t check out with that first impression.

“I consider myself a bit of an expert on knowing when two women are sleeping together,” Jack pronounces, a self-assured smile that has Lena kicking him in the shins.

“Don’t be gross,” she chastises, but he shrugs a shoulder, unaffected by her glare.

“This is the same with you and Sam when you tried to convince everyone you were just friends for an entire semester and…oh that’s right, you and Kara,” he says, a long drawn out emphasis on the name.

“Jack,” she hisses, kicking him again, but he just laughs.

“I must have done something crazy in another lifetime considering I’m constantly surrounded by women that all want to sleep with each other,” he says around a mouthful of eggs and ham.

Lena’s lips twist in disgust, but she laughs at him when he makes a show of closing his mouth and chewing.

“I don’t know what to tell you, darling,” she says, this time her foot pressing more affectionately against his shin instead of kicking it.

Thankfully, he swallows before answering. “Tell me you’ll still marry me if we’re both unwed at forty,” he says with a cheeky grin.

Her chest feels light as she grins back at him. “As long as you allow me a mistress,” she teases and Jack’s smile widens.

“As if I’d deprive the love of my life such a thing,” he says in an exaggerated tone that makes her laugh again.
“I appreciate your generosity.”

“I’m sure Kara will too,” he returns, so quickly that Lena almost doesn’t register what he’s said until she’s already nodding in agreement.

Her eyes go a bit wide and that just makes Jack laugh as he shovels more food into his mouth.

“Would you stop it?”

His laughter does not obey her command, but he reaches over the table to grab at her hand. “If you’d stop making the most hilarious faces every time I bring her up, the novelty would wear off.”

“I’ll work on it,” Lena says dryly, rolling her eyes and picking up Jack’s mimosa to take a long sip.

“It’s all in the processing, love. You’ve always been a quick learner,” he says, shrugging and winking at her. “I believe in you.”

She scoffs, exasperated, and kicks him again for good measure.

--

Knowing that her absence at matches has become far more conspicuous than Lena'd like, she begins to ease herself back into attending regularly with Jack's rampant encouragement. It means seeing Kara far more than she'd been the last few weeks, but it's not something she can help. The Lakehawks are still part of her job. Still part of Kara's job. That's just a reality she has to face.

So avoiding Kara becomes much more difficult. It certainly doesn't help that it feels like Kara's face is everywhere, but Lena does a good job of dodging her as much she can. It's difficult, but not unmanageable.

The only contact they have after the bar is a text from Kara that comes late in the evening the next day. I really do think we should talk again.

Lena doesn't respond to it until the next morning and all she says is I'm really busy this week, sorry.

It’s not a complete lie. She’s scheduled as many meetings as possible for the coming week, content to bury herself in work, content to let Jack to continue to drag her out every once in a while. One night, he pulls her out to a club near the baseball stadium on the other side of town. It’s how Lena finds herself approaching a VIP booth that already has Lucy Lane and Helena Bertinelli of all people in it. Lena has a vague recollection of Gotham pummeling the Skippers a night ago. Her eyes immediately scan around the immediate area for Kara and is relieved not to find any sign of her.

“Hello ladies!” Jack yells, before Lena can ask him why he’s not told her who else might be there. Lucy doesn’t look surprised at all at his approach and Lena swallows the urge to swat at him as Helena stands to greet them.

Jack and Lucy embrace, having seemingly bonded somehow without Lena having noticed. Helena offers a more polite handshake for Lena, familiar enough to not seem awkward, but not the same way Jack is grinning enigmatically at Lucy.

“Nice to see you, Lena,” Lucy says, shifting away from Jack to wrap an arm around Lena’s waist and hug her.

It’s a bit of surprise, Lena must admit, but she manages to react normally enough to the gesture and hug Lucy back.
"You too, Lucy."

"You two here alone?" Jack asks, as they settle back down into the booth and Lucy shakes her head, reaching for a bottle of whisky in the chiller on the table and offering it to Jack.

"Maggie and Kate were here earlier, but they went out to the dance floor and we haven’t seen them since," Lucy answers.

"Ah," Jack replies shortly, sharing a knowing glance with both Lucy and Helena that Lena has no idea how to interpret. It’s as if Jack has somehow assimilated among these people when she wasn’t paying attention.

"Am I missing something?" Lena feels compelled to ask as Jack pours her a short glass of whiskey and looks beyond her shoulder to flag down a server.

Helena, who has been eying Lena since she sat down, smiles secretively. "Maggie and Kate," she answers as if that’s any kind of explanation.

Shockingly, it’s Jack that fills her in with a laugh and a, “They make you look romantically well adjusted.”

At first, Lena is merely offended, until she realizes what Jack’s referring to and anxiety spikes through her so swiftly that she’s sure she’s blushing, looking at Lucy and Helena to judge their reactions.

Thankfully, they don’t seem to register the comment than anything other than its face value. Both of them laugh at Jack’s joke until Lena relaxes and laughs with them.

“I don’t think I want to know,” Lena says, sipping at her drink as Jack orders a round of shots from the server who’s made their way over.

“You don’t,” Lucy tells her with a grin.

Helena, who hasn’t stopped appraising her since she sat down, affects a flirtatious looking smile that has Lena’s eyebrows raising.

“I’d be happy to tell you the entire story over drinks,” Helena says in such a straightforward manner that Lucy smacks at Helena’s arm.

“Don’t hit on the owner of my team,” Lucy chides, though she’s laughing at the way Helena is rubbing at her arm.

“She’s not the owner of your team right now, we’re in a fucking night club,” Helena protests and Lena watches the exchange with wide eyes. Jack is just laughing at them, as if the exchange is something familiar.

“Don’t hit on Lena, she’s off limits,” Lucy amends and Helena looks completely affronted by the statement.

“Don’t tell me what to do, bitch,” Helena responds and Lena thinks to be shocked by the sudden escalation of the argument, but Lucy laughs so hard at the statement that she realizes it’s far more good natured that she’d assumed.

Jack is laughing along with them and it relaxes some of the tension Lena’d been holding in her shoulders.
“Ignore her, Lena,” Lucy tells her.

It takes a second, but Lena finds a suitable reply in, “That shouldn’t be hard.”

As if no one expected her to reply like that, they’re all silent a beat before Jack chortles and Lucy’s face takes on a delighted smile as she pokes at Helena and laughs. “Told you she was fun,” Lucy is saying and it wraps an unexpected warmth around Lena’s ribcage.

Their server returns with shots for them all, tequila per Jack’s request. They all pluck a shot off the tray and hold them over the table towards each other. “To National City’s superiority over Gotham,” Lucy says to toast and Lena looks at Helena as if expecting her to protest, but she merely shrugs a shoulder.

“Can’t argue with that,” she says before clinking her glass with the rest of them and promptly throwing her shot back.

Lena laughs, exchanges a smile with Lucy and feels more relaxed than she’d ever think she would in this kind of scenario.

Of course, that’s about when her mind wanders where it’s apt to these days. Straight to Kara. It’s hard not to wonder what their lives would be like without the complication of circumstance. What it’d be like if Kara were next to her right now, joking with their friends and exchanging laughing smiles with Lena.

Lucy and Helena seem to be treating her as if she were any other fellow clubgoer. Despite Lucy’s earlier protests, she doesn’t treat Lena at all like she owns the team Lucy plays for. Instead, she cajoles Lena onto the dance floor at one point, drags Jack there by the black tie he’s wearing and Helena joins them later with four shots of something fruity tasting.

It feels normal in a way Lena doesn’t know how to categorize.

So instead, she just enjoys the moment, laughs at the enthusiastic way Helena sings along to the music playing – all but screaming it in Lucy’s face.

It’s nice. Even if it can’t help but feel fleeting.

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Lakehawks games have certainly changed from the first time Lena’d attended, but Lena’d always attributed that to her growing relationship with Kara.

As she sits at the next match - a midweek contest against Ivy Town - she realizes she’s far more ingratiated in the team than she’d assume.

Lucy comes over to her almost immediately and greets her and Jack with a wide smile. Jack actually gets up and hugs her. It’d be easy to write that off as having just recently socialized with Lucy at the club, but then M’gann is striding past them towards a rack of balls and slows enough to give Lena a nod and a little wave.

Alex jogs by and holds her fist out. Jack immediately bumps his own against her’s, but Lena’s so taken aback that she doesn’t think to react until Alex pauses and looks at her expectantly.

The entire team makes some show of greeting her and Lena can’t recall if that’s something that’s been happening for a while and she didn’t notice, or if something shifted overnight somehow.
Kara’s made her way onto the court and Lena’s eyes snap to her quickly and of their own volition. They stay glued there as Kara catches a pass from Maggie and makes an easy layup.

Maybe it’s just that Lena’d never really noticed anything except Kara before.

On her way to the bench, Kara catches Lena’s eye, lets a soft smile that’s becoming commonplace grace her lips, and looks away.

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The calls from unknown numbers at odd times throughout her days and nights are becoming so commonplace that she doesn’t even blink at it before answering.

“Have you read mother’s email?” Lex asks, before even saying hello. He sounds particularly joyful today. Lena’s only just got home from work at eleven and feels considerably less so. But hearing her brother’s voice brings a small smile to her face.

“I think we must be on different email chains,” Lena says, flicking through channels on her television. “People she actually cares for, people she tolerates.”

“She tells an inspirational story of you ruining some poor girl named Sarah’s life in middle school,” Lex says. “Terrifying stuff. Similar topic: why are you not going to all the Lakehawks games?”

“Similar topic?” Lena laughs before abruptly realizing what he means. Her sudden silence makes her brother chuckle and she feels compelled to cut him off from further comment with, “I’ve been busy running a company by myself.”

The local news, as if hearing their conversation, starts to run a highlight package from the game last night - one she had managed to weasel out of by sending Jack with some girl - and it includes a clip of Kara grimacing at the scoreboard as she walks off the court.

“Feels pointed,” Lex says. There’s a burst of sound on his end of the phone. It sounds like a drum circle or something. Lena rubs at her temple. “Lena, the blogosphere is starting to note your inconsistency. There are whispers that you’re considering selling the team.”

“You get the blogosphere where you’re at?” Lena asks. Lex laughs.

“Are you doing alright?” Lex asks. “And I’m not asking because I care about my basketball team. Though I do. Especially my prized draft pick, one Kara Danvers. Not sure if you’ve heard of her, but I spent a lot of bribe money to secure her.”

“You know, the CIA is probably recording this call,” Lena deadpans, knowing full well Lex didn’t need to bribe anyone to acquire Kara Danvers. In fact, Kara’d recounted the story of her draft day one night over cups of coffee – how Alex had already landed in National City and there wasn’t really another choice for her after that. Kara would follow Alex anywhere.

“I’m flattered the CIA find me worthy of attention, but that doesn’t answer my question.”

“I’m fine,” Lena says. There’s a waver in her voice, she can feel it. Lex is probably one of only a few people that would detect it, but thankfully he doesn’t seem too keen on calling her out.

“You’re always fine, Lena,” he says in that big brother voice he has. “But tell me, do you know what’s up with Kara Danvers? The blogosphere has a lot of opinions about her recent attitude change of late.”
“Attitude change?” Lena asks, feeling how forced the innocence in her voice sounds. “I don’t know what you mean.”

“Fine, I’ll call Jack and ask,” Lex says, sounding smug.

“Cute,” Lena returns, sarcastic enough that Lex laughs.

“I’m just checking,” he says. “I want to make sure the team hasn’t completely imploded by the time I come back and steal them from your clutches.”

“You think I’d give them back to you that easily?” Lena replies, smiling at the prospect of her brother returning to National City. Having him around, even at his wildest, was better than not.

“I said steal didn’t I?”

Lena laughs. “I miss you,” she says more softly than she intends.

Across the line, Lex seems to pause. The distant sound of crowd chatter and drumming is the only thing in Lena’s ear for a moment. “I miss you too,” he says and then takes an audible breath. “I’m thinking of investing in coconuts. Thoughts?”

The non-sequitur, and its obvious intention to change the subject, makes her laugh. “I don’t think that’s a thing.”

“It is,” he says firmly and she shakes her head, shifts down on her couch.

“Not with company money,” she instructs, smiling.

“You’ve frozen all my accounts, how would I even manage that?”

“You have your ways,” she accuses, narrowing her eyes even though he can’t see her.

He laughs boisterously. “You were always the smart Luthor, weren’t you?”

“Glad you’re finally accepting that,” Lena teases, thankful for the easy way Lex always makes her smile.

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The Lakehawks have a day planned to visit the children’s ward at one of Luthor Corp’s National City hospitals. It’s been on her calendar for months, but as the day approaches Lena wavers on her earlier decision to attend. The guest list includes nearly the whole team, and features heavily on its star player. It’s one thing to go to a few games and share a half-hearted smile, but it’s another to be caught one-on-one in a small hospital ward.

In the end, she chooses human decency over an overwhelming need to avoid Kara and heads to the hospital.

The starting lineup of the Lakehawks are already there in full warm-up gear and bearing boxes full of gifts. Lena spots Lucy and Maggie first as they take turns signing a small basketball and handing it to a young girl in a wheelchair. Lucy gives a wave her way while Maggie kneels down to talk to the girl.

Kara’s in the corner talking to a small boy in a bed. Whatever Kara’s saying is making the boy laugh and his parents are beaming at Kara from the head of his bed. It’s a touching scene, one Lena can’t seem to take her eyes off. For half a second, she can imagine a much younger Kara in a hospital bed
like this one, and it makes her want to come to Kara’s side, grip her fingers. But she hangs back. Kara is leaning forward to hug the boy, a soft smile on her face.

If she hadn’t already been aware of her feelings for Kara, she’d certainly be clued in now.

Turning away from the sight after what is surely too long watching it, Lena goes through the paces of talking to the right people and signing the right papers. She takes a few press pictures and gets through the emotions of talking to the children. All while doing her best to avoid running full on into Kara.

It’s not easy. They’re in a confined enough space and as anticipated Lena can’t exactly avoid her entirely without making a scene.

Which is how she inevitably ends up on opposite sides of a gigantic teddy bear being gifted to the ward with a softly smiling Kara Danvers.

“Well,” Kara greets with a casual pull of her lips.

Lena returns the greeting, but with a deep intake of air she knows doesn’t go unnoticed. They’re saved from further discussion by Winn who holds up his phone between them. “Wave for Instagram,” he instructs with a grin and dutifully Kara turns to the camera and does as she’s told. A second later, Lena manages to do the same.

They take three pictures until Winn’s satisfied and leaves them alone all over again.

Kara turns back towards her as if to pick up conversation, but Lena’s decided she’s made enough of an appearance at this event for the day and dismisses Kara’s intent with a carefully crafted smile.

“I’m afraid I have to go,” she says, the words over-enunciated and soft. “It was good to see you.”

“Lena,” Kara says, impossibly soft and full of both plea and admonishment.

Lena takes another deep breath, it resonates shakily in her chest, but before she can say much else Kara adds, “We’re friends.” It seems to be a constant mantra of Kara’s, like if she just reminds Lena enough it’ll somehow become true.

It pulls a hot feeling in the well of her eyes and makes her hyper aware of where they are and who might be listening. “We are,” she says with a nod and a lift of her chest. Kara had already made it perfectly clear that friendship was all she was really looking for from Lena. Kara wasn’t the one suffering from the complication of having feelings, and whatever confusion she was having didn’t negate the fact that nothing at all should be happening between them. The reminder of it gives Lena the backbone she needs to walk away. “I’ll see you around.”

Kara doesn’t reply, but Lena doesn’t give her much chance before turning around and heading towards the hospital director to say her goodbyes.

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It’s a game in Star City that Lena attends only because Jack tricks her by scheduling a talk for both of them at a local convention. Luthor Corp and Spheerical have had a long standing partnership and it’s pretty common for her and Jack to appear together at tech conferences and press events to announce new projects and answer questions.

Lena doesn’t even realize the Lakehawks are in town until Jack mentions it on the itinerary for the weekend. Suffice it to say, Lena is less than pleased. An away game feels so much for vulnerable
than one at home in an arena with her name on it. There's something more intentional and exposed about sitting in the stands as a visitor.

“You can’t be serious,” she says as they’re idling in hotel lobby trying to decide on a dinner locale.

“It will look odd if you’re in town and you don’t attend the game,” Jack comments, affecting a casual expression that Lena wants to slap off his face.

“I can’t imagine how anyone would find out,” Lena replies and he gives her a look that tells her exactly how and she nearly shoves him. “What is your goal here?”

“Processing,” Jack says, shrugging. “You’ve gone to home games, you can go to away games.”

“I have been processing,” Lena says. “I’m over it.”

“You’re over it,” Jack repeats, clearly unimpressed with her lie. “Last week you told me we couldn’t go to a charity cocktail hour because she was invited. Charity cocktails. Those are your favorite charity events.”

“I believe I told you we couldn’t go because I had an early meeting the next day,” Lena says airily, avoiding Jack’s intent gaze.

“You can’t avoid her forever,” Jack says, suddenly serious. “As long as you own the Lakehawks and she plays for them you’re going to have to get used to the reality of seeing her all the time. Not just at games, but out and about. You run in the same circles. We’re friends with her friends.”

“I am perfectly used to reality. I see her plenty in National City,” Lena replies, choosing not to correct Jack - he’s friends with Kara's friends, but Lena's not entirely sure she could put herself in the same category.

“Then you can handle seeing her here,” Jack points out. “It’s not a big deal, right? I thought you were over it.”

Lena hates how easily he backs her into a corner and she crosses her arms over her chest, lips thinning. “I hate you,” she says quietly, smiling slightly to soften the words in a way that makes Jack laugh.

“No, you don’t,” he denies cheekily and she fails at suppressing her smile.

“You’re far too invested in this,” she points out and he shrugs a shoulder, but his expression goes back to being serious.

“Maybe I feel guilty,” he admits. “For having put you in this position in the first place. I want you to be alright.”

It doesn’t make sense to her for a moment until she grasps his meaning and reaches out to wrap her fingertips around his wrist. “You had nothing to do with it,” she tells him, shocked he’d think for a second he had any part in the emotional turmoil she’s currently dealing with.

“I was the one that encouraged you to go out with her,” he says and she acknowledges that with a conceding tilt of her head. “And now you’re a mess.”

“You told me to sleep with her, not to get so messed up,” she reminds him, thinking of the way he’d first talked about Kara’s reputation, about how all Lena needed to do was get it out of her system.
“I should have known better,” Jack replies and Lena shakes her head at him, clicking her tongue in disagreement.

“You’re not responsible for my poor choices, Jack,” Lena says, baffled he’d even think otherwise for a moment. “Just like I’m not responsible for that time you drunkenly hit on my mother.”

It does the trick of lightening his mood, his jaw dropping a bit before he descends back into laughter. “You are absolutely responsible for that, you could have told me that’s whose ass I’d been checking out before I approached her.”

“It’s not my fault you couldn’t recognize a woman you’ve known since you were eight.”

“I’d think you’d be comfortable knowing I can’t recognize your mother by her backside,” he points out and she laughs, squeezing the wrist she’s still holding onto.

“You’re right.”

“Of course I am,” he says, smugly. “Just like I’m right about going to the game tonight.”

The reminder makes her groan softly and a tad pathetically. He laughs at her and slings an arm over her shoulders. “Oh, don’t be like that,” he says, slinging an arm over her shoulder and directing her towards the bar on the other side of the lobby. “Let me buy you a drink.”

“You’re buying all my drinks tonight,” Lena tells him and he just winks at her.

“Whatever it takes, love.”

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The game isn’t quite the trainwreck Lena had been anticipating. They get seats a few rows behind the Lakehawks bench and when a few players notice her during warmups, they wave and smile. It occurs to her again how different an experience it is from when she first took over the team.

Kara doesn’t notice her right away. It’s actually Lucy Lane who whispers something to Kara moments after waving hello to Lena that has blue eyes pulling up straight in Lena’s direction.

Jack waves enthusiastically enough that Kara returns the gesture and manages a smile for Lena. It beats uncomfortably across her chest and she wonders when it will stop affecting her so much just seeing Kara.

Thankfully, the game starts before she and Kara have to stare at each other much longer, and she’s able to focus her attention on the drink in her hands and Jack’s running commentary on the game.

The Lakehawks lose.

Kara puts up a valiant effort – tallies twenty-five points and twelve assists – but the rest of the team seems out of sync. Maggie fouls out in the third, Alex shoots 2-17 from the field and Lucy turns the ball over almost three times in a row. M’gann is the only player that seems to have her head on straight, but even her expert passing and thirty points can’t carry the team to victory.

They’re no match for Sara Lance having a career-high thirty-eight points and Felicity Smoak having the game of her season on defense with nine steals and an unreal field goal percentage.

There’s frustration all across the Lakehawks bench. Alex can be seen at one point hunched forward, elbows on her knees, and towel draped over her head to hide her face. Kara sits next to her, slouched
low in the chair and watching the game with a surly expression Lena easily identifies.

Cat spends most of the time yelling at anyone within earshot. There’s a moment when Kara takes a nasty fall after going up for a block on Laurel. She lands directly on her back and it’s loud enough that Lena can hear it all the way in her seat. The sound of it nearly freezes the breath in Lena’s lungs, even though Kara sits up slowly, waving off trainers who come out to check on her. Cat starts screaming bloody murder at the referee calling for a foul and even going so far as to throw her clipboard his direction.

In the end, Laurel helps pick Kara up from the ground, Kara gets benched the rest of the game and the only person that gets a foul is Cat who earns a technical for whatever venom she’s spit at the referee during the entire ordeal.

All in all, Lena’s grateful when the game finally ends and she can retreat back to her hotel.

Before retiring to her room, she and Jack stop for a late night snack and drink as had become their routine earlier in the season. As they sit at the bar sipping at Bailey’s and watching coverage of the game on the television in front of them, Lena starts to relax.

It feels a bit like she survived something.

“Kara played well,” Jack comments as a highlight package of Kara crossing one of her defenders over and driving to the basket plays on the screen.

“For all the good it did,” Lena adds with a twist of her lips.

“Better to perform like that now than in the playoffs,” Jack replies and Lena makes a noise of agreement.

It’s comfortable to sit there with Jack and unwind form the tension Lena’s come to associate with Lakehawks games. She tries to shake away the feeling in her body like it’s still preparing to see Kara in an hour – fresh from the game and reaching for Lena with strong fingers.

Jack finishes his drink quickly and announces his intention to retire to his room, but Lena finds herself hesitant to leave. There’s something more profound about the emptiness of her hotel room than she’d like to admit.

Thankfully, Jack doesn’t say anything, though there’s something sad in his eyes when Lena tells him she’s staying for another round. He kisses her goodnight and leaves her to it.

Though she doesn’t order another drink, she does nurse the one in front of her for long enough that she notices the television is starting to replay the earlier broadcast of the game.

It’s still odd to see her own image on the screen, seated next to Jack in the crowd. The players are walking on to the court for tip off and though she knows it’s not noticeable to anyone else, she can so clearly see the way Kara turns her direction briefly. She remembers the moment their eyes connected for just a few seconds before the whistle blew.

The memory is enough to have her throwing the rest of her drink back and smiling her thanks to the bartender.

It’ll get better, she reminds herself. It won’t always be like this.

Had she not been so caught up in giving herself a mental pep-talk, she might have noticed the figure walking into the lobby and stopping in their tracks as she crossed her way towards the elevators.
As it is, she doesn’t notice anything at all until she’s pressing the button for her floor in the elevator and her eyes drift up briefly enough to see Kara.

A wave of déjà vu floods over her as Kara strides forward swiftly and just as the elevator doors start to close, Kara’s arm shoots out to shove them firmly back apart.

Lena’s stomach flips over and she backs up against the wall as Kara steps inside.

The fresh, just-showered smell of her invades the small elevator car and even the tentative smile Kara’s wearing is nearly the exact picture she’d been all those months ago before they kissed for the first time.

The memory burns down her arms into her fingertips and Lena’s heart thuds with the ominous sound of the elevator doors closing.

“Hey,” Kara says, soft as she turns to press a number on the panel of buttons – one above the floor Lena’d already selected. There are nearly sixty-five floors in this building and Lena suddenly wishes she were staying on one lower down the list.

“Hi,” Lena returns, trying to suppress the way her body wants to react to being this close to Kara for the first time in too long.

“It’s good to see you again,” Kara says, so politely that it almost sounds fake as she backs up against the elevator wall and the car starts to move upward.

“You could have waited for the next elevator,” Lena mumbles, keeping her eyes trained at anything but the way Kara’s leaning against the wall. There’s something about the look of Kara after a game. Her lightwash jeans and Lakehawks-issued zip-up that makes Lena’s insides go liquid.

“You could stop avoiding me,” Kara counters, sounding some mixture of hurt and irritated.

The accusation pulls Lena to look at her, indignant. “I have not been avoiding you,” she denies, clicking her tongue against the lie.

“Yes, you have. You just told me I could have waited for a different elevator,” Kara replies a touch more testily. “And I don’t see why you feel you need to.”

Lena can’t help but huff at that, her smile incredulous. “Really?”

“Yes, really,” Kara says and Lena shakes her head at her.

“Even you aren’t that dense,” she says and then it’s Kara’s turn to look indignant.

“Lena we’re friends, okay? That…” Kara pauses, lips pressed together for a moment as if searching for words. “That other stuff doesn’t matter.”

Lena blinks, thinks to scoff but is almost too offended by Kara’s characterization of what’s happening. Instead she laughs, a bit shrilly, and looks at Kara as if she’s an idiot.

“I’m in love with you, Kara,” Lena says, the words flowing slowly out of her mouth without a second thought. It’s not as if there’s any point in denying them anymore. They’ve already been sitting between them for weeks. “That’s not other stuff.”

Their eyes snap together, connecting in such a tangible way that Lena forgets to breathe for a second with the way Kara’s expression goes intent on her own. With a soft intake of air, Kara looks
appropriately contrite enough that Lena relaxes the indignation in her face. “That’s not what I meant, I just – look that’s what I want to talk about.”

“I can’t imagine there’s anything left to be said,” Lena says softly, turning away from the look on Kara’s face.

“There is,” Kara insists and Lena blows out a breath.

“Like what?”

A pause and Lena glances at Kara for a moment. There’s that same confusion Lena feels like Kara’s had on her face ever since that night Lena finally confessed what she was feeling. Lena watches as she takes a deep breath, drawing up to her full height.

“Like maybe I’m in love with you too,” Kara says and it’s so quiet that Lena feels like she doesn’t hear it right away, processes it on a delay, but as she does it’s like everything in her body goes so rigid it’s painful.

With considerable effort to stave off the heat in the back of her eyes, she keeps her gaze on the numbers of the floors as they climb further upwards. The elevator feels like it’s taking an age.

“That doesn’t change anything,” she answers, the words dropping out softly between them.

Kara turns more fully to face her, but Lena can’t look over. Knows it would only end with Kara in her bed. “What do you mean it doesn’t change anything? Of course –”

“I told you before,” Lena interrupts firmly, this time finally turning to look at Kara’s face. “I won’t date someone that works for me.”

“I don’t work for you,” Kara says in a low tone.

“You play for a team I own,” Lena points out, despite feeling just how absurd this reasoning has become in the face of her feelings for the other woman in the elevator.

“Then I’ll put in for a trade,” Kara answers immediately, her expression honest and sincere.

It shocks against Lena’s chest, startles her enough that she doesn’t know what to say other than, “Don’t be ridiculous.”

“I’m serious,” Kara says and it’s very clear the more Lena looks at her just how serious it is. Lena can’t even process what Kara’s saying, what she means. It’s not at all what she expected to hear and she’s saved from responding by the dinging of the elevator doors.

“You’re being irrational,” she whispers, shaking her head at the intent look on Kara’s face.

Without further comment she turns to see the doors opening to her floor and moves to exit, but Kara’s grabbing her hand and pulling her back inside so swiftly that they collide into each other solidly. Kara’s free hand reaches up to stop the doors from closing.

“I’m serious,” Kara repeats, her face close enough to Lena’s that it wouldn’t take much for them to be kissing.

Lena can see just how serious Kara really is, can read it all over her face. The confusion from earlier is gone in wake of something decisive and persistent. It reminds Lena unerringly of what Kara looks like while playing basketball when the score is close and the clock is running down to zero.
She feels seconds from crying. Can feel the tug of heat at the back of her eyes so acutely that her throat starts to ache from the restraint it takes to stop the tears. It doesn’t look like Kara is faring much better, her blue eyes shimmering as she looks intently at Lena.

“This is your career you’re talking about,” Lena says, the words sounding thick through the emotion in her throat.

“There are more important things,” Kara says without hesitation, her hand still warm where it’s wrapped around Lena’s.

It’s like something out of a dream and Lena doesn’t know how to react. It’s like she’s running on default functioning because all she can think of is that she needs to remove herself from this conversation as quickly as possible.

“You’re not thinking clearly,” Lena whispers, trying to get the words out as evenly as possible. “We had a fling, Kara. A fling that got out of hand and –”

“It wasn’t a fling and you know it,” Kara interrupts, the pleading look of her eyes starting to chip at Lena’s chest. “It hasn’t been for a long time. I just didn’t realize it.”

“That doesn’t –” Lena doesn’t know what to say, how to argue against the way Kara’s looking at her, and she feels her grip on all the reasons this is a bad idea slipping away. “It doesn’t matter.”

“Of course it matters,” Kara says. “I’m sorry that I didn’t know what was happening, but I get it now. We can figure this out.”

“Kara,” Lena says, unsure of how even to finish what’s she’s thinking. There are too many things happening in her mind right now to sort it out.

“I can play for a different team, Lena,” Kara says insistently. “We can do this.”

It’s right there for the taking. Lena can almost taste it. Her eyes dart to Kara’s lips and god she wants to, but then Kara’s shoving the elevators doors apart again when they try to shut and the shrill alarm that rings out breaks them apart just enough for Lena to breathe.

“I’m not going to be the person that took Kara Danvers away from the Lakehawks,” Lena says, voice barely a whisper as she softly pulls her hand away from Kara’s. “I won’t.”

“You don’t have to be,” Kara says, sounding so desperate that it pulls hard at Lena’s chest.

“I have to go,” Lena says, slowly losing the fight against her oncoming bout of crying.

“Lena, let’s talk about this,” Kara insists, though she doesn’t move when Lena steps backward off the elevator.

“Nothing’s changed,” is all Lena manages to say before turning and walking away.

The lie burns down her throat so intensely that as soon as she hears the elevator doors close behind her, she lets the tears welling in her eyes finally fall.

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*Everything* has changed.

Lena feels like she can’t do anything but replay that moment in the elevator over and over again until she drives herself crazy.
Even throwing herself headfirst back into work doesn’t do the trick of distraction like it was before. Her reasoning starts to feel muddled in her head, shadowed by the honest way Kara had looked in the elevator.

A fantasy starts to form. One where she’d kissed Kara the moment she’d said *maybe I’m in love with you too.*

It’s a nice fantasy. The fantasy version of her gets to laugh against the press of Kara’s mouth, gets to thread their fingers together and walk out of the elevator, down the hall into her hotel room. In the fantasy they wake up together without any kind of anxiety, they date out in the open and Lena doesn’t think twice about smiling widely at Kara during Lakehawks games.

It’s nice.

But it’s also devastating and Lena finds the thought of it so oppressive that a few days later she steals away to Metropolis just to get away from it. Jack doesn’t question her when she says she’s going east to take care of some business, just makes her promise to tell Lana hi for him.

Lana doesn’t seem as immediately disappointed in Lena the way she had the last time Lena’d run away to Metropolis to get away from her problems. It seems as if Lana can sense the turmoil in Lena’s brain because her expression is merely sympathy, some kind of resignation Lena isn’t sure what to do with.

“Martinis?” Lana offers after they greet each other and Lena lets out an exhausted breath.

“Yes please.”

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It takes two martinis and Lana’s uncharacteristic, but no less unrelenting understanding for Lena to finally confess.

“I might have told her I was falling in love with her,” she admits, avoiding eye contact with Lana, but sensing the way her friend is trying so very hard not to react the way she wants to – boisterously and with a fair share of surprise.

“I’m sorry, come again?”

Lena takes a deep breath, doesn’t repeat herself, but adds, “And then she might have told me the same back.”

It’s silent a moment. Enough that Lena risks looking over to where Lana’s blinking at her, a dumbfounded expression and her mouth agape as if she’s moments from saying something but can’t quite find the words.

It takes another two seconds, but Lana finally finds whatever she’s looking for and express it in a sharp, loud, “What?!”

Lena’s grateful suddenly that they’d decided to stay in Lana’s apartment instead of heading out to a bar.

“You heard me,” Lena says, lips pressing together as she takes a sip of her gin.

“Yeah, I did,” Lana replies, setting her drink and down and looking at Lena incredulously. “But it just sounds like you said you and Kara Danvers confessed mutual love and adoration for each other.”
“I wouldn’t go that far,” Lena sighs.

“I mean, I thought it was serious, but I was thinking serious in the we do kinky stuff in bed kind of way, not the we write love songs about each other way.”

Scrubbing an exasperated palm across her face, Lena sighs into a soft chuckle. “Oh my God, Lana. It’s neither of those things.”

“I’m judging by the blush that it’s at least some of those things,” Lana says, needling at Lena as she takes a pointed sip of her martini.

“Stop,” Lena says.

There’s a teasing smile on Lana’s face, but she grows serious for a moment. “But you’re really in love with her?”

“I said I might be falling in love with her,” Lena clarifies though she knows how far from the truth it is. Lana seems to know too because she clicks her tongue, disapproving.

“Splitting hairs as always, Luthor,” Lana admonishes, before affecting a bit of a glare. “I can’t believe Jack didn’t tell me this.”

“I haven’t actually told him yet,” Lena says, not having really intended on telling Lana either, but it came out before she could really stop it. It feels good, anyway, to have it out there in the open and it’s easier to do it this far from National City. This far from Kara.

Lana gasps dramatically. “You mean I know something Jack Spheer doesn’t about your torrid love affair?”

Lena manages to laugh, but lets her head fall back on the couch and looks at her friend with some exasperation. “Don’t call it that.”

“I don’t think you can avoid using the L word anymore after what you just told me. It is what it is, girl.”

“And what it is, is nothing, as if I’ve told you time and again.”

“What do you mean? I thought you said she loves you too,” Lana replies, brow furrowing.

It still takes a second for Lena to erase the first memory - the I don’t have feelings for you. Honestly. Swear – and replace it with a new one – Kara in the elevator holding the door open and pleading with Lena to hear her out.

“She did…eventually,” Lena says with a twist of her lips. “It only made it worse.”

“How could that possibly make it worse?” Lana asks, propping her elbow up on the back of the couch to lean her head against her palm.

“It just did,” Lena answers with a shrug. “It’s not like we can actually have a serious go at this.”

Lana lets out a sigh, shakes her head. “You could, but you’re too scared to do it.”

“I am not,” Lena says indignantly.

“Lena, come off it. I’ve known you for ages. All this ridiculousness about…what is it again? Your reputation?”
“Professional ethics,” Lena says though the words feel thin and weightless as she says them.

Judging by the way Lana laughs, she’s not all that impressed. “Listen, I get it. It’s not clean. But it’s not like you’re going to own the Lakehawks forever. A few months ago you were trying to sell them.”

“They’re much better for business than I originally anticipated,” Lena says, the memory of those first few days as owner of the team seeming so distant right now.

“And if Lex hadn’t fucked off to who knows where to find himself or whatever it is your brother does when he’s alone, then this wouldn’t be a problem because he would still be the acting owner.”

“Yes, but that’s not the case obviously.”

“Obviously,” Lana returns dryly. “But you know Lex. He’ll probably come waltzing back in any day now like he never left wearing a big funny hat and holding illegal imports as gifts in his hands. You can put the team back in his name and problem solved.”

Lena laughs at the admittedly accurate description of her brother but shakes her head. “Again, until that happens…”

“Look, this isn’t like…your assistant we’re talking about. This is Kara Danvers. It’s not like she’s sleeping with you to get ahead. She doesn’t need to. Even I know that.”

Kara had said as much, back when it first started, and Lena knows it to be true, can see the logic as it is.

“Have you considered the possibility that dating Kara could be a boon for Luthor Corp?”

“I beg your pardon?”

“Think about it, Kara’s like a National City hero. They adore her there. You’d probably take a bump in stock prices just from being photographed out and about with her.”

“Be serious, Lana,” she says, rolling her eyes affectionately at her friend.

“Okay, fine,” Lana says suddenly, her voice losing that token of tease it carried earlier in a way that has Lena fighting the urge to recoil. “Professional ethics, your big family business, they’re convenient excuses. But deep down you don’t want to date Kara because you’re avoiding getting emotionally invested in someone that might always love their career more than you.”

The words come out in a frank, no nonsense way that has Lena connecting eyes with Lana, mouth dipping into a frown.

“Just like you mother, your father, and Sam,” Lana adds, brow arching as if challenging Lena to disagree. “Because the other stuff you could find ways to work around.”

The truth of it feels heavy as it pushes into her chest and she looks away from Lana’s all too knowing eyes to throw back the last of her martini. “I think it’s a bit too late to pretend like I’m not emotionally invested,” Lena admits in a soft, small voice as she sits forward to set her empty glass on the table nearby.

Lana reaches out, puts a warm hand against Lena’s shoulder in a gesture that has Lena slouching against the couch. “The first step is admitting it, right?” It’s said with a teasing smile this time, a bit of the seriousness ebbing from her friend’s expression enough that Lena returns the gesture as much as
“I don’t know what to do, Lana,” she confesses quietly.

“I can’t tell you what to do, babe,” Lana says, stroking her thumb over Lena’s shoulder. “Other than to stop lying to yourself.”

After a quiet moment, Lena takes a breath, tries to break down the mental barriers she’s done such a good job of erecting around her feelings and smiles when she says, “I did fall for her, you know?”

“Yeah,” Lana says with a laugh, her hand retreating from Lena’s shoulder to grab for their empty martini glasses and stand. “I don’t think anything short of love can make someone this turned around in their own head.”

Lena laughs at that, but acknowledges the truth of it with a tilt of her head as Lana strides to the small wet bar on the side of the living room and begins to mix them new cocktails. “It’s not my fault, she’s just so…”

It’s against her better instinct to talk about Kara openly like this and hesitation makes itself known again, if only for a second.

Lana turns back with their martinis, handing Lena one as she takes her place back on the couch with a soft, but conspiratorial smile. “She’s just so what? Tell me about her.”

“What do you want to know?” Lena says, eyebrow arched as she looks at Lana over the rim of her glass.

With a waggle of her eyebrows, Lana shrugs a shoulder. “The good stuff, you know.”

Lena laughs, but does just that. It comes out easy after that, a flow of words about a woman that’s become somehow much more important than Lena’d ever acknowledged before.

In the middle of it, as she’s telling Lana all about Midway City and Hamilton, Lena has an absurd thought: Jack’s going to be pissed.

Confessing to Lana doesn’t change much concretely other than making Lena feel like she’s no longer walking around with a deep dark secret. It’s not as if a weight has been lifted exactly, but it feels better nonetheless.

So much better in fact that she doesn’t feel the same kind of clawing anxiety at going to a Lakehawks game when she returns back to National City.

Jack seems to notice it right away, smiling at her inquisitively over pregame dinner. “You look particularly relaxed tonight,” he comments, and she shrugs a shoulder.

“Is that a bad thing?”

“Of course not,” he replies, cutting into his steak. “Just unusual considering past experiences. One might get the impression you’re looking forward to the game.”

“There can only be so many left to survive.”

“Well, hopefully there are a lot,” Jack says, looking somewhat offended. It amuses Lena to see him so invested in something he had made fun of her for at the beginning of this season. To think both of
them had ended up wrapped in it is a nice balm.

“Thank you for being my friend,” Lena says. Jack looks surprised, but smiles his wide, carefree smile.

“I’m just here for the free drinks,” Jack says, taking a sip of his scotch with a look that has Lena laughing.

--

The narrative of the game in all the marketing emails is to stop a backslide into the playoffs. The Lakehawks have been less consistent since the Olympic break, falling, apparently, to the second seed in the Western Conference. Getting to close out their season series against the Skippers at home is all the heat they and the fans need – the arena is rocking by the time the players have been introduced and they’re setting up for tipoff. Lena feels that same tenseness she has, but she’s nervous for once about the actual results of the game. The Lakehawks looks like they feel it too, giving only nods and waves to Jack and Lena.

Kara gives a glance her way that looks stony, intense, her hands on her hips as she stands at the center circle. Lena gives her a small smile, one that has Kara nodding and taking a deep breath before refocusing. It’s small, wrought. But it’s something that makes her feel better instead of worse.

The game is tense, to be certain, and chippy. The Skippers play strong off the ball, bumping around the Lakehawks stars even when the fouls start to pile up. Kara and Leslie seem to jostle nearly every other play they’re both on the court, Leslie sidling up into Kara’s space and talking until Kara’s jaw starts to tense and her fists clench. Maggie keeps a good eye on it, pulling Kara away nearly every time.

On the other end of the court, Siobhan Smythe has gone on a string of three-pointers that seem to take more and more wind out of the crowd every time she hits one. Lucy, who’s been guarding her for much of the season, looks frustrated. Coach Grant seems rather dismayed by both her team’s play and the Skippers’s vision of defense – she spends her time alternating between furiously calling for a time out where she yells at her players and berating the refs for their poor choices. Lena catches J’onn pulling Kara to the side at a time out, talking quietly and gesturing toward the Skippers bench. Whatever he’s saying has her shaking her head.

It feels like it happens slowly. But maybe that’s only because Lena has a front row seat to it.

Kara gets a pass from Lucy at the corner. The lane is open straight towards the basket and as soon as Kara sees it, she takes two dribbles forward before she launches into the air for what will likely be a monster dunk. Siobhan notices it a step too late, and maybe it’s frustration or instinct, but she steps into Kara’s path anyway, even though there’s no blocking her dunk.

It’s just enough contact.

Siobhan’s shoulder hits into Kara’s hip, and Kara twists in the air.

The drop is significant and when Kara hits the court the noise reverberates ominously throughout the stadium. She slams directly onto her lower back and the back of her head smacks onto the hardwood. Lena feels her chest pull inward and the crowd jumps to their feet with a collective gasp.

The dunk has gone in, the basketball bouncing away from the scene as Kara lets out a sickening sound of pain and rolls to her front, her face smashing into the floor and hand going to her back.
Nearly the whole court is frozen for a moment, eyes trained on her form.

Alex reacts first, shoves two Skippers players out of the way to skid towards her sister and bend near her face.

They’re feet away. Lena can hear the way Kara’s making incoherent noises that make Lena feel like she can’t breathe and Alex’s asking her what’s wrong, what hurts. Both the Lakehawk and Skipper medical staffs come sprinting the few feet between the benches and where Kara is, one of the Lakehawks staffers with the unfortunate job of pulling Alex away.

“That didn’t look good,” Jack murmurs.

Lena clenches her fingers together, watching as the arena around them stalls in its excitement, players from the Lakehawks hovering back from the medical staff as Skippers players slowly retreat to their own bench, many of them looking gray-faced. Kara lets out a yell when the staff rolls her over onto her back.

One of the Skippers staff members has her hands on either side of Kara’s neck and jaw, holding her in place as the head trainer of the Lakehawks talks to her. Kara’s hands clench and unclench continuously, visible between the mess of bodies around her. The craziest urge to rush the court and grip ahold of Kara’s hand rushes through her.

Lena doesn’t respond to Jack, doesn’t really feel like she’s capable of words right now because it’s the most pain Lena’s ever seen Kara express, let alone on a basketball court, and there’s something portentous about the way one of the staffers gestures at a ref to talk into his microphone.

It feels like it takes hours, but she’ll find out later it’s only minutes of evaluation before a stretcher appears.

Kara gets strapped into a board, her head stabilized and arms crossed over her chest as a team of three starts to wheel her off the court. Lena watches it with wide unblinking eyes. It doesn’t feel real for a long moment.

Then, for as long as it felt like Kara was just lying on the court, she’s gone. Wheeled off down the tunnel with a team of paramedics and the team trainer and the remaining Lakehawks are gathering into a huddle.

The arena feels restless, unsure. Lena can feel the anxiety still pressing outward from her chest and Jack turns to her, head bowed low. “Should you go?”

It’s what Lena wants to do. There’s no way she can sit through the rest of the game after that. Her eyes catch sight of Alex who’s standing just feet away and has her own gaze trained on the tunnel Kara’s just disappeared down. Her face is impassive, but tight. Lena’s not sure how Alex is going to continue to play.

“There’s nothing I can do,” Lena says quietly even as her feet feel seconds from picking up and running down the tunnel.

“That’s not what I meant,” Jack returns and when Lena locks eyes with him, something in her chest makes the decision for her.

Without another word, Lena steps away from her chair and makes her way towards the tunnel that leads back into the locker rooms. The security guard nods at her as she steps past the roped off section and she’s distantly aware of Jack trailing behind her.
It takes far too long to find Kara, but she does just as she’s being loaded into the back of an ambulance. The Lakehawks trainer is still talking to her, his hand gripping Kara’s. It’s hard to tell if she’s responding. It’s an eerie sight and Lena has no idea how to react to it.

She freezes just inside the loading doors as the stretcher is being lifted into the back cab. Jack comes up right beside her, his palm a comfort as it finds its way to her back.

“Excuse me,” he calls out to a passing EMT. “Where are they taking her?”

He spares a glance for Lena and must recognize them because he answers quickly. “National City General.”

“Come on,” Jack says in a quiet whisper as he tugs her backward just slightly. “I’ll drive.”

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The hospital is quiet when they get there. A stark contrast to the chaos in Lena’s mind.

Hospitals have never been her favorite place, considering how long her mother spent working in them and the short time her father was in one before he passed away. The smell of antiseptic and the sound of things beeping, low conversation between nurses - it all makes her feel like curling into a ball, especially realizing Kara is somewhere in the bowels of it all.

Jack goes through the trouble of approaching the reception desk and locating where they’d take Kara. As he speaks to the woman sat there, Lena begins to feel foolish and out of place. She shouldn’t be here. For a long list of reasons that start to burn in the forefront of her mind.

But before she can pull Jack away from the reception desk, he’s already returning, a grim set to his lips that has Lena’s stomach turning over.

“They’ve taken her back for some more testing. She likely won’t be finished with it for another hour,” he informs her.

“Anything else?” Lena inquires against better instinct.

Jack shakes his head, puts a hand at her elbow in a warm gesture of sympathy. “Nothing she could tell me. They’re not sure what’s wrong and it’s not like we’re her family.”

It pulls at the unease already going sour in the pit of her stomach. “Of course,” she says. “We should go.”

“I’m okay with waiting,” Jack says softly, eyes glancing around a moment in a move that does nothing to ease Lena’s anxiety. “Alex will probably be here soon and she can get more information.”

It occurs to her that the game will likely be done within the hour and it won’t be long before the Lakehawks will likely arrive, Alex Danvers leading the charge, Cat a few footsteps behind her. The thought of hanging around for that makes her feel like her stomach is in knots.

“I’d like to go,” Lena tells Jack, her eyes connecting with his with a look she hopes will quell any argument.

“Lena, it’s okay to –”

“Jack, please,” Lena says quietly and Jack squeezes her arm before relenting and leading her back towards his car.
She doesn’t go back to the hospital. Doesn’t feel it’s her place while at the same time feeling it’s the only place she really should be. Instead, she and Jack go back to her place and catch the highlights of the game. Kara’s injury is heavily featured and after the footage rolls an anchor informs them nothing has been disclosed and that Kara’s still under evaluation at National City General.

If Lena’s anxiety over watching the footage is noticeable, Jack thankfully does not comment other than pouring her a glass of wine and sitting close by her side.

“It could be nothing,” he says softly as the news switches to Cat’s postgame presser. It’s short and brief and clear that Cat has even less patience than normal for the spattering of questions from reporters.

“That looks like nothing to you?” Lena points out as the television yet again plays Kara’s fall in such slow motion that Lena hears the echo of Kara’s painful reaction. The highlight package transitions over to footage of the ambulance pulling away down the street, and then cuts to images of Tweets from players around the sports world.

“Just saw @KD_25’s injury. You never want to see ANYONE get hurt, but Kara’s one of the ones you’d really never wish it on. Great person, great player. Hope everything turns out alright,” is attributed to some local sports writer whose name seems a little familiar to Lena in the haze of panic she’s drifting through.

“We could have stayed at the hospital,” Jack replies, his fingers twisting the stem of his glass around.

“With what excuse?” Lena says, dismissing him with an irritated blow of her breath that Jack immediately returns.

“You don’t need an excuse, Lena,” Jack says with sudden intensity in his tone. “You own the damn team.”

It pulls Lena’s gaze over to where he’s staring at her, expression close to flabbergasted as he adds, “You’re letting paranoia run your life.”

She has no answer to that. Not when she can feel how true it is.

They show a clip of Clark Kent looking somewhat stricken, sweaty and clearly post-game across the country, giving a response to a reporter about news of Kara’s injury. The look on his face feels similar to the one in Lena’s chest at the moment.

Shoulders dropping and emotion starting to take over in a way that makes her feel itchy and uncomfortable, she turns her head away from the screen, but doesn’t push Jack away when he slings an arm over her shoulder and pulls her in close.

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Official diagnosis of Kara’s injury breaks by morning: a lumbosacral bone bruise.

Pinpointing the injury seems to breathe some relief into the sports media. Most speculation has her out nearly two months, though it seems the official Lakehawks line is that she’s out indefinitely with a plan to re-evaluate her in four weeks. The information settles sourly in the back of Lena’s throat. A workable timetable or no, it feels like Lena is still there on the sideline, so far away, watching Kara scream in pain.
It’s hard not to think of what Kara must be thinking and feeling right now after an injury like that, hard not to pick up her phone and call her, send a message just so she knows Lena’s thinking about her.

Cat gives another interview the following day and answers questions that have been itching at the back of Lena’s brain all night. She’s uncharacteristically candid with the reporters and the relief on her face when she talks about Kara being released later that day is undeniably comforting to the ache in Lena’s chest.

“We were scared,” Cat says honestly as the reporter asks after what it was like visiting Kara in the hospital the previous evening. “When we got to the hospital last night, she didn’t have feeling in her legs and was in and out. This morning when I saw her, she was up and walking.”

Lena’s stomach swoops in a swirl of feeling and she has to stretch her palms out over her desk to stop herself from immediately dialing Kara’s number.

As a distraction she focuses on answering an e-mail from James trying to set up a meeting that week and scrolling through a series of tweets regarding Kara’s status. Two months didn’t seem so bad in the face of having no feeling in her legs, but Lena knows Kara Danvers. She could barely handle being out for a few days with a sprained finger.

Winn seems to have spent considerable time in the hospital with her and there’s a series of pictures. First of Kara from her hospital bed, smiling and giving the camera a thumbs up. There’s clear exhaustion in her face that Lena can easily read even through a camera lens, but she looks happier than Lena’d expected.

There’s a few other pictures. One of Alex leaning over her sister’s bedside and smiling. It looks unmistakably like both of them have been crying and Lena ponders over the virtue of posting such a vulnerable looking picture.

She’s saved from further exploration by Jess walking into her office and announcing her two o’clock appointment. With a deep, steadying breath, she closes out her windows and stands to greet the gentleman walking through her office doors.

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The Lakehawks play another home game the following day and Lena feels the most uncomfortable she’s ever felt in Luthor Corp Arena.

She and Jack go through the usual motions. Pre-game dinner at a nearby restaurant. A few drinks in the courtside lounge before finding their seats. Warmups continue on as if nothing is different, but Lena feels like she can sense Kara’s absence as if it were a tangible string attached to her ribcage.

The entire game is spent wondering how Kara is doing, if she’s watching the game, whether she’s feeling any better or not.

The team plays well enough to win. Kara’s replacement is a much smaller woman named Eve Tessmacher who has the enthusiasm of a small puppy as she runs around the court, but none of Kara’s natural ability to take over a game.

Post-game only makes the hollow feeling in Lena’s chest deepen as she and Jack exit down the locker room tunnel and watch the players pass by. She misses the tall, confident shape Kara’d take as she’d walk down the tunnel after a good win. Misses the way she’d high-five all the staff lining the hallway and jostle her sister in jubilation.
She especially misses the way she’d sometimes catch Lena’s eye and wink conspiratorially, her smile nothing short of seductive.

It all swells to such an overwhelming state that Lena gives in and texts Kara as soon as she’s returned home. Just a quick, short, *how are you feeling?*

The response comes much later as Lena’s slipping into bed. *My back hurts.*

Absurdly, it makes Lena laugh. A relieved kind of sound if anything.

She doesn’t reply, can’t think of what else to say that wouldn’t be a complete outpouring of feeling. It’s not what Kara needs right now anyway, and Lena feels better just having made the slightest contact.

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It’s a few days later that she has a meeting scheduled with James and J’onn, who’s joining them in Cat’s stead. The topic on the table is most obviously Kara’s recovery process and a team trainer and doctor join them for a short bit to go over a more detailed explanation of the injury.

What they describe mostly makes Lena feel sick. The trainer gives off a laundry list of symptoms Kara’s experienced over the past few days, ranging from memory gaps resulting from her not inconsiderable concussion to nausea to intermittent numbness in her fingers. The doctor only shrugs when James asks if they have a more clear timetable.

“When it comes to things like this, it takes what it takes,” he says, looking apologetic.

It’s not far off from what she’s been hearing in the news, but hearing the specifics of some of it has her trying not to excuse herself to call Kara immediately. Lena spends most of the meeting working not to seem overly interested in the discussion.

Instead she opts to sit back and merely listen, allows J’onn and James to talk amongst themselves over what the official statement should be. Apparently, there’s some measure of strategy involved in revealing too much this close to the playoffs.

Lena zones some of it out, only tunes back in at James offhandedly commenting, “Honestly, in some respects this injury couldn’t have been timed better.”

As she glances at J’onn, she catches the way his lips press together in consternation and the look of admonishment in his eyes directed at James.

Something about the moment makes Lena’s tongue go dry for a moment before she feels compelled to ask, “What exactly do you mean by that?”

James nearly startles as if just remembering she’s there and looks hesitant before answering, “Less than a week ago, Kara was in my office asking for a trade.”

The words drop significantly in the otherwise silent room and Lena thinks perhaps she’s misheard him for a second even as J’onn adds, “She wasn’t thinking clearly.”

“She did what?” Lena sits up in her seat as she asks it, fighting the mixture of emotion spiking in her throat. A certain kind of indignation wins out. “Why is this the first I’m hearing of it?”

“J’onn’s right,” James answers, straightening in response to the rigid way her back has gone. “She hadn’t thought it through and I told her to take some time to really think it over. It would have been
nearly impossible. And now it is.”

It’s a struggle not to react the way she wants – to not storm out of the office and call Kara up immediately to ask what the hell she’s thinking. She manages, but just barely. Gives James a steely look. “I’m sure I needn’t remind either of you that Kara Danvers is the face of this franchise and losing her could spell disaster.”

James nearly rolls his eyes, but J’onn lifts his chin and looks at her straight on. “We understand,” he says. “I assure you.”

“Good,” she replies, swallowing against the bitter taste at the back of her throat.

--

An unshakeable kind of anger follows her from the meeting. She thinks to call Kara but takes a deep breath and reminds herself of Kara’s current condition. There’s a good chance she wouldn’t even answer the call.

But it’s still impossible to resist that thrumming desire to throttle Kara and confront her about asking for a trade. It’s that urge that has her finally making her way to Kara’s apartment building.

She doesn’t call George. Instead, she opts to walk. It’s not that far, only ten or so blocks, and it feels more discreet to approach this way. It also gives her enough time to collect her thoughts before she gets there. The doorman nods at her as she passes through the lobby, still familiar with her.

Her determination starts to leave her as she makes her way down the hallway to Kara’s door. It takes her a good thirty seconds to actually press the doorbell and as soon as she does, the muffled sound of it echoing behind the door spikes against her chest.

This is a bad idea. She should definitely go.

But just as she’s set to turn and walk away, the door swings open and Lena’s greeted by none other than a smiling and gorgeous Diana Prince, wearing a Wonders sweatshirt and hair pulled back in a loose ponytail.

Oddly, she doesn’t look very surprised to see Lena standing there, nor confused. Instead, she looks some measure of excited as she pushes the door open wider to usher Lena inside. “It’s Lena, right?” Diana says in the soft warm tones of a voice Lena’s only heard before on television.

“That’s right,” she manages to reply through a thick throat and a shaky feeling in her extremities.

Diana smiles enigmatically. “I’m Diana,” she says as if Lena wouldn’t know, but when Lena expects a handshake, Diana moves forward and wraps her in a hug. “Kara’s told me so much about you.”

That’s a bit alarming, all things considered, but Lena manages not to react other than a polite smile. “It’s nice to meet you.”

“Likewise,” Diana says with such a genuine expression that it almost seems fake.

A glance around them shows Kara’s absence in their immediate vicinity and Diana must see the question in Lena’s expression because she answers an unspoken question. “She’s in the bedroom.”

Diana is virtually a stranger, but she’s the only connection she has to Kara right now and it’s what pulls the question out of Lena’s throat, “How is she?”
The smile Diana responds with is unreadable. “As expected,” she says before walking past Lena to pick up a leather jacket slung over a nearby chair. “You’ve got great timing, truth be told. I was just on my way out. You can keep her company.”

Lena feels her eyes go wide and can’t quite stop them, but thankfully Diana’s busy gathering up a bag and dropping her phone into it. It gives Lena enough time to school her expression into something more neutral even as the idea of being alone with Kara right now is clawing at her throat suddenly.

“Don’t leave on my account,” Lena protests, but Diana’s already striding towards the door and smiling enigmatically at Lena.

“I have to catch a flight, I’m afraid,” she says. “But it was such a pleasure to meet you finally.”

And with a little wave and a flurry of movement, Diana’s gone from the apartment as if she were never there. It leaves Lena feeling a tad flat-footed and she blinks around the room for a long second.

It’s Kara’s voice calling out that breaks her out of the moment, a muffled yell of Diana? resounding from the bedroom.

With a last breath, Lena sets her purse down on the kitchen counter and strides back towards Kara’s bedroom, trying not to think about the last time she was here or how easily her feet take her in Kara’s direction.

When she rounds the corner into Kara’s spacious master bedroom, she’s greeted by the sight of Kara struggling to sit up, everything about her posture radiating pain and it spikes a quick flash of fear in Lena that has her all but bolting to Kara’s side.

“Hey, stop,” Lena orders firmly, putting her hands up in front of Kara but not daring to touch her lest she cause more pain.

Kara jumps at Lena’s voice, clearly surprised, but the shocked expression on her face gives way almost immediately to pain as she lets out a sharp fuck before lowering herself back on the bed.

“You should not be moving so much,” Lena says, watching the ginger way Kara maneuvers back down.

“What are you doing here?” Kara asks, the words coming out through gritted teeth until she’s finally relaxing back on her bed.

It’s clear Kara’s been confined to the room since she got out of the hospital. There are empty glasses and Gatorade bottles on her bedside, a smattering of pill bottles and the sheets are wrinkled and kicked to the end of the bed as if they haven’t been needed in some time.

“What are you doing trying to get out of bed?”

“I can walk,” Kara protests, though the heavy way she’s still breathing betrays her insistence. “Just super slowly. Where’s Diana?”

“She left to catch a flight. And just because you can do something doesn’t mean you should,” Lena points out, spotting the walker Kara’d clearly been issued at the end of the bed. Just imagining Kara Danvers, the most athletic person Lena’s ever been around, having to use some kind of apparatus to move around steals the breath out of Lena’s throat for a second.

“If I stay in one position too long, it just makes it worse,” Kara tells her and Lena’s eyes rake over
Kara’s form as if she could pinpoint the source of her injury that way. It’s impossible, of course, but Lena feels the need for something concrete, something she can fix.

“You could be more careful,” Lena says.

Kara doesn’t respond right away, just observes Lena a moment as her breathing starts to even out. “You didn’t answer my question,” she finally says, careful sounding.

In light of Kara’s clear pain, Lena’s initial plan to berate her for attempting to get traded starts to dissipate and she swallows it for another day. “I came to see how you were doing.”

“Because we’re such good friends?” Kara asks in an uncharacteristically snarky tone, a bitterness Lena’s never heard before seeping through and she reminds herself it’s probably the pain making her sound like that, but it still cuts sharply across her chest.

“Yes,” Lena answers, going for soft against the hard look on Kara’s face. She sits on the edge of Kara’s bed as lightly as she can. “I’d think it’s no secret that I care about you.”

That seems to relax some of the tension in Kara’s being and she seems to sag against the mattress. “My back fucking hurts,” Kara bites out, an angry looking smile on her lips. “But at least I can feel my legs.”

Cat had divulged as much during her press conference, but hearing Kara mention it brings a gravity to the idea Lena hadn’t considered before and her heart hurts for what Kara must have gone through those first few hours in the hospital. Not for the first time, a part of her wishes she had stayed.

“Have they given you something for the pain?”

Kara sends a look of distaste for the pill bottles at her bedside table. “Yeah and then some.” “They’re not helping?”

“I’m not taking them.”

“Kara,” Lena chastises, wondering why someone thought leaving this woman to her own devices was a good idea.

“I have to get better,” Kara says. “And fast. The playoffs are soon and staying in bed stoned out of my mind isn’t going to help.”

“Being an idiot about your pain management and then doing something stupid isn’t going to help you get any better either,” Lena says, feeling irritated. She had been aware Kara was stubborn, but not to the point of ignoring all sense.

“Don’t yell at me,” Kara complains, her face affecting a pouty look just bordering on pathetic.

“I’m not yelling at you,” Lena says. “I’m just worried. I don’t want you to be in pain.”

They observe each other for a few moments and Lena takes the time to soak in Kara’s presence after such a long absence. As unfortunate the circumstances, Lena can’t deny the warmth spreading across her skin.

“It’s nice of you to stop by,” Kara says softly after a few seconds. “After everything.”

Lena allows her lips to thin into something of a smile. “That other stuff doesn’t matter, right?”
“Right,” Kara answers after a moment, but it comes out thick sounding and the air around them seems to warm.

Silence lingers again, but somewhat more comfortable than before. The television in the corner is playing an old basketball game, clearly game tape Kara has acquired from the team. Kara’s bedroom looks so familiar, no difference from the last Lena saw of it and it settles something comfortable against Lena’s chest.

“Why are you actually here?” Kara asks. “Not that I don’t want you here, because I do, but I thought you were still busy avoiding me.”

“To see how you were doing,” Lena answers again. “Like I said.”

“Uh huh,” Kara replies, a disbelieving smile on her face that has heat beating into Lena’s cheeks.

“Okay, fine,” Lena says with a sigh and a shake of her head. “I came over to yell at you.”

“While I’m on my deathbed?” Kara jokes, hand to her chest in feigned indignation. It settles some of Lena’s nerves to see Kara joking so easily. “We already agreed you can’t yell at me.”

“I never agreed to that,” Lena points out and Kara makes a familiar-looking pouty expression.

It’s then that Lena really looks her over, notices the Lakehawks issued sweatpants and loose tank top that exposes the familiar scar on Kara’s chest. Her glasses are slipping down her nose and there are bags under her eyes that make Lena want to reach out and stroke through Kara’s hair until she’s falling asleep.

“You haven’t been sleeping, have you?” Lena says before she can stop it.

The contrite look on Kara’s face is answer enough. “Can’t,” she answers. “Hurts too much.”

“That’s what the meds are for,” Lena says with a pointed arch of her brow.

“You sound like Alex.”

“Your sister is a smart woman.”

“Don’t let her hear you say that,” Kara returns quickly and they exchange amused smiles. “Now what did you come here to yell at me about?”

The reminder of her real reason for being there twists painfully at her chest enough she has to take a deep breath. “I had a very interesting meeting with James today,” she starts and Kara’s eyes go wide enough Lena knows Kara can make the connection easily enough.

“Sounds nice,” Kara says in a small voice and Lena’s lips thin.

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“You asked James to trade you.”

“I told you I would,” Kara says, her chin lifting as she says it. “I wasn’t lying. About any of it.”

Kara refusing to back down from it makes Lena feel like she can’t breathe. And something about the statement makes Lena’s eyes feel hot, her throat achy as the memory of their conversation in the elevator twists up from her stomach. “I told you I didn’t want you to,” Lena says, grateful her tone stays even.

Kara’s jaw is tight, her eyes dart away from Lena. “It’s not as if it matters anymore. My trade value is
“Wallowing in self-pity isn’t going to help you get any better,” Lena tells her, absurdly remembering her mother saying the same thing to her when she was in the midst of her break up with Sam. The memory makes her want to take it back, but she acknowledges the virtue in the sentiment.

Kara reacts to it with an unexpected laugh and she shifts gingerly on the bed, trying to sit up as best she can. “You’re right,” she says, but Lena makes a guilty face.

“Sorry, that was harsh,” she admits but Kara waves her off.

“No, Alex said the same thing to me yesterday, and Diana – well Diana said the equivalent of that in Diana’s world,” Kara says cryptically, her smile fond, but not offering much more.

The reminder of the gorgeous Diana Prince makes Lena feel squirmier than she’d like, but she manages to stay still. “Nice of her to stop by,” she says instead.

Kara nods. “She’s always been a really good friend.”

“That’s good,” Lena says, trying not to recall that Kara’d once told Lena she was a really good friend too. Lena knows very well how close Kara can be with her friends.

If Kara notices anything about the strangled way the words come out, she doesn’t comment. She just looks at Lena a moment longer than comfortable before Lena feels compelled to remove herself from that stare.

She’s served her purpose for being here anyway – checking in on Kara and admonishing her for the trade attempt. It’s time to go.

“I should get going,” she says, standing from the bed and offering Kara a small smile. “I’m glad to see you’re doing well.”

Without waiting for Kara to reply, Lena turns to make her way out of the bedroom, but Kara stops her with a sharp enunciation of her name.

Lena turns with an inquiring look and Kara shifts further up the bed, her face screwing up in enough pain that it makes Lena want to rush back to the bed and soothe her. She can feel her hands twitch before she clenches them.

“We - the Lakehawks play tonight,” Kara tells her and Lena almost laughs – she’s well aware of the Lakehawks schedule. “If you’re not doing anything, would you want to come over and watch it with me?”

The request comes out small sounding, a plea unmistakable in the quiet way Kara shapes the words. Lena realizes quite quickly there’s only one answer to be had. The idea of Kara having to watch her team play all alone is reason enough for Lena to answer in the affirmative, but even without that, Lena feels incapable of resisting the vulnerable way Kara looks right now. Her response takes a second too long to form, though, because Kara keeps talking.

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to,” Kara says, looking miserable all over again as she glances to the television, her fingers plucking at her pants. “I get that things are weird but I - it’d be nice. I’ve missed hanging out and since all of my other friends are basically working tonight...”

It takes a second for Lena to breathe around the feelings rising in her chest. She can do this. She can be there for Kara, as a friend, in a time of need. It doesn’t have to be anything more than that.
“I’ll bring takeout?” Lena offers, smiling at the happy glint that puts in Kara’s eye.

“Can you be trusted to order something that isn’t just a bowl of vegetables?” Kara teases, sounding more like herself than she has since Lena arrived.

Lena rolls her eyes. “I think I know what you like to eat by now,” she points out and as she hears herself a blush creeps up her neck.

Kara laughs so loudly it only intensifies the heat seeping into Lena’s cheeks even as Kara lets out a pained, “oh shit, don't make me laugh, my back,” between laughs.

Lena leaves her like that, hearing the sound of her laughter all the way until she’s out the door.
Chapter 7

It takes some deliberation before Lena decides on what to bring for dinner to Kara’s that night.

The obvious solution to her indecision would be to call Kara and ask, but she feels oddly determined to choose herself and hope she gets it right.

She settles on something easy, something she’d seen Kara order before and sends it to George with a timeline of when she’ll head to Kara’s. The rest of the afternoon slogs by in a series of project meetings and a good hour of trying to put a dent in her inbox. It all feels like a slow slide until she sees Kara again.

When she’s finally done and heading home, a small portion of nerves returns to her stomach. She’s not sure there’s wisdom in electing to spend an evening at home alone with Kara. The confidence she tried to have earlier about being friends feels like it’s retreating inch by inch.

But she forces herself to suppress all of that and focus on changing out of her work clothes into something more appropriate for watching a basketball game with a former fuck buddy turned complicated mess of a friend.

Just thinking of it makes her shake her head at herself in the mirror and pour a calming glass of red wine. Regardless, it still takes her a half hour and sixteen outfit choices before she settles on a casual pair of black jeans and a top.

George picks her up precisely on time and there are two white bags full of hot takeout food waiting for her in the backseat. He gives her a reassuring smile that she tries to return and then dutifully drives her to Kara’s apartment building.

If she lingers a few moments inside the back of the car before entering the building, no one but George has to know.

By the time she’s ringing the doorbell, it occurs to her that Kara’s likely not in any position to be walking to the door. Or rather even if she tried to do so it’d probably take her fifteen minutes to get from the bedroom to the front hall.

But before Lena can think of a suitable solution, her phone is buzzing in the purse slung over her shoulder and she fumbles around with the food in her hands to fish it out.

It’s Kara.

“Hi,” Lena greets.

“It’s open,” Kara says. “I’d open it myself, but I don’t want you to die out there waiting for me.”

Lena laughs even though Kara’s voice sounds strained and self-pitying as she says it. “Just stay put,” Lena instructs, pushing the door open to the murmured sound of a television.

“I’m on the couch,” Kara’s voice calls out both over the phone and through the apartment. Lena disconnects the call and drops her phone back into her purse, striding through the front entryway towards the living room.

“Hey,” Lena greets, coming around the couch to set the bags of takeout on the table in front of Kara.
“Ooh, Maxwell’s,” Kara says, the smile on her face feeling like a reward for making the right food decision.

“I hope you’re hungry,” she says, depositing her purse on a side table covered with flowers and well wishes before taking a good look at Kara.

“Always,” Kara replies, shifting just slightly, but cringing as she does it.

There’s what looks like an ice pack inexpertly strapped around her waist and a blanket is slipping off her legs. Without thinking of it, Lena moves forward, settling Kara from moving too much with a hand to her shoulder as her other hand inspects the saran-wrap Kara’s used to keep the ice pack at her back.

“Do this yourself?” Lena muses, seeing how uneven the wrap is and the way the ice pack is all but slipping out of position every time Kara so much as breathes.

“I’d like to see you do better in my position,” Kara murmurs, pain making her sound grumpy and irritated.

“Here, let me fix it,” Lena offers, reaching out.

“Are you qualified to do this?” Kara asks even as she shifts enough to give Lena access.

“I have multiple degrees,” Lena says, airily enough that she gets Kara to smile. “You’re in good hands, I assure you.”

“Of that, I have no doubt,” Kara replies, softly enough that it hits against Lena’s chest.

Ignoring the feeling, Lena starts to pull off the wrap and the ice pack, working as best she can around Kara’s ginger movements.

“I wish the thing would just heal,” Kara says, a bit out of breath. “It’s a stupid bruise.”

“It’s barely been a week,” Lena tells her, trying to ignore how close they have to get just so Lena can place the ice pack at Kara’s back. It’s the closest they’ve been in what feels like forever. “You bruised your spine. These things take time.”

“I know,” Kara sighs, trying to sit up enough so Lena can get the wrap around her waist. It brings their faces abruptly close until Lena blinks and focuses on the task at hand, moving enough out of Kara’s airspace that kissing doesn’t feel like such an inevitability. “But I’m over it.”

“I can tell,” Lena says absently as she pays more attention to her movements.

“I can’t even shower myself yet,” she complains and that, at least, distracts Lena from the way her fingers keep brushing against Kara’s body. “My arms can’t go high enough to wash my hair without feeling like I’m being stabbed in the back and just standing for too long is a bitch.”

As she works at pulling the wrap off in repetitive circular motions, she glances at Kara. “That must be difficult,” she says, hoping it’s not a segue for Kara to ask for assistance.

“Alex helped me out,” Kara says, assuaging some of Lena’s worry. “And the team sends over a nurse and trainer every morning.”

“That’s good,” she replies without little else to say. Kara quiets down as Lena works at getting the last round of wrap off her. The ice pack has gone warm and from the feel of it, some time ago. Lena
heads to the kitchen to find a replacement and returns with a smile.

“Not too tight,” Kara instructs, and Lena goes about wrapping her back up, trying to work as efficiently as possible.

It gets finished quickly enough, but not without making Lena feel a tad short of breath. It helps that she has something to focus on – setting out the takeout boxes and finding plates and utensils. As she does it, Kara turns the volume up on the television.

The game is already playing – a panel of talking heads doing the pregame show and Lena winces when they play a clip of Kara’s injury.

“I wish they’d stop showing that,” Kara grumbles, accepting the plate Lena’s handing her with a murmured thanks.

“It’s painful enough for me to watch,” Lena says, almost to herself as she watches the slow-motion replay of Kara’s fall. “I can’t imagine what it must be like for you.”

Lena can feel sudden scrutiny and turns to see Kara observing her, expression neutral, but eyes seeming to search for something. It makes her cheeks feel hot and she looks away from it with a short laughed out, “What?”

“Nothing,” Kara says immediately, shaking her head and laughing too. “Sorry I just – you’re right. It sucks to watch. It’s like I can feel it happen all over again.”

“I’m sorry,” Lena says, reaching out to put her palm over Kara’s knee. It’s meant to be a friendly, reassuring gesture, but her palm goes white hot immediately until she pulls it away almost too abruptly not be noticed.

Kara doesn’t seem keen to comment, for which Lena’s grateful. Instead, she gingerly reaches for a takeout box, taking care not to move her back too much and mumbles, “Thanks for dinner.”

“Any time,” Lena says softly, scooting just close enough to help Kara with the food, mindful of too much movement and hyper aware of every wince of pain Kara makes.

--

They find a comfortable eating position though Kara jokes a few times about Lena spoon-feeding her in a way that makes Lena both blush and glare at Kara.

When the game starts, they grow silent. Kara’s focus zones in intensely to the television where her team is huddled together under the basket and the starting lineups are flashing up on the screen. It’s undeniably odd to see the Lakehawks Starting Five and not see Kara’s name in the list.

As the players lineup around center court for tip-off, Kara makes a little noise. “Cat has Eve on Imra?”

Lena tries to make out what that means – sees Kara’s replacement, Eve Tessmacher, lining up next to a woman Lena vaguely remembers as Imra Ardeen. The memory is fuzzy with distance, but she can almost recall the night club in which she’d first run into Kara.

“Is that bad?” Lena asks as the referee throws the ball in the air between Alex and a tall woman with the name Ferris sewn into the back of the jersey.

Kara’s lips thin. “We’ll see,” she says, sounding nothing short of ominous.
The game starts slow and though Lena has not at all developed an interest in basketball for its own sake, she finds it intriguing to watch the game with Kara. She’s had the postgame rundown from Kara before – had likened it to a general picking apart battles won and lost – but it’s clear early on that the live version is different.

“Watch the baseline!” Kara shouts at the television, and Lena watches as a pass gets thrown right around Alex’s outstretched arm to a player running past Eve towards the hoop. It’s a perfect arc that ends in a basket and Cat screaming from the sideline as J’onn makes an instructive hand gesture behind her. “Come on guys.”

Lena stays silent for the most part, not having much to contribute to Kara’s nearly uninterrupted commentary for the entirety of the first half.

Kara must notice at some point because when the whistle blows, she looks over at Lena as if suddenly remembering someone else is with her. “Sorry,” she says looking genuinely contrite, her brow pulling down as she shifts gingerly on the couch into a new position.

“Do you need to get up?” Lena asks, sitting forward with her hands out as she watches Kara’s pained expression as she moves. They’d removed the ice pack in the middle of the second quarter and Lena wonders if there’s another one she should be getting out of the freezer.

“I just need to sit differently,” Kara says, blowing out a low breath as she finally stills again. “This sucks.”

“Maybe you should reconsider your stance on pain medication,” Lena says with a pointed arch of her brow. The half-time panel starts to talk on the TV and Lena stands, gathering the remains of their dinner up from the coffee table.

Kara makes a whiny little noise that makes Lena have to smother a smile. “Maybe I just need a drink,” Kara counters in a pitiful voice that makes Lena look over, a tad alarmed until she sees the teasing look on Kara’s face.

“That’s the last thing you need. Didn’t you have a concussion?” Lena asks, shifting around the couch and bringing the dishes and empty boxes into the kitchen.

“A mild one,” Kara grumbles, just barely audible as Lena walks away.

She goes about cleaning up, the boxes to the trash and the dishes into the dishwasher. As she’s pulling out dishwashing soap and a sponge and moving around Kara’s kitchen, it occurs to her quite suddenly how comfortable it all feels.

The realization settles heavily on her chest and she has to stop a moment to take a breath. The sudden cessation of movement must be noticeable because Kara’s voice rings out. “You okay?”

“Yeah,” Lena says, smiling even though Kara can’t see her. “Just – where do you keep dish towels?”

Lena knows exactly where they are, but Kara must not realize that because she answers it easily. “Two drawers down to the left of the sink.”

“Thanks.”

Dinner disposed of, Lena paces quickly back into Kara’s bedroom, tries to ignore the cluttered messy look of it, and swipes the pill bottles off the bedside table before returning to the living room.
“In case you change your mind,” Lena says, setting the pills down on the coffee table and inspecting them to make out which one is actually the pain medication. It’s the first time in what feels like ages she’s been grateful to have had a mother with a medical degree.

“I won’t,” Kara says sounding as stubborn as a young child. It makes Lena roll her eyes. “I have a ridiculously high pain tolerance.”

“Don’t bite your nose to spite your face,” Lena says as she turns to the television and watches the first half highlights play there. The Lakehawks are down five points – a fact that’s likely contributing to Kara’s mood.

The second half doesn’t get much better. The Lakehawks look like what they are: a team adjusting to the loss of their star player, the lynch pin in their well-oiled machine. Kara’s mood sours as the score becomes more and more lopsided, her commentary spiraling off in exasperation.

In the fourth quarter, after the Lakehawks go on a 13-1 run to bring the score closer just to lose momentum and give up 10 uncontested points, Kara finally relents. “You’re right,” she says out of nowhere.

Lena turns, confused. “About?”

“My pain meds,” Kara says in a strained voice as she tries to shift position for what feels like the fifth time in the last ten minutes. “I should take some.”

Lena watches the pain play on her face, wishes there were something more concrete she could be doing. “I’ll get you a glass of water,” she says softly before standing to pace to the kitchen.

Kara takes her pills as the final minutes wind down on the Lakehawks loss and the camera shows a close up of Cat shooting a steely look at Alex who couldn’t seem to hit a shot for much of the second half. The camera cuts away just as J’onn moves forward and pulls Cat’s attention away.

“Should have put Vasquez in to guard Donna. I don’t know what Cat was thinking,” Kara says, a displeased frown on her face.

Lena watches as the postgame analysis crew comes on screen and the points breakdown comes up in a flashy graphic. Curiosity gets the better of her. “Why’s that?”

“Hmm?” Kara looks over, clearly a tad confused as to why this is the point in Kara’s gamelong commentary that Lena needs clarification for.

Lena can understand that, but she pushes on. “What do you mean? How would that have changed anything?”

Something amused slides across Kara’s face. “Are you asking me to teach you about basketball?”

Suddenly embarrassed, Lena rolls her eyes with a click of her tongue. “Forget I asked.”

“No, no,” Kara protests, though she chuckles as she says it. “I just think it’s cute.”

Lena makes a face that only has Kara laughing more fully. “Instant regret.”

Laughter tapering off, Kara shifts a bit, but doesn’t wince in the way she had earlier. “It’s like we’ve come full circle. Dinner at home and Lena Luthor asking me for my brilliant insight into the holy game of basketball.”
“Good to see the pain meds are kicking in,” Lena says dryly and Kara smiles, her head hitting the cushion a bit and Lena’s reminded suddenly of post-coital cups of coffee on this very couch, of the exhausted, but happy way Kara would look, the lingering flush to her skin, the way her hair would be messily piled on top of her head.

Lena aches for it in an indescribable way that has her stretching her palms out against her thighs.

“Can I tell you something?” Kara says softly after a few beats of silence.

There’s an ominous pickup in her heartbeat, but Lena affects a friendly smile and faces Kara. “Of course.”

A moment’s hesitation before Kara says, “I’m bummed.”

Her brows pull down, but before she can say that’s to be expected, Kara clarifies the statement with a quiet, “About us.”

Silence drops around them and Lena can’t do much but blink at Kara, wonder how the hell she’s supposed to respond to that.

All she can think to say is a soft, “Kara,” that sounds something between agreement and warning.

“I know you don’t want to talk about it,” Kara says, and Lena notices the droopy way her eyes are falling, the way her body is sinking into the cushions. “I respect that. I’m just – I guess I just – just consider this my formal complaint.”

The petulant way Kara says it actually makes Lena laugh despite the way her heart feels like it might beat straight out of her chest. “Maybe you should get to a bed,” Lena says, sitting up and trying to decide if she even has the strength to help Kara towards the bedroom.

“I didn’t mean to upset you,” Kara says hastily, her hand hovering in the air between them as if she’s going to touch Lena. It stops abruptly, likely because Lena darts away from it, and a sad expression takes hold of Kara’s face that Lena wants to soothe away instinctively.

“You didn’t,” Lena denies, but Kara’s frown deepens.

“I am glad to be your friend. I just…” her voice trails off a moment, her eyes sleepy as they observe Lena and a dissonant smile crosses her lips. “Whatever, you already know how I feel.”

I’m in love with you too, rings so clearly across her memory that Lena feels deafened by it.

Throat dry, she stands from the couch. “Let’s get you to bed.”

Kara seems seconds from passing completely out, but she’s able to stand up with Lena’s assistance, and together they get the walker Kara’s been issued in front of her. It’s slow work, but Lena follows closely behind as they shuffle towards the bedroom.

“Are you going to be okay?” Lena asks quietly after getting Kara into the bed and shuffling around some of the mess left littered across the room.

“Yeah. Alex said she’d call after the game,” Kara says, her voice slow and deep. “Nurse and trainer at six.”

“That’s good,” she says, fidgeting with the sheet over Kara’s legs a moment before turning to leave. A hand darts out to capture her own and Kara halts her at the side of the bed. “I didn’t mean to make
things weird.”

Something more powerful than the nerves catching in her throat has her squeezing Kara’s hand back and turning to sit down on the mattress by Kara’s hip. “You didn’t,” she says firmly, keeping Kara’s glossy gaze. “I promise.”

“I do really want to be friends,” Kara insists. “I just had to say it one more time.”

It feels final in a way that makes Lena’s eyes burn. “I want to be friends too.”

“It means a lot to me that you came over,” Kara says, her speech starting to sound slurry.

Blue eyes flutter closed as she says it, sleep clearly pulling Kara under against her will and Lena takes a deep breath, throat achy.

“You mean a lot to me,” she admits into the quiet of the bedroom before releasing Kara’s slack hand, checking that she has what she needs and pacing out of the bedroom.

As quickly as she can, she cleans up the mess left in the living room, checks on Kara one last time before calling George and making as discreet an exit as possible.

Lena’s not sure what to do with the contradicting feelings twirling in her head. Her resistance to Kara had ebbed away nearly completely in the course of the evening, and she wishes she were more frightened by it.

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It’s hard to get Kara’s forlorn expression out of her head, but she manages. Makes it through the next sequence of days business as usual. The Lakehawks have a stretch of days without a game after returning from their road trip before they face Coast City at home.

As is their routine, she and Jack meet for dinner and go through the usual motions. The unsettling thought of attending a Lakehawks game in which Kara isn’t part of the lineup hasn’t really worn off and she spends most of dinner and pregame drinks wondering about Kara. What she’s doing, who she might be watching with, what she’s feeling. It’s such a persistent curiosity that she finds herself texting Kara just before tip-off.

Are you watching the game?

Kara’s response is quick. Winn got the night off to come watch with me.

That’s nice, Lena returns as the ref throws the ball in the air and the Lakehawks take possession.

You?

Front and center as always.

Let me know if you need any help understanding the game, Kara texts, punctuating the sentence with a series of laughing emojis that makes Lena purse her lips.

Very funny.

Kara’s response this time is in the form of a selfie taken from high above Kara’s head so that the ice pack wrapped to her back is visible. The shot also includes the tense line of Kara’s neck and shoulder muscles and Lena swallows as she opens it, shields it a bit from Jack’s view as if it were scandalous. Winn doesn’t have your ice wrapping skills is the caption and Lena laughs.
Maybe it’s the vodka soda she’s had or the safety of engaging in this conversation over text, but Lena’s all set to respond I can come fix it later as if it were instinct before Jack’s leaning closer suddenly and she has to shift her phone from his view.

“You know, the papers might notice if you’re on your phone the whole game,” Jack whispers in her ear, his arm slung behind her on the back of her chair.

It startles Lena away from her phone screen and she elbows Jack in the ribs as subtle as possible before dropping her phone into the purse under her seat. “Shut up, Jack,” she murmurs, but she smiles at him and feels almost comfortable as she focuses back on the game.

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The Lakehawks manage to win, though just barely, and after the game she and Jack head to their usual spot for a postgame drink.

Kara had texted her through much of the game with little comments about plays and at one point an instruction to tell Alex to stop going for corner 3s. Lena’s responses had been infrequent, but enough to encourage Kara to keep sending them and she finds the re-emergence of their texting to be somewhat comforting. It’s friendly in a way that starts to stitch together parts of her heart.

That is until Kara sends a you looked good on TV just as the bartender is setting down her glass of Bailey’s and Lena feels her tongue go dry.

It’s the kind of text that would usually be followed by an agreement to meet up and where. It’s the kind of text that’d make Lena cross her legs and look forward to what the night could bring.

But now, she doesn’t know how to react to it – thinks maybe having Kara actually taking her pain medication was making the other woman a tad too loose lipped – and then she tries valiantly to convince herself that Kara didn’t mean it that way.

So she settles for a friendly thanks and puts her phone away for the rest of the night.

There’ll be an adjustment period, Lena realizes. It won’t be easy to be friends and not read into every situation. At least not at first. It’ll get better.

They’ll be friends and...it’ll get better.

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Part way through the week, the Lakehawks Instagram breaks a two-week silence on Kara’s rehabilitation and posts a picture of her in physical therapy. In a pair of loose grey Lakehawks sweat-shorts and a white tank top, Kara makes a show of walking through a set of two bars meant to assist her.

Her arms strain as she moves slowly, but confidently, and at the end, she manages to take another four careful steps unassisted until she’s smiling, exhausted at the camera and giving it a thumbs up.

Lena watches it several times, enjoys the happy, accomplished look Kara has at the end and laughs a bit at Winn’s caption.

Doing better? Lena texts her before thinking twice of it.

Minutes later, she gets a response in the form of a selfie. It’s clearly the Lakehawks training room if the giant Lakehawks logo on the wall behind Kara is anything to go by. She’s smiling at the camera,
chin lifted as she sits on the corner of one the many beds in the room. *Still really sore, but walking is awesome.*

It makes Lena want to go celebrate the achievement, to go bask in the way Kara’s probably thriving on getting one step closer to back on the court. But instead she sends a few thumbs up emojis and allows herself to sink into a vicarious kind of good mood.

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Throughout her tenure as the owner of the team, Lena’s had to give a few interviews here and there. First, when she’d just taken over ownership and then as the season went on and a reporter would catch her after a game or at an event.

It’s not something new to her life, but she can’t deny that the first time she’s stopped to answer a question regarding Kara’s injury, she finds herself startled.

The question is a soft ball. A gentle inquiry into Kara’s recovery process and a reach for Lena’s own reaction to the injury. But Lena can’t help but feel the question too personal to really answer. For half a second, there’s paranoia over why anyone might ask her at all. It’s an absurd feeling, one she manages to suppress with a smile on her face.

Falling back on years of training in the art of polite bullshit, Lena answers as professionally as possible. “Kara is the face of this franchise. The Lakehawks will do whatever it takes to see to it that she’s fully recovered.”

“How are you feeling about the playoff chances without Kara in the lineup? The Lakehawks certainly haven’t looked like themselves without her.”

Lena tries hard not to react to the question, though it’s hard. It’s not as if she has any wise words about the practical *basketball* effects Kara’s injury has on the Lakehawks. “We’ll jump that hurdle when we come to it,” she answers, knowing at the very least that they have a couple weeks left until the regular season is over. She’d have to be dumb, deaf and stupid not to know that much. It’s all the television and news outlets have been talking about.

“There has to be some nerves here,” the reporter insists, goading her. “This used to be Kara’s team after all and –”

“It’s *still* Kara’s team,” Lena answers before she can help it. “She’s not dead.”

The reporter looks taken aback that it was that simple to get a soundbite out of her and Lena internally groans at herself. Regaining composure, she puts a smile back on. “Don’t count the Lakehawks out just yet,” she says in a more even tone and with a dismissive nod of her head, she paces quickly away from him.

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Kara texts her later: *happy to hear I haven’t died.*

It takes seconds of searching, but Lena finds the middle finger emoji in the small keyboard on her phone and sends Kara an entire line of them. Kara returns several emojis with their tongues out.

She receives a message from an unknown number a few days later: *You give good soundbite, sis.*

She decides to reuse her middle finger emoji with Lex as well.
The next away game is in Dallas. Lena catches the Lakehawks social media showing stat lines and pictures of the players boarding the usual plane that morning. It’s yet another instance of Kara’s absence being unnervingly noticeable.

There’s no normal shot of Kara waving at the camera, bag slung across her back and perfectly pressed outfit drawing all eyes her way. Instead, it’s a series of Alex and Lucy striding across the tarmac with sunglasses obscuring their faces. Maggie is right behind them, uncharacteristically grinning at the camera, though the expression falls short of genuine and seems more out of mockery than anything.

M’gann is there too, huddled next to Eve and seeming to be talking to her about something intently. Cat paces behind them, looking ridiculously put together and focused intensely on two phones – one at her ear and the other in her hands.

Lena finds the picture to be incomplete without Kara’s form and it’s what has her texting Kara over her lunch hour. Are you watching the game tonight?

It takes a bit for Kara to answer, but she sees the message later after she’s getting out of a meeting and heading to the labs to go over a project. You can come over if you bring food.

A smile tugs her lips, makes her feel warm. Indian okay?

Kara sends back about fifteen emojis and it’s only Lena’s wealth of experience in deciphering Kara Danvers Text Speech that lets her know it’s a positive response.

This time, when Lena shows up at Kara’s door, it’s Sara Lance that’s exiting. Lena practically jumps back, her hand hovering over the doorbell as Sara swings it open and they both startle.

“Lena!” Sara greets, her smile surprised, but genuine. She strides forward and captures Lena in a hug as if they’re old friends.

It only takes a moment for Lena to remember her manners, but she does. “Sara, hi. I didn’t realize the Evergreens were in town,” she says.

“Skippers tomorrow,” Sara says. “Have to do KD here a solid and keep them out of the playoffs.”

“Is that likely to happen?”

Sara shrugs, but there’s something smug about her smile and she closes the door behind them until they’re both out in the hallway. “I’ve seen stranger happen. And with Kara out for the rest of the regular season, the whole playoff picture got kind of shuffled.”

“Ah, I see,” Lena says, nodding and wondering why Sara felt the need to keep them here outside the apartment. The careful scrutiny on Sara’s face is beginning to unnerve her.

“So, what are you doing here?” Sara asks, and it could sound casual, but Lena catches something intent in the question. Sara’s eyes dart to the brown paper bags in Lena’s hand. “Bringing Superstar dinner?”

“Yes,” Lena responds succinctly, unsure what she’s going to do if Sara inquires further.
“Nice of you,” Sara says, and they nod in time with each other, an awkwardness making Lena shift her feet.

“Well, it’s certainly the least I can do,” Lena says in a practiced way that sounds too much like her mother.

Sara smiles, folds her arms over her chest. “It’s nice the two of you are friends. I love Moira Queen like she was my mother, but I can’t imagine being at a club with her or the like,” she says, and Lena fights the feeling that Sara’s out to trap her. Sara pauses then, makes a considering look before adding, “Actually Moira can get down, maybe I can.”

There’s some measure of comfort in the fond way Sara’s smiling and Lena returns the expression. “Kara’s easy to befriend,” Lena says, and almost immediately regrets it. It sounds too telling, and Sara’s smile turns from fond to something more lecherous.

“Oh, I know,” she says conspiratorially, and Lena feels a usual spike of jealousy when confronted with Kara’s considerable past.

“I’m sure you do,” Lena says. It comes out even, but she knows Sara hears the disdain in her voice.

But instead of rising to it, Sara laughs, uncrosses her arms to lay one on Lena’s bicep. “You worry too much,” she says as if speaking to something unspoken.

“I’m sorry?”

Sara shrugs, this time her smile is more casual, affectionate even. “Kara’s one of the good ones,” she says, and Lena nearly bristles.

“I know that.”

Sara’s smile widens. “Good.”

It’s all the other girl says before winking and moving past Lena to stride down the hallway. “Bye,” Lena says under her breath, a bit put off by the entire interaction.

“Goodbye, Lena,” Sara shouts out over her shoulder as she rounds the corner. It startles Lena. She didn’t think Sara would have heard her.

With a deep breath and a shake of her head, she pushes the conversation from her mind and reaches out to open the door. It swings open to reveal Kara a few paces away, shuffling with her walker towards the door.

“Kara, what on earth?” Lena says, moving quickly forward to set the bags down just inside the door and come up in front of Kara.

“I thought I heard Sara say your name, but then you never came in so I just – I thought –” Kara’s words chop off abruptly and her cheeks go pink as she looks away from Lena.

It doesn’t occur to her immediately where Kara was going with that, but when it does Lena laughs. “I assure you, Miss Lance’s charms don’t work on me.”

“That’s not –” Kara chokes on the words a bit, her flush intensifying in a way that makes Lena’s stomach flip inappropriately. “I just didn’t want you to get trapped by her. She can be a lot.”

“She was fine,” Lena dismisses, trying to steer Kara towards the couch. “Why don’t you sit down,
“She didn’t say anything weird, did she?” Kara asks, though she follows Lena’s lead and shuffles towards the couch. She’s walking noticeably better. Almost as if she didn’t need any assistance, but Lena’s grateful Kara’s not overdoing it. “She can be weird sometimes.”

“I said it was fine,” Lena says with a laugh.

Kara makes a noise like she doesn’t quite believe Lena, but doesn’t comment further, just makes her way to the couch and sits down with only a slight groan. It’s an improvement from the last time she saw her, to be sure.

“How are you feeling?” Lena asks after she retrieves the food from the front entryway and drops it on the table.

“Better,” Kara says, and she sounds bright with the prospect of improvement. “I walked by myself the other day.”

“I saw,” she replies, pulling cartons out of the bags. At Kara’s inquisitive look she adds, “Instagram.”

“Oh,” Kara laughs. “Winn and his camera.”

“You looked good,” Lena says and rolls her eyes at Kara’s pleased expression. “I meant walking.”

“Sure you did,” Kara says, with an exaggerated wink.

It’s overtly flirtatious and as Lena sits down and hands Kara a carton of food, she takes a deep breath.

“Kara,” she starts, the seriousness of the word pulling her gaze over. “I think we should set some boundaries.”

“This sounds familiar,” Kara replies, slowly setting the food in her lap.

“I just think,” Lena looks away, tries to find the right way to say this. “If we’re going to be friends, maybe we should…”

As her words trail off, she looks back to see some realization spread on Kara’s face. “Be careful about how we talk to each other,” Kara finishes and Lena nods. That’s as good a version of how she feels as she can think of.

“Yeah, set some ground rules so we don’t get things confused.”

“Because that worked so well the first time around,” Kara says dryly, and Lena sighs.

“Maybe that’s a reason why we shouldn’t hang out right now,” Lena says. “It’s all too fresh.”

Kara’s lips thin and she shifts up a bit. “I think we’re fine,” she says in a confident way Lena feels incapable of not believing. “I think pretending like our feelings don’t exist is what makes it hard.”

“I’m not pretending -” Lena starts, but Kara cuts her off with a look.

“I understand you don’t want to talk about it, that’s fine. I even understand that you don’t want to date me or be anything other than friends. I get it,” Kara says sounding nothing like she actually understands Lena’s position, but is going along with it nonetheless. “But let’s not sit around like we both didn’t declare our love in some form or another.”
It sinks so heavily against her chest Lena’s breath catches when she inhales. The serious look Kara has pulls Lena in and she doesn’t know how to reply other than a softly delivered, “Okay.”

“I’m going to act the same way around you because we’re the same people,” Kara continues. “It doesn’t have to mean anything other than that. It’s not some...it doesn’t change anything. It’s just how you and me are.”

“That feels like it’s just asking for trouble,” Lena points out and Kara shrugs a shoulder.

“Maybe that’s because you overthink things too much,” she says and Lena’s shoulder deflates as she rolls her eyes into a laugh. “I’m serious.”

“I know you are,” she replies.

“Look, was avoiding me all the time that much fun?”

“No.”

“And do you really want to spend all our time together thinking over every word you say to me so I don’t get the wrong idea?”

Lena sighs. “No.”

”And you want to be friends, right?”

"Yes," Lena replies, unable to deny the irresistible pull she has to keep Kara in her life.

“There you go,” Kara says, with a nod like she’s just solved all their problems. “I know where we stand, Lena. You don’t have to worry about that.”

There’s that finality again. It pushes the breath out of her for a short moment. “Okay, you’re right,” she says with a soft smile, wanting to buy into what Kara’s saying, wanting it to get better.

“Just relax,” Kara says, stretching her hand out as much she can to set it on Lena’s forearm. The warmth of it shoots up her arm and spreads over her chest. “Relax and we’ll just be you and me.”

Lena decides that for once maybe she will relax, stop overthinking every excruciating detail. “I think I can do that,” she says and Kara beams at her.

“Settled then?”

“Settled,” Lena says with a nod.

Kara retracts her hand and picks up the carton of food in her lap. “Good. I’m starving.”

“Shocking,” Lena deadpans and when Kara laughs and winks again, Lena just grins back and sinks into the couch cushions.

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The game goes much as it did before. Kara spends her time shoveling food into her mouth and yelling at her team from the couch. It’s clear by the enthusiastic way Kara watches the game that she’s feeling better. There are still wincees and grimaces of pain, but they’re much less frequent than they had been before.

The Lakehawks have managed to fall into some kind of rhythm without Kara. The style of play isn’t
as smooth as before – even Lena’s untrained eye can see that much – but it seems to work for them.

“Eve’s playing better,” Kara comments at one point as they watch Eve hit a contested three.

“Is she?”

“Yeah,” Kara answers absently, eyes intent on the game. “Why aren’t we in zone defense right now?”

Lena looks back at the game. She’s managed to pick up the basics of basketball by sheer exposure, but some of the more finer elements have eluded her. “No idea,” she says, pretending she knows what Kara means.

Apparently, she doesn’t pretend well enough because Kara looks over with an amused expression. “Sorry, I forget you’re allergic to sports.”

“I am not,” Lena protests, indignant.

“Just basketball then.”

“Clearly untrue considering how much time I’ve spent with the sport’s biggest player,” Lena says, eyes drifting upward in exasperation.

Kara’s hand goes exaggeratedly to her chest. “Flattered as always that you think so highly of me,” she teases.

“Isn’t that just objective truth?” Lena says with a grumpy lilt to her voice.

Kara laughs. “Actually,” she says, pointing at Lena with her fork. “A lot of people would say Clark is the better player.”

It’s a surprising anecdote and though Kara’s moved past it to focus back on the screen, Lena feels curious. “Really?”

Chewing, Kara looks over again just as Lucy gets a shot blocked under the basket. “Yeah,” she says, with a shrug. “He holds a lot of records in his league.”

“That’s…” Lena can’t help but look thoughtful as amusement plays across Kara’s face. “I didn’t know that.”

Kara shrugs, takes another forkful of food and shifts a little with a grimace. “I’ll break them all eventually,” she says. “He’s just been in the game longer. People don’t think about that.”

“You also don’t play the same position,” Lena adds and it’s Kara’s turn to look surprised.

“I’m impressed you know that,” she says, and Lena rolls her eyes. “What? I am.”

“I just don’t think it’s fair to compare you two.”

“And yet people are going to keep doing it forever probably,” Kara says, sounding just bitter enough to pull a sympathetic smile across Lena’s face. It feels a lot like the way she talks about her brother. Far off as he may be, his shadow will likely always loom. “The biggest difference between us is that I win games,” she says matter-of-factly and at Lena’s arched brow she adds, “You can have as many scoring records as you want, but it means nothing if you’re not winning championships.”
Lena considers that, nods as the truth of it becomes apparent and Kara laughs softly.

“Basketball’s a team sport,” she says, and Lena acknowledges that with a smile.

“That much, I do know.”

“Good,” Kara says with a wide smile. “You’ve got the basics down.”

Lena thinks to shove Kara but stops just short of it.

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The Lakehawks win in a hard-fought overtime, though Kara doesn’t catch it all. She falls asleep sometime late in the fourth, about twenty minutes after she takes her pain meds, slouching over towards Lena’s shoulder until Lena has no choice but to shift enough to catch her.

Lena stays and watches the rest of the game, is grateful for Kara’s tiny snores into her shoulder. From what Kara’d told her earlier – *I haven’t been sleeping great with the pain* – Lena’s glad she’s getting some sleep in now, even if it isn’t the most orthodox.

When the game is over, Lena does her best to move without waking Kara, actually manages to get her into a comfortable enough position and wakes her up just enough to remove the ice pack they’d put on her after the half. It’s warm now and easily plied out of the wrap Kara’s got around her waist.

“You leaving?” Kara mumbles, stretched out across the couch and barely awake. Her eyes are only half open, a soft twist to her lips as she tries to focus on Lena.

Lena’s already cleaned up their mess from dinner and is in the process of pulling a blanket over Kara’s body. Her hair is all over the place, but she looks adorable. It reminds Lena of how she looked waking up in bed in Tokyo, tired and happy.

“Yeah,” Lena whispers, wondering how friendly it would be to sit at Kara’s hip and stroke her hair until she falls back asleep. Probably not very, no matter how much she wants to.

“Did we win?” Blue eyes suddenly become a bit more lucid as they dart to the now quiet television.

“Yes,” Lena laughs, and Kara deflates back into the cushions. “Do you want to move to your bed?”

Kara shakes her head, licking out against her lips sleepily. “This is fine,” she says and Lena nods, but finds herself lingering by the couch, not ready to leave. She wants to sit down again and feel Kara’s warmth bleed against her, wants to brush her fingers along Kara’s eyebrows when she frowns in pain.

“Okay,” she says, forcing herself to get moving lest she fall onto the couch and curl into Kara’s body. “Sleep well.”

“Hey,” Kara says, darting her hand out and capturing Lena’s, just like before. Startled, Lena wonders if yet another emotional confrontation is about to happen, but all Kara says is, “Thank you.”

“Any time,” Lena says.

Kara gives her a sleepy half-smile that every inch of Lena screams to kiss. She settles for twining their fingers together instead, squeezing and feeling Kara squeeze back. She’s weak enough that she waits until she’s sure Kara is asleep before she leaves.

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Thai tonight? Is what she receives somewhere around midday the next Lakehawks away game. She’s agreeing before she has a chance to think about it, really. She doesn’t bother knocking when she gets to Kara’s.

“Hey,” Kara says from where she’s apparently nested for the day on the couch. “How was work?”

“Well, my mother called from Prague with her laundry list of things I’m doing poorly this quarter,” Lena says.

“So, great,” Kara says with a laugh, her smile twinning a little when she turns to look at Lena.

“I’m thankful that it’s over,” Lena says. “How are you feeling?”

“Alright,” Kara says. Her smile is a bit dopey, but it’s endearing. “I’m trying to find my ideal Kart combination.”

There is indeed some cartoonish racing game on Kara’s massive television, paused mid-race. Lena can’t help but laugh.

“Jack and Lana and I used to play that as a drinking game in college,” Lena says. Kara snorts, shifting slowly so that she faces the television again and pressing play.

“Were you any good?” Kara asks, as Lena starts to pull plates and napkins from various sources in Kara’s kitchen and makes quick work of unpacking their dinner.

“Lana once threw her controller at my head because I swept nine races in a row,” Lena says, shrugging. Kara laughs loudly as Lena arrives at the couch with their food. “It was particularly impressive because the winner had to do shots.”

“Why would the winner have to do shots?”

Lena shrugs, can’t remember what their reasoning was other than some version of, “To keep the playing field even, I suppose.”

Kara finishes her race nearly as soon as Lena sits down, and she absentmindedly switches inputs on Kara’s television over to the Lakehawks pregame. By the time she’s handed over Kara’s plate without looking and glanced up, Kara is watching her with that same dopey smile on her face.

“What?” Lena asks. It’s a foolish question, a fact that settles harshly in her chest. Lena can read Kara’s face clear as day.

“I - ” Kara starts, but then shakes her head a little. “Nothing. Thank you for dinner.”

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It somehow becomes a routine in the same way their trysts had fallen into. Nights of Lakehawks games mean texts with Kara about what to have for dinner and quick exchanges in which Lena reminds Kara that no she can’t have wine while she’s on pain medication no matter how much Kara thinks it will help her back.

George picks up whatever takeout Kara’s requested that night and ferries Lena over to Kara’s apartment building.

Kara’s rehab is progressing. Not as quickly as Kara’d like, that’s certain, but she’s getting there. Walking has started to become easier and easier and though she still can’t sit or stand for long periods
of time, she’s able to walk at a relatively normal pace and without the help of her walker – a fact Kara was so delighted by Lena had to convince her not to throw the contraption out her bedroom window.

Internal reports have Kara back for the first series of the playoffs and a certain buzz starts to swim around the front office.

Though Kara’s mobility is great news for the Lakehawks, it’s somehow complicated Lena’s life in ways she didn’t think to anticipate.

It changes the dynamic of their hangouts. Kara’s not chained to a seat or to her bed while Lena moves about the apartment. Now, as Lena works on pulling plates out of kitchen cabinets and utensils out of drawers, Kara’s able to idle in the periphery, standing propped against the counter.

“Should you be standing so much?” Lena asks, glancing out of the side of her eyes and trying not to react to the hot feel of scrutiny.

“It helps,” Kara answers, plucking a green bean out of the plastic container set out on the counter.

It might help Kara, but it’s distracting Lena to the point she nearly drops a plate and Kara laughs at her.

“Am I bothering you?”

“No,” Lena responds quickly, sending Kara an unimpressed look.

“Sorry,” Kara says, sounding anything but. There’s a cheeky lilt to her lips that Lena realizes she hasn’t seen in a long time. Though it makes her cheeks feel flushed, it warms in her chest just as much.

“You seem pleased today,” she comments

“It’s a good back day,” Kara replies jovially. “My PT says I’m way ahead of schedule.”

“That’s great,” Lena says genuinely, looking up and allowing the smile on Kara’s face to tug a similar expression across her own.

“Yeah, there’s a chance I could be back just in time for the playoffs.”

“I’d heard the same myself.”

“Couldn’t come a day too soon. I think I’ve been going stir crazy.”

“Don’t push yourself,” Lena warns, worried Kara’s eagerness to get back to playing could end up jeopardizing her recovery.

“I’m not,” Kara says, holding her hands up defensively.

Before Lena can say more, the doorbell rings out loudly through the apartment and they both jolt, looking towards the door as if it will reveal who is standing outside.

“Are you expecting someone?” Lena asks.

“No,” Kara says, and she makes to move towards the door, but Lena stops her with a hand on her bicep.
“I’ll get it.”

A glance at the security panel next to Kara’s front door reveals the visitor and Lena finds herself staring at the grainy video image of one Clark Kent.

“Who is it?” Kara asks in a whisper as she slowly comes up behind Lena.

“Your cousin,” Lena answers in a hushed voice, turning to gauge Kara’s reaction.

Her face shutters in a way that has Lena reaching for her hand without thinking. “Do you want me to tell him to go away?”

Kara hesitates, looks like she might even take Lena up on the offer, but instead reaches out and unlocks the door.

Before Lena can think to retreat back into the apartment the door is opening, and Clark Kent is standing there, looking clean-cut and tall and ever the picture of the All American Boy. His well-cut jeans and leather jacket look plain in an inoffensive way and Lena can make out the small features of his face that look so much like Kara.

“Clark,” Kara greets, sounding somehow completely warm and also closed off at the same time. “I wasn’t expecting you.”

“Hey, Kara,” Clark says, and he steps forward to press a careful, familial kiss to Kara’s cheek.

A glance to Lena has Kara hastily introducing them. “Clark, this is Lena,” she says, gesturing forward and Clark turns on a smile Lena’s seen on more than one advertisement.

“Lena Luthor, yes,” Clark says, holding his hand out. “I knew Lex fairly well.”

It’s the first Lena’s hearing it, but that’s Lex for you. “Did you? I’m sorry to say I never heard much of you,” she replies, taking his hand and putting on the smile she usually reserves for hostile takeovers.

It’s an instinctive reaction more than anything. Something in her can’t shake the story Kara had told her, the sad, forlorn way she’d talked about Clark all those years ago. How much she had wished Clark had been there for her.

Kara may not hold a grudge, but Lena’s not as nice.

“Well come in,” Kara says hastily, shooting Lena a look as Clark walks between them and into the apartment. Lena shrugs, unrepentant, but puts on a look of innocence that, judging by Kara’s eye roll, isn’t that convincing.

“Would you like me to go?” Lena nonetheless asks under her breath as Clark paces out of hearing distance into the kitchen.

Kara hesitates, but takes Lena’s hand. “I’d rather you stay, if you don’t mind.”

With a squeeze to Kara’s fingers, Lena smiles as reassuring as she can. “Whatever you need.”

They join Clark in the kitchen, Kara moving quicker than she had been before as if trying to cover up any sign of injury for her cousin. It isn’t until Lena gives her an admonishing look that she slows it down.

“What brings you by, cuz?” Kara asks, reaching into the fridge to pull out a beer and hold it up for
Clark’s inspection.

He waves the drink off and takes a seat at the long expansive counter of Kara’s kitchen. “I’ve got a shoot in the morning for a new Nike ad,” he explains. “Thought it was a good opportunity to stop by, see how you’re doing.”

“I’m great,” Kara replies, standing up straighter than she probably should be and smiling at her cousin. “How are you?”

“Great,” he parrots, a skeptical look on his face at Kara’s sunny demeanor.

“Super great, even,” Kara says. “I’m doing great.”

“I guess you’re on the good drugs, then,” he says, glancing over at Lena with a grin Lena’s seen plastered on Monarchs promotional material and Nike commercials that sometimes run during the Lakehawks games. It’s boyish and charming and Lena can understand his clean-cut appeal.

“A lumbosacral bone bruise certainly qualifies for the good stuff,” Lena says, and she knows it comes out much harsher than he deserves, but she feels taken aback by his surprise appearance, how much it’s clearly thrown Kara off, and it helps to regain her footing.

Kara shoots her a look, but there’s a smile on her face that relaxes Lena and Clark looks at both of them before replying. “I’m sorry,” he says. “Maybe I should have called to check in before I dropped by.”

“No, it’s fine,” Kara says, laughing softly. Lena catches the way she’s leaning heavily against the counter as she tries to make a show of being put together for her cousin. “I’m glad you stopped by. And yes, I am on the good drugs.”

Clark relaxes from the way he’d stiffened under Lena’s gaze and smiles at her. “That’s good. When I broke my collarbone my rookie season, I couldn’t get enough of them.” He makes a face and then shakes his head. “That makes it sound like I had a drug problem, which to clarify, I did not.”

The hasty way he tries to reassure them reminds Lena so much of Kara that she has to laugh.

“I know you didn’t, Clark,” Kara says, reaching out to pat his hand and then wincing as she pulls back. Lena just barely restrains herself from going to Kara’s side and ordering she sit down somewhere.

Clark looks like he notices the painful expression Kara’s made and a wave of concern on his face makes Lena feel a little less bitter towards him. “You okay?”

“I’m great,” she dismisses and at his continuing look of worry she adds, “Seriously. It just tweaks sometimes.”

Thinking of a way to get Kara onto a couch and into a more comfortable position, Lena draws Clark’s attention. “We were about to order dinner and watch the game. Would you like to join us?”

Clark looks taken aback by the offer and even Kara gives her a quick look, but Lena plasters on an inviting smile that has Clark returning the expression easily enough.

“If I’m invited, sure,” Clark says. He looks at Kara, who looks over at Lena with somewhat narrowed eyes before she pulls a smile on her face.

“Yeah, of course,” Kara says.
“Cool,” Clark says. “Let me call James and tell him I’ll catch him later tonight.”

Kara waves him further down the hallway of her apartment and barely waits until he stops at her guest bedroom until she’s looking at Lena suspiciously.

“Go sit down,” Lena says, before Kara can let out whatever it is she’s about to say.

“This is going to be weird,” Kara says, looking very pouty as Lena starts pushing at her shoulder to usher her over to the couch. “We haven’t talked for longer than ten minutes since Japan.”

“I promise I will handle him if you just go sit down,” Lena says. “Right now.”

“I’m going,” Kara grumbles, her feet finally moving as Lena guides her over to the couch. When she sits down at the arm, she groans unhappily. Lena doesn’t even think about it, just runs her hand across the hair at Kara’s temple for a moment before she blinks and sighs.

“So, what’s for dinner?” Clark asks, a grin on his face as he reenters the living room. Lena’s hand retreats nearly as quickly as it had escaped her control. But Kara is still looking at her softly.

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They watch the first half of the Lakehawks game together, the three of them. It takes a few minutes for Kara to start her usual commentary, clearly still distracted by Clark’s presence. But the two of them strike up a stilted conversation that begins with basketball strategy and doesn’t venture too much into personal things. Lena sits back and listens, can’t help but be interested in hearing Kara’s commentary as a two-way discussion rather than the monologue it usually is.

As the game goes on, everyone seems to relax. Clark and Kara even seem to get along as if they were age old friends, joking about different childhood memories and making fun of some of the plays on the television.

It’s interesting – there are clearly similarities between Clark and Kara. They’re both funny, genuine people. But there are times where it’s apparent Clark isn’t quite sure how to handle Kara, and it’s apparent too that Kara notices. Lena wonders if this is how it’s always been or if it was something that developed after Kara’s parents died. Or maybe just when Clark went off to college.

By the time Clark leaves with another kiss to Kara’s cheek and a smile for Lena, the Lakehawks are about to start off the second half. Kara waves him down the corridor before she leans heavily again against the kitchen counter, the smile on her face drifting away as she slides onto a stool.

“Nice of him to stop by,” Lena says wryly and Kara makes a tired face, drops her head into the hand she has propped up by an elbow on the counter. Her other hand goes gingerly to her back and Lena looks around to see if she can spot Kara’s pain meds.

“Of all my family members that was surprisingly the least awkward,” Kara replies, an exhausted grin for Lena.

“Really?”

“Eliza was here the first few days,” Kara says, but pauses for a second to furrow her brow. “Eliza’s my adopt –”

“I know who Eliza is,” Lena interrupts with a laugh.

The crinkle in Kara’s brow fades and she regards Lena a moment before returning the chuckle. “Of
course you do,” she says softly and then, “Well she was here right after I got out of the hospital and could not stop crying.”

At Lena’s face, Kara laughs again. “She’s usually not like that, but apparently seeing me that injured really upset her and she was just fussy and super concerned and how do you tell a person that loves you that much that they’re suffocating you?”

Lena arches a brow, but nods in an attempt at agreement. It’s hard to relate much less imagine Lillian Luthor shedding a tear over anyone that wasn’t Lex. “Sounds difficult.”

“And then when Alex comes by she keeps looking at me like if she breathed the wrong way she’d break me,” Kara continues on with a bit of a grumble. “The whole team doesn’t know how to react to me or what to say. Even Sara took two shots of vodka before she acted normal.”

“You two were drinking?!” Lena exclaims, and nearly slaps a hand over her mouth when she hears how chastising they sound.

Kara just laughs, waves her off. “Just Sara. She took one look at me with the walker and went straight for the liquor cabinet.”

“Sounds well-adjusted.”

“Sara’s just like that,” Kara dismisses easily, laughing with a kind of fondness that Lena doesn’t know how to take. It’s a constant battle to forget how surrounded Kara is by beautiful women. “Diana was really the only one that acted normal. And you. For the most part.”

“You’ve sure had a lot of visitors,” Lena comments, trying not to remember her run-in with the gorgeous Diana Prince.

“Turns out all you need is a nearly career-ending injury to bring everyone you know in your life to your doorstep,” Kara says and Lena sighs, setting aside any other feeling but the urge to soothe out Kara’s pain.

“Your career isn’t over, darling,” she tells her softly, reaching across the counter, but not touching Kara. “This will heal.”

Kara observes Lena for a poignant moment. “You know, I couldn’t feel my legs for the first few hours in the hospital.”

“You’ve said,” Lena says, swallowing against a sudden surge of emotion. Lena’d heard that from Cat’s press conference and again when Kara mentioned it that first night Lena stopped over to berate her. It’s not new knowledge, but it still steals her breath for a second.

“I thought it was over.” It’s said so matter-of-factly that Lena doesn’t know how to respond. “When Alex showed up after the game, I didn’t even want to see her.”

“I can’t imagine what you must have gone through,” Lena says quietly, unsure where Kara’s going with this.

A beat of silence, a look of consideration before Kara says, “They told me you were the first one there.”

Shock chills down Lena’s spine, her eyes widening for a moment. She’s not sure what to say other than, “What?”
Kara smiles. “I overheard the nurse talking to Cat and asking if they should call you since you’d been there minutes after I arrived.”

Lena flushes, feels her cheeks spike so violently with warmth she barely restrains herself from pressing her hands against them.

When she doesn’t reply, Kara bites at her bottom lip. “I don’t mean to embarrass you.”

“You’re not,” Lena denies, shaking her head and laughing a bit at herself. “I just didn’t realize you knew.” She pauses a moment and regards Kara seriously. “I’m sorry I didn’t stay.”

Kara shakes her head, reaches across the counter to where Lena’s hand still sits and touches her fingers lightly. “It was enough knowing you’d been there at all.”

It occurs to her with an overwhelming kind of clarity just how serious this thing between her and Kara is. It’s too clear how deep they’ve gone, how tightly Lena’s emotions are so wrapped up with Kara’s. The realization should give her anxiety, it should wrap around her throat and choke the air out of her.

Instead, her throat just feels thick and achy like she might cry, but her chest warms and settles down into her body. She feels rooted to the ground and to the way Kara’s looking at her and all she can think to say is, “I’m glad we’ve stayed friends.”

Kara smiles, even as her eyes drop and she laughs. “Me too.”

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The Lakehawks lose. By the time the game is over, Kara looks the kind of emotionally exhausted she had after she told Lena about her parents, her eyes unfocused as she listens to the postgame territory.

“Let’s go to bed,” Lena announces, standing abruptly and only really hearing what she just said because Kara makes a startled noise, the exhaustion leaving her face as a more wide-eyed stunned expression replaces it. Lena feels her own eyes do the same, but she puts a stern face on and looks down on Kara. “You know that’s not how I meant it.”

Kara laughs, her expression deflating. “Too bad,” she jokes, and Lena’s hands feel like they’re buzzing suddenly.

“Very funny,” Lena says, determined not to overthink the teasing look in Kara’s eyes. “As if you’re in shape for anything like that.”

“Too real,” Kara says, the words more like a groan as she gingerly picks herself up from the couch. They make their way to the bedroom and though Kara can walk without any assistance, Lena still follows her all the way there just to make sure. It isn’t until she’s standing there with Kara in the silence of the bedroom that she realizes she’s done it.

“Can I ask you an awkward favor?” Kara says quietly, looking at Lena over her shoulder until Lena comes better into view.

“Sure,” Lena replies, wondering what it could be and stomach flipping over at the possibilities.

Kara hesitates a moment, her fingers tugging at the hem of her grey Lakehawks issued t-shirt. “Do you think you could help me get my shirt off? It’s just painful as hell to do it myself.”
“Of course,” Lena says immediately, though the buzzing that began earlier only intensifies. “Just show me what to do.”

They work around each other, Lena lifting the fabric of Kara’s shirt over her head as best she can while Kara makes work of not moving her arms too high nor straining her back too much. It takes a lot of maneuvering and a lot of Lena trying very hard not to touch any bare skin.

She’s only partly successful. Her fingers still graze the muscles of Kara’s stomach and her shoulder blades and her body wakes up as if on muscle memory. It’s only with significant determination that she’s able to push it aside and focus on helping her friend.

When they finally get it off and Lena’s stuck standing in front of a topless Kara Danvers, she has to avert her gaze lest she let it rest there for an obvious length of time. “All good?”

Kara grabs the t-shirt from where Lena has her fingers clenched around it. “Yeah, thanks.”

Lena nods, looks up at Kara’s face. “No problem,” she says, clearing her throat the slightest. Kara’s eyes feel intense, but Lena thinks maybe that’s her own imagination. “I’ll see you later.”

“Definitely,” Kara says and before Lena can even think of it she’s stepping forward and pecking a short, completely friendly kiss to Kara’s cheek.

“Sleep well,” she says, face blooming with warmth before she turns and strides directly out of Kara’s bedroom without another word.

On her car ride home, Lena wonders the virtue of spending this much time around Kara, of allowing the kind of flirtation they’ve fallen into. Thinks maybe all that’s happening is she’s falling into old habits and only complicating everything so much further. That there’s a likelihood that letting this happen will only end with her being right where she was in Tokyo.

The obvious solution would be to stop, to cut her ties until their feelings are sorted out, but just the thought of it curdles so violently in her stomach that she knows it’s not a real solution to anything. And a part of her, too, knows that if it’s inevitable that her and Kara will be together, she wouldn’t mind.

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Jack calls her midweek because he’s knee deep in a work project that’s driving him to the brink of insanity. Lena can hear the crazy in his voice the minute she picks the phone up and can picture him in his office, hair a mess from running his fingers in it and eyes red rimmed with how long he’s been awake.

“Do you want a break, or do you want me to come fix the problem?” Lena teases, already logging out of her computer and picking her bag up from the floor.

“Can it be both?” Jack asks, sounding pitiful.

“I’ll bring coffee,” Lena tells him before hanging up and telling Jess to call down to George.

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It’s just as Lena’d expected. Jack’s office is a mess, his desk an unorganized pile of papers and half-destroyed prosthetic parts. It’s some project Jack’s been working on for the better part of a year and Lena recognizes it rather easily as soon as she gets close enough.
Jack is slumped in his chair, his suit jacket discarded along with his tie and his sleeves rolled up high on his arms. He offers Lena a tired smile when she hands him his usual coffee order and sets her bag down by his desk.

“You look terrible,” she tells him, her voice soft as she reaches out to tuck an errant lock of his hair out of his face.

“I assure you, I look a lot better than I feel,” he says with a joking twist to his lips.

“Reassuring,” Lena says dryly, and then surveys his workspace with an unimpressed eye. “Maybe some fresh perspective will help.”

“Maybe,” Jack says, slouching further in his chair and looking exhausted as he sips at the coffee he brought her.

Lena observes him a moment. “When did you eat last?”

“What day is it?”

“Wednesday.”

Jack looks to the ceiling as if it holds the answer. “Not sure,” he says and Lena sighs.

“Come on,” she says holding her hand out and hauling him up out of the chair when he takes it. “Why don’t we go get some food and maybe a shower and come back to it a bit fresher?”

“I’m too tired to shower,” he all but whines and Lena laughs.

Pointing a stern finger at him, she says, “That part is non-negotiable. You’ve clearly become immune to what you smell like.”

Jack makes a face that both of them laugh at, but slings an arm around her shoulder and pulls in her closer. “That’s part of my musk,” he says and she elbows him, hard.

“Don’t be gross, or I’m taking the coffee back.”

He jumps back from her, huddles the coffee protectively, but grins at her, already looking fuller of life than when she walked in.

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They head to his apartment and he takes a quick shower while Lena threatens to burn the clothes he’s clearly been working in for the past three days. After that, when Jack looks a little more capable of being a normal human, they head around the corner from his building to an old dive-y bar they used to frequent years ago but haven’t visited in some time.

It’s a comfortable kind of place and Lena’s pleased to see it hasn’t changed much in the time they’ve been away.

They take a corner table, a darker area of the already dim bar and Lena immediately orders a pot of coffee and two of Jack’s favorite appetizers.

“So talk me through the problem,” Lena instructs as the server sets the coffee on the table along with two mugs and glasses of water.

Jack does as he’s told, walks through the project and where he’s gotten stuck. Lena listens intently,
pushes his coffee towards him when he doesn’t stop to drink it and lets her mind try to work on a solution.

It takes a full plate of wings and half an order of spinach artichoke dip before Lena has something to contribute and she sketches out an idea on a beverage napkin on the table.

Jack leans low over the table and watches her, sips at his coffee and blows out a breath into a laugh. “Why are you so brilliant?”

“Are you complaining?” Lena asks, pushing the napkin towards him for his inspection.

It’s likely not the full solution, but it’s at least something Jack hadn’t thought of yet and he folds the napkin nicely before sticking it his pocket. “Not at all,” he says. “I knew there was a reason I chose you as my best friend.”

Lena laughs. “Good to know I’ve earned the title.”

Looking much less exhausted than before, Jack sits up and throws the rest of his coffee back before pouring some more into his mug. “Okay, you solved my problems, any problems I can solve for you?”

Lena shrugs, sips at her water. “I actually don’t have any problems,” she says, realizing suddenly how true it is.

Jack’s disbelief, however, is immediate and deep. “How is that possible?”

“That’s rude,” Lena says, kicking his foot under the table.

“Are you seriously telling me there’s nothing new with the superstar?”

The mention of Kara makes Lena pause, considering, but she shrugs again. “Not really.”

“You’ve been texting her again,” Jack says, reproachfully. “I’ve seen it happening.”

“We’re friends,” Lena says, and it somehow doesn’t feel like a lie. Somewhere between sleeping together and then not, they did become friends. Complicated flirtation and feelings aside.

Jack, however, looks completely skeptical and despite an immediate feel of indignation, Lena can admit that’s probably warranted. “You’re friends,” he repeats in a deadpan, scoffing into a laugh at the end of it.

“I know what that sounds like,” Lena says, acknowledging it with a sigh. “But it’s true. Strange as it may seem.”

“It is strange,” Jack says. “Are you two…engaged in your arrangement again?”

Lena scoffs, taking a sip of her drink and glancing over to the television where a Harriers game is playing. They’re getting destroyed.

“She’s only just been able to walk for longer than ten minutes at a time,” Lena says. “We’ve been hanging out. Normally.”

“You’ve been hanging out,” Jack says. When she looks over at him, he’s squinting unnecessarily in the dim light of the bar.

“Yes,” Lena says.
“Normally,” Jack repeats. Lena throws a look his way that has him laughing. “Sorry, I just. I can’t imagine how it would be normal. You’ve spent the last two months like a hamster in a wheel trying to ignore your feelings.”

“She knows about my feelings, I know about hers. Now that it’s all out on the table there isn’t some big dark cloud looming over us,” Lena says idly, watching the screen as the Harriers miss another shot. It takes her a few moments to realize Jack is staring at her, and when she looks over at him, he’s got wide eyes.

“She has feelings,” Jack says. “That you know about.”

The cold feeling of realization – that she never exactly managed to tell Jack that she and Kara had had any constructive conversation about feelings at all – sets in.

“I – yes,” Lena says, shrugging and looking around before she speaks again. “I told her when we broke it off that I was - ”

“In love, yes,” Jack says, nodding and rolling his hand in the air as though she needs to get to the point. She’s a bit offended he’s just rolled past that.

“Right. She told me…some time after that…that she was in love with me too,” Lena says. It settles in the air like concrete.

Jack blinks at her, the mania from earlier leaking back into this eyes.

“So you’re in love with each other, and you’ve been hanging out. Normally,” Jack says. Lena nods. “Lena. What the fuck?”

“She needs a friend right now, and I can do that,” Lena says, shrugging. “Things are still how they are.”

Jack’s jaw is slack, his eyes darting around a little crazily and he looks completely at a loss for words.

“I’m too exhausted to process any of this,” he settles on, shaking his head at her. “You’ve both acknowledged you’re in love but can’t be together and are totally fine hanging out and texting like old friends. Even though you spent months sleeping together like…all the time.”

Lena shrugs, but when it’s said out loud like that, she can see where his skepticism comes from. “I don’t know what to tell you. We’re friends.”

“I’d tell you that you’re being delusional, but it’s like talking to a wall at this point.”

“Harsh,” she says, making an indignant face.

“I can’t believe, honestly, that I told you months and months ago to sleep with the star of a basketball team and then you listened to me, and now you’re in love with her and you’re going to get married,” Jack mutters, mostly into his coffee.

“I think you skipped over how we’re just friends,” Lena says, glaring. Jack shrugs.

“For now,” he says, then blinks. “You know, I bet Kara Danvers never thought she’d be the trophy wife.”

“You need to go to sleep for at least twenty-four hours,” Lena says, shoving at Jack’s shoulder.
Jack hunches low over his coffee and shakes his head. “Just tell me where to send the wedding gift,” he grumbles, and she kicks him under the table.

“Shut up, Jack,” she says, but laughs when he just gives her a cheeky little grin.

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Kara gets featured yet again on the Lakehawks Instagram. This time she’s walking completely on her own and even has a basketball in her hand. She looks complete in a way that makes Lena’s heart flutter.

The caption is just the countdown begins.

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Instead of a text, it’s a phone call and Lena’s body reacts to that against her will. Phone calls from Kara usually lead to a very specific thing that has heat curling in her stomach and Lena pushes it down with frustration before picking the phone up. It’s not even eight in the morning, she admonishes herself silently.

“Hi,” she greets, and Kara’s voice is almost aggressively bubbly across the line.

“Hey! What are you up to?”

“Just got to work,” Lena says. “I have a conference call with some Dutch subsidiaries.”

“Can you speak Dutch?” Kara asks, her voice light and happy. It makes Lena smile.


“I know there isn’t a game tonight, but would you want to come over anyway?”

Lena hesitates, ponders the likelihood of being able to restrain herself around Kara without the distraction of the Lakehawks. Wonders how much she even wants to restrain herself at this point.

“We can’t be friends if we never hang out,” Kara says as if reading her thoughts and Lena’s eyes go to the ceiling a moment.

“I was just checking my schedule,” she lies.

“And?”

Lena thinks of Jack’s earlier strategy – that repeated exposure might numb her to pain – and decides maybe the same applies here. The more she hangs around Kara as friends, the less likely she’ll be to think about all the things they used to do when they were hanging out. Kara had certainly said as much herself. Just relax and be friends. They can certainly have dinner without the distraction of the Lakehawks.

“I have something going on early afternoon,” she says, grateful it’s not actually a lie – there’s some happy hour she remembers she’s meant to make an appearance at after the normal workday is over. “But I could head by around dinner.”

“Great!” Kara says, sounding so happy Lena can’t help but smile.

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When she actually does check her schedule, her eyes go wide at a meeting she notices for later that day. It’s apparently an appointment that’s been on her schedule for the better part of a week, but Lena’s just noticing it now – a glaring Samantha Arias: 1:00PM taunting her from her computer screen.

A sudden exclamation of Jess! brings her assistant scurrying into her office with a look of concern that Lena tries to assuage with a smile. Judging by the severe furrow of Jess’s brow that doesn’t release, Lena’s not certain she succeeds.

“Miss Luthor?”

“This one o’clock meeting I have…”

“Samantha Arias, yes,” Jess says with a nod, looking down at the tablet in her hands and scrolling through what must be Lena’s schedule.

“Any idea what it’s about?” Lena asks, hoping Sam at least attempted to contrive some business reason.

Jess purses her lips, scrutinizes something on her screen. “Looks like…a project proposal?”

“For what?” The words are clipped and a bit irritated and she tries not to take it out on her assistant.

“Unspecified,” Jess answers, looking up at Lena with a worried wrinkle between her brows. “She just mentioned that she needed fifteen minutes of your time.”

“You put her down her for a half hour,” Lena points out, glancing again at her schedule.

Jess shrugs, a bit repentant. “She was nice.”

With a sigh, Lena affects a smile, but shakes her head at the flush on her assistant’s cheeks. “Very well,” she concedes. “Will you let me know when she arrives?”

“Of course, Miss Luthor,” Jess replies dutifully.

And with that, Jess promptly leaves her alone with her thoughts and Lena spends the next twenty minutes staring at the same sentence in an e-mail she’s been trying to reply to until she finally shakes out of it.

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Sam arrives five minutes early, just as Lena’s finishing a late lunch and discarding the rest of its contents into the trash can near her desk. Jess informs her of Sam’s arrival with enough hesitance that Lena does her best to smile warmly and affect some kind of casual air.

“Send her in,” she tells her and seconds later is greeted to the confident image of Sam Arias striding into her office.

“Lena,” Sam greets and after a moment’s deliberation, Lena leaves her chair to pace around her desk and greet Sam with a quick, polite air kiss to the cheek.

“Sam, good to see you again,” she says, the words coming out even and practiced.

“Thank you for meeting with me,” Sam replies as they disengage, and Lena takes her position back behind the safety of her desk. Sam drops into one of the chairs across from her as Lena does the same.
“I must say I was a bit surprised to see you on my schedule,” Lena starts, pushing forward in her chair and leaning her elbows on her desk. She picks up a pen from its surface and plays with it, feeling fidgety, but trying to contain it. “What brings you to Luthor Corp?”

Sam laughs softly, her eyes darting away for a moment and Lena feels a drop of worry for a moment. “I can imagine what you must have thought.”

Lena’s sure that’s true. But she figures if maybe she just ignores the elephant in the room, it might wander away. So she arches a brow, lips thinned into a smile and says, “I’m not sure what you mean. My assistant said something about a project proposal?”

Judging by the way Sam’s lip twist, the reasoning was about as thin an excuse as Lena’d anticipated. “Yes, right,” Sam says. “That’s not entirely true.”

It irritates her more than she can say, and she hates the manipulative way Sam’s managed to trap her, but she takes a breath and remains professional. “I can’t imagine what else would bring you here,” she says, and Sam actually rolls her eyes at that.

“I said not entirely true, okay? I do have business here, but it feels awkward to start there without…” her lips purse a moment, eyes darting over Lena’s face. “You know.”

“So you secured a spot on my work schedule to talk personal things?” Lena knows she’s sounding testy, bitter even, but she can’t quite stop it.

Sam, however, has always been quick on her feet, adaptable and close to unflappable. She sits up in her chair and levels Lena with a look. “I have business to discuss with you that has nothing to do with us,” she says and Lena’s brought back to a different conversation, a younger version of Sam telling her it was about business, not about us. “I thought it might be good to get some of the personal stuff out of the way.”

Lena keeps her gaze out of sheer unwillingness not to be the first to break and sets the pen she’s been twisting back down on the table. When she doesn’t respond, Sam adds, “Unless you’d just like to awkwardly pretend none of our personal history exists.”

A snarky reply spikes up in her throat, but she swallows it and sees the opportunity for what it is: closure on a relationship she thought she might never get. “Very well,” she answers. “What would you like to talk about?”

This takes a bit of the rigidity out of Sam’s spine, but she keeps Lena’s gaze still, jaw tight. “I’d like to apologize,” she says, and Lena fights the reaction that wants to cross her face. Her stomach flips over, and she feels a scratching at an ancient scab.

“For what?”

Sam’s smile turns sad, her eyes softening. “For the way things ended between us,” she says in a quiet voice. “And for some of the things I said.”

“You don’t owe me an apology for that,” Lena dismisses, strangely feeling it unnecessary to rehash all that history. It occurs to her quite suddenly that she’d forgiven Sam without realizing it, that she’d moved on. Her mind wanders to Kara, wonders how much that had a hand in it, despite realizing the answer quite clearly.

“Maybe not,” Sam says, “but I want to give you one nonetheless. I’m sorry.”

“It’s okay,” Lena says and despite believing the words, her eyes feel hot with the memory. “It was a
long time ago.”

Sam is quiet a moment. “And you’ve clearly moved on.”

The words could sound bitter, but they somehow don’t. It takes Lena a second to even process exactly what Sam’s referring to, but when she does her smile crosses her face unbidden. It’s incredibly inappropriate to feel this pleased by the insinuation she could be dating Kara, but something about the moment has Lena allowing herself to live in the fiction.

“Kara, you mean.”

“Yes,” Sam laughs. “Kara Danvers. Quite the catch. How did that happen?”

Lena blinks, has no good answer for that question other than a dismissive, “It’s a long story.”

“It must be hard with both of your jobs and her busy schedule,” Sam says. “She travels a lot, doesn’t she?”

“We both do,” Lena answers firmly, unsure where Sam might be going, but wanting to head it off nonetheless.

“Of course,” Sam acknowledges. “I know all about that.”

“I’m sure you do,” Lena replies with an unimpressed lift of her brow. “We find ways to manage.”

A bit of a lie, but Lena feels no need to correct Sam’s assumption that she and Kara are together. It’s not entirely incorrect anyway. Though it may never have been something official, they’d found ways to see each other despite busy schedules. They still do.

Had they been dating, Lena realizes suddenly, it might have actually worked better than expected. It still could. She shoves that aside for processing at another time.

“I’m happy for you,” Sam says managing to sound genuine enough that Lena smiles fondly. “You seem really happy.”

“Thanks. I think it’s the first time I’ve felt this positive about a relationship,” she adds before she can stop it. The truth comes barreling out of her and even she’s a bit surprised to hear the words. There’s a flash of a wince on Sam’s face that she takes a guilty pleasure in before deciding to let the past lay where it should.

“Have we sufficiently shuffled the elephant out of the room?” Lena asks, a teasing twist to her lips that seems to relax Sam.

The other woman leans back in her chair a bit, crosses her legs. “Sure,” she concedes. “I guess I just hope we can be friends from here on out.”

Lena’s not sure if she’ll ever be able to be truly friends with Sam, but she’s seen stranger things happen so she nods. “Friends,” she says definitively and waits for Sam’s nod of approval before continuing on, “So, friend to friend, let me hear this business proposal.”

Sam takes a breath, smiles.

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Lena feels accomplished after her meeting with Sam – a far cry from how she’d felt when she first saw the meeting on her schedule. A weight she didn’t realize was there feels lifted off her shoulders
and when they hug their goodbyes, it feels genuine and lacking the kind of angst she’d felt before.

How much that has to do with knowing she’s headed to Kara later, Lena’s not sure, but regardless it no longer aches much at all to think of Sam.

It’s a good thing too seeing as Sam’s proposal was actually legitimate – not just a front for a more personal conversation – and something she can see Luthor Corp moving forward with. They’d scheduled a meeting later in the month to talk logistics and contracting.

By the end of the work day, Lena’s in a decent mood. It makes the obligatory appearance at the cocktail hour much more bearable than usual and she even finds herself smiling genuinely at a few investors as she works the room.

When Lena shows up at Kara’s apartment, it’s Kara that actually answers the door for the first time. Walking around at a relatively normal pace and beaming so hard Lena nearly tackles her in a hug. Instead, she settles for a much more restrained smile and a, “You look great.”

“My back still kind of hurts, but I can walk around now,” she says with a happy bounce to her feet. Her eyes run up and down Lena’s body and Lena feels suddenly self-conscious when she remembers how she’s dressed. It wasn’t her intention to come here like this, but there hadn’t seemed like a lot of time between the cocktail hour and the appropriate time to come to Kara’s so she’d just headed straight there instead of changing.

The dress is black and sleek, and her heels are the kind she likes to wear to tower over the condescending masses of men she usually has to interact with at these things. Jack likes to call them her power pumps. They make her legs look great and her hair is pulled back into a severe bun behind her head and she’s wildly overdressed for a night in with Kara.

Something crosses over Kara’s expression; a few things, really, like Kara doesn’t know what to say. “You look nice,” seems to be what Kara settles on, but it comes out a little strangled. “Really nice.”

A hot flash courses over Lena’s skin and she puts a self-conscious palm at her hip. “Thanks,” she says, voice thicker than she’d like.

“Hot date?” Kara comments, sounding so forced Lena almost laughs. There’s a sour look on her face that Lena reads easily and she can’t decide what to think of it. There’s a thrill threatening to shoot up her spine.

“I came straight from a Luthor Foundation Cocktail Hour,” she tells her, stepping inside the apartment and past Kara. Their bodies almost brush and the hair on the back of Lena’s neck stands up. There’s something dangerous about the look in Kara’s eyes right now and it’s not doing much for her master plan of learning how to be *platonic* friends.

“Oh,” Kara says, clearly incapable of not sounding relieved. “Sounds fun.”

“Remind me to take you to one and we’ll see how fun you think it is,” Lena says dryly and when she turns, Kara’s smiling. She can imagine, for a second, taking Kara to such a function. Kara in a well-tailored suit, her arm around Lena’s waist, carrying on conversations that always exhaust Lena. She wants that. And it feels more in reach than ever, even if it shouldn’t.

“Deal,” Kara says, voice too low not to make Lena’s chest feel light.

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They end up sitting at the kitchen counter and eating the large spread of Italian Lena’d brought over. Their stools are inches apart and Kara turns to sit sideways and face Lena as they eat. It means their thighs brush ever so often when Kara shifts and Lena can’t help but take comfort in the movement.

Kara looks so casually attractive right now. Lena had never thought she’d find the ensemble of track pants and a long-sleeved t-shirt with the sleeves rolled up appealing, but on Kara it flutters something unstoppable in her gut and makes her want to run her palms up the hard line of Kara’s forearm.

She’s not particularly distracted from her desire as Kara talks over her rehab – she’s allowed to dribble and pass basketballs now. She’s so clearly happy, her legs bumping against Lena’s and her smile contagious. After they’ve managed to exhaust that topic, Kara asks how Luthor Corp is.

“It was fine,” Lena says. “The Dutch were happy. And I got a proposal today from Sam.”

Kara is unfortunately taking a drink in the middle of that, because she chokes on her sip of water immediately, coughing heavily. It makes Lena laugh, which makes Kara glare.

“I’m going to assume your ex didn’t actually propose to you at work,” Kara says, her voice scratchy, after she manages to take some deep breaths.

“No,” Lena says. “She did apologize for the way our break up happened, though.”

“That’s nice,” Kara says, though it sounds like she thinks nearly the opposite. Something about the tone makes Lena feel warm.

“She wants to be friends actually,” Lena adds.

“Do you want to be friends with her?” Kara asks, forking a piece of chicken into her mouth.

Lena shrugs. “I’m not against it, I just don’t know how realistic it is.”

“Why’s that?”

“There’s a lot of history between us,” Lena says, thinking of what it was like seeing Sam for the first time in so long at the club. “I think it’s kind of hard to be friends with someone after you’ve seen them naked.”

It occurs to her what she’s said as soon as Kara laughs. Sometimes she forgets how parallel the situations are. It’s hard not to wonder if being friends with Kara is as farfetched as being friends with Sam though for entirely different reasons.

“I suppose that’s true,” Kara says quietly. ”But we seem to be managing okay.” There’s something heavy in the air when their eyes connect.

“Yeah,” Lena replies, scrambling for a way to turn the conversation. “I suppose you’ve always managed to be friends with people you’ve slept with.”

Kara makes a face, her brows coming together severely. “What does that mean?”

Heat crawling up her neck, Lena keeps her face neutral. “Just that – well Sara for example,” she says, hating the ever-deepening look of confusion on Kara’s face and wondering for the first time if she’s been missing something this entire time. “Or Diana.”

A bark of a laugh escapes Kara. “Diana’s married,” Kara says emphasizing the word as if it’s crucial. “She has been for like forever. Did you not know that?”
Lena had not known that all, but she tries not to let her surprise show. “That’s – well good for her.”

Kara’s eyes search Lena’s face and she grows warm under the inspection. “You thought I was sleeping with Diana?!”

“I don’t know!” Lena says, putting her hands up defensively and straightening. “You’re out with her a lot and a frequent subject of gossip. When we first met I saw you linked to no less than three girls in a week.”

Though Kara’s face is incredulous, there’s a hint of a smile. “Are you telling me this whole time you thought I’ve just been sleeping around with half the league?”

“Not half,” Lena replies quickly and at Kara’s grin, she glares.

“Lena,” Kara says softly, her face growing serious even as her smile remains. “I’m not going to lie, I’ve definitely slept with a few of my friends. That’s what happened with Leslie.”

“I remember,” Lena says, trying not to grumble it out.

“And I’ve managed to keep healthy friendships with nearly all of them, sure, but…” Kara pauses, her jaw working back and forth a minute. “It’s not really the same.”

“What do you mean?” Lena asks, though she can see it plain as day on Kara’s face. The moment feels thick suddenly.

“The other girls. It’s not the same,” Kara says. “It doesn’t compare to how I feel about you.”

Silence drops around them and it’s not the first time Kara’s made a comment like that, not the first time Lena’s been reminded of their mutual feelings for each other, but right at that moment it feels like all the tension that’s been coiling between them for weeks just snaps.

At least for Lena it does. Her body just reacts to the look on Kara’s face and their proximity and this built up well of desire in the pit of her stomach and they’re kissing. She pushes off her stool and fits in between Kara’s legs and is idly very grateful Kara had stopped eating during their conversation because there’s nothing to impede the way their mouths slant together.

The feel of it impacts so swiftly in Lena’s chest that her breath whooshes out of her and her hands pull Kara closer by her chin. Kara’s hands land on her hips and it feels so good Lena’s not sure why she ever wanted to resist it.

Until reason regrips her consciousness and she abruptly pulls away, her feet pacing backward until she nearly trips over her stool.

Kara’s breathing hard, looking at her with wide eyes and glossy lips and Lena would like ever so much to go back to kissing, but her brain is running a million miles a minute with all the complicated reasoning she’s wrapped herself up in ever since this thing started.

“Lena,” Kara says, breaking the silence first.

“I’m sorry,” Lena says, shaking her head. “I don’t know why I did that.”

Kara’s quiet a moment, but stands, her hands going to her hips and chin lifting just so slightly. “I think you do.”

“I shouldn’t have,” Lena says, clinging to the last vestiges of her resistance as she matches Kara’s
stance. "That was impulsive."

Kara sighs, the sound of it aching under Lena’s ribcage. They regard each other for long seconds, Kara wavering back and forth on her feet and Lena would reach out to steady her if she could trust herself to touch Kara without touching Kara.

“Can we just talk about it?” Kara asks in a small voice and Lena’s throat aches.

“About what?” Lena asks knowing full well what Kara’s talking about.

“Why you think we shouldn’t be together when both of us clearly want to be,” Kara says matter-of-factly.

Instinct has Lena ready to protest, but before the denial can even leave her lips, Kara’s expression darkens. “Be honest,” she commands in a way that Lena is helpless not to obey. "I just want to understand."

Taking just a moment to gather her thoughts, Lena takes a breath. “Your whole life is basketball,” she says. “Just how mine is my company.”

“I know that,” Kara says, but Lena holds up a hand to stop her.

“We talked about this that first night,” Lena continues. “There just isn’t a lot of room for relationships. In either of our lives.”

Kara’s lips thin with discontent. “You’re talking as if we haven’t been managing to find the time for each other for months now.”

It’s true. Lena can’t deny that much. Despite both of their jobs, they’d found time to see each other in way Lena might have thought impossible before. “Because it was casual,” she says.

The laugh Kara lets out is more a scoff than anything else. “Right,” she deadpans, sounding sarcastic.

“It was,” Lena insists. “And anything more than that means commitment, means taking time away from the bigger priorities. I’m not going to be something that takes you away from your first love.”

Kara observes her then, blue eyes searching about Lena’s face until she feels her cheeks warm. “Look,” she starts, taking a deep breath and letting her expression soften. “I’ve spent most of my life not caring about much other than basketball.”

“I know,” Lena says and Kara’s lips twist.

“It obviously worked out for me.”

Lena laughs at the casual shrug Kara adds to the end of the sentence. “I’d say so.”

“Priorities can change,” she says in a quiet but firm sounding drop of the words. “You’re not taking me away from anything. You’re just adding to it.”

“Kara,” Lena starts, fighting the way her throat feels like it might suddenly close. “This is basketball we’re talking about. It’s your entire career.”

“I don’t know where you got the idea that I can’t have both things,” Kara says, a curious look in her eyes.
Lena’s quiet a moment, searching through her own confused mix of feeling. “Maybe I just know that there’s a possibility you can’t.”

“And you think I wouldn’t choose you,” Kara finishes for her, wrapping something cold around Lena’s ribcage.

“You barely know me,” Lena says, the words not much over a whisper.

Kara scoffs and it’s a bitter sound that has Lena swallowing thickly. “I may not know your favorite color still, but I know you.”

“Sex is –”

“It was more than sex,” Kara says, the persistence and determination in her voice starting to chip away at Lena’s already crumbling walls. “We did other things. I know you may not have noticed – I didn’t notice until you straight up told me – but it was always there. I was always falling in love with you.”

It’s like standing with her head underwater for a moment. Lena’s not sure what to do anymore other than cling to the tattered remains of her ridiculous logic. “It’ll be complicated,” she says and only after it comes out does she realize she’s talking about it as if it is definitely going to happen.

Kara must realize it too because her lips quirk up. “That doesn’t scare me.”

“It could ruin both of our careers.”

“No, it can’t,” Kara insists.

“Not yours, maybe,” Lena says.

“And not yours either,” Kara says.

“You don’t know that.”

“I know you’ve built something at Luthor Corp too big for either of us to topple. That much is obvious to anyone,” Kara says and there’s something about the way Kara looks at her that makes her feel empowered, unstoppable. For just that moment she buys entirely into the fiction Kara’s creating.

“People will talk,” Lena continues, running down the list in her head. “And it won’t be good. What if this goes south? What if we –”

“We don’t have to make an announcement,” Kara interrupts. “Nothing has to change from how it was before.”

Lena arches a brow at that to which Kara rolls her eyes a bit and adds, “I just mean – we can keep it secret for now. Just...I won’t date other people, and neither will you.”

“Were you dating many people before?” Lena asks before she can help herself and a tiny smile plays on Kara’s lips.

“No,” she says softly, and Lena feels something go light in her stomach.

“Really?”

“Really,” Kara answers, nodding. “I told you that one time in Vegas that I hadn’t been sleeping with anyone else.”
“I know you did.”

“Did you not believe me?” Kara asks, arching a knowing brow.

Lena flushes, shrugs a shoulder. “We didn’t have any promises to each other back then,” she points out.

“And now we will,” Kara says firmly. The words feel like the slamming of a door against her chest.

“This is really risky,” Lena says, feeling the concession coming fast.

“Some things are just worth the risk,” Kara says. “Isn’t that what you were trying to teach me forever ago with poker? There are just some hands you don’t fold.”

“And some hands you do,” Lena points out, trying not to get distracted with the memory of the poker lesson Kara’s referring to. It comes as a surprise that Kara remembers anything substantive beyond the way they’d ended up falling on the pile of chips and cards on the hotel floor.

“Aren’t you tired of fighting it?” Kara asks, a kind of desperate exhaustion in her voice that makes Lena want to reach out towards. “Because I am.”

Lena makes a disbelieving little noise. “I don’t think you’re the one fighting it,” she says for lack of any better response. If anything, Kara’s the one that seems so relaxed about the entire thing, so comfortable with everything.

Kara smiles wryly. “If you don’t think not kissing you every time I see you doesn’t take a lot of work…”

It makes Lena want to press back in, to push into Kara’s personal space until they’re kissing again. Instead, she presses her palms to her thighs and takes a deep breath. “I’m not very good at this,” she says and at Kara’s curious look she adds, “Relationships.”

“Just give me a chance to prove to you that this can work,” Kara says quietly, and Lena feels any misguided resolve pull hard out of her heart.

“I’m scared of what could happen if it doesn’t,” Lena admits in a voice barely above a whisper.

Kara’s face goes so soft around the edges that Lena wants to sink into her body. “It’s okay to be scared,” Kara says, and she reaches out to lightly trap Lena’s fingers with her own. “Just don’t let that stop you from doing it.”

A precarious silence drops around them and Lena feels the last barriers fall with an inevitable swoop of her stomach.

“Okay,” Lena says, breathing the word out and feeling like she might cry if she’s not careful. “I’m in.”

A radiant kind of look bursts across Kara’s face so suddenly that Lena has to take a sharp intake of air. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Lena nods, and she steps forward, back into Kara’s personal space. “You’re right. I’m tired of fighting it.”

Kara searches her face as if to be sure before her smile widens and she threads forward until their lips are together again. This time, Lena lets herself sink into the feeling, brings her hand up to Kara’s
sternum and grips at the fabric of her shirt there to keep them close. Kara’s hands have slid to her hips and the touch feels so familiar that her insides go liquid.

The kiss drowns everything else for long moments until Lena tapers it off lest she do something reckless like shove Kara against a wall.

“I should let you know that I can’t actually have sex for like…a few more weeks,” Kara says when they break apart.

It takes a second to process, but Lena laughs, smooths out the wrinkles her fingers made in Kara’s shirt. “I think I’ll survive,” she says though her body feels like if Kara gave the green light right now, she’d be falling into bed already.

For the sake of the Lakehawks playoff run, Lena’s glad Kara said something.

“Maybe you will,” Kara replies wryly, a suggestive waggling of her eyebrow that has Lena laughing again.

“The last thing we need is some article about how your injury was exacerbated and how,” Lena says and Kara’s smile goes wide and amused.

“I think we could handle it, you’d just have to do all the work,” Kara says with a wink that Lena rolls her eyes at.

Swatting at Kara’s arm lightly, Lena clicks her tongue disapprovingly. “After all that business, I’m pouring myself a glass of wine,” she says, moving away from the temptation of Kara’s body and suggestive expression.

“The very suggestion of doing any work and you need some wine,” Kara says, laughing, as she turns to reach for a glass for Lena from the collection on the counter. “You’re lucky I stock up for you.”

“You think you’re so funny,” Lena says, but she’s unable to stop the short laugh that comes out.

“If you’d just stop laughing at all my jokes, I might think differently,” Kara says, a smile on her face as she presses a kiss to the side of Lena’s head.

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They end up on the couch watching the tail end of a Skippers game. Lena protests only the slightest - her interest in basketball starts and ends with the Lakehawks - but Kara tells her it’s good preparation for the playoffs. The Skippers are routing Central City and both are possible playoff matchups for the Lakehawks depending on how the points shake up.

Kara’s commentary is much less involved than it is during a Lakehawks game, but Lena imagines that might have something to do with how close they settle together and the hand that’s drifted over to Lena’s thigh. They watch the entirety of the game and then the postgame show. There’s an extended conversation about the postseason and when they show a clip of Kara’s injury and some pictures from the Lakehawks social media of her recovery, Lena reaches forward to change the channel.

They sit through another hour of local news and then a rerun of some show Kara says is hilarious. Lena laughs only because Kara’s laughter is loud and infectious.

An emotional exhaustion from before starts to creep up on her, but she finds herself resistant to the
idea of leaving. She wants to hover in Kara’s airspace a bit longer, sit in the feeling of this new thing they’ve endeavored on.

But when she fails to suppress a yawn, Kara notices and Lena gives her a conciliatory smile.

“I should get going,” Lena says, standing and watching as Kara does the same, stretching her back out just the slightest. Lena watches the movement and is pleased to note Kara only winces a few times.

“It’s late,” Kara comments and they both glance at the time on the small cable box under Kara’s television.

“I know,” Lena says when nothing further comes from Kara. “That’s why I should get going.”

Kara looks hesitant for a second, her feet shifting and eyes darting away before she says, “You can - you can stay the night if you’d like.”

Kara’s face is the same kind of open and honest that Lena fell for months ago and when she stretches out her hand in invitation, Lena doesn’t know how to resist it. Doesn’t want to.

“That sounds nice,” she says quietly, sliding her palm across Kara’s who smiles at her.

Lena takes a pair of extra sweatpants and an old t-shirt that Kara offers her and slides into a bed she’s been in so often. It feels like the start of something new and exciting even if it’s something they’ve done a million times before. It feels right.
Chapter 8

It should feel drastically different considering something so fundamental has changed between them. Or so Lena thinks.

Instead, it feels fairly natural when she wakes up in Kara’s bed, fully clothed and eyes clearing on the still-snorin image of Kara’s face. Kara’s hand is outstretched between them, settled on Lena’s hip, and Lena notices her own fingers have tangled in Kara’s shirt, having moved there of their own accord sometime while she was sleeping.

A month ago, it would have startled her. She might have found a way to slowly extricate herself from the closeness or guiltily sunk into it knowing it was only temporary. But this morning, she does neither of those things.

Everything feels too good. Her body feels weighted into the mattress, tethered to the soft way Kara’s face looks while she’s sleeping. So, without thinking much of it, she sags further into the mattress and shifts until Kara’s hand is slipping more solidly onto her body.

Kara grumbles something in her sleep but doesn’t wake. It’s a small moment, but it somehow contains so many things Lena had never allowed herself to hope for.

It’s almost embarrassing how quickly she falls back asleep, her feelings like a blanket over both of them.

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The next time she wakes up, it’s to Kara gently shaking her shoulder. It forces her to come to full consciousness rather quickly and when she jerks up, Kara’s expression goes somewhere between amused and concerned.

“Morning,” Kara says, already standing next to the bed and dressed like she’s headed for a workout.

Lena sits up but feels so much goggier than she normally does. A glance to the clock beside Kara’s bed tells her it’s just past five in the morning. It’s not much earlier than she normally wakes up, but there’s a lingering lassitude in the back of her mind that has her wanting to pull Kara back into the bed.

“Hi,” Lena says, clearing the sleep out of her throat and throwing the covers off her body so she can stand up.

“Sorry to wake you,” Kara says, hands in the pockets of her black joggers. “But I thought you might want to get out of here before Alex gets here to pick me up.”

The mention of Kara’s sister makes Lena’s eyes go wide – wide enough that Kara tries and fails to smother an amused looking smile. “Good thinking,” Lena murmurs, sudden anxiety making her stomach flip as she glances to the door.

Kara reaches out to take a loose hold on Lena’s arm, stepping in close enough to pull Lena’s attention back to Kara’s face and quell some of the fluttering in her stomach. “You have time, she won’t be here for another hour.”

They regard each other for a moment and Lena doesn’t resist the soft, warm feeling that threads around them. Kara’s palm feels hot on the skin of Lena’s forearm and it seems like they both look
down at where they’re touching together.

Kara’s face flushes and she pulls her hand away slowly. It’s an absurd reaction. They’ve touched so many times at this point, Lena feels like she knows Kara’s body nearly as well as her own. But everything feels more charged now, every movement filled with new meaning.

Rocking back and forth on her feet, Kara stuffs her hands back in her pockets and shoots Lena a soft smile. There’s something so attractive about the look that Lena’s cheeks go hot.

“How are you feeling about last night?” Kara asks, the crinkle around her eyes betraying just how much she cares about the answer.

The implication that Lena could have changed her mind overnight makes her stomach swoop.

It’s no less scary, sure. If anything, Lena feels a bit more terrified about the entire thing in the light of day. But there’s something about the look in Kara’s eyes that makes Lena feel a little more reckless and unafraid. It’s not as if she’s made this decision haphazardly.

No, it’s more that every moment that came before last night was like a slow crawl leading to this one. Her decision was made long ago, and it was always going to bring them here.

The inevitability of that is a bit more terrifying, but Lena takes a breath against the feeling.

“Good,” she answers simply, her voice carrying no louder than a whisper. “You?”

Kara smiles and Lena’s stomach flips over. “Happy.”

Maybe it’s all the months of being so sure of Kara’s lack of feelings, or maybe it’s Lena’s general pessimism when it comes to her personal life. But whichever, the way Kara looks at her makes her chest feel expansive and tight at the same time. “Yeah?”

“Totally,” Kara answers, laughing at herself as she says it.

Lena feels giddy, embarrassingly pleased and she’s afraid if she’s not careful she might do something ridiculous like start giggling or maybe even clapping.

Thankfully, Kara saves her from her dilemma by reaching out an arm to snake it around Lena’s waist and turn them towards the kitchen. “Come on,” Kara says. “We have time for a quick cup of coffee.”

Mindful of Kara’s injury, Lena’s careful about the way she leans into Kara’s side, but doesn’t protest when Kara leads them out of the bedroom.

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Their coffee finished, Lena glances at the time and realizes she should get going. Especially if Alex is liable to show up at any moment.

“I’ll see you later,” Kara says, though it comes out more like a question.

They hover around each other near the front door and Lena can’t stop herself from reaching up to touch lightly at Kara’s face.

“You will,” Lena says and they both seem to hesitate, Kara’s eyes drawing down to Lena’s lips.

It’s as if they’ve never kissed before – as if Lena hadn’t all but thrown herself at Kara the night prior. Even the first time they’d done this – in an elevator so long ago – Lena had felt less hesitant.
Thankfully, Kara shakes off the awkwardness of it first and smiles, noses forward before Lena even has time to take another breath.

It feels good and almost new. Kara’s hand wraps to the small of her back to bring them in closer and Lena lets her hands rest near Kara’s neck, fingers tangling in the straps of her tank top.

She doesn’t want to leave. Aches with how much she wants to stay. Warm in Kara’s orbit.

But reality is there nonetheless and this time, when Lena finally pulls away to leave, it doesn’t feel so final. Their parting holds the kind of promise Lena never let herself believe in before.

They smile at each other, kiss again, swiftly, before Lena walks down the hall and slips into the black town car waiting for her.

George glances at her in the mirror. There’s a smile on his face she can’t decipher, but if he knows anything, he doesn’t say as he pulls the car away from the curb and takes her home.

As a change of pace, Lena doesn’t fight the happy feeling trying to take over her being. There’s a tingly warm feeling sensation spreading across her skin and Lena doesn’t resist it, closes her eyes a moment and lets herself feel.

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This time, Lena doesn’t make the mistake of keeping Jack in the dark. In fact, she’s not sure she’d be capable of doing so even if she’d wanted to. It’s like everything threatens to come bursting out of her the second they meet up for a late happy hour that evening.

“You look uncharacteristically happy,” Jack says, almost grumbling it as he swirls an olive in his drink. “I suspect it has nothing to do with your board meeting today.”

“Kara and I talked things out,” she tells him, thinking maybe that’s a good way to put it. She’s mindful of the bartender washing glasses at the end of the bar, but other than that most of the other patrons are engrossed in their own conversations.

Jack freezes, turns slowly to look at her and lets the olive toothpick in his hand plop back into his drink. “Like, talked things out,” he says. “Or talked things out.”

It’s clear just from Jack’s expression what kind of distinction he’s making, and she swats at his bicep. “She has a back injury.”

“I thought she was healed and feeling better.”

“Not that better,” Lena says with a little scoff.

Jack makes a humming noise like he doesn’t believe her, but the sound cuts off when Lena throws him a glare. “So, what does that mean? Talking it out.”

Lena takes a breath, feels like there isn’t a good explanation that doesn’t make her sound like a giddy teenager. “We discussed…things.”

It’s one of the lamer moments of her life.

“Things,” Jack repeats, looking like he wants to laugh at her, but wisely swallowing the urge. “How enlightening.”

“We’re going to give it a try,” Lena says and then feels the need to clarify. “Dating. Sort of.”
Jack blinks for a second, a smile blooming on his face.

“What? Like an adult relationship? One where you have to acknowledge your feelings and appear in public together?”

“So cute how you pretend you know what that is,” Lena jabs, cheeks flushing as she tries to fight the way her stomach rolls at appear in public together. That part is going to take a lot more time for Lena to come around on.

He laughs, but doesn’t deny her jab. In a friendly gesture, he puts his hand on her arm. “I’m sorry, Lena, I’m only joking.”

“I know, but I’m serious,” she says, still rolling her eyes at him. She pauses a minute before adding, “About trying it with Kara.”

His expression soberes in small degrees until he’s smiling softly at her, fond and almost proud. “I’m happy for you,” he says. “I’m glad you’re at least trying.”

“That’s all there is to do sometimes, right?” Lena says wryly, and he winks at her.

“That’s what I’ve always said, love.”

“You’re so wise,” Lena says, reaching over to poke at his shoulder. Jack nods sagely.

“And so you’re finally over all that...what was it? Professional ethics and blah blah,” Jack asks, his disdain for Lena’s previous reasoning clear.

Lena sighs. Isn’t really sure how to answer that. “I suppose I’m just tired of fighting against something I want so badly,” she admits, her voice so quiet she’s not sure Jack can hear her.

From the way his face goes soft, she’s pretty sure he does. “So what does that mean? Are you guys going to...come out?”

Just the thought of announcing to the world that she and Kara are dating starts to coil anxiety in her throat that she can’t deny. “No,” she says slowly, unable to stop herself from looking around at the other patrons in search of wandering eyes or ears. “It just means we’re...” A good explanation alludes her for a moment, but Jack seems to take pity.

“You’re giving it a try,” he says, but there’s a delight in his eye that makes Lena smile.

“We are.”

“I’m happy for you, Lena,” Jack says, as sincere as can be. It spreads warmth across her skin.

“Thanks, Jack,” she says quietly, and he smiles.

“And you know what this calls for,” he says, already raising his hand to the bartender.

“No shots, Jack it’s barely six,” Lena says, grabbing for his arm and laughing when he avoids her reach and waves down the bartender anyway.

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The Lakehawks have a string of away games before they make their last home stand and Lena can’t quell the surge of anticipation for Kara’s text the morning of the first match against Central City.
I’m craving Italian tonight – meet at your place? is all it reads and that shouldn’t be something so distracting, but Lena feels like she thinks about it all throughout the rest of her day.

They haven’t hung out anywhere other than Kara’s apartment. Largely on account of Kara’s injury – she’s mostly been unable or uninterested in going anywhere else. She was well aware of Kara being a known persona around National City, but the running reports on her every spotting around town has gotten to the point where it gets talked about in the city’s tabloids. Just two days ago, there’d been a photo of Kara in sweats and a heavy jacket getting ramen from the noodle shop on her corner on the front of the Daily Nat.

Do you need me to send my driver over, she texts later, hoping Kara’s not intending to walk all the way over. It’s a walkable distance, sure, but the idea of Kara making the trip makes Lena uneasy. Not to mention that little paranoid voice in her head that doesn’t like the idea of Kara getting spotted waltzing up into Lena’s apartment building.

Kara’s response is quick: I’ll take the Model L – that self-drive you put in there is awesome. What do you want from Cosettas?

I can send George. It’s no problem, Lena replies. Trusting in her own technology well enough but liking the assurance of having her own driver take care of Kara.

This time, there’s a lag between responses. George doesn’t like me.

Lena laughs, thinks maybe Kara’s joking, but when nothing else is forthcoming, she texts back: that’s not true.

It is, Kara replies. Pretty sure he’s a Skippers guy.

That’s entirely new information for Lena. In fact, she’s never even thought to consider that her driver had any sports allegiances. It hadn’t exactly been part of the hiring qualifications. She’d say she’s surprised it’s never come up in conversation, but truth be told, she and George don’t exchange much small talk beyond how are you and where to, Miss Luthor?

Before she can reply, Kara texts again. What do you want from Cosettas?

I think you’re wrong about George is Lena’s only answer – now completely distracted by the possibility her driver of over a decade is a Skippers fan and carries a distaste for Kara. It’s bothering her enough that she considers calling him right now and confronting him and if it weren’t for the rational part of her that knows how ridiculous that is, she’d have done so already.

I’m not.

Lena glares at her phone, but before she can reply, Kara’s already sent another text.

Just tell me what you want to eat tonight so I can satisfy you.

Lena knows her word choice was intentional – a clever tactic to distract Lena from the current train of conversation. But even knowing all that, it still works. Her brain drops between her legs and heat crawls up her throat.

Caprese salad, please is all Lena texts back.

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When Kara does show up that night it’s with three bags of Italian food and Lena’s fairly certain that
Kara’s interpreted *caprese salad* as lasagna, two orders of chicken parmesan and a variety of appetizers that will likely end up as leftovers in Lena’s fridge.

“One of those boxes better be my salad,” Lena murmurs, taking in Kara’s obnoxiously pink windbreaker and ripped jeans. Her jitters start to return in full force as Kara edges her way into Lena’s apartment and leans forward to kiss her cheek.

“Hey,” Kara says, ignoring Lena’s comment about the food. “You look nice.”

Blue eyes rake slowly down Lena’s fairly bland skirt and blouse combination. It’s what she’d worn to work that day and had been too lazy to change out of upon returning home. There’s a smirk on Kara’s face as she finishes her once-over and moves to set the bag on to the kitchen counter.

“It’s my normal work clothes,” Lena says dryly, passing a hand down her side to even out a crinkle there. “Hardly anything to write home about.”

Kara *tsks* as she pulls boxes out of the bags and shoots Lena a smile. “Yeah, but I know what you look like underneath it all.”

It should be alarming how much Lena’s body reacts to that, to the look in Kara’s eye and the way her jacket rides up as she sets out all the food.

“Would you control yourself?” Lena scolds, fighting her blush as she makes her way to the wine cooler and searches for something to drink. Kara hasn’t been indulging on account of her pain medication and general rehab, but that’s not going to stop Lena from putting something in her hand lest she grab for Kara.

“I’m not allowed to be honest?” Kara says, trying to look innocent and failing. She sets the last box out and leans on the counter, watching Lena with playful eyes. It’s as if the shift in their relationship – or maybe just the *acknowledgement* of it – has just made Kara all the more flirty.

Or maybe Lena’s just far more responsive to it now that she doesn’t have to hold back.

Setting the bottle of wine on the counter, Lena regards her, unimpressed for a moment. “You’re trying to get a rise out of me.”

Kara shrugs, her smug looking smile the kind of irritating that makes Lena want to kiss her. “I can’t help it that you’re just super pretty and I don’t feel like I have to pretend I don’t notice anymore.”

It’s impossible not to be swayed by the honest quiet of Kara’s voice. Lena’s only human. The warm, soft feeling she’d spent so much time before trying to avoid wraps around her so tightly she sighs a little and steps into Kara’s space.

“You’re a flirt,” Lena accuses, though her tone lacks any kind of censure. Her fingers play with the strings of Kara’s jacket as she turns to face Lena.

“I’ve told you before,” Kara says, her palm hot as it finds a place at Lena’s back. “They’re not lines, just the truth.”

It feels a bit overwhelming when Kara threads forward and kisses her. Lena didn’t think her attraction towards Kara could get any more intense, but it turns out mutually confessing their feelings has done wonders for the way Kara’s lips feel.

Kara’s hands feel strong when they take purchase on her hips and when her back presses into the edge of her countertop, she starts to forget why they’re not supposed to be doing this.
Kissing can’t hurt, right? It’s just kissing.

One of them makes a noise, Lena’s not sure which of them does. All she can focus on is the way Kara’s fingers are playing with the waist of her skirt and the feel of their hips coming together. It’s when Lena realizes her fingers have worked their way between them to Kara’s belt buckle that she remembers herself and pulls away.

“We can’t,” she gasps out, breaking off from Kara’s lips and turning her head when Kara chases after her.

“We’re just kissing,” Kara insists, her mouth close to Lena’s ear, voice heated. “It’s fine.”

“It’s not going to be in a few minutes,” Lena says, unable to stop the way her neck cranes as Kara continues to press kisses down her throat.

“Doesn’t it feel like now that we shouldn’t do something, it’s all you want to do?” Kara murmurs and it’s like the throbbing feeling in Lena’s gut answers for her.

“The food’s getting cold,” Lena says, pushing at Kara’s shoulders. Gratefully, Kara obeys the motion and pulls back. There’s a little pout forming on Kara’s lips – the adorable exaggerated kind that Kara punctuates with puppy-dog blue eyes, but all it does is make Lena laugh and push her again.

Clearly, this whole injury-forced abstinence thing is going to be harder than she had given thought to before. It shouldn’t surprise her. She’d spent months trying not to sleep with Kara and all she seemed to do was fail. A lot.

Kara makes an exaggerated noise of complaint but laughs along with Lena and presses a swift and much more platonic kiss to Lena’s mouth before moving to the cabinet where Lena stores her plates. “I got you your salad, but I also got other stuff which you should eat because salads are boring. Even if they’re really just a sneaky way to eat cheese.”

Lena shoots her a look, but takes a plate when Kara offers.

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The game isn’t great – though that’s been a theme of the Lakehawks season ever since Kara’s injury. The first quarter is a mess. Kara spends a lot of it uttering curses and at one point nearly throws a fork at the television before Lena catches the motion and stops her.

By the second quarter, Kara seems keen on spending her energy on berating her team and just about every person on the television.

“Just run a pick-and-roll, or feed the post, or something,” Kara complains, letting her head fall back on the couch in exasperation. “When nothing is working, go back to fundamentals. That’s not rocket science.”

Lena’s actually an expert in rocket science and yet has no idea what pick and roll means or why you’d be feeding anything during a basketball game. She’s notably more versed in the sport than she’d been months ago, but some of its intricacies still elude her.

“That’s a relative idiom,” she points out.

Kara turns to her and Lena can’t help but watch the play of muscle in Kara’s shoulder, the way her neck strains with the motion. Yet again, Lena finds herself struggling against desire. Against the
attractive way Kara always looks and the reminder that it’s been over a month since they last had sex. Their entanglement in the kitchen certainly didn’t help in putting out any internal fires.

“A pick-and-roll is a block that gets a shooter free,” Kara says, snapping her fingers a little. “Now that you’re dating a superstar, you have to know these things. That’s the rules.”

“Oh, I didn’t realize,” Lena says drolly, laughing a little when Kara rolls her eyes. The reminder that she and Kara are dating draws heat into her spine. “Educate me then.”

Kara picks up the tablet Lena has sitting on the coffee table and swipes it open to find a drawing program with a blank document. “I’ll show you,” she says, starting to draw what looks like half a basketball court on the screen.

“Kara, I don’t want to pull you away from the game,” Lena protests, half because she doesn’t care that much and half because it feels like an unnecessarily complicated thing to explain.

“Frankly,” Kara says, turning from the tablet to regard Lena. “I could use something to focus on that isn’t the shitty way my team is playing or the way your legs look right now.”

It’s like a hot brand across her chest. Lena’s lips go dry as blue eyes sweep down her body and she adjusts her skirt where it falls near her knee.

“I’m sorry,” Lena says, for lack of a better reply and Kara’s eyes go dark.

“Don’t be,” she replies. “I mean, it’s nice. But I think if I did what I wanted to you, my back wouldn’t recover for probably another three months and then where would the Lakehawks be?”

Lena swallows and tries not to imagine what Kara would do if she weren’t injured, where her hands might go, where they might end up. Her eyes venture to the patio that sits outside her living room and a memory sparks heat down her spine. “Very wise,” Lena agrees, but the words come out throaty and inviting.

Kara takes a breath, smiles crookedly. “Stop looking like that,” she tells her.

It’s not really her fault. Her whole apartment is like that. When she looks away from the patio, it’s towards the chair in the corner and her thighs ache with the memory of sitting atop Kara there. Then to the couch they’re currently on, the many times they’ve tangled together across its cushions. Even the floor.

“I can’t help it,” she admits, a tad unapologetic. There’s something about Kara’s helpless reaction to her that makes her feel satisfied and powerful. Kara was right. Now that she can’t have it, it feels like it’s the only thing she wants.

Kara looks at her, stares really and Lena can make out the careful way she’s breathing.

Abandoning the tablet back to the coffee table, Kara scoots back on the couch and crooks her head to the side. “Come here,” she says and Lena’s eyes go a bit wide. She hadn’t expected Kara to give in that easily – or at all.

“Kara,” she warns. “We went over th –”

“Not for that,” Kara dismisses, reaching over and tugging at Lena’s arm.

Kara doesn’t look entirely trustworthy, but part of Lena stopped caring somewhere after the third memory she’d had of Kara pushing her down onto the floor and making her see stars. So she slides
down the couch until her knees are bumping into Kara’s.

In a motion Lena barely registers, Kara scoops her hand behind Lena’s calves and pulls until her legs are in Kara’s lap, a hot palm holding them there strongly. Lena yelps a little, nearly falls back onto the couch, but manages to stay upright and glare a bit at the laugh on Kara’s face.

“What are you doing?” Lena says, warily, but enjoying the warm way they’re pressing together now. Kara’s thumb strokes the skin of Lena’s leg as it moves towards her knee.

“Just because I’m out of commission, doesn’t mean -”

Lena captures Kara’s fingers before she can finish that sentence, the intent obvious in the way Kara’s eyes have gone dark and hooded.

“Yes, it does,” Lena says, though her body thoroughly disagrees with her. The second she realized what Kara was offering it was like her stomach starting doing backflips.

“No, it doesn’t,” Kara insists even as she stills her hand and doesn’t try for more.

“Kara, there’s absolutely no good reason to risk your back for something like that,” Lena says, her mouth feeling dry at the thought of allowing Kara to slide her hand up further and do whatever she had planned.

“I can think of a few good reasons,” Kara replies, her eyes darting down and then back up.

Lena swallows thickly. “Kara,” she warns lowly, but she can feel her resolve slipping. Her hand shifts where it’s still holding Kara’s and her skirt hikes up with the motion.

“I swear I feel fine,” Kara says, but when she moves as if to get closer, Lena catches the slight wince on her face and that alone cools just about everything in Lena’s body.

“You do not,” Lena says, managing to scoot her legs back off Kara’s lap and push Kara back into the cushions. “I saw that face.”

“It just tweaks sometimes,” Kara says, sounding like a whine. “It’s really fine.”

“I’m sure,” Lena says dryly, turning back towards the TV. Kara’s arm is perched on the top of the couch and Lena backs up into the crook of her shoulder, enjoying the way Kara’s hand drops to her arm and they press against each other.

They’ve never really done this. Sat on the couch this closely for something as benign as watching television. Certainly never been this close during waking hours if it wasn’t leading to something else.

It feels good. The kind of good Lena could find herself becoming far too used to. And if that wasn’t an indication of how much of her life has changed…

“Now come on,” Lena says, adjusting her skirt before letting her hand settle on Kara’s thigh. “Explain to me this pick and roll stuff.”

Kara laughs, but does just that and Lena lets herself sink into the intelligent sound of Kara’s voice and the warm solid feeling of her body.

In the end, the Lakehawks pull off a win somehow – Kara’s astonishment is matched only by her exuberance at the thirty points M’gann manages to score. Even though she might not have been on the court, Kara gets the beginnings of her usual victory flush that Lena finds so attractive.
It makes her want to climb on top of Kara and take back her earlier denials, but she swallows thickly against desire and just enjoys the glow of Kara’s aura.

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They fall back into old habits. Or maybe it’s really that they’d never truly abandoned them in the first place.

It’s a careful dance of watching Lakehawks games and private dinners, of late night kissing that they’re mindful not to let go too far.

Lena can’t help but marvel at how it fails to feel any different than what they were doing before. The only thing that’s changed, perhaps, is that Lena no longer spends her time fighting the grip Kara seems to have on her heart. There’s no ache in the pit of her stomach when Kara smiles at her, reaches for her across a couch, or kisses her goodbye.

It all feels almost too good to be true. And Lena does her best not to let her usual pessimism break the spell.

For a while, it works.

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The last home game of the regular season comes against the Dallas Demons on a Saturday night. Kara’s finally been given the green light from Cat to attend a game. “I think she’s been worried I’ll just grab the ball and sub myself in or something,” Kara had grumbled when trying to explain why Cat had all but barred her from previous games.

“Cat knows you pretty well,” Lena had joked and though Kara rolled her eyes, she didn’t disagree.

Some of Kara’s energy starts to rub off on Lena – it’s like she’s looking forward to the game just as much as Kara is. Even though Kara won’t be playing, just being a part of the game again is making both of them buzz with excitement. Kara heads to the arena early to join in on pregame meetings, but not without kissing Lena so thoroughly she has to redo her makeup before heading out herself.

As is custom, she and Jack grab dinner at a steakhouse before the game and she realizes with no small amount of wonder that it’s likely the last time she’ll be doing this until next season. There are the playoffs, sure, but as every sports announcer’s reminded her all week, there are no guarantees in the playoffs.

“Can’t believe the season’s coming to an end,” Jack comments as if reading her thoughts. He cuts into his ribeye and laughs a little. “Feels like just yesterday you were complaining about your new responsibilities.”

She kicks him lightly under the table but doesn’t disagree. It feels like the season went by so quickly and yet when she thinks of where she was months ago when she’d first taken on the Lakehawks, so much has changed.

Certainly, there’s the obvious.

When she had first researched the team, looking at pictures and statlines on the Lakehawks’s star player, it was one thing. There was no shortage of information on Kara – on how she came up in the league, and the long list of accolades she’d accrued at a young age.

But all that research didn’t prepare her for knowing what it’s like to wake up in the morning to find
Kara already watching early morning ESPN with the sound off, what it’s like to share satisfied smiles over cups of coffee and the very personal knowledge of what Kara’s strength feels like up close and personal.

It definitely didn’t prepare her for finding that she’s grown to enjoy the routine of going to Lakehawks games – even if she still hasn’t gained a passion for basketball.

“I’m almost sad it’s over,” she admits and Jack smiles.

“Ah, it’s nearly the playoffs, love. It’s not really over. It’s only just begun.”

When they make it to the arena, it’s packed. Even with the Lakehawks’ recent stumbles, fans still show up in droves to cheer them on. The music is thumping loudly as she and Jack take their seats, warmups well underway.

Players fly around the court. Lucy gives Lena a wave when she spots them and then does a very complicated looking hand signal at Jack that he returns easily. She shakes her head at them.

It’s still quite odd to watch the Lakehawks on the court and not see Kara, but something settles in her chest knowing she’s at least somewhere in the building. Knowing she’ll be at the end of the bench tonight instead of at home watching the game gives Lena some small measure of comfort.

Kara isn’t there for the tip-off, but Lena knows the moment she’s walked out onto the court to take her seat. It’s like the whole stadium lets out a collective breath the minute she appears. There’s no fanfare announcing her return, but everyone notices – a smattering of applause swells until she gives a half-hearted wave to the crowd.

The game goes well. It seems even just having Kara on the bench does something to the Lakehawks confidence. They handle the Demons fairly easily and put them on the defensive early in the game.

Cat stalks up and down the court and Lena enjoys the return of Kara’s voice to the variety of things Cat shouts at her players. On more than one occasion, Kara stands to reiterate something Cat’s yelled out, gesturing with her hands at Eve to switch sides of the court, or get back on defense. A few times she gestures so vigorously that Lena can see the clear wince, followed by the athletic trainer forcing her down by her shoulder. It makes Lena worry, but the sense of comfort at having Kara in the arena again overwhelms it.

After half, Lena can’t help but notice that Kara doesn’t return to the bench and a short text informs her why: spending the second half up in your suite if you want to join me.

It pulls an urge through Lena to stand up and do just that. They’ve never watched a game together in this arena. Not really. And there’s something about Kara up in the suite by herself that has Lena weighing her options.

Jack is yelling something at the game, far forward on his chair, and Lena looks up to see Lucy picking Alex up off the court as the ref makes a sign with his hand towards the scorer’s table and the announcer’s voice booms personal foul, Thirteen. Two shots.

“Damn right that was a foul,” Jack says, sitting back in his seat. Lena’s eyes draw up halfcourt to where she knows the owner’s box sits. It’s too far for her to really see anything clearly, but her gaze drifts there nonetheless.

“Say, Jack,” she says quietly as Alex lines up at the free throw line.

He makes a noise to indicate he’s listening, but doesn’t waver his gaze from the game, fist pumping
when Alex’s sinks her first shot.

“I think I might head up to the suite level for a bit,” she tells him and that, at least, draws his attention, brow furrowed as he turns.

“You’re what?”

“I’m thinking about going up to the suite level,” she says, keeping her voice low. Alex makes her second free throw and jogs backwards down the court to play defense.

“The suite level,” Jack repeats, looking skeptical. “Do you even know how to get there?”

“Of course, I know how to get there,” Lena says, a touch offended even if she’s lying. It’s not like she can’t just ask the first security guard she sees and find it easily enough. “I just – James messaged me saying there’s a guest he’d like me to meet. Will you be alright down here?”

“Sure,” Jack says. He promptly gets distracted by Maggie draining a three far beyond the line, standing up and yelling loudly. She waits for the next break in play, and brushes past him towards the courtside lounge and the exit that leads to the rest of the arena.

An attendant lets her into the owner’s suite and she’s happy to find it completely empty apart from Kara, who turns to greet her with a grin as she enters. She’s standing at the island where snacks are laid out, digging through a cup of trail mix, watching the in-suite television with statistics laid out.

“Hey,” Kara says, walking forward. She’s wearing dark wash jeans and a perfectly pressed sport coat over a black collared shirt. The buttons are undone enough to expose the strong cut of her collarbone and though Lena’d seen all this when Kara had taken the court, it’s certainly another beast up close and personal.

“Hi,” Lena murmurs, her body growing hot when Kara presses in close and drops a swift, sweet kiss to her cheek. Almost light enough to appear platonic to anyone who might catch it – not that there’s anyone who can see them up here anyway.

It leaves Lena wanting for more. She hopes her cheeks aren’t red.

“Thanks for coming up,” Kara says. “If I was left alone, I think I might’ve just eaten everything in sight out of nerves.”

Lena hums, lets Kara lead her by the hand to a row of seats on the edge of the box. It’s dipped far enough into the suite that other box level guests can’t see them, but they still have a good view of the court. “What made you want to watch from up here?”

A sheepish sounding noise escapes Kara’s throat as she admits, “Apparently, I was annoying Cat.”

It makes Lena laugh. “What did you do?”

Wincing, Kara laughs at herself. “I might have mentioned a few times that she should play me,” Kara says and Lena can imagine it perfectly – thinks maybe she caught wind of Kara saying just that in the first half.

“A few times,” Lena parrots, amused and knowing enough that Kara flushes.

“Maybe every time she passed me.”

“She’s going to sit you just to piss you off,” Lena tells her, not putting it past Cat Grant at all.
“I know,” Kara whines, slouching in her chair. If it hadn’t been clear before that her injury was nearly fully healed, it was now. A month ago, hell a week ago, Kara wouldn’t have been able to stand that position. “I just want to play.”

“All in due time, darling,” Lena says softly, reaching over to touch Kara’s thigh. The muscle there ticks as Kara bounces her leg the slightest. “What are the doctors saying?”

Kara huffs. “I’m not cleared for full game contact yet,” she admits. “I mean it’s fully healed, I have like zero pain, it’s not even really tweaking, but they want to wait. I can work out, just not practice or play yet. Say it’s not good to jump the gun.”

Lena’s inclined to agree and is about to say as much when Kara levels a look her direction that her body responds to before her brain registers it.

“And no sex for at least another week,” Kara adds in a whisper that has Lena crossing her legs, “At least that’s what they said - that I should wait until I’m cleared for a game to indulge in extra-curricular activities.”

A tad scandalized, Lena gapes at her, trying not to laugh at the exaggerated wiggle of Kara’s eyebrows. “You asked them about that?”

Shamelessly, Kara shrugs. “Of course I did.”

“Kara,” Lena scolds, feeling her cheeks warm.

“What? It’s important information,” she says. “I’ve had a girlfriend for like a month and I’ve been totally out of commission. It’s practically a Greek tragedy.”

It shouldn’t flutter something so appealing in her chest to hear the word girlfriend, but it does.

“We’ve had sex before,” Lena points out, primly adjusting her skirt and leaning into the armrest between them.

Kara shifts, her arm coming to sit on the back of Lena’s chair. “That’s what makes it worse.”

At Lena’s little noise of indignation, Kara laughs. “How so?”

“I’m not imagining things we could do,” Kara explains, voice low, and the suite starts to feel hot. “I’m remembering things we’ve already done.”

Lena has to lick her lips, the proximity of Kara’s body and the topic of conversation are affecting her ability to concentrate. “You have a point,” she says softly, knowing she’s struggled with the same thing. Kara’d been right. Knowing she shouldn’t do something is somehow making it all the more desirable.

“I mean, there’s the stuff we did in Tokyo over the Olympics, or that time in my car after that Evergreens game, or that one time —”

“I get it,” Lena interrupts grabbing the fingers Kara’d been holding up as she started her list and laughing. It’s hard to ignore how how visceral all those memories come back to her. “Stop talking about that here.”

“I’m just saying,” Kara says, sounding not nearly as affected as Lena, but one glance at her face and Lena knows that not to be the case. “I’m accustomed to a certain lifestyle and this injury is really cramping it.”
The crowd below them lets out a roar and they both turn back to the game to witness Alex side stepping a fallen defender and neatly draining a three. The sudden reminder of where they are does a little to settle the liquid in Lena’s stomach.

“Atta girl, Alex,” Kara says under her breath, a little fist pump accompanying the words.

A glance at the scoreboard shows that the Lakehawks are starting to pull away, like the team is playing better just because Kara is in the building. Lena knows it probably isn’t that simple, but she likes the thought anyway.

“Do you have any plans for postgame?” Lena asks. Kara doesn’t answer, focused as she is on the court. Lena has to nudge her in the shoulder to gather her attention. When Kara startles and looks at her, Lena raises an eyebrow.

“Sorry,” Kara says, a smile appearing on her face. “What’d you say?”

“At this our future?” Lena asks drily. Kara shrugs, her mouth opening just as the door behind them swings open loudly and so suddenly that Lena jumps in her seat.

“KD!” a voice calls out and Lena nearly shoves Kara away in an attempt to make things appear – not how they are. When she turns to look, it’s Winn, carrying a phone and a battery, his press credentials swinging from his neck as he strides further into the suite.

Lena stands as he approaches and puts some distance between her and Kara who she manages to hear mumble natural under her breath. Winn looks surprised to see her, but moves quickly past it with a polite, “Miss Luthor. I didn’t realize you were up here as well. Sorry to interrupt.”

It doesn’t mean anything – Lena tries hard to remind herself of that fact. Winn’s not leaping to any conclusions because she so happens to be in her own suite with Kara. But the thought is there, however brief and Lena runs her palms down her hips in an effort to still the small shake in her hands.

“Kara,” she says and barely restrains from swatting Kara when the other woman makes a soft noise in her throat.

Kara stands as well, much more calmly than Lena’d managed and shoots Winn a charming smile. “Did you need something?”

Winn still looks – well not confused – but his eyes dart between both of them like there’s something to see there. Lena shifts under the knowledge that there definitely is something to see, but she manages to school her expression into something neutral. “Yeah, sorry,” Winn says, shaking his head and putting on a more casual smile. “Need some pics for the ‘gram.”

He holds up his phone to Kara and she looks down at herself, “Should have told me, I’d have dressed up.”

It takes some effort not to reply to that, Lena arches a brow at Kara’s outfit regardless and tries to ignore the smug way Kara looks when she glances over. Winn laughs.

“Oh please, you totally rock the injury chic look,” he says, fiddling with his phone.

“Injury chic,” Kara repeats with amused looks for both Winn and Lena.

Lena tries very hard not to feel like her heart is beating loud enough for Winn to hear – it reminds her of a moment right after she’d first slept with Kara. They’d been standing in a hallway and approached by Winn for similar reasons. Even then, Lena felt like she’d been wearing a sign that read I fucked Kara Danvers. Now she isn’t even doing such a thing and it still feels that way.
“Don’t question my genius,” Winn tells Kara, finger pointed at her sternly. “Now go lean against something and look cool.”

“Ah, my specialty,” Kara jokes drily, a roll of her eyes for Lena punctuated by a wink that has her darting her eyes to Winn and grateful to find him absorbed in his phone.

As ordered, Kara strides to the railing at the edge of the suite and leans there, hands propping her up and affecting a smirking expression that Lena’s far too familiar with. Just like that, Lena’s reminded of what makes Kara Danvers so irresistible in the first place – it has surprisingly little to do with how well she plays on the court. Winn makes little *ooooooh* noises of approval as he snaps his shots and it does enough to break Lena from her spell.

“Got it?” Kara asks, standing up from her position and propping her hands on her hips.

Winn nods, scrolling through the pictures on his phone. “Oh yeah, for sure, those are great,” he says, almost to himself. Lena catches Kara’s little self-satisfied looks and shoots her an unimpressed one until they share a secretive smile.

“Great,” Lena says, drawing Winn’s attention. It turns out to be the wrong thing to do because it’s as if he just remembers she’s there. His face going suddenly delighted.

“Hey, we should get one of the two of you,” he says, and dread hits in Lena’s chest out of nowhere.

“I don’t think that’s necessary,” she manages to say, happy with the calm, even way it comes out.

“Fans love that kind of stuff,” he says, waving her over to where Kara is standing insistently. “Trust me. Owner player friendships are all the rage these days. Personal interest story and all that.”

Lena’s mouth feels a little dry and Kara doesn’t help – when she looks over, Kara just shrugs like she agrees with the idea and Lena has no choice but to go along with it.

She makes sure to keep a respectable professional distance between them when she walks over to where Kara is, but Winn *tsks* at her immediately.

“You have to act like you like each other,” he instructs, making a gesture for them to get closer. “Come on, that pic of you guys at the gala got like a bajillion likes. I know you’re capable.”

The anecdote surprises Lena enough that she doesn’t notice Kara’s arm snaking over her shoulders to pull her in closer.

“Nice,” Winn says, already looking through his camera phone and adjusting something there.

“Take the picture, Winn,” Kara says good-naturedly as she jostles Lena a bit.

Lena manages to smile and hopes her cheeks aren’t very flushed in the picture. Winn seems satisfied after only a few shots and he makes a pleased sound. “Awesome, guys, thanks,” he says and doesn’t even look at them as he turns to leave.

Even though he’s gone, and they’re left alone again, Lena breaks out of Kara’s hold like they’re being watched and paces a respectable distance away. An undeniable grasp of anxiety has taken hold of her throat and she *knows* it’s irrational, but she doesn’t know how to make it go away.

“What’s wrong?” Kara asks, soft like if she talks too loud Lena might bolt.

Frankly, she might be onto something.
But Lena doesn’t know how to articulate what she’s feeling so she dismisses the question with a shake of her head and leans against a far wall further into the suite from where Kara’s standing. “Nothing.”

“That went fine, so what’s got you looking so spooked?” Kara says, advancing towards her but staying a few feet away.

“I’m not spooked,” Lena denies, scoffing at the suggestion as much as she can.

Kara has a look on her face caught between knowing and sad. “Is it Winn? Because he’s harmless.”

A loud roar erupts from the crowd below them and they both turn to see a replay of M’gann shooting a roughly contested three over a Dallas player’s hand. “Let’s go,” Kara intones in an excited thrill of the word. The delight on her face washes some of Lena’s lingering unease away.

There’s a small beer cooler on the side of the suite and Lena heads for it while Kara’s distracted, opens it and inspects the contents just for something to do. “Do you want a drink?”

Kara laughs, comes up behind her. “I’m technically working,” she says, leaning on the counter next to the cooler and looking at Lena with a searching look. “But you should if you want.”

Straightening, Lena decides against the drink and closes the door. It thuds loudly in the room and she tries not to jump, but feels skittish nonetheless.

“Okay, Crazy,” Kara says, reaching out to grab for Lena’s hand. “Tell me what’s up.”

The touch of Kara’s fingers both soothes her and ramps up her nerves, but Lena swallows against the feeling and tries to get her brain to settle down. “I’m fine, I just…I don’t know.”

Kara waits a moment. Observes Lena critically, her eyes darting to the door Winn just exited through. “You know, it’s not like either of us are wearing tattoos on our foreheads declaring our love for each other,” she says, hitting it right on the head.

It makes Lena irritated that Kara can read through her so easily. Irritated and yet warm.

“I know that,” she snaps, but obeys the tug of Kara’s hand when she pulls her in closer.

“Winn’s so oblivious, I could mount you in front of him and he probably wouldn’t notice,” she adds, a teasing quirk of her lips that almost does the trick to make Lena relax, but falls short.

“No one is that oblivious,” Lena points out, trying to get the edge out of her voice, but failing.

“It’s just an expression,” Kara says needlessly, voice quiet and concerned. The sound of it coupled with the look on Kara’s face starts to beat at the tension in Lena’s chest. “Eventually people are going to know.”

Rationally, she knows that. Knows that they’re not going to keep it a secret forever. That’s a ridiculous notion.

But Lena wants to savor the privacy for as long as possible. She doesn’t want to deal with the fallout until she absolutely can’t avoid it any longer. So the threat of it all coming down – even the smallest most insignificant one – has her shaking with adrenaline.

“I’m not ready for that,” she says, her voice sterner than she really means it to, but she doesn’t correct it. “Not right now.”
Kara’s lips thin, but she doesn’t argue. “I know you’re not. I told you before, I’m not looking to make some kind of announcement,” she says, her thumb over Lena’s knuckles. “But if you start acting weird around me now, that’s going to be more telling than anything else.”

Lena gives her a look, all ready to deny what Kara’s saying, but Kara pushes on.

“We’ve been seen out together. People know we’re friends. You start acting differently and that’s going to be the story. You want to keep it hush hush, then just relax,” Kara says, her voice entreating.

It takes a deep breath, but Lena tries to do as Kara’s saying. The rational part of her brain acknowledges the truth here. She’s more likely to make headlines jumping away and avoiding Kara than she is just being normal.

“You should know that I’m historically terrible at relaxing,” Lena points out, allowing her lips to quirk upward.

“That’s okay,” Kara says, pulling Lena even closer until they’re in each other’s airspace. “I’m an expert at it.”

Lena hums, doubts that to be true from what she’s heard and seen of Kara’s work ethic, but she’s nevertheless charmed by the look in Kara’s eye and can’t stop from smiling. It has Kara smiling too, but just as she noses forward as if to kiss her, Lena puts her hand up to stop it, pushing away and pushing at Kara’s lips with her fingers.

“Just, don’t kiss me here,” Lena says, but her fingers trace softly to Kara’s jaw. “There have to be some rules.”

Kara laughs, but obeys. “You have a thing for rules, don’t you?”

“Structure is important,” Lena says, lips thinning to stop from laughing as well.

“Or you just like someone telling you what to do,” Kara says, voice low and suggestive. Enough so that Lena pushes her away and scoffs, even as her cheeks warm.

“Okay, rule number two, no saying stuff like that here either.”

“You’re no fun,” Kara says, but her laugh says otherwise.

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The picture is up on the Lakehawks Instagram by the time she and Jack are ordering amaretto sours at the bar after the game. Jack laughs loudly when he sees it, showing it to Lena with a look of pure glee. “So this was the guest James was so eager you meet?”

Lena doesn’t reply in favor of watching the television behind the bar, but she can’t stop the smile at his delighted laughter.

“You two look good,” he comments as the chuckles taper off and Lena can’t disagree, glancing at the picture again.

Kara’s got her arm around Lena and her other propped on the railing. They look friendly enough and not nearly as incriminating as Lena might have felt. Lena’s expression actually manages to look normal, her smile the kind she usually reserves for public pictures of the sort, but softer.
“I’m making this my phone background,” Jack teases and she swats at him.

“Shut up, Jack.”

The season ends with the Lakehawks dramatically clinging to a wild card spot in the playoffs after having dropped to third in the West. It’s the worst end to a season the team has apparently seen in three years.

“That sucks,” Kara grumbles as they catch the standings on a late night rerun of SportsCenter.

“We’ve still made the playoffs,” Lena points out, leaning back against the couch and swirling the wine in her glass. It’s what she’s kept hearing around Lakehawks offices. Their ranking might not be great, but they’re still in the race. She’d even heard a few people mentioning it might be better to sit lower on the standings – something about seeding and favorable matchups.

“Barely,” Kara adds, and Lena tuts at her, focusing on the tablet in her lap that’s displaying plans for an update to the Model L cars.

“You should try to be more positive,” she says, swiping through schematics and idly making notes in the margin for her morning meeting.

“I am positive,” Kara defends, standing and stretching her arms above her head, it pulls Lena’s attention from the blueprints in her lap. In the past few days, Kara’s seemed to reach the tail end of her recovery process. Most of her mobility has returned and apart from a few random tweaks and occasional soreness after workouts, she’s back to working order. “Positive that if we don’t figure our shit out, we’re going to have problems.”

“They’ll figure it out,” Lena says, though her mind has wandered away from her. Kara’s stretching out her neck and moving her back around and Lena’s eyes follow the motions. Kara’s fingers are scratching her stomach, her shirt riding up enough to reveal the low hang of her joggers and Lena licks her lips unconsciously.

We shouldn’t. We shouldn’t. We shouldn’t.

Lena’s brain tries valiantly to remind her of all the reasons they can’t do this, but with the absence of her usual monologue – it’s too messy, too complicated, she doesn’t feel the same – Lena’s body can’t seem to agree.

She must stare too long because when her eyes rake back up to blue ones, there’s a smug look on Kara’s face that only sends heat between Lena’s legs.

“Hi,” Kara says, voice liquid and smug. “You okay?”

Unwilling to admit where her thoughts had wandered, Lena straightens and goes for unaffected with a simple, “Yep.” She turns back to her tablet and swipes to her inbox, pulling up an e-mail from one of her techs suggesting a tweak to the assisted steering program.

Kara sits back down on the couch, her arm coming to rest over the top of it. “You know, my back feels good. Really good even,” Kara points out as if the information is benign and not an invitation.

There’s something about the way Kara taps her fingers mindlessly against the couch cushion that makes Lena want to squirm. “I’m happy for you,” Lena says, taking a long sip of wine and trying to focus on the few lines of code she’s reviewing on her tablet.
“Feels like I could do athletic things,” Kara says with emphasis on the word and a funny waggle of her eyebrows that makes Lena laugh.

“I’ll believe that when I see it,” she says, nudging Kara with her elbow and rolling her eyes when Kara makes a feigned expression of pain.

“Oh you’ll see it,” Kara says and it could have sounded suggestive, but she shoots a phantom basketball in the air and celebrates the fake shot and it’s so endearing Lena’s chest feels heavy with the weight of Kara’s smile.

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There’s a two-week break between the last game of the regular season and the first of the playoffs. Kara’s finally allowed to practice with the team again – though it’s very medium intensity from what Lena’s gathered and next to no contact. Not because Kara couldn’t handle it, but rather a desire not to risk her before it’s necessary. Regardless, it’s given Kara a renewed sense of energy and purpose that’s almost palpable.

Lakehawks social media has been all over practice. There are near daily if not hourly videos of Kara running drills with the rest of the team and a few in the weight room.

It’s been a new experience to pause over those videos of Kara and not feel guilty - she’s able to linger over the looping image of Kara throwing a medicine ball against a wall or jumping up onto a black box for a few long seconds and not fight the quick spike of heat.

Early into the break, Lena has a meeting with James, Cat and J’onn at Luthor Corp Arena. It’s partly a season-wrap up meeting, but largely a discussion about the playoffs. Apparently the “new season” of the playoffs requires new promos for the team and some individual players, as well as a number of other little details Lena hadn’t considered would require her oversight.

One of the tasks ends up being choosing between a slew of team and individual player photos. It’s one of the easier endeavors Lena’s ever faced – picking which promo shot of Kara staring down the camera and looking deadly they’re going to use for the stadium banners.

If she takes a few of them home that night to muse over her decision, no one has to know the real reason.

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Though they see less of each other now that Kara’s back in full practice and focused on returning to help her team defend their championship, they still make an effort to connect when they can. Even if it’s late night dinners at Kara’s apartment or a phone call as Lena’s sliding into bed.

A few days before the playoffs are set to officially start, Kara calls to invite Lena to dinner, but just before Lena’s set to suggest a local Indian place for takeout, Kara’s clarifying, “No, I think we should like go out to dinner.”

At Lena’s long pause, Kara adds, “If you want to.”

“Of course I’d like to have dinner with you,” Lena says carefully, wide-eyed at the idea of appearing in public together like that. “I just…”

“Lena, we’ve had dinner out together before and it was fine,” Kara says, cutting to the heart of it easily and sounding far too logical for Lena to disagree with her. “But if it freaks you out too much, I can grab us takeout.”
“No, you’re right,” she says quietly and forces the rest of her brain to agree. Kara is right. The very first time they hung out together was out at dinner. She hadn’t worried too much about it then - had worried more about doing something that would draw attention to how good she thought Kara looked in a blazer. Logically, she knows that she’s being paranoid. And she wants to not be.

“Great,” Kara says, so joyfully that Lena smiles. “I’ll pick you up at eight.”

They end up at a small, unassuming barbeque joint far out of downtown. It’s the kind of place Lena can imagine her mother turning her nose up at, but Kara navigates her way through the web of side streets around the place easily enough, and walks into the place as if it’s a second home, holding the door open for Lena to enter first.

A stout older gentleman wearing a dirtied apron and a white chef’s hat comes out to greet them as they’re sat at a table, his eyes wide with delight and arms outstretched. “Where the hell have you been, Superstar?”

“Trying to win championships, Albie,” Kara replies, standing to greet him. They hug, laughing like old friends and Lena idles by her seat, unsure of what to do. When they disengage, the man turns to look at Lena, his eyebrows waggling. “And you brought a pretty girl, I see.”

Laughing, Kara gestures to Lena. “This is Lena Luthor,” she introduces and Lena politely extends her hand. He doesn’t seem to react to her name other than smiling widely and shifting towards her.

Two beefy hands take hold of hers and shake it enthusiastically. “Always a pleasure to meet one of Kara’s friends,” he says and it looks like he means it. Lena can’t help but smile back, even though it feels like her already low-level nervousness has ratcheted up. “I’m Albert. Albert Foster.”

“Nice to meet you, Mr. Foster,” she says, falling on politeness out of habit.

“Oh please,” he says with a hearty laugh as he finally releases her hand. “Call me Albert.”

“Okay, Albert,” Lena says and Kara comes closer, her hand falling to Albert’s shoulder.

“This is Albert’s restaurant,” she tells Lena, a happy little smile on her face that actually does the trick of putting Lena somewhat at ease.

“Since 1908,” Albert pronounces with a proud puff of his chest.

“Best ribs in the whole city,” Kara adds, lowering her voice as if it’s a secret. There are only two other people in the entirety of the restaurant. For which Lena can’t deny she’s grateful.

“You’ve always been my best customer, Kara,” Albert says with undisguised affection in his voice. It makes Lena shift farther towards relaxing. “Now come on,” he says, gesturing to the table next to them. “Sit, sit, let me make you food.”

Kara obeys the command with a friendly laugh, and Lena follows suit. And then he’s gone, scuttling towards the kitchen and yelling something at a young man in a chef’s coat lingering near the entrance. The menu is small, consisting mostly of ribs, and burgers, but Lena can see why Kara would like it - it’s quiet, the bar is well-stocked, and there are masses of National City sports memorabilia all over the walls.

But she can’t help but notice how Albert looks at her when he comes back out of the kitchen with two bowls of coleslaw, like he’s watching her.
“So, Lena, how did you meet my very favorite basketball player?” Albert says, pulling out a pepper mill from his apron and starting to crack it over Kara’s bowl. Lena shifts in her side of the booth, unsure of how to answer that question. Kara is, of course, paying every bit of her attention to the appetizer before her, and it almost makes Lena laugh.

“We met at work,” Lena says, simple enough and wondering if Albert’s able to make the connection between her name and the Lakehawks.

He stops cracking pepper over Kara’s bowl and offers it to Lena, then, and she nods. He seems nice. She tries to tell herself that, tries to tell herself that Kara wouldn’t put them in a bad position intentionally. That this is nice. That Kara looks relaxed, and happy, and healthy, and she’s smiling at Lena. But it’s hard.

“Kara works too much,” Albert says, stopping after Lena raises her hand a little. He doesn’t slink away immediately though, slapping Kara on the shoulder and looking down at her. “I know because you eat so much and stay so small.”

“I feel like that’s not something you’d complain about,” Kara says, laughing.

“I worry, though, I worry,” Albert says, his hand on Kara’s shoulder and his smile kind. It warms Lena the slightest, seeing someone care so visibly at Kara. “Okay. You two, eat! I’ll make sure to give you an extra half rack of ribs before you go and some for your sister.”

“No, Albie, that’s -” Kara starts, but Albert is already rushing back toward the kitchen. He stops at the bar for just a second and asks the bartender to put the Harriers game on, throws a wink their way before he disappears.

“He seems nice,” Lena says, trying to just. Calm down. Kara’s foot bumps into hers under the table, her eyes focused on Lena’s.

“And he won’t say anything about us being here,” Kara says, arching a brow at Lena. “I’ve been coming here since my rookie year and he’s been nothing but discreet.”

Lena sighs at having been caught so easily, but she can feel her shoulders relax just the slightest anyway.

“Oh, so this is where you take all your secret lovers?” Lena jokes, trying to clear the anxiety out of her head, and Kara laughs.

“I’d love to say just you, but I did take Leslie here once,” Kara admits with a shrug of her shoulder. “And Diana, but I don’t think that counts. And I guess Sara too.”

“Well, so happy to know I’m special,” Lena says drily, rolling her eyes and reaching for her spoon.

“You should feel special,” Kara says. “I didn’t wear sweatpants like those other times. And I’ll hold your hand after.”

“Oh, wow, the romance,” Lena says, deadpan, and Kara smiles. “I feel like I’m the luckiest woman alive.”

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Dinner is pleasant and enjoyable in a way Lena didn’t really expect and it only makes her feel a bit guilty that she’d resisted it so much. Just like the first time they did this, Kara is the same devastating combination of smart, funny and attractive. Made worse by how much better they know each other
now, how much more comfortable Lena is with the way Kara’s toes tap against her own ever so often.

The coleslaw is delicious - Kara goes on a five minute unimpeded rant about why exactly it is so delicious that has Lena laughing and endeared to the passionate way Kara goes on and on. They split a plate of ribs after Kara cajoles Lena into it and Lena finds herself unable to disagree with Kara’s earlier boast that they’re the best in the city. Not that Lena has much a barometer to measure such a statement.

All in all, it’s a different sort of experience than it has been sharing quiet dinners at home together. She doesn’t spend the majority of her time watching Kara’s every move, searching for winces of pain or discomfort. She doesn’t need to compete with the television for Kara’s attention even though there’s a Harriers game going into overtime on the television over the bar.

Kara listens to her talk about the plans rolling out for the Model L cars and the struggles of preparing a new patent filing for later that quarter, asks insightful questions about Lena’s work and looks at her intently the entire time like Lena’s the only thing worth paying attention to in the entire restaurant.

Lena does her best at returning the sentiment, indulging Kara when she goes on another five minute rant about the officiating mistakes in the last Lakehawks game and Lena’s surprised to find she can actually follow all the rules.

“So are you finally ready to admit you’re a basketball fan?” Kara teases after Lena makes a comment about the lack of clear unambiguous differentiation between a Flagrant 1 and a Flagrant 2.

“Never,” Lena returns - and it’s absolutely true. “Understanding something and liking it are two completely different things. We’ve been over this.”

Kara shrugs, leans back in her chair with a smug smile that Lena feels crawl up from her toes. “It’ll happen eventually.”

“Don’t hold your breath,” Lena says with a roll of her eyes that has Kara laughing and Lena’s stomach warming.

The restaurant remains relatively empty, but a few people come and go. As their dinner continues, Lena finds herself less and less concerned with the other patrons and becomes so wrapped up in Kara’s bubble that she forgets about Albert until he’s bustling up to the counter where Kara’s gone to pay their bill.

“Come on, come on, I need a new picture,” Albert says, holding a little polaroid camera up in the air and gesturing for them to get together. The hostess has Kara’s card already, is ringing it through and laughing at Albert’s enthusiasm. “You and your date, Superstar.”

Kara reaches for Lena and pulls her into her side immediately. Lena’s paranoia suddenly returns full force, crashing into her chest abruptly and making her limbs feel stiff.

“It’s for his wall,” Kara points out, drawing Lena’s attention to a wall behind the host stand full of polaroids. Even at first glance, Lena recognizes about six different people - most of them local celebrities. There’s an amusing photo of Alex, Kara, and a blonde woman who Lena thinks must be Eliza, Kara’s adopted mother, where they all have bibs on. It does absolutely nothing to settle the churn in Lena’s stomach.

“Yes, yes, come on,” Albert is saying, clearly waiting for Lena to smile. She does, and she can feel how fake it feels across her face, but reminds herself that making a scene would only make all of this
worse. Albert doesn’t seem like he minds, shaking out the photo while Kara signs the check and reaches for Lena’s hand. Lena doesn’t even think about it, just pulls her hand away and turns to walk out the doors.

She hears Kara say *bye* to Albert, following after Lena with quick footsteps. She arrives at Lena’s side quickly, bumping their shoulders together.

“Hey,” Kara says, her voice soft. “What’s up?”

“What’s up?” Lena says, unable to keep the disdain out of her tone. She knows she’s being just - too much. Can feel how irrational the entire thing is, can hear Jack telling her *you’re letting paranoia run your life.*

The sound of Kara’s sigh is loud enough that Lena feels irritation take a tight grip of her throat and when Kara’s car unlocks as they near it, she maybe pops the door open a little more abruptly than normal, nearly hitting Kara when she tries to come over and open it for her.

“Lena,” Kara starts, but Lena’s already closing the door against her reply.

With a lingering look from outside the car, Kara shakes her head slightly before rounding to the driver’s side and slipping in. Lena looks pointedly out the window and says nothing as Kara buckles in and turns the car on.

They get about two minutes away before Kara breaks the silence.

“Are you going to tell me why you’re mad or should I just start guessing?”

“I’m not mad,” Lena snaps in a snippy tone that she knows sounds ridiculous.

“Right,” Kara says, drawing the word out to show how much she believes it. “Clearly.”

It’s not helping Lena’s anger quell at all, the waves of anxiety wrapping around her chest tightening with how irrational she knows she’s being.

Kara glances at her a moment and when she speaks again, her voice is soft. “You know, it’s just a picture.”

Annoyed at the blase way Kara says it, Lena release a breath out her nose. “I don’t know how wise it is to have our picture plastered up on the wall of a restaurant right now.”

The car is silent a moment as National City passes them by outside and Lena squirms in the passenger seat, her arms crossed and trying desperately to stop the itch across her skin.

“Here’s the thing,” Kara says, the words slow and careful. “That kind of stuff happened *all the time* when we were just sleeping together.”

“It did not,” Lena denies immediately, though she knows Kara’s right.

“There were pictures of us at *Hamilton,* at that APT opening, at the Olympics,” Kara lists off, holding her fingers up as she says each one, but keeping her eye on the road. “And that’s all they were. Pictures.”

“Yes, and then it’s a pattern,” Lena says. “People want to know who you’re dating. People want to know who I’m dating. It wouldn’t be that hard to look at any of those pictures and get an idea. Get the *right* idea.”
“Okay,” Kara says, slowly. Lena expects something more, but silence comes back over them as Kara seems to be thinking, her hand tapping on the wheel.

“What are you doing?” Lena asks as Kara takes an unexpected turn and guides the car towards an empty parking lot.

“Parking so we can talk about this,” Kara says, throwing the car into park and unbuckling so she can face Lena.

“Talk about what?” Lena asks.

Quiet stretches a moment, and Kara takes a visible breath.

“You’re going to have to get used to the idea that eventually people will know,” Kara tells her and then something desperate plays across her face. “Otherwise...what are we doing?”

Tension spreads out between them and Lena’s chest goes hollow. “Kara,” she starts softly, not knowing what to say, but feeling some of her anger lessen at the look on Kara’s face.

“Seriously,” Kara says, looking sadder by the second. “I’m totally fine not telling people right now. I think you’re right, we don’t need to be making any kind of announcements. But what’s your game plan? Is this what you want to do the rest of our lives?”

The confident way Kara implies they’re in this for the long haul makes Lena’s throat go thick – with what she’s not sure.

“The rest of our lives,” Lena repeats quietly, and Kara must not have had the realization of what she’s said until she hears it back. An attractive looking warmth bleeds into Kara’s cheeks, but she doesn’t seem to relent.

“Sorry,” she says, looking anything of the sort as she smiles at Lena. “I should probably warn you that I don’t really half-ass things. Not my style.”

There’s something both alarming and exciting about that. Lena’s not sure how to react and Kara picks up on it easily, laughs a bit at herself. The thought spreads like wildfire through Lena’s brain. She hadn’t really gotten past where they are now – dating. Even that had seemed like a hurdle. What Kara’s implying...

“Well...okay. I don’t - I mean - ” Lena doesn’t know how to explain the sudden disquiet in her mind.

“I know I said nothing has to change,” Kara says with a soft casual shrug. “I’m not trying to say anything has to right now. I just like to think ahead. And I’m hoping this is going somewhere other than what it is now.”

It’s so straightforward, Lena feels taken aback, but as the surprise starts to settle, she finds herself warming inexplicably to the idea. Nonetheless, she takes a breath and says, “It might take me a bit. To get there.”

“Get where?” Kara asks, eyes seemingly intent on the answer. “Telling people or...the other part?”

Both, Lena thinks, but on some level knows immediately which is the more challenging of the two. “Telling people,” she answers, fiddling her fingers together. “Not freaking out at the idea of someone finding us out. It might take me a bit to be comfortable with it.”

“That’s okay. Just give me someday,” Kara says, the words like a whisper across Lena’s skin.
Lena’s throat feels like it loosens though her words still feel thick. “Someday,” she says, with a little nod.

Kara accepts that with a soft, small smile and reaches out to take Lena’s hand, the movement slow and careful like she’s afraid of spooking Lena. It makes the stress in her shoulders start to flow out of her. “Can I ask you something?” Kara says quietly and Lena takes a breath.

“Of course.”

“What is it that makes you so upset about people knowing?” Kara asks, her eyes searching as she says it, barely visible under the lowlights of the parking lot. “What do you really think is going to happen?”

It takes a few seconds for Lena to sort her thoughts into order. Her initial thought is that she doesn’t have to explain herself, that Kara should just - respect it. But Kara is holding her hand, looking at her patiently, telling her that she wants this to go somewhere. And even though Lena can barely think into the next ten minutes, she likes the idea of it. Of having Kara on the other end of the line, holding onto her.

“I’m not sure I know how to explain it,” Lena admits. There are too many complicated scenarios swirling in her brain and she isn’t sure which one to latch on to, which one is in the driver’s seat of her anxiety.

“Okay, let’s try it this way,” Kara says, their fingers playing together. “If I went and told a reporter that I’d fallen for Lena Luthor and we’ve been secretly dating the past few months, what do you think would happen next?”

Just the thought of it has Lena’s chest going tight again, but she gives the question due consideration and schools together an answer from the oppressive feeling in her throat. “I’d have to see my personal life all over the news for the next few weeks,” she says as a start and Kara’s eyes narrow.

“You really think people care that much?”

Lena laughs, a sharp quick sound. “My brother slept with a woman whose name had never once made the papers before and suddenly it was all I could read about for two months.”

“She was the wife of a Lord Tech board member and it happened in the middle of that big deal you guys were trying to push through,” Kara replies and Lena straightens, gestures emphatically at her.

“See, even you know all the sordid details!”

Kara sighs, but seems to acknowledge what Lena’s saying with a quirk of her brow. “But that’s all it was, Lena,” she says. “A few tabloids that got picked up by the news and now it’s...you don’t even hear about Lex anymore.”

“Because he’s gone into hiding like a coward,” Lena grumbles, feeling a headache start to build at her temples.

“Because no one really cares,” Kara clarifies.

Pinching the bridge of her nose, Lena takes a breath. “Public opinion is a fickle thing,” she says. “And I’m all there is standing between the press and my family’s legacy. I really don’t want that legacy to be a long line of scandalous affairs.”

“This isn’t a scandalous affair,” Kara says quietly, her eyes intense enough that Lena feels drawn
“It’s still newsworthy,” Lena replies, knowing how egocentric it is, but having been in the public eye long enough to know it’s true. It’d been true with her father’s affairs and then her mother’s and had certainly been true during her brother’s most recent dalliance.

“Well sure, we’re both hot, rich, and we photograph together well,” Kara jokes, eyes bright.

Kara’s playing with her fingers while she talks, and the feel of it is wrapping her up slowly in a warm familiar feeling she’s found herself helpless against. Anxiety still lingers, like a buzz across the surface of her skin, but she finds a desperation to sink into the confident spell Kara’s exuding throughout the car.

“Look,” Kara says, taking a breath and seeming to steel herself for something. “I know you can’t hear this right now, but you’re not responsible for your family’s mistakes. The things you’ve done for Luthor Corp are your legacy and yours alone.”

Lena looks out the window a moment at the lights of National City and lets out a long breath. “You know, I was never really supposed to be CEO,” she admits into the silence of the car. Her words sounding small to her own ears.

When she looks over at Kara, blue eyes are still trained straight on her, crinkled just the slightest in inquiry. “You weren’t?”

“Lex was,” Lena says simply, almost laughing at the idea now. It had been such a sure thing when she was a child - Lex had always been the favorite, and the logical choice to take over the family empire. “My mother always favored him and made it very clear to me I’d never measure up. No matter what he did, no matter how much trouble he got into...he was perfect in her eyes.”

Kara makes a face, her lips twisting with displeasure. “You know, whenever you talk about your mother it makes me want to punch her and I’ve never even met her.”

“Be glad,” Lena says with a short laugh, her fingers squeezing Kara’s and undeniably charmed by the protective way Kara’s jaw goes taut.

Kara hums, lifts Lena’s hand up to press a quick kiss to her knuckles and it shoots warmth up Lena’s arm. “So, what happened?”

“Lex wanted nothing serious to do with the company,” she explains. “He was always more into the lifestyle of being rich than the actual work it takes to achieve such a thing.”

“Ah, I see,” Kara says, a little amusement at her lips.

“So he basically gave it to me,” she says.

“Gave what to you?”

“The company,” she answers, remembering the day her brother told her Luthor Corp would be hers. “We both already worked there and then my father got sick and the company had to restructure and I know my mother was fitting to put Lex in charge, but one day...He must have made some presentation to the board because they passed a motion to promote me with only one vote against.”

She can’t help but laugh at the memory, of the way her mother had looked fuming as she walked out of the top floor conference room and the stupid-silly way Lex had strode out looking like he’d just won the lottery.
“Do I even want to know who voted against you?” Kara says, voice sounding dark as if the obvious answer is already pissing her off.

Lena smiles. “Like I said. I was never her favorite.”

“Your mother is the worst. Seriously.”

Lena hums, but doesn’t deny it. “I think maybe a part of me is always going to be trying to prove something to her. Ridiculous as it sounds.”

“It doesn’t sound ridiculous,” Kara says sincere as can be, she pauses a second, her blue eyes impossibly soft. “I still check Clark’s stat lines after every game to see if I did better than him.” The admission surprises Lena and it must show on her face because Kara laughs. “Yeah,” she says through a self-deprecating chuckle.

“Why?” Lena can’t help but ask. Though they’d mentioned Clark as the statistically better player before, Kara had been so confident when she’d said that championships matter more than statistics.

Kara shrugs, looking unsure in a way that has Lena shifting in closer. “I guess a part of me will always be trying to prove something too,” she says and Lena’s lips feel dry, her chest heavy under the weight of emotion she feels for the other woman in the car.

“You don’t have anything to prove to anyone,” she tells Kara emphatically, baffled Kara would think otherwise.

A small, amused smile plays across Kara’s lips. “Yeah,” she says, looking Lena dead on. “And neither do you.”

It lingers in the car between them for a bit, just sitting there like something dropped on the center console and Lena’s not sure how to respond.

Kara’s smile drops a bit, but she chuckles. “That’s not going to stop either of us from feeling that way though,” she says and Lena’s heart beats with the truth of that. “It’s not ridiculous. I get it.”

The significance of what Lena feels for Kara feels suddenly too big for the car. It expands outward so suddenly that heat starts to pool at the back of Lena’s eyes and she has to chew on her lips and look away to stop an embarrassing show of emotion. Kara must sense it because she squeezes her hand, but doesn’t say anything.

“Well,” Lena says, taking a breath and settling the hot feeling in her chest.

Kara lets out a laugh that sounds watery enough it has Lena turning back to her. “Emotions are scary, huh?”

It makes Lena laugh as well, her shoulders deflating to sink back against her seat. “Terrifying,” she agrees, and they share a smile.

Kara seems to relax too, her shoulder dropping against her own seat and her eyes quiet. “What can I do to make you feel better about this?”

Lena wishes she had that answer. “I’m not sure,” she admits and then pauses, her heart feeling like it might beat out of her chest before she softly adds, “But I love you for wanting to.”

It does something to Kara’s face that makes Lena feel like she might cry, the emotional vulnerability of the moment threading tightly around her ribcage.
Reaching up to adjust her glasses, Kara looks away, her eyes blinking rapidly a moment before she turns back. It takes a bit, but after a deep breath, Kara manages a charming smile, the tension in the air leaking out of the car all around them just like that.

“Do you know what’s a proven method for alleviating anxiety?” Kara asks, the emotional spell Lena’d been under breaking at the non sequitur.

From the look on Kara’s face, Lena’s not sure she wants the answer. “Xanax,” she says in a deadpan that makes Kara laugh.

“Well sure, but I was thinking more of a homebrew method,” she says, waggling her eyebrows suggestively enough that Lena tsks her way through a laugh that feels good coming out of her throat. Kara’s expression is obnoxious in a way Lena knows is being put on for her benefit.

“And what method would that be?” Lena asks, knowing full well what Kara’s saying. The knowledge of it goes liquid in Lena’s stomach and pushes downward. It’s amazing how quickly her body can switch from the heights of fear and vulnerability to the depths of arousal under Kara’s guidance.

“You could get in the back seat and I could show you.”

The offer makes Lena feel some kind of way, but even in Kara’s uninjured days, back seat romps had done a number on Lena’s body. “I think we’re going to have table car sex for a while,” she says, grateful to have moved on to lighter topics.

Kara shrugs, unaffected by the rejection. “My apartment’s close by, I can show you there too. I’m versatile like that.” It’s delivered with a little proud lift of Kara’s chin and a smug smile that makes Lena want to kiss her. She doesn’t only because she fears she might actually end up in the back seat if she gives in.

“I think I’ll stick to my own methods for a little bit longer,” Lena says, her laugh warm and amused.

“I’m just saying, maybe it’s all those orgasms you’re not getting anymore that’s the problem,” Kara suggests and that goofy wink she sends Lena shouldn’t really do it for her, but damn it, it does. There’s still a redness to Kara’s eyes that make Lena want to push across the console and tangle their limbs together.

Swallowing against the flush in her cheeks, Lena affects an unimpressed look. “Who says I haven’t been having orgasms?”

Kara’s face goes on a journey that Lena can barely follow, but makes her laugh. “Thanks for that image,” Kara says in a dry delivery of the words as she releases Lena’s hand and sits back in her seat to drive them away.

Lena laughs, unapologetic, and recaptures Kara’s hand as they pull out of the lot and head back towards the city.

It feels as though something has resolved between them, even if nothing really has. Lena feels lighter all the same and when they pull into heavier traffic on the highway leading into town, Lena doesn’t even think to let go of Kara’s hand.

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It’s at the end of a long work day full of meetings after meetings with R&D that Lena finally slips into her usual black town car, exhausted. The back of the car is the perfect temperature and just dark
enough that Lena feels herself slouching in the leather seats as she checks her phone.

Kara is at the Lakehawks training center, judging by the live photo she’s just sent of M’gann doing a deadlift while Lucy jumps up and down around her. Jack and Lana have been chattering away in their group text about whether they should take a group trip to Italy over the summer and there are a string of unopened texts from unlisted numbers that Lena feels too tired to look at. Lex will have to wait until she’s had at least a glass of wine.

George sends her a polite smile in the rearview. “Where to, Miss Luthor?”

“Home,” she answers, dropping her phone on the seat beside her for a moment, relaxing. Another text from Kara appears, asking if she saw what the Skippers just posted on Instagram. It springs a memory in her mind, and she has to lean forward a little as George pulls up to a stoplight.

“George, are you a Lakehawks fan?” she asks. George seems for a second like he doesn’t hear her, or is ignoring her - either way he doesn’t speak, before a smile comes onto his face and his head tilts to the side.

“What would you like my answer to be, Miss Luthor?” George asks. Lena huffs, dropping back into her seat and eyeing him as he takes a left turn.

“Don’t tell me you’re actually a Skippers fan,” she says. George actually laughs, the first time she’s ever seen him do that.

“Did Miss Danvers tell you that?” George asks. Lena pauses, adjusting her skirt and fiddling with her phone, trying to just - talk about Kara. This is her driver, he’s an ex-Marine under about seventeen NDAs. She can talk to him about Kara. It’s not as if she’s been very good at hiding it from him - he’d driven Kara home on so many morning-afters that he’d have to be deaf, dumb and blind not to put two and two together.

“I told her she was being ridiculous,” Lena says, watching George’s face in the mirror. “My driver couldn’t possibly be a Skippers fan.”

“Of course not, ma’am,” he says in a way that speaks to the exact opposite.

“I also told her it was ridiculous to think you didn’t like her,” Lena says pointedly, arching a brow when George glances at her in the rearview.

“I like her just fine,” George says, smiling. “More than I ever wanted to, honestly.”

Lena feels soft at that, returns his smile easily as she slides further down in her seat, where Kara has texted her another photo, a grinning, sweaty selfie asking if she wants late night ice cream.

“I understand that feeling,” she says quietly.

The car goes silent and as she looks out her window to see buildings and people pass, it feels like she can breathe around the rock of anxiety in her chest, for just a moment.

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The news covers the possibility of Kara’s return nearly nonstop. It runs on the ESPN bottom scrawl just about every time Lena catches sight of it and it seems like all the city can talk about is whether Kara will return for game one against the Evergreens even though Lena already knows it won’t happen.
Kara’s thoughts on the subject become abundantly clear over a late dinner at Lena’s apartment.

“It’s stupid, I feel fine,” Kara says, stabbing almost violently at penne noodles on her plate.

“There’s no use risking you before you’re needed,” Lena replies, having already had this meeting about Kara’s return with Cat, J’onn and James earlier that week.

“I don’t know if you’ve noticed our stat line the last month, but I’ve been needed,” Kara argues, her eyes narrowed as they pick up from her plate to connect with Lena’s.

Unimpressed by Kara’s surly attitude, Lena merely thins her lips and takes a pointed sip of her wine until Kara deflates and sags back into her seat. Her fork clangs onto her plate with a longsuffering sigh. “Falling in the standings means that for the first time in three years we don’t have a first round bye,” Kara says even though Lena knows this. “What if we lose in the first round and I don’t get to play at all?”

Lena hadn’t actually thought of that. Though the Lakehawks had been struggling as of late, they’re still heavy favorites to make a deep run in the playoffs. Most of the conversation around Luthor Corp Arena has been overlooking the Evergreens and already focused on the matchup against the Aces.

“Are you that worried the team will lose?” Lena asks. Kara had expressed as much before - her worry that the team wasn’t getting their shit together but Kara looks close to hysterical at the thought right now.

“We were well matched against the Evergreens all season,” Kara points out. “People are forgetting that.”

Lena sighs, wanting to make Kara feel better, but unsure if that’s even possible. “We played well against Dallas,” she says, searching for positives.

“The playoffs are different,” Kara replies and Lena’s been hearing that for weeks now.

There’s something shaky about the way Kara fiddles with her knife where it rests against the table, her eyes agitated and lips thin. It prompts Lena to ask a more probing question. “What are you actually worried about?”

For a moment, it feels like Kara’s not going to answer, or snap at Lena for being obtuse, but after a beat she sits up a bit and rests her chin in her palm, propping her elbow on the table with a sigh. “If we lose it will feel like it’s my fault,” Kara admits in a quiet, uncharacteristically nervous voice.

Lena almost scoffs at the prospect and though she catches the sound halfway out of her throat, she can’t stop the disbelieving play of a smile on her lips. “But it won’t be,” Lena says for lack of a better response.

Kara nods, but she shrugs a shoulder. “Yeah, but it will still feel like it.”

At a loss for what to say, Lena stands and paces to where Kara’s sitting, waiting for her to sit back before dropping unceremoniously onto her lap and taking hold of her gaze. “Basketball is a team sport, remember?”

It makes Kara smile and laugh in a way that has Lena feeling triumphant, but there’s a tone of sadness caught in the sound. “I don’t like not being able to help my team,” Kara says and her lips twist a bit. “I hate it, actually.”

Lena’s hands find Kara’s cheeks, her thumbs stroking across her cheekbones. “You’re doing all you
can right now,” Lena tells her, searching for a way to assuage Kara’s mood. “Sometimes that’s all there is to do.”

Kara sighs, but leans her head into the heat of Lena’s palm. “I just want to play.”

“I know you do, darling,” Lena whispers and can’t help but press forward to kiss her. It makes the tension in Kara’s shoulders start to ebb away visibly and that’s all the encouragement Lena needs to keep their lips together for a long moment.

Strong hands find purchase against Lena’s hips and Kara seems to sink into the kiss. It feels good and when Lena’s fingers travel into Kara’s hair to play there, a soft noise passes between them.

“This is definitely making me feel better,” Kara murmurs when they pull apart and Lena chuckles, licking against the taste of Kara lingering on her lips.

“Happy to help,” Lena says, her voice throatier than she expects. Kara’s hands feel hot against her hips even through the fabric of her clothing.

Kara smiles before pushing forward again, making Lena lose track of her thoughts for long moments. Their bodies press closer, Kara leaning forward and wrapping her hands more firmly around Lena’s waist. The feel of Kara’s fingers finding purchase on her back, sliding up under her shirt, is making Lena feel liquid and hot.

“Are you going to be mad if I pick you up and take you to bed?” Kara asks, the low sound of her voice tightening low in Lena’s gut.

No, Lena thinks immediately, every bit of her body already considering dragging Kara to the floor. “I want to,” Lena admits, stroking her thumb over Kara’s bottom lip and trying to get her breathing to even out. Before she can continue, Kara seems to take that as a green light and stands, picking Lena up with her so quickly Lena squeaks in surprise.

They get about ten steps away from the table before Lena thinks to protest with an amused, but stern, “Kara, put me down.”

Kara stops and obeys, sets Lena down near the couch of her living room and waits expectantly.

“Just because I want to, doesn’t mean we should,” Lena manages to say, pleased with her self-restraint. Kara’s still got her hands on her, keeping their hips in tight.

“We’re both adults,” Kara points out, eyes darting significantly to Lena’s lips and down between them. “We make our own decisions.”

“Yeah,” Lena agrees, trying to remember why it’s a bad idea. “And five minutes ago you were spiraling down a guilt trip about not being able to play as early as possible. Do you really want to jeopardize that?”

In all likelihood, Kara’s back would survive even if they retreated to the bedroom, but Lena finds she would never forgive herself if something happened. The look on Kara’s face earlier wouldn’t be something she could live with knowing she’d had a hand in putting it there.

Kara seems to gather what Lena’s saying, agrees with a displeased twist of her lips. “Doesn’t mean we can’t go make out like teenagers on the couch,” she says, a teasing quirk to her lips that makes Lena laugh.

“You’re very hard to resist, do you know that?”
The smug little grin Kara gets tugs hard between Lena’s legs. “I think that’s more likely because you don’t want to be resisting in the first place,” Kara says and it makes Lena glare at her a little bit if only because it’s true. “But I appreciate you doing so anyway.”


The look in Kara’s eyes is honest and Lena feels all fluttery at the sight of it. It’s what likely makes her pull Kara over to the front of the couch and push her down against the cushions. Kara looks surprised at the move, but pleased.

“You tell me if anything hurts,” Lena instructs, finger pointed sternly towards Kara’s face.

Kara puts her hands up, grinning in anticipation. “Scout’s honor,” she says, her eyes dragging down as Lena shifts down onto Kara’s lap and presses her lips against Kara’s smile.

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After long minutes of Lena testing her resolve atop Kara’s lap, they break apart, but stay tangled on the couch. Kara turns on the television to distract them and Lena tries to rearrange her hair from the messy tangle Kara’s fingers put it in.

There’s an insistent throb pushing downward in Lena’s body, but she settles against Kara and ignores it as her breathing evens out.

They’re both quiet for long moments, the dull drone of the late night news the only thing in the room, until Kara shifts a bit and breaks the silence. “So, I’ve been thinking.”

“Always dangerous,” Lena jokes, shifting enough to face Kara and suddenly wary of the shifty movements of Kara’s eyes.

“Yeah,” Kara replies, laughing softly before saying, “I think you should meet my sister.”

It takes a second for Lena to register the meaning, even as Kara adds a quiet, “I want you to.”

It becomes clear then, even if Lena hadn’t leaned back farther to take in the nervous way Kara’s biting at her lower lip. Nonetheless, Lena hears herself say, “I’ve met Alex before.”

At the very least, it pulls a chuckle out of Kara. “You know what I mean,” she says softly. “I want to tell her. About us.”

The very thought of it has anxiety clawing up her throat though Lena can’t pinpoint a truly rational reason as to why. Lana and Jack and even George know about things with Kara, and Alex is Kara’s closest friend and her sister. It occurs to her how unfair Lena would be to say no, but that doesn’t stop the anxiety of it from taking over.

Kara must notice her reaction because she seems hasty to argue her side of things.

“It’s just, she’s my sister. And I usually tell her stuff and, I don’t know...” Kara chews at her lip a bit, clearly picking up on Lena’s hesitance. “We don’t have to, but I thought it could maybe be a way to ease you into the idea of people knowing about us. Alex is about as safe as we can get.”

“Why do you need me there to tell her?” Lena says, trying not to sound cowardly, but wanting a way out of this nonetheless. She’s never exactly been impressive at families. Even her own. This particular meeting is making her feel flighty.
Kara shrugs. “I guess I don’t,” she says, voice small. “I’d just like it if you were.” A pause. “Please.”

Maybe it’s the way her skin is still buzzing from when she’d been pressed into Kara’s lap, or the way she can still feel lips under her jaw and fingers under her thighs, perhaps it’s more the emotion in her chest when Kara looks at her like she is now. Whatever it is, there isn’t much left in Lena’s reserves to put up a fight and she feels helpless to keep resisting.

She wants to move forward. She wants to get better at this. More than all of that, she wants the kind of future with Kara that they keep talking about. And she knows what she has to do to achieve it. In the face of all that, all Lena can think to say is a soft, “Okay. Just tell me when.”

“Yeah? Really?” The light that brightens on Kara’s face is enough to stamp down the fear churning in Lena’s stomach and makes her own face morph into an answering smile.

“Yeah, really,” Lena repeats, laughing at the happy expression Kara makes and the easy way it soothes the disquiet in her stomach.

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Though they could easily get away with meeting out in public, Lena suggests they pick a place more discreet.

They settle on a bar – which isn’t exactly the kind of discreet Lena was going for, but works well enough. They’ve all been there before so it’s not as if anyone will blink twice at the three of them meeting for a drink.

Plus, this particular bar has large highback booths with short curtains that easily shield any outsiders from eavesdropping.

Lena arrives early, stakes out a corner booth and orders a shot of whiskey to calm her nerves. It’s ridiculous because she’s met Alex a million times. The waiter gives her a bit of a funny look for ordering a shot at eleven on a Sunday, but she sticks through it. Kara arrives about fifteen minutes later, on time, wearing a baseball cap and a pair of tight jeans and a crewneck sweatshirt, sliding up into the booth smoothly. She seems to read Lena well enough that she doesn’t press forward for a kiss, just slips her hand under the table to grab Lena’s fingers for a second.

“Alex said she might be a little late,” Kara says, dropping her phone on the table and looking around. “Are you hungry? Want to order food?”

Kara’s presence calms Lena more than the shot roiling in her stomach, and she manages to semi-relax for the next twenty minutes – Alex is very late – until the door to the bar flies open and Alex arrives about fifteen minutes later, on time, wearing a baseball cap and a pair of tight jeans and a crewneck sweatshirt, sliding up into the booth smoothly. She seems to read Lena well enough that she doesn’t press forward for a kiss, just slips her hand under the table to grab Lena’s fingers for a second.

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There are large black glasses perched on Alex’s nose that match the rest of her outfit – black leather jacket, black skinny jeans tucked into black combat boots and a black t-shirt with a logo Lena doesn’t recognize slashed across the front.

“Okay, sorry I’m late,” Alex says. Her voice is a little hoarse, and Lena can’t help but smile as she begins to put together Alex’s look and its meaning. Though Kara mentioned she’d spent the night going over the Lakehawks playbook and watching reruns of Jeopardy, Alex clearly did something a
“You’re fine,” Kara says as they take their seats. Lena scoots into the booth and Kara follows, Alex sliding in across from them.

“I need coffee,” she grumbles, taking her sunglasses off and scruffing a hand over her hair. She looks like death, but Lena wisely doesn’t tell her so.

Kara, however, has no problem with such things. “You look like shit, Alex,” she says, though it doesn’t sound sympathetic at all. In fact, Kara laughs a little.

“Gee, thanks, sis,” Alex replies and it’s clear she kicks Kara by the way Kara yelps in pain and jumps.

The waiter interrupts them, and Alex orders her coffee even though Kara suggests a round of shots that makes Alex’s face look a little green. Lena pokes Kara’s side under the table to get her to stop teasing her sister.

Coffee arrives and the table goes a little silent as the waiter leaves them again. It’s awkward, though maybe that’s only because Lena knows what they’re here to do. Kara feels restless next to her, shifting in her seat so much that Lena puts her hand on her knee to stop the movement.

Alex eyes them both suspiciously and it makes Lena’s heart start to thud.

“Are we going to talk about what it is you brought me here for? Because on the phone you made it sound like you had something to tell me,” Alex says.

“Yes, right,” Kara starts, suddenly looking very nervous.

Alex must pick up on it because her face goes a little paler. “Is it your back? Is it not actually better?”

“My back is fine,” Kara dismisses easily, sitting up as if to prove the point. “That’s not it.”

“Well what is it? Are you retiring or something?”

Kara’s face goes still with shock at the thought. “Why would I retire?”

“I don’t know,” Alex says, shrugging and glancing at Lena. “I’m just cycling through ideas. Are you getting traded? Did you breach your contract somehow and didn’t tell me? Am I getting traded? Did you get arrested —”

“Oh my God, stop guessing,” Kara says, leaning forward and hitting her palm on the table between them lightly but strong enough it stops Alex’s stream of words.

“Well, if it’s not one of those things, I don’t know why you both look like you’re about to tell me my dog died.”

“Krypto is fine,” Kara says, waving away Alex’s nonsense. “Eliza would tell us.”

“Kara, just tell me whatever it is before you or I have a heart attack,” Alex says.

It feels like standing on the precipice of a cliff, because Lena knows exactly what’s about to happen. “Lena and I are dating.”

If it wasn’t clear before that Alex had no idea what she’d been summoned for, it’s apparent that she had never even considered this possibility. Her jaw goes slack and eyes wide. Kara sits back up and
very deliberately reaches for Lena’s hand. Though it’s under the table, Alex’s eyes follow the motion and seem to get impossibly wider.

It takes a long thirty seconds before Lena finally decides to try to interrupt whatever is going on in Alex’s mind.

“Alex, look – ” she starts, but she’s promptly interrupted by Alex’s sudden exclamation of: what the fuck.

“We’re dating,” Kara repeats, though it does nothing to erase the stunned expression from Alex’s face.

“What do you mean you’re…” Alex pauses on the next word as if its foreign to her mouth, “...dating?”

“Lena and I,” Kara says. “We’re seeing each other, and I wanted you to know.”

Alex blinks, seems to think about what Kara’s saying. “Why?”

Kara’s brow furrows. “Because.”

“Is this – I mean – is this a new development?”

Kara makes a face like she doesn’t know how to answer that, so Lena does it for her. “It’s a bit complicated.”

Alex seems to be recovering, though she takes a long, unnatural sip of her coffee that has Lena’s nose turning up just a tad. “Complicated how? How is that a hard question? When did you guys start dating?”

The look Kara gives Lena must answer that question for Alex because she lets out a sound like she’s just figured something out.

“Oh my God, that’s where you’ve been going when you’ve been busy,” Alex says, putting the last words in air quotes. “This whole time you’ve been sneaking off to – to – to you know with our owner?!”

Alex’s voice rises a bit at the end of it, loud enough to draw some attention their way. Kara shushes her sister. “Can you keep your voice down?”

“I’m –” Alex shakes her head to herself. “This is...” She looks back up at her sister. “Since when do you date?”

Kara shrugs, looks about as mystified at that question as Alex does. “Since Lena, I guess.”

Something about that answer makes Lena feel a touch breathless, but she tries her best not to outwardly react. Instead she grasps Alex’s attention.

“It’s just something that happened, Alex,” she tells her. “And we thought it was time you should know. As you can imagine, it’s not something we’d really like to get out there.”

Alex still has a disbelieving sort of smile on her lips, but she acknowledges what Lena’s saying with a raise of her brow. “Yeah, fair enough. God, so many things make sense now,” Alex murmurs, looking down at her coffee.

“So, you’re okay with it?” Kara asks, voice sounding strained.
Alex looks a bit baffled by the question, her eyes going between them. “Does that matter?”

When Kara doesn’t answer, Lena does for her, gauging the look on both sisters’ faces. “Yes.”

Alex regards Lena then, searches her face a moment before turning back to her sister. “I’m happy if you’re happy,” she says, shrugging a shoulder. “You’re both adults.”

“I assure you we didn’t come to this lightly,” Lena says quietly and Kara actually laughs, deflating just a bit at her sister’s version of acceptance. “We’ve more than discussed the complications.”

“Yeah, no kidding,” Kara says and Alex’s eyes go a little narrow again.

“So that’s what was up with you over All-Star break?”

Kara’s expression goes noticeably shifty and piques Lena’s interest. “We were figuring stuff out.”

Kara seems to consider her words a moment before saying, “Well, I was figuring stuff out, I guess.”

It’s almost comical to see how Alex starts connecting dots – the waterfall of realizations displays so clearly on her face. “So, when you asked me –”

“Alex,” Kara interrupts and Lena arches a quizzical brow at the flush in her cheeks. “We can talk about that later.”

Alex’s face breaks out into a mischievous looking grin and she looks at Lena again. “Well that’s fun.”

“You’ve already talked to Alex about us?” Lena asks Kara, trying to interpret the amusement on Alex’s face and the embarrassment on Kara’s.

“She never said your name,” Alex tells Lena, pulling her attention. “As much as Maggie and I pestered her.”

“It was after,” Kara’s eyes dart to Lena and then back to her lap. Lena’s fairly certain she knows what Kara’s referring to even before Kara lands on a vague, “The Olympics. After we got back.”

“Oh my God,” Alex breathes, delight in her eyes as she looks at Lena. “I forgot you were in Tokyo.”

“The point is,” Kara says, drawing her sister’s attention with a firm voice. “We wanted you to know officially. About us.”

Alex seems to take mercy on her sister and relaxes back into the booth, nodding a bit. “I’m happy you told me,” she says, sounding sincere for a moment before a smirk returns to her smile. “Though we’re definitely going to go over a few things later, Kara.”

Kara rolls her eyes but returns Alex’s smile. “Fine.”

“I mean…” Alex starts, twisting her coffee mug on the table and leaning back against the booth. “Kara Danvers dating. Didn’t know you had it in you. You’re going to break hearts everywhere.”

Kara gives her sister a petulant look, rolling her eyes.

Alex’s gaze turns back to Lena. “I’m sure I don’t have to tell you I know a whole roster of jacked up professional athletes that will come after you if you hurt my baby sister,” she says, and Lena takes a second to process the sentence as Kara leans over the table and swats at Alex.

Sipping at her coffee, Alex manages to avoid Kara’s swing and Lena laughs softly, pulling Kara
back from attacking her sister. “I certainly don’t intend to,” she tells Alex and that seems to be enough for the other woman.

“Well as long as we’re sharing things, I’ve been sleeping with Lucy,” Alex says, without any preamble and now it’s Kara’s turn to look shellshocked. Lena feels it herself, honestly, even though she’s had slight inclinations before about the situation.

A thick silence drops around them for a moment before Kara starts to sputter out her surprise, spine going rigid. “I thought it was a one-time thing. I walked in on you guys in Gotham and you said –”

“Yeah, I lied,” Alex says, looking sort of relieved at having the information out there. “We’d been sleeping together before you caught us and kind of after that too and it was a mess for a while and then I also maybe slept with Maggie?”

Kara’s jaw drops open and Lena can’t hide her own shock. She’d heard some of this from Jack – though that was mostly speculation – but she hadn’t expected it to all come out.

“Alex,” Kara says, clearly at a loss for words. “Why lie about it?”

Alex gives her a pointed look which Lena finds appropriate – it’s not like her and Kara are in a position to judge someone for hiding a love affair.

After a second, Kara catches on to that, but apart from a conceding quirk of her head, she presses on. “I’m serious. This is different.”

“I just never told you because all you cared about was basketball and winning and stuff and,” Alex shrugs, “I don’t know. I thought you’d tell me to just focus on work and stop getting involved in all those distractions.”

Lena watches as a swath of emotion crosses Kara’s face. “I wouldn’t have said that,” she says in a small voice Reacting to the hurt in Kara’s voice, Alex’s face goes soft. “I wasn’t really thinking clearly. There was a lot going on.”

The two sisters observe each other a moment and Lena feels a touch out of place. It only lasts so long, because Alex is reaching into her pocket and pulling out her phone.

“So, Lena, do you want to see pictures of your girlfriend when she was fourteen and got her head stuck between the banisters at our house?”

“Alex, do not -”
Chapter 9

Lana comes to town on a work trip – or so she claims, but Lena knows full well Lana likes to invent conferences and business meetings as excuses to get out of Metropolis for a weekend. They end up all piling into Jack’s bachelor pad and it takes longer than Lena would have thought for the subject of Kara to come up.

“So, what’s the update on Danvers the Younger?” Lana says, sipping a martini and eyeing Lena with a smile. Jack looks absolutely thrilled, leaning forward from his seat as though they’re about to gossip about Lena’s love life right in front of her. Which is probably true. “Last I heard, we were dating her.”

“Yes, I am dating her,” Lena says, rolling her eyes, but pleased with the easy way it comes out of her mouth, her chest calm. Lana waves her away, focusing on Jack’s sudden look of enthusiasm.

“Lena met the sister,” Jack says with a haughty lilt to his voice. “As the girlfriend.”

Lana eyes go wide with delight. “Ooooh, Alex?” she marvels, making an exaggerated show of tapping her fingers together like an evil supervillain. “Tell me everything. Does she hate you now?”

Offended, Lena scoffs. “Why would she hate me?”

Lana shrugs and Jack laughs. “You’re kind of uptight,” Lana answers as if it’s obvious. “Good for an owner maybe, not as fun as a girlfriend.”

Unimpressed, Lena throws a pillow at her, but somehow Lana’s able to ward it off with a swipe of her hand. “No need for violence,” Jack says though he’s laughing.

“God, remember when you said it wasn’t serious?” Lana says, a look on her face like she’s going to dissolve into endless laughter in a moment.

“It wasn’t,” Lena insists, despite knowing how untrue it is.

“At least now we can laugh about it,” Jack adds, with the a very fake-looking expression of pity on his face. “Before, it was just sad.”

“So sad,” Lana agrees, reaching out to touch Jack on the arm and they look at each other with matching expressions of woe that hold for a few seconds before dropping into shared amusement.

“I hate both of you,” Lena murmurs, resigning herself to their mirth.

“Lana and I were about to place bets on which one of you would crack first,” Jack says, still laughing as Lana nods.

“It didn’t work because we both knew it would be Kara,” Lana says and Lena wonders how awful it would be if she threw her martini at Lana’s face for a moment before deciding it’d be a waste of good gin.

She settles for glaring at her friends. “Why is my love life your consistent favorite topic of conversation?”

“We’re obsessed with you,” Lana says drily. “Plus, you’re the one who’s always getting all messed up over things. Jack and I - we know what we’re about.”
“Sleeping with people as indiscriminately as possible with a total disregard for responsibility?” Lena asks. Jack snorts.

“Says the girl who slept with every single woman in the MIT Flying Club,” Lana says.

“There were four of them in total, and one of them was Sam,” Lena says, rolling her eyes.

“Weren’t you in that club, Lana?” Jack asks, laughter rolling out of him until Lena has to reach over and punch him in the ribs. He starts wheezing through his laughter.

“Okay, okay, okay, let’s focus on something more pressing,” Lana says, pulling herself out of her seat and coming over to the two of them. She drapes her arms around Jack and Lena’s shoulders, pulling them together. It feels a lot like nothing’s changed since college. Especially when Lana remarks, “Where are you guys taking me for a good time in this city?”

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They end up at Marvel Bar – an old prohibition style place. Lowkey enough to not be too crazy on a Friday, but popular enough that it’s still packed at a level that satisfies Lana’s desire for a night on the town. George thankfully doesn’t mind too much when Lana gets in the car and starts asking for an AUX cord immediately.

It’s a deceptively large space for a bar located in a nondescript alley and down two flights of stairs. They get waved in by the doorman and find a large half-circle booth in the back of club. Lana wastes no time before ordering a bottle of vodka to the table and co-opting Jack into searching the crowd for what Lana likes to refer to as free rides home.

It was never exactly an activity she loved participating in – there was always a little bit of fear of being too much like her brother, cavorting around and sullying the family name. But especially now, it holds no interest to her. She looks around with them anyway, especially as Lana starts listing off qualities she’d like – tall, dark hair, scruffy, flexible -

There’s a wave of blonde hair in the crowd and that shouldn’t be a distinctive characteristic all things considered, but Lena finds herself looking anyway. Perhaps wishful thinking more than anything. But it distracts Lena well enough that she pulls out her phone to text Kara, see how she’s doing.

Halfway through a what are you up to, Jack’s voice is pulling her attention with an entirely too pleased sounding, “Do my eyes deceive me?”

Vodka bottle suspended over her glass, Lana pauses to look at him. “What? What is it?”

Lena follows their gazes and her stomach drops to the floor when she sees what’s caught his attention.

It’s Alex Danvers, sauntering up to their booth with dark eyes and a dangerous looking smile. Just past her shoulder Lena can spot Kara walking towards the bar and she mutters a soft what the hell under her breath.

Jack jumps out of his seat to greet Alex, gripping her in a quick hug and Lana sets the bottle back down, eying Lena with a mischievious grin.

“Hey,” Alex says, letting out of Jack’s hug to reach for Lena.

“What a surprise,” Lena says, digging through her shock to find for her manners and return Alex’s hug.
Alex laughs in her ear, eyes bright and filled with enough warmth to make Lena relax just a titch. “You mind if we join you?”

Jack answers for them with a pat to Alex’s shoulder and a friendly, “Of course. Does that mean the superstar is here as well?”

Making a face at the nickname that has Jack laughing, Alex nods. “I sent her for shots.” Her eyes dart to Lana then, eyebrows lifting in interest and Lena moves to introduce them.

“This is Lana Lang,” she tells Alex, watching as Lana stands and extends a hand, smile flirtatious as always. “Lana, this is—”

“Alex Danvers,” Lana supplies, a kind of excitement on Lana’s face that Lena knows spells disaster for her - as it always has. Jack actually laughs on the other side of the table. “Nice to meet you.”

Lena takes the opportunity to slip away from the table, beelining towards the bar, where she can see Kara is turning away with a round of five shots clutched precariously in her hands. When she sees Lena, she grins. It’s a nice sight, but she gets bumped immediately by a dude dancing quite vigorously, and Lena immediately remembers why she’s less than pleased with Kara at the moment.

Sparing a quick glance for their surroundings, Lena shoves Kara around a dark corner, her fingers pressing solidly into Kara’s stomach – hard enough that Kara makes a disgruntled sound but obeys the push, juggling the shot glasses in her hands. Some of the liquid sloshes over the sides to drop on her hands and Kara’s licking the excess away in a distracting manner.

“What do you think you’re doing?” Lena says, a tad accusatory, but still trying to shake off the surprise of seeing Kara.

Kara almost accomplishes the innocent look she’s clearly going for, but there’s a quirk of her lips as she scans down Lena’s body that betrays her. “Hanging out with Alex.”

“At a club?” Lena asks, hearing how ridiculous the question is, but unable to stop it.

“Yes,” Kara says, amusement playing on her lips. “Good eye.”

“You’re injured,” Lena reminds her, even though Kara’s been walking and moving just fine for weeks now. Just that morning she’d seen an Instagram post of her at practice going through shooting drills and Kara hasn’t winced once in the last three times they’ve been together.

It occurs to her perhaps some, or maybe most, of her worry is rooted in the idea of being out at a club together even if they’d only run into each other.

“I’m fine,” Kara reassures her, but Lena feels like a crowded bar full of drunk partygoers is the last place Kara needs to be, irrational as it may be. “If I can practice, I’m pretty sure I can sit in a booth at a club. I’m not even really drinking. One of these shots is secretly apple juice.” She looks down at her hands, brow furrowing suddenly. “Shit, I can’t remember which one it is.”

Lena does a valiant job at not laughing at that. “It still feels irresponsible when you’re trying to get back in the lineup soon,” she points out, arched brow. She nearly puts her finger up to scold her, but manages to restrain herself.

Kara laughs, an amused look in her eye and clearly unaffected by the narrowing of Lena’s gaze. “I didn’t know you’d be here,” she says, completely ignoring Lena’s point. “This is a nice surprise.”

“You should go home,” Lena says. “And rest. And not be around drunk idiots.”
“Lena, I’m fine,” Kara repeats, more seriously this time. Lena knows, intellectually, that Kara’s perfectly capable of being out and about without worry. But the hot feeling in Lena’s chest doesn’t dissipate so easily – Kara is wearing a button down with a palm frond motif printed across it, a denim jacket overtop. Her hair is down and she’s wearing glasses – something Lena’s learned Kara likes to do to stay incognito. She looks a stupid kind of gorgeous that lets Lena know that the biggest threat to Kara’s back health and the bubble of secrecy they’re keeping their relationship in is probably her.

“For real,” Kara adds, an entreating smile on her face. “Alex asked to go out tonight – something to do with Lucy. I’m not going to say no to my sister and my back feels awesome today.”

Lena takes a deep breath, eyeing Kara’s posture. Besides the awkwardness of holding five large shot glasses together, she looks good. Great, even.

“Come on,” Kara adds, breaking the last of Lena’s resistance. “It’ll be fun.”

“Fine,” Lena says, after a moment. Kara grins, glancing around for a second before she leans forward and drops a quick kiss to Lena’s cheek. She hovers near Lena’s ear for a moment, their bodies warm and close.

“You look amazing,” Kara says. “Have I mentioned how good my back is feeling?”

“Don’t push it,” Lena says, shoving at Kara’s stomach again until she backs away, reaching for two of the shot glasses in Kara’s hand. “Let me help you carry those.”

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It turns out to be a kind of torture to sit next to Kara when they return to the booth together. Perhaps this is really why Lena had resisted the idea of Kara being here. Very little to do with Kara’s injury, or of public exposure, and very much to do with the way Kara looks right now and the soft fresh smell of her that wafts over Lena every time Kara so much as shifts in her direction.

It certainly doesn’t help that Kara seems to be exuding a restless kind of energy and Lena’s body naturally associates that with pleasant experiences. Coupled with the vodka already warming in her system and Lena feels hyper aware of every movement Kara makes.

Jack is engrossed in a conversation with Alex over – something Lena doesn’t care enough to tune in for – but Lana is looking at Lena with an amused smile playing on her lips like she knows how much pain Lena’s in.

Lena makes a point to put some distance between her and Kara, enough that they’re not touching and she makes perhaps a too obvious show of not even looking at the other woman. It’s like an exercise in futility because it’s no secret to anyone in the group that she and Kara are seeing each other.

If Lena wants to touch her girlfriend in a booth at a club, she should be able to. Prying eyes are hard to find at an upscale club that’s packed with drunk, dancing people. She’s not even really sure what’s stopping her. Instinct, maybe. The familiar urge to keep away from Kara as long as possible, to hold off until they can at least get to one of their apartments.

Although, the promise of relief isn’t really there either. Maybe that’s making it worse.

“So, Lana,” Kara starts, shifting in her seat and putting on a polite smile. “Are you a fan of basketball?”

Lana laughs, the sound more like a scoff than anything else. “No,” she replies, with nothing further
Kara looks like she doesn’t know what else to say, her eyes dart to Lena helplessly, but Lena keeps her own eyes on her drink, spinning her straw in it absently.

“I’ve been to a few of your games, though,” Lana says, shifting in the booth so that her body presses closer to Lena’s and Lena’s closer to Kara’s. God, the woman is diabolical. “One with Lena in Metropolis early this season.”

“Oh, uh,” Kara practically sputters, her cheeks going full red. Lena’s own memory of that night is particularly vivid. Kara pressing her into the elevator wall, her face when the doors closed on Kara’s floor. “Yeah. I remember that game.”

“And I saw another one here a few months ago,” Lana says. “Lena refused to give me your number when I asked.”

“I would refuse to give you anyone’s number,” Lena interjects. Lana rolls her eyes as Kara laughs a little, shifting in her seat. Lena has half a mind to just put her hand on Kara’s thigh to calm her down. But she holds back, ends up shifting awkwardly. Lana looks at her very seriously, leaning even closer.

“Okay, can we just - “ Lana swats at Jack’s arm until she has his and Alex’s attention. “Like, we all know, right?”

“Know what?” Lena asks, confused at the quick way Jack nods at Lana in response.

“That you two are -” Lana makes an obscene gesture with her hands that has Alex laughing and Lena smacking at the movement.

“Would you act your age, please?” Lena scolds her, trying very hard not to blush. She can feel Kara’s searching eyes next to her and it occurs to her quite suddenly she hadn’t exactly told Kara that Jack and Lana know. Have known.

“Oh come on,” Lana says in that dismissive way she always has. “I’m just saying that everyone knows.” Lana gestures at all of them in the booth. “So can you two just please, please stop being so awkward?”

“We’re not being awkward,” Lena denies immediately, her chest drawing up defensively, but when she glances at Kara, she gets no support. Kara’s smile is amused and the quirk of her brow she gives to Lena lets her know she’s on her own.

“It’s like watching two middle schoolers at the school dance,” Lana says, making a face like she’s disgusted by the image.

“She’s right,” Alex adds from across the table between them. “No one’s going to die if you two act like you know each other.”

“Intimately,” Lana adds, raising her hands like she’s going to make her gesture again, but Lena slaps them out of the air. It only makes Lana smile and Lena rolls her eyes.

Just as she’s about to admonish her friends, Kara’s scooting closer on the booth, her arm coming to settle on Lena’s shoulder, warm and heavy. “Better?” Kara asks Lena, her smile easy when Lena looks over at her.

Lana gets a look on her face that’s nothing short of ominous. “It’s a start, but I’m happy to watch
“Lana,” Lena interrupts in a snap of the word, her glare doing nothing to her friend as it never has.

“Oh let me have my fun, Lena,” Lana pouts and Jack laughs.

“We’ve known you too long for that, love,” he says to Lana, scooting towards her to wrap his own arm around her and settle his chin on her shoulder. She pats him on the cheek and laughs.

“How long have you guys known each other?” Alex asks and when Lana turns to enthusiastically tell the story of how they all met years ago, Lena’s stopped from interrupting her by the soft brush of Kara’s fingers against her shoulder.

“This okay?” Kara asks, low and quiet near Lena’s ear.

It’s clear what Kara’s asking and as Lena’s eyes scan the crowd around them, she finds she actually is okay settled into Kara’s side while her two oldest friends argue about the true origin story of their friendship.

“Yeah,” she says softly and without more hesitation she turns to press a fleeting kiss to Kara’s jaw.

“When did you tell Jack and Lana?” Kara asks, the question more curious than anything.

Lena takes a breath, isn’t sure how to answer that question. “They guessed,” she says, making a face when she can’t think of anything better to say. “I suppose they have been guessing the whole time.”

“The whole time?” Kara exclaims, managing to keep her voice hushed, but the surprise showing in the amused twist of her lips.

Lena blows out a heavy breath, laughs at herself. “They’ve known me forever and apparently I’m not as subtle as I’d like to think,” she admits, watching as Jack laughs loudly at something Lana’s saying to Alex. Lena’s too focused on Kara to tune into their conversation.

It’s silly to think she’s been on Kara’s case about keeping everything between them secret and there have been two people in her life that have been in the know the entire time.

“Are you mad?” Lena asks, thinking maybe Kara has a right to be at least irritated at her, but Kara’s smile is easy and gorgeous, pulling Lena under her aura easily.

“No,” Kara laughs, shaking her head. “It’s good that you can talk to people about it.”

She shifts in her seat the slightest, glancing around the club. No one’s paying any attention to them, even with two famous basketball players bookending the booth. She supposes they’re shadowed by curtains and crowd for anyone to really notice them anyway, so she settles more into Kara’s side and feels Kara’s hand tighten on her shoulder.

“You shouldn’t be nice about it,” Lena jokes. “You’re making me feel guilty.”

“I’m sorry?” Kara says, laughing a bit.

They smile at each other and for a moment it’s just the two of them.

That is, until Lena hears the words boarding school and threesome leave Lana’s mouth and she whips away from Kara so fast Kara jumps.
They spend the rest of their night ensconced in their booth, Kara sipping at waters and Lena nursing a vodka soda while Lana convinces Alex and Jack to join her on the dance floor.

It’s comfortable in a way Lena’s starting to accept. No one at the club pays them any attention and they’re hidden enough away that you’d have to walk right up to the table to really recognize them or what they’re doing.

“Not so bad, right?” Kara asks, leaning forward in the booth, her hand slipping down Lena’s thigh to rest at the inside of her knee. She’s abandoned her jacket to the side and Lena can’t quite keep her eyes away from the pull of muscle up Kara’s forearm and up through her bicep.

“Not so bad,” Lena murmurs, enjoying the mix of warmth in her stomach from the vodka and Kara’s proximity. They’ve been touching in some way the last half hour they’ve sat there and it’s starting to do something to Lena’s brain.

She could get used to this. A part of her is afraid she already has. Kara’s eyes feel hot as they glance at her face and her hand feels heavy against the inside of Lena’s leg. It makes her want to squirm closer, to slide Kara’s hand further up her thigh and see what they could get away with in the privacy of their little space.

The combination of feeling is what has her focused on her drink and not on the careful slope of Kara’s neck and the itch across her palms to tug her in closer by the lapels of her shirt.

“We should have warned your sister about Lana,” Lena mutters, clearing her throat against the sticky way it’s started to feel.

“Why’s that?” Kara asks, chuckling and letting her eyes drift towards the woman in question. Lana does the answering for her where she’s positioned between Alex and Jack, one hand in Alex’s hair and the other in Jack’s.

“Lana’s the kind of girl that invites you out for ice cream and the next thing you know you’re in her bed wondering how she got your pants off so quickly,” Lena says with dry delivery.

Kara’s laugh is rich as it rolls over her, her fingers tapping on Lena’s knee in a distracted motion. “Sounds like there’s a story there,” she says, amused and Lena feels a flush climb up her neck.

“I assure you there’s not,” she says, dragging her eyes over to Kara’s. “I’ve just known her and Jack a long time.”

Kara’s hum makes it clear she doesn’t buy that, but she also doesn’t press, just smiles at Lena and takes a sip of her water. “You know, for a while there I thought you might be dating Jack,” Kara says after a minute, the words quiet under the heavy bassline of the music.

Lena has to lean in a bit to catch them, but laughs when they register. The sound more like a scoff than anything else. “Jack?!”

She shouldn’t sound that incredulous. Not really. Her relationship with Jack had been a frequent subject of gossip columnists around the city. It’s perhaps part of why she’s so aware of how much the press enjoys tidbits about her personal life.

But there’s something about Kara thinking such a thing that has her peeling off into reams of laughter.

“Sorry,” Lena says as her laughter ebbs away in face of the embarrassed flush in Kara’s cheeks. “I shouldn’t laugh. I suppose it’s not an unreasonable thing to think. My mother regularly reminds me
“Yikes,” Kara says, with a little laugh, her eyes tracking back to where her sister is now - absolutely making out with Lana on the dancefloor while Jack does something he should not in public with his hands.

“You really thought I was running around with you while I was dating Jack?” Lena asks. Kara makes a soft noise, shifting on the seat and her fingers drifting on Lena’s knee until they’re situated more underneath her thigh.

“I don’t know what I thought, really,” Kara says. “You guys were always around each other, and you were so focused on boundaries and stuff that I guess it made sense that maybe I was like. Your sidepiece.”

“My sidepiece?!” Lena blurts out incredulously and Kara’s nose crinkles when she hears it back like that.

“Well, I don’t know,” Kara says, defensively, an embarrassed laugh escaping her lips.

“Happy to hear you think so highly of my ability to stay loyal,” Lena says drily and Kara sighs through a smile.

“That’s not what I - it was more that,” she takes a breath, looks away a second. “I was confused about like...everything.”

“After all those times I told you I wasn’t in the market for a relationship and when we talked about sleeping with other people and - ”

“I was confused,” Kara interrupts with an amused emphasis on it.

Lena enjoys the attractive flush crawling up Kara’s neck. It makes her want to scratch her fingers down Kara’s chest. “And when did you figure it all out?”

Kara laughs like maybe she hasn’t actually figured anything out, but her hand pulls tighter against Lena’s leg. “About when you told me you had feelings for me.”

Though it shouldn’t be a surprise, Lena still feels a bit baffled. “You really had no idea before then?”

Kara’s chewing softly at her lower lip, her glasses slipping down her nose when she looks down and she adjust them before answering. “If I had thought twice about it maybe I would have seen it,” she says, a self-deprecating laugh falling out of her. “But I’ve always been kind of oblivious to this stuff.”

Lena hums, thinks of the moment she’d confessed everything to Kara and when she remembers the softly stuttered I don’t have feelings for you it doesn’t ache as much as it usually does, buffered by the warm hand wrapped around her thigh and the look of Kara’s eyes in the dim light of the club.

“It wasn’t until you were gone that I realized how much I missed you,” Kara shakes her head, eyes widening. “All the time. Constantly. And not in a friend way.”

It’s hard to pin down how she feels about that.

“I felt really dumb,” Kara continues. “Alex says that I never noticed because I don’t like getting attached to people.”
At the mention of her sister, Lena spares Alex a glance, brows lifting at the sight of Lana pouring a shot down Alex’s throat.

“She claims I have abandonment issues that make me keep all my relationships on the same level so I don’t have to deal with people I care about leaving me,” Kara says, the words tumbling out like a grumble.

Lena considers that, observes the expression on Kara’s face a moment. “Is that what you think?”

Kara takes a slow sip of her water before setting it back down on the table. Her movements look slow and deliberate. “I think that I spent a lot of energy convincing myself that I felt the same way about you as I did for any of my other friends,” Kara says with a wry twist of her lips.

“What changed?” Lena asks even though Kara had all but said it had been Lena’s confession that spurred on her own.

“It was pretty telling that when it felt like I had a choice between basketball and you, it was an easy decision,” Kara answers with a dark little laugh. “Let me tell you, that was terrifying.”

“I can imagine,” Lena says, setting her drink on the table and remembering Kara’s heartfelt insistence that she could put in for a trade, that she’d play for another team if it’d make Lena feel more comfortable. “I’m sorry I was so stubborn.”

“It’s fine,” Kara says, sounding earnest. Her palm feels hot against Lena’s leg, the muscle of her arm flexing as she shifts. “We’ve both got stuff.”

Lena laughs at that non-descriptor and the goofy little grin that plays across Kara’s face.

“I’m just glad we got to where we are now,” Kara finishes, threading forward to press a swift, innocuous kiss to Lena’s cheek.

The moment, and what Kara’s saying, feel incongruous with the loud, busy club they’re in. But Kara’s voice is low and clear in Lena’s ear, her hand wrapped around Lena’s thigh, and Lena feels affection sink down her spine free of guilt. She reaches up to grip Kara’s lapel, smoothing it down along her chest.

Kara, for her part, just looks at Lena, her blue eyes focused behind the thick rims of her glasses, expression open.

It feels like it gets hot in the booth all of a sudden, wrapping up and around her ribcage and Kara’s eyes dart to Lena’s lips as if in question. She thinks to be mindful of their setting, but they’ve been uninterrupted all night and Kara’s eyes are the prettiest shade of blue, so she gives a quick soft nod and just like that Kara is leaning down to kiss her, hot and open-mouthed.

She sinks into it without question, her fingers tightening in the collar of Kara’s shirt. Kara’s hand on her thigh grips tighter as well, and a part of Lena considers very seriously just pushing Kara into the nearest dark corner.

In the interest of not creating a scene, she pulls away from the kiss to murmur a heated do you want to get out of here but before she can say anything, Lana is barreling back into the booth, hitting Lena in her side and forcing her to break away from Kara as she reaches for the empty bottle of vodka on the table.

“Can you stop fucking in this club and help me?” Lana asks, a bit whiny.
After years of knowing each other, Lena can read the inebriation easily in Lana’s eyes, laughs a bit at the unfocused way they dart around as Lana pouts about the lack of vodka left.

“Can we go somewhere with more booze and like…” Lana gestures about and Lena glances over her shoulder to notice Jack and Alex idling nearby, huddled together and talking about something intently. Both of them look a bit ruffled, Alex with a smear of lipstick on her cheek. “A couch?”

“Time to lay down?” Lena asks, reaching out to hold Lana upright by the bicep when she threatens to fall over.

Lana takes a deep drunken breath and falls back against the booth, slouching there and licking her lips. “Call George and tell him I want McDonalds,” she instructs and Lena can see Lana’s kicking her shoes off under the table.

Kara laughs next to her, but stands and reaches for her jacket. “You call George, I’ll go close our tab out and get some waters,” Kara says, winking at Lena before pacing away towards the bar.

“She straps, doesn’t she?” Lana muses, watching Kara disappear into the crowd and drunkenly bumping into Lena’s shoulder as she pulls out her phone to text George.

“Lana, for God’s sake,” Lena starts, but when she glances at her friend, Lana’s eyes are unfocused, but happy, dancing around Lena’s face.

“I just call it like I see it, babe,” Lana says, letting her head fall heavily onto Lena’s shoulder. “Now can you get me McDonalds and maybe a cold bathroom floor?”

Lena rolls her eyes, but shifts to prop more of Lana onto her body as she finishes her text for George.

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“Lena, why the fuck are you using your blender at eight in the morning on a Saturday?” Lana groans in the doorway to Lena’s kitchen. She looks a little rough around the edges, mascara still on her face as she blinks in the light streaming into the apartment.

“I was making smoothies,” Kara says, a small laugh on her tone. “And breakfast? Do you want some?”

Lana blinks as if startled to find Kara in the apartment. She shouldn’t be. They’d ended up at Lena’s apartment after the club on Lana’s suggestion for a nightcap.

“You’re a morning person, aren’t you?” Lana says as if accusing Kara of something dastardly.

Lena laughs from where she’s sitting at the island, her computer open in front of her as she checks her inbox. She’d been enjoying the quiet sounds of Kara puttering about the kitchen before Lana had stomped in.

“Kara tends to be insufferably full of energy,” Lena says idly, glancing up to catch Kara winking at her. It spikes a blush that she hides by looking down into her coffee. It still makes her feel jittery to be this open about Kara, but she’s known Lana all her life and underneath all her nerves there’s something calm and settled that she wants to sink into.

Lana makes another groaning sound as she flops into the seat next to Lena. “How annoying,” she says, stealing Lena’s coffee to take a sip. “What other bad habits do we need to know about?”

Lena manages to pluck her coffee out of Lana’s hand with a glare and a pointed, “Leave her alone,
“You know you can’t tell me what to do, Lena,” Lana replies, taking the coffee a second time and shooting Lena an evil looking smile.

“She’s fine,” Kara says, laughing at the interaction and dropping ice cubes and berries into the blender.

“See,” Lana says, gesturing at Kara and arching a challenging brow at Lena.

Lena rolls her eyes, but relents, stepping up to make herself another coffee.

“Okay, so Kara,” Lana starts, propping her elbows on the kitchen and sipping at Lena’s coffee. “Who did you vote for in the last election?”

“Lana!” Lena scolds, turning from her perch at her cabinet, one hand on a new coffee mug.

“What?” Lana says, hands up to defend her own innocence. “I’m giving her the Lillian test.”

“Lillian like your mother?” Kara asks, the distaste clear in her voice as she pauses midway into adding a banana to the blender.

“Oooh, already hating Lillian, good start,” Lana says in a put-upon sage tone, her finger pointing approvingly in Kara’s direction. “Okay, we can do small questions first. Thoughts on minimum wage?”

Kara looks a bit baffled by Lana - as most people generally are upon first meeting her - but recovers and drops the fruit into the blender before answering. “I guess I think people should have a livable wage?”

Lana looks delighted by the answer, her fingers tapping against the coffee mug in her hand and a wide smile. “Gay marriage?”

Lena flushes when Kara looks directly at her for just a moment.

“I’d think that would be obvious,” Kara says, fiddling with the top of the blender and lifting an amused brow at Lana.

Lana smiles, enjoying that answer far too much for Lena’s taste. “What about the immigration problem?” is Lana’s next question and Lena rolls her eyes at the way Lana emphasises the last two words in clear mimicry of her mother.

Kara, for her part, looks confused and a little offended. “The problem?”

It seems to be an answer in itself for Lana who laughs abruptly into her coffee. “God, Lillian is going to hate you,” she says, sounding as if it’s a compliment.

“Lana,” Lena sighs, but she can’t fight a smile at the gleeful loon on Lana’s face.

“It’s true,” Lana says, a chuckle drifting across the words. “I mean, come on, Lena. An athlete and a social justice warrior?”

The Lillian tone Lana continues to use is amusing enough that Lena gives in to the mirth on her friend’s face. “Blonde too,” she adds, only intensifying Lana’s laugh.

When Lena looks at Kara, she’s smiling, standing in Lena’s kitchen being interrogated by her friend
like it’s nothing. It does something fluttery to Lena’s stomach, makes her set down her coffee mug and take a step into Kara’s personal space.

Kara’s smile never falters and she leans down when Lena makes to kiss her. It’s a soft, sweet kiss and when Lana interrupts them with an exaggerated cough to remind them they have an audience, Lena’s pleased to find only happiness in her chest.

As she’s going through her mail one afternoon, sorting out bills and flyers and the odd catalog, she comes across a small, pastel blue envelope with a return address she doesn’t recognize immediately. It’s a wedding invitation. A tacky wedding invitation, but past the looping script that’s barely legible and the glitter that spills onto her counter, she’s able to read the details. The son of one of Luthor Corp’s board of directors is apparently getting married a year from now somewhere in Italy.

Usually, she’d ignore the invitation and throw the thing in the trash with the rest of her junk mail - though Lex had always been keen about crashing weddings with open bars, it’d never really been Lena’s thing. But there’s something about the Lena Luthor and Guest that has her considering it for a long few seconds.

With a soft exhale, she sets the small RSVP card to the side and thinks maybe she’ll check the Lakehawks schedule for next season.

A year is a long time from now, right? By then, who knows what her life will be like.

Despite their fall in the standings, the Lakehawks end-of-season position in the league gives them a home court advantage in their first round against the Evergreens. It’s one of the many reasons they give for Kara not starting the first game.

“First game of the first round. At home. John, I don’t think they should risk Kara Danvers before they need to,” an announcer says on the late-night sports rundown Jack’s turned on after dinner that night.

“Can’t agree more, Catelyn,” the other anchor replies. “We’re sure she must be eager to get back and contribute, but the Lakehawks, and Kara, need to be thinking long term here. The Evergreens are beatable and - ”

“Turn that off,” Lena calls out to Jack, pulling out wine glasses from her cabinet.

“They’re talking about your lover,” Jack calls back. “It’s important.”

“Don’t call her that,” Lena grumbles, fishing for her wine key to open the bottle on the counter.

“What else am I supposed to call her?” Jack asks, voice suddenly closer as he walks into the kitchen. “Girlfriend? Significant other? Paramour?” A pointed pause before Jack adds. “Former fuck buddy?”

Lena stops before she pours wine into his glass, her expression unimpressed as her eyes narrow. “Do you want wine or not? Because I will happily drink this entire thing by myself,” she warns him. “In front of you.”

“I apologize,” Jack says, holding out his wine glass. “Please, ma’am, may I have another?”
She rolls her eyes, pouring him his wine. The news is still talking about Kara, somehow, in the other room.

“But take heart, Lakehawks fans - if and when the team needs her, she’s around. Our reporter Cale Berkstrom caught up with her at Luthor Corp Arena.”

“I’ve been working hard,” Kara’s voice starts, sounding a little out-of-breath. When Lena peeks at the television, she’s clearly sweaty, in her practice uniform. “I’ve had a ton of time off, and it’s been good for me, but I’m ready to go whenever.”

“And how is the back feeling?” Cale asks, his mic pressed close to Kara’s face. Kara actually laughs a little, rubbing the back of her neck.

“Feels great,” Kara says with an easy shrug as if to display how loose she feels. “Stronger than ever.”

She glances up to the camera right then and grins. It’s the kind of smile that Lena can’t help but smile back at, the same that’s wormed its way into her heart.

“The Lakehawks have had quite the year leading up to the playoffs,” Cale continues, Kara turning back to him and nodding politely along. She scrubs the towel that’s hanging around her neck over her face as he talks. “Definitely not the shoe-in everyone thought you’d be. A lot of people are looking to the new ownership shift in the offseason as one of the -”

Kara cuts him off mid word, her smile only faltering the slightest. “New ownership?” The words come out incredulous and condescending enough that Cale reacts visibly, his eyes twitching as if trying to find a way to backtrack.

Kara laughs, gripping the towel around her neck with both hands and Lena hears Jack chuckle along with her as they laugh. “The Luthors have owned the Lakehawks as long as we’ve been a franchise,” Kara tells him as if explaining something to a child.

“Of course,” Cale says, shaking his head and smiling at Kara in a clear attempt to save the interview. “I was just referring to the change in supervision between -”

“Lena’s been great,” Kara says, interrupting again and Lena closes her eyes with a touch of exasperation as she tries to remind herself it’s her own paranoia that makes Kara’s defensiveness sound like it means something. “Anyone that thinks otherwise, doesn’t understand basketball.”

Kara must realize how that sounds because the tension that’d pulled into her shoulders, flows downward and she quickly shifts her face into something more friendly. “We’ve had a tough road to the playoffs this year, but I assure you, we’re ready and I’m looking forward to getting back out there and contributing.”

It’s clear from Kara’s tone that the previous line of questioning is closed, but she keeps a smile on her face at odds with her tone. It’s what has Cale Berkstrom relaxing and the awkwardness ebbing away from the conversation.

“Thanks, Kara,” he says, just as ready to end the interview as Kara seems.

“Thanks, Cale,” Kara says with a perfunctory nod.

Kara walks away then, down the long hallway towards the locker room and the camera shifts to focus on Cale as he throws it back to the newsroom and the segment ends, shifting to coverage on the upcoming hockey preseason.
Jack lets out a low whistle that evolves into a laugh.

“Your lover’s got a bit of a protective streak,” Jack says. “God, Lana’s right. I can’t wait for her and Lillian to meet.”

Lena’s stomach swoops at the thought. “Shut up, Jack.”

--

Kara calls her as she’s slipping into bed, her phone lighting up on a recent Calvin Klein ad of Kara’s featuring her gold medal and Lena gapes at it for a second, wondering when Jack had the time to change her contact info.

“Hi,” she says, managing to pick the call up before it gets sent to voicemail.

“Hey,” Kara returns, voice edged with just a hint of exhaustion. It makes Lena want to run her fingers through Kara’s hair until she falls asleep, a hot urge that feels both familiar and not.

“You sound tired,” she murmurs, shifting down under her sheets and suddenly wishing they were together.

“Forgot what full time practice was like,” Kara says with some amusement even as it’s punctuated with a yawn. “Injury’s made me lazy.”

Lena rolls her eyes at that, but doesn’t comment. Kara’s conception of lazy is certainly not average. Even when she’d been fully injured she’d kept a fairly full schedule. When Lena would come over for dinner she’d spot the Lakehawks playbook open on the kitchen counter with Kara’s notes scribbled in the margin, or the television paused on game footage she’d have sent over.

“I saw your interview earlier,” Lena replies in lieu of confronting the notion Kara’s somehow become lazy.

The hum Kara lets out is telling enough, as is the worried little chuckle. “You did? How’d I look?”

As if on instinct, Lena’s hand starts to drift down her stomach. “Sweaty,” she replies in a dry tone that only makes Kara laugh.

“I seem to recall that not bothering you,” Kara teases and Lena feels her gut clench as a memory of Tokyo spikes across her consciousness.

Ignoring the seduction in Kara’s tease, Lena takes a breath. “You really shouldn’t have gotten so defensive with that reporter,” she says and Kara sighs.

“I wasn’t as defensive as I wanted to be,” Kara says, sounding put out at having had to stay composed. “It was a stupid question.”

“That’s a logical conclusion,” Lena replies. “I am one of the big differences this year and it makes perfect sense someone might point to that as the reason -”

“Lena, I’m the reason we barely got into the playoffs, okay?” Kara’s voice has an edge of irritation, but Lena can tell it’s not directed at her. “I’ve been distracted all season and injured for the last month of it and -”

“You’re saying that has nothing to do with me?” Lena points out, arching her brow though she knows Kara can’t see it. A wave of guilt squeezes at her chest so intensely she has to roll to her side
to combat it.

Kara’s silent a moment and it makes Lena feel squirmy, like she wants to just hang the phone up and pretend this conversation never happened. “I know what you’re thinking, but it really doesn’t,” Kara says on a sigh.

“But nothing,” Kara interrupts, sounding firm.

Lena sighs as her chest starts to feel hollow.

“Seriously,” Kara says, voice softer this time. “I just mean - yesterday, J’onn mentioned that my rehab has been the most he’s seen me around the facility all year. Showed me my security logs and everything.”

“Kara,” Lena starts, unsure of how to finish. The idea that she’s the reason Kara’s in trouble at work or has been less than focused aches.

“It’s not a bad thing,” Kara says, and then laughs a little. “Actually, he seemed kind of proud of me.” Lena feels confusion leak in to replace her anxiety, plucking at the blankets on her bed.

“For being distracted?” Lena asks. Kara hums, and Lena can picture her standing at her patio doors looking out on the city, a few blocks away.

“He said that I was a better player because I wasn’t around as much,” Kara says. “A more well-rounded player and teammate or something.”

“Oh?” Lena feels useless to comment having zero ability to truly judge Kara’s abilities as a player and feeling far too biased to give a real opinion.

“Yeah,” Kara says, sounding like she’s trying to work through something. “I guess not spending every minute of my free time in the weight room or at shootaround actually did some good. Who knew?”

Aside from having witnessed a lot of it firsthand, Lena remembers hearing tales of Kara’s work ethic from nearly everyone when she’d first taken over the Lakehawks. Frankly, it makes her think of her own work, of how she spends considerably less time in the basement labs of Luthor Corp and how rarely she brings work home with her these days.

“I have been told there’s such a thing as overworking,” Lena jokes and Kara laughs.

“My point is that, I don’t know, there are some people who think that having you around has made me better,” Kara says and the silence that follows feels heavy until Kara adds, “I mean, my understanding of my own emotions has deepened at the very least.”

“Glad to be of service,” Lena says drily. Kara chuckles on the other end of the line.

“Yes, thank you,” Kara says, and though she punctuates it with a yawn, her next words come out even and low. “Now tell me what you’re wearing.”

Lena laughs fondly. “Go to bed, darling.”

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Lena’s just finished a call with a group of East Asian investors when Cat Grant walks into her office.
without any announcement. It startles her, to say the least, and she barely restrains from jumping.

Thankfully, she manages to stand gracefully in her chair and greet Cat with a welcoming smile.

“Cat. To what do I owe the unexpected pleasure?” She asks, pointedly before gesturing towards one of her office chairs. Cat declines the invitation and instead stands in front of Lena’s desk.

“I’m here on business,” Cat announces, a smile on her face that makes Lena think she should be worried. It’s odd for Cat to come to Luthor Tower for any kind of business – most Lakehawks business is conducted at the front offices at Luthor Corp Arena and Cat’s known for not travelling far from the premises.

“Well by all means,” Lena replies, gesturing again towards a chair, but Cat either doesn’t notice, or intentionally ignores it.

Instead, she wastes no time in getting to the point. “I’m aware of your relationship with Kara.”

It’s so startling that Lena almost audibly reacts to it – a short intake of breath she swallows quickly. “I’m sorry, what relationship?”

Denial is so hardwired into her psyche that she’s made the decision to do it without much thought. Cat gives her a look that makes Lena feel small even if her own office – a feat few have ever accomplished.

“I don’t have time to dig it out of you,” Cat says. “I’ve known for some time now. Kara is a lot of things, but subtle has never been one of them.”

That’s an alarming thought. “I –” Her face must telegraph her thoughts because Cat’s lips push together even as her brow furrows.

“I wouldn’t worry about other people having caught on,” Cat says, sounding uncharacteristically reassuring. “I know Kara better than most people. She has her tics. Most of the team, at least, are far too focused on themselves to see what’s right in front of them. I imagine Alex knows, but the rest…”

That makes Lena feel the slightest bit better even though she should have known as much. Alex had been undeniably shocked when she’d found out.

“I don’t care either,” Cat adds, pulling Lena’s thoughts back to the present. “Kara can sleep with whomever she wants to as long as it doesn’t affect what happens on the court. There are certainly worse choices.”

It’s not what Lena had expected. At the very least, she would have thought Cat might have a few choice words regarding the power structure of their relationship, but Cat seems unconcerned that Lena is basically Kara’s employer.

“I’m sorry, I suppose I don’t understand the purpose of this conversation,” Lena says, completely at a loss and struggling against showing it on her face. Cat sighs, rolling her eyes up to the ceiling and then back down to eye Lena as if this entire interaction is a great burden.

“You may know that Kara is under contract for the next six years, for 240 million dollars,” Cat says. “I’d never say this to her directly, but she’s the face of this team and this franchise and frankly is...very expensive.”

“I know that,” Lena says, some heat leaking into her words. It’s insulting to think that she doesn’t know about these things, really. Her family name is on Kara’s checks.
“We’re heading into the playoffs now, and Kara’s rehabilitation is a priority for this team. It’s likely she’ll return to play against the Aces, once we get through the Evergreens.”

“I know,” Lena says, a bit baffled at what Cat’s saying – they’d discussed just as much in a meeting not two days ago when Lena’d been called in to talk to James, Cat and J’onn about the issue. Kara had been unable to shut up about the possibility the past week either, but Lena’s wise not to share that much.

“Then I assume you know that any kind of drama or…” Cat pauses, her lips thin a moment. “Spectacle, could cause an unwanted obstacle in the entire process. She needs to be completely focused on the playoffs for this team to succeed.”

Lena thinks to be offended – hears the accusation in Cat’s tone and wants to snap at her. Her involvement with Kara has been a season-long endeavor and has been about as discreet as it could possibly be between two relatively famous people. Not to mention Lena’s constant anxiety about it.

“And to be clear, Lena, I’m not asking you to break off your relationship,” Cat says. “I care about Kara’s happiness, on account of her happiness being directly correlated with her performance. But I am asking you to be careful. At least until we win.”

“I have no intention of creating a scandal where there needs not be one,” Lena says, reminding herself that this is her office and she’s not going to let anyone – not even Cat Grant – berate her like a child in it. “And I can assure you, Kara is anything but distracted. I’m not sure something as insignificant as this could distract her.”

It’s a stretch of the truth - Kara had just recently admitted how distracted she’d been towards the end of the season - but she knows how much Kara’s focused on returning in the playoffs, how hard she’s working to be able to contribute to her team’s successes again and she feels unstoppably defensive of her.

Something softens in Cat’s face, though her tone remains unforgiving. “The fact that you think it’s insignificant at all is what worries me,” Cat says. “Kara’s had many dalliances as a Lakehawk, but I know her well enough to know when something’s changed.”

Lena hadn’t meant it like that, but she doesn’t know how to explain it to Cat. Doesn’t know how to explain that part of what she finds so breathtaking about Kara Danvers is her wholehearted loyalty to the Lakehawks, her competitive drive to be the best, and her unwavering commitment to winning.

She tries not to remember that moment in the elevator when Kara looked at her with dark, desperate eyes and said I’ll put in for a trade as if the only thing that could surpass her loyalty to the Lakehawks was the possibility of being with Lena.

“I’m merely confident in Kara’s ability to do her job, and well,” Lena says sternly, her jaw tight and back straight, trying very hard not to focus on Cat’s mention of Kara’s dalliances or how Lena’s somehow different. She’s afraid if she thinks too hard on it she’ll start blushing.

Much as she knows it to be true, having it spoken out loud in her office is making her feel flighty.

Cat’s eyes narrow critically, but her chin lifts as if Lena’s passed some test. “I suppose that should be reassuring enough.”

“I think I’m still failing to see the purpose of this conversation,” Lena says, arms crossing her chest. A smile seems to threaten its way to Cat’s lips. “Just making sure we’re all on the same page,” Cat says. “Congratulations, by the way. You two make a handsome couple.”
Lena feels whiplashed, but Cat’s already turning to walk out of the office - their conversation over just like that.

“Cat,” Lena calls out, halting the other woman’s path to the door. “It really doesn’t bother you?”

“What? You and Kara?” Cat looks irritated that Lena’s asking such a petty question and she hesitates only a moment before clarifying something that’s been nagging her for what’s felt like months and Cat seems to have glossed over entirely.

“That I’m practically her boss,” Lena clarifies with a soft clearing of her throat. It drops between them and sits there. Lena feels anxiety grip her throat as the silence stretches, but she doesn’t retract the question. She’s far too desperate for an answer. Now that it’s out there, she needs to know.

What she gets is a loud, uncharacteristic laugh from Cat. “You’re not her boss, Lena,” Cat says, the amusement on her face looking more like condescension. “I am.”

Lena thinks maybe Cat needs an informational chart or graph showing her that Lena does in fact hold some position of authority over the Lakehawks roster, but Cat seems to deem the subject closed, because she turns before Lena can reply and disappears out the door.

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The first series against the Evergreens begins and just as expected, Kara is on the bench. It’s a five game series, the first two of which will be played at home. The promos that have run all week employ phrases like Defend Our House and Road to Repeat with a running montage of Lakehawks players making flashy plays against the Evergreens. There’s a very memorable shot of Kara slamming a basket in over Sara Lance’s head that Kara’s been delightedly showing everyone at any given opportunity. Lena’s been sent the clip no less than five times in one day.

It’s exciting and Lena gets swept up in the sheer energy of a playoff atmosphere. Luthor Corp Arena is deafeningly loud during the first two home games and packed full of fans all wearing the same Lakehawks colored t-shirt and waving baby blue towels in the air.

The pregame is much different than it has been all season, though none of the players meet at center court to greet each other or exchange friendly hugs and handshakes. The teams seem largely to ignore each other though she does see Sara throw Kara a little chin lift as she passes by.

Kara for her part, sits on the far end of her team’s bench in a well cut blue suit that draws Lena’s attention for the better part of warm-ups.

The game goes well for the Lakehawks. They seem to have abandoned any quirks from their end-of-season slide in favor of being playoff ready. The Evergreens have no answer to an Alex-Lucy duo that seem to be clicking at just the right time and the focused way M’gann keeps draining corner threes like she was born to do it.

They take the first two at home and the crowd roars when Maggie gives an on-court postgame interview and tells everyone to bring their brooms to Star City.

“What did Maggie mean?” Lena asks Kara later when they meet up for a late night bowl of ramen at Kara’s apartment. “With the brooms.”

Kara laughs and starts to mimic pushing a broom against her kitchen floor. “Because we’re gonna sweep ‘em,” she says delightedly and that still means nothing to Lena, but she laughs when Kara does.
The Lakehawks do end up completing a sweep of the Evergreens in a hotly contested game three. There had been tickets to the game on her desk that morning as well as a list of flight options, but she’s slated to speak at a charity gala in which Luthor Corp is a major sponsor. Though she admittedly does seriously contemplate canceling, she gives the tickets to Jack with instructions to *cheer loudly*.

The realization she’d prefer a basketball game over a professional obligation certainly makes her pause a moment.

She catches the game highlights later when she’s passing by the small bar in the lobby of the event center and she steps closer to watch them play on the massive television hovered over glass shelves of liquor.

Alex is giving an interview on screen, hair slick against her temples and face flushed. She’s laughing at something the interviewer says and the closed caption reads *she’s ready when she’s ready.*

The screen switches then to a panel of Evergreens players that Lena recognizes - Sara and Laurel Lance side-by-side with Felicity on the end. They look subdued and resigned as they’re asked a few questions and when Lena sees the score of the game flash on the bottom of the screen she understands why.

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Her eyes go wide as she turns away from the screen and pulls her phone out of her clutch, striding towards the exit of the building.

*Saw the score, good game,* she texts Kara, sliding into the backseat of her car and instructing George to take her home.

A wall of broom emojis comes in as her reply, but before she can type a response, her phone is ringing and Kara’s contact is flashing on her screen.

“Do you think it’s too early to send Sara a bunch of gifs of M’gann crossing her over in the third?” Kara asks when she picks the phone up with an affectionate *hey.*

“Yes,” Lena responds promptly though she laughs.

“I’m just so happy we won,” Kara says and the delight in her voice is infectious.

“Me too,” Lena replies, imagining the smile on Kara’s face.

“So what are you wearing?” Kara asks, in rich rolling tones that makes Lena feel hot all over.

She laughs, but reaches to make sure the privacy partition is up all the way. “I’m not even home yet,” she tells Kara, squirming more at the low sound of Kara’s laugh.

“Tell George to drive around the block a few times,” Kara suggests, all too amused by the prospect. Lena hates that her stomach feels like it melts at the low sound of her laughter and for a moment she nearly considers it.

With the Evergreens eliminated, the Lakehawks are on to round two and their next opponent - a Las
Vegas Aces team seeded high enough to have had a first round bye. Or so Kara explains it. The intricacies get a bit lost as Kara decides to add a soft, “You should come.”

Lena blinks, confused a bit. “I’m sorry?”

“I’d like it if you came to Vegas,” Kara says, her voice soft as if unsure of what she’s saying, and Lena feels there’s something weighted there she’s not picking up on.

When she doesn’t reply right away, Kara shifts and adds, “For the game.”

Since the Aces ended their season higher than the Lakehawks, they’re set to have home court advantage for their series. It means the first two games are scheduled in Vegas and Lena’d actually considered going already – Jack had sent her about sixteen text messages about it as well – but she doesn’t need Kara to know that.

“Why is that?” Lena asks, though she suspects the answer.

“Cat says I’m officially going to play,” Kara says quietly, and Lena feels her eyes goes immediately wide. Though it’s what she expected, what they’ve all been expecting for weeks now, the significance of it still lands heavily in her chest.

“Really?” Lena asks, her own voice dropping down to match Kara’s. It comes out like an awed whisper.

“Yeah,” Kara replies, still quiet, but a hushed excitement threading between them. “Really. Maybe game one, but for sure game two.”

Lena can’t stop her smile. It stretches impossibly wide across her lips and she wonders if it’d be inappropriate to leap across the table and kiss Kara. It is her own home, of course, but the moment feels soft, at odds with that urge.

“I’m excited for you,” Lena says, reaching instead for Kara’s hand. Kara grabs it and holds on tight, a smile on her face that makes Lena feel like melting into the floor.

“Thanks. Me too,” Kara says, a spark in her expression Lena hadn’t quite realized was missing until just that moment.

“Nervous?” Lena asks, wondering if all that time away had done anything to Kara’s confidence.

It’s immediately apparent that it hasn’t. Kara’s smiles is close to predatory and in a different context, Lena would need to cross her legs. As it is, she shifts a bit in her seat. “Of course not,” Kara answers in a tone that says as much. “I’m Kara Danvers.”

Lena laughs a bit. “I’m happy to see your ego is fully intact.”

Kara acknowledges it with a tilt of her head, but her smile never falters. “So you’ll come?”

There’s an implication in the air of what else Kara getting playtime means. Lena can see that the excited look in Kara’s eyes isn’t entirely about basketball. Though Kara’s seemed well over her injury for some time now, there’s something more official about being cleared for a game. A selfish part of Lena can think only of what other activities Kara’s physically fit for and she feels a tad ridiculous that her mind goes quite quickly on a downward spiral.

“Sure,” she says, warming at the happy way Kara’s face reacts.
There’s a feeling of both exhilaration and terror about the prospect of being in Vegas with Kara again, of being with Kara again. It feels like a lifetime ago that they tangled together on the couch of Lena’s suite, a deck of playing cards and alcohol abandoned across the floor. So much has changed since then that Lena feels like they’re different people.

Which is ridiculous. Kara looks exactly the same, has the same irritating smirk on her face when she catches wind of Lena’s derailing thoughts, and lets out the same low laugh that makes Lena’s throat go dry.

“I don’t know how much we’ll be able to see each other. Cat can be kind of crazy in the playoffs,” Kara says, voice coming out thick and liquid against Lena’s ears. “But I’d still like it if you were there.”

Lena doesn’t trust herself to say anything more coherent than, “I’ll be there.”

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Jack is thrilled when Lena has a courier deliver tickets to the games in Vegas to his office. He sends her no less than seven videos titled some variation of Lakehawks Playoff Hype.

“So I take it you’d like to accompany me?” Lena asks when he calls her later that afternoon.

He lets out a loud whoop that has Lena rolling her eyes. “Is Kara going to play?”

“You know I’m not allowed to tell you that,” Lena says, having already been in about six meetings that made it quite clear Kara’s injury status wasn’t something for public consumption.

“Oh, please, it’s me,” he counters. “Why else would you be going to Vegas?”

“Well, I own the team, don’t I, Jack? I thought I didn’t need an excuse,” she teases, amused when he laughs.

“We’ve come so far haven’t we?” Jack jokes through his laughter and Lena can’t help but smile.

“We have.”

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It’s almost impossible for Lena to be in Vegas and not think of all the things she and Kara have done there. Of all the things Kara’s done to her and vice versa. It certainly doesn’t help that she’s in the same gigantic penthouse suite she’s stayed in before.

One look at the basketball court and Lena feels her thighs press together on reflex. What makes it worse is imagining what new memories they’ll make and the way her brain keeps looking at her future with Kara as something inevitable.

Kara calls her right as she’s pulling the covers down on one of the beds - the master, the one where Kara had made her come three times in a row before finally allowing Lena to return the favor. She answers out of habit, feels the thrill of their usual routine spark up her spine again.

“Hey,” Kara says, voice quiet.

“Hi,” Lena returns, feeling her legs shift through the sheets and wishing Kara was there, talking in her ear. It’s an odd longing, one that’s becoming familiar.

“I think I told you this already, but Cat has us on pre-game curfew,” Kara says, laughing a little. “Or
else I’d come say goodnight in person.”

“Probably wouldn’t be wise anyway,” Lena says. Kara hums for a second before she speaks

“So, what are you wearing?” Kara asks.

“A chastity belt,” Lena replies, deadpan. Kara bursts into laughter that Lena can’t help but join in.

“Okay, okay,” Kara says. “I’ll see you tomorrow?”

“See you tomorrow,” Lena says, and she can feel the deep well of happiness inside her that she’ll actually get to see Kara on a basketball court tomorrow. “Play well.”

“Oh, I intend to,” Kara says, voice low and happy. Lena falls asleep with a smile on her face and a steady thrum of arousal in her stomach.

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The stadium is electric. Even though it’s not their home court, it feels like the Lakehawks have managed to make a presence. Lena’d been told it’s extra difficult to get an away crowd during the playoffs, but it seems Lakehawks fans are exceedingly passionate. Jack has somehow come up with a Lucy Lane jersey to wear under a blazer, and Lena had only just barely stopped him from painting his face. By the time they get to their seats across from the Lakehawks bench, the arena has mostly filled in, the music thumping as the two teams finish up warmups.

Kara looks good, though it’s clear that Cat has told her to not push so hard in the shootaround - a bit of gamesmanship, Lena’s sure. She’s ambling up and down the center line, occasionally getting into a jog, dribbling a ball with her. One of the trainers takes her through a series of stretches near the scorer’s table that Lena has to look away from before Jack starts to tease her.

When the timer runs down on their warmup time, the Lakehawks start to congregate at their bench, but Kara’s lingered at half-court, dribbling a ball idly as the clock winds down. It feels like most of the arena - Lena included - have their eyes on her as she casually launches a shot towards the hoop. It swishes, the sound drowned out by the loud buzzer indicating the end of pregame. Jack chortles at the display and Lena can’t help but murmur show off good naturedly.

She hears an Ace fan behind her mutter to his friend: That’s not good.

Kara’s not starting the game, but Lena’s not surprised. Kara’d mentioned that Cat had merely told her she could dress for the game and getting any playing minutes would depend on how the game went. That seemed to be the theme on Kara’s return – don’t risk her before they need to. Kara had been very vocal as to how much she hated that mentality.

The game tips off and Lena’s eyes can’t stop wandering to the end of the bench where Kara’s sitting – dressed in her uniform and warmups for the first time in what feels like forever and an intense look on her face that Lena’s body reacts to of its own accord.

It’s exciting. Lena can’t deny it. It’s like the whole crowd is hyper aware of everything Cat does as if waiting for the moment she calls Kara’s name.

It happens towards the end of the first quarter. Lucy goes to the line to shoot free throws and Cat turns towards her bench. Lena can tell it’s going to happen seconds before it does – Cat has a small smile on her face as she props her hands on her hips and calls out a simple KD.

Kara’d already been halfway out of her chair the second Cat had turned towards the bench and she
jumps up, reaching for the back of her warmup and pulling it off in a swift motion.

The stadium noticeably reacts and it’s as if a hushed whisper of Kara’s name spreads like wildfire around the crowd. Lena finds herself swept up in it as Kara takes instruction from Cat and walks towards the scorer’s table, tucking her jersey into her shorts and checking in.

“I think I might die I’m so excited,” Jack whispers, sipping at his gin and tonic like it’s a lifeline.

“Calm down,” Lena says, swatting him on the arm. The crowd absolutely roars when the buzzer sounds and Kara comes jogging onto the court, low-fiving Eve when she comes out. It’s a mixture of boos from the Aces fans and loud screams from those dressed in Lakehawks blue. If Lena stands to lend her own clapping to the cacophony of sound, it’s only because she gets caught up in the moment.

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Kara plays as if she never spent a second away from the game.

It takes one trip down the court for Kara to score her first basket, a quick cut through traffic leading to an easy layup. It’s nothing flashy, but the second the shot drains in the net, the Lakehawks section of the crowd goes wild.

Jack erupts in applause so abruptly that he jostles Lena, enough for her drink to spill. Though she glares at him, he just shrugs and gestures to the court where Kara’s jogging backwards to play defense.

The team clicks so quickly it’s like Kara never left. A series of perfectly arced passes between Danvers sisters has the team up by eight in a short minute and by the end of the half, the Lakehawks have pulled significantly away.

The players retreat into the locker room and on their way, Kara catches Lena’s eye and acknowledges her with a lift of her chin.

Not too long ago the look might have thrown her heart into a terror filled drumline, but right now it’s pulsing warmth throughout her extremities and she smiles back.

In the end, the Lakehawks pull off a game one win by twenty points. Kara tallies a cool thirty-four points in her return that has Alex grabbing her in a headlock by the end of the game to congratulate her with a scruff of her hair.

By the time the final buzzer sounds, the Aces fans in the building look absolutely dejected in a way that makes Lena feel triumphant and perversely happy.

Despite not being at home, there’s a quick spell of applause as Kara walks off the court, and she waves out in appreciation. Her eyes find Lena’s again, zeroing in on her as she passes by into the tunnel. The smug, victorious look of Kara’s smile sends a thrill down Lena’s spine and Jack leans in close to her.

“Should I assume you won’t be joining me at the slot machines tonight?” Jack asks, tone amused enough to have Lena elbowing him in the side.

“Shut up, Jack.”

--
When Lena makes it back to her hotel, Kara’s already there in the lobby. Lena spots her easily enough, standing at the front desk in a pair of soft looking jeans, a Lakehawks-blue button down and a familiar leather jacket that Lena’s always found dangerously attractive.

Jack’s already left her side in favor of finding Lucy at some restaurant on the strip and Lena certainly hadn’t put up any resistance to their parting. It means that when her eyes meet Kara’s across the lobby, she doesn’t have to hide the way her breath skips.

Lena continues her journey towards the elevator bank, but lets her gaze linger on Kara until Kara’s expression lifts just enough to be noticeable.

As Lena reaches the long row of elevators and calls one with a push of a button, she sees Kara say something to the concierge before pushing off the counter and heading Lena’s way.

This time, Kara makes it into the elevator just as Lena’s pressing the button for her floor. Kara follows suit before turning to lean against the wall next to Lena as the doors close.

“Good game,” Lena murmurs, shifting closer as the car starts to ascend upward.

“Yeah, it was,” Kara agrees, sounding lighter and more free than she has in weeks.

“How do you feel?” Lena asks, looking up into Kara’s eyes. They lock on to Lena’s with an intensity that grips at her throat, the air in the small elevator going thick. “Your back and everything.”

“Really good,” Kara says in a low, soft voice that pours like liquid over Lena’s ears. “Like it never happened.”

The elevator doors ding open and Lena knows it’s Kara’s turn to get off even if Kara doesn’t tell her in a soft whisper, “This is my floor.”

“I know,” Lena says, intentionally as she can, and she reaches out to press the close doors button without saying much else, eyes still connected to Kara’s.

The closing of the doors draws a slow, playful smile on Kara’s face and Lena’s body already aches with what it knows is about to happen. Kara turns to face her, coming close enough that Lena feels heat swell between them.

“You sure you’re totally healed?” Lena asks softly, still hesitant at the idea she could do anything to hurt Kara. The Lakehawks playoff chances aren’t exactly the top of her priority list in this precise moment, but the professional in her tries to keep her brain in control.

Kara’s palm comes up to prop against one of the elevator walls and it effectively traps Lena between the wall and Kara’s body, their faces getting close. “I assure you, I’m in fully working order,” Kara says in a low voice that pools low in Lena’s stomach. “And really eager to celebrate a good day at work.”

“I don’t want you to get hurt,” Lena protests, the last of her hesitation dripping out of her. Her fingers grip at the sides of Kara’s jacket.

“I can handle you,” is Kara’s answer and damn if that doesn’t break Lena’s resolve completely.

The elevators ding their arrival to Lena’s floor and she’s silently grateful. A few more seconds and she’d likely have put them in a compromising position right in the elevator car.

They break apart as the doors open and Lena leads the way. It’s silent in the kind of way that’s
deafening to Lena. She feels sensitive to every movement Kara makes, to the way she lingers behind her as Lena slides her keycard into the door and pushes it open.

The door is barely shut when Kara’s hand is at her hip, turning her around and pressing in close. There’s a beat of a hesitation where they just observe each other. “You okay?” Kara asks in a whisper that warms across Lena’s lips. All Lena can think to do is nod. “Nervous?”

The question pulls Lena’s head back a bit so she can look more clearly into Kara’s eyes. It certainly sounds more like Kara’s nervous than Lena is and that’s clear as day when their eyes connect.

“No,” she says quietly, unable to stop the soft laugh that curls around the word. “We’ve done this a few times before.”

Kara’s lips quirk up, but the darting of her eyes betrays her. “Yeah, I know.”

Lena waits a moment before pulling back a bit to ask, “Why are you nervous?”

“I’m not,” Kara denies immediately, but her hand twitches at Lena’s hip and when Lena just stares at her, expectant, Kara relents, “I don’t know.”

Not sure what to say, Lena remains silent, hovers in the warmth of Kara’s presence.

“Should it feel different?” Kara asks after a moment, her expression screwing up into a mixture of embarrassment and confusion.

“Should what feel different?” Lena asks, but even as she says it, she realizes what Kara means and can’t help sounding incredulous when she adds, “Sex?”

“I don’t know,” Kara says, the words sounding frustrated. “Shouldn’t it?”

It occurs to her why Kara might think that way - that with their feelings out in the open something about all of this should feel so different. But Lena finds it doesn’t feel different at all. And she’s fairly sure she knows exactly why.

Hesitating when vulnerability starts to itch at her throat, Lena flicks a finger on one of the buttons of Kara’s shirt, her eyes darting away a moment as she tries to find the right words. “I guess, it doesn’t,” she says, looking up into Kara’s eyes and hoping she understands. “Not for me.”

Blue eyes search her face for a moment and Lena feels naked. “No?”

Lena shrugs, decides nothing bad can come from being honest. Not anymore. “I mean, maybe I’m a little less scared of the way you make me feel now, but other than that…”

Kara licks out against her lips and it’s distracting, Lena shifts closer at the sight of it, considers just kissing Kara and coaxing all the nerves out of her that way.

“Sometimes I feel really stupid for not seeing it before,” Kara says in a whisper that feels loud when it beats into Lena’s ears. It’s not hard to figure out what it means and Lena’s chest feels like it might crack open. Her fingers flex where they reach up to wrap in Kara’s jacket.

Lena breathes in against the moment before giving into the inevitable and pushing upward towards Kara’s lips.

It’s like something snapping after being held taut for so long.

It only takes a heartbeat for Kara to react and when she does, she kisses Lena so completely, she
feels devoured by it. A noise escapes her but gets swallowed by the insistent slant of Kara’s mouth as Lena’s walked backward swiftly. Her fingers move listlessly over Kara’s body, pulling her in close and sliding inside her jacket.

It feels like ages since she’s had her hands on Kara with any kind of promise of it going anywhere.

There’s approximately zero finesse in how they claw at each other’s clothing. Kara’s leather jacket hits the ground somewhere just inside the front door and Lena’s purse drops so thoughtlessly she thinks she hears its contents spill across the floor.

Then it’s shoes kicked off and Kara’s shirt flinging over a nearby lamp while Lena’s fingers fumble with her belt buckle. Kara doesn’t even bother with Lena’s dress, just hikes the hem up when they fall on the couch and lets her hands travel north.

“I feel like I haven’t touched you in years,” Kara all but groans into Lena’s neck, her fingers slipping black lace down Lena’s thighs.

Lena’d agree with Kara, but her voice gets lost in the choking feeling of Kara spreading her legs open and slotting between them. There’s an impossibly tight feeling low in her gut that feels liable to explode at any second.

A hissing sound escapes through her teeth when Kara presses down in just the right spot and Lena’s fingers clench at Kara’s shoulders. “Fuck,” she breathes out, her legs spreading even wider, knee hitching against Kara’s hip.

It feels quick. Kara doesn’t seem keen on wasting any time and for that Lena’s grateful. She’s so worked up at this point it feels like she could come just from thinking about what’s about to happen.

But no amount of imagining, of trying to remember what Kara’s fingers feel like, has really prepared Lena for having the real thing after so long. It pulls the breath right out of her throat, her eyes hot as they roll upward and she’d think to be embarrassed about the satisfied noise she makes, but can’t summon the strength.

Kara’s lips are right below her ear and Lena can feel them stretch into a smile there. “Feel good?”

Lena doesn’t answer, just grabs for Kara’s forearm with one hand and lets her hips chase the feeling Kara’s expertly pulling through her body. Her other hand takes purchase on Kara’s neck, nails digging into the skin there enough to make Kara jump.

For a long moment all Lena can hear is the slick sounds of Kara’s fingers and her own breath panting up into the air. Pleasure goes racing through her, spiraling downward so quickly she knows it’s going to snap between her legs at any moment. Something about the shaky way she grips at Kara’s neck, her back bowing to bring them in closer, must let Kara know just how close she is because she pushes their foreheads together and smirks.

“Don’t come yet,” Kara whispers, pushing into Lena relentlessly and if Kara really wants Lena to stave off the orgasm racing down her spine then she should not say stuff like that.

“Kara,” she says, drawing her name out in a plea, barely able to keep it from sounding like a whine. “Please.”

“Don’t want it to be too fast,” Kara says, slowing her pace and ramping up Lena’s frustration.

It prompts her to crane her neck and pull Kara closer, their mouths hovered together. “Fast first,” she says against Kara’s lips, biting softly at her bottom lip when Kara’s fingers curl just how she likes it.
“Fast first, slow second.”

“Slow -” Kara starts to say but Lena shakes her head, her fingers moving to tighten in Kara’s hair.

“It’s been months. Stop talking and make me come,” Lena orders, a bit startled to hear how firm the words come out, but feeling so desperate for the tension in her gut to uncoil.

The chuckle Kara lets out is low and liquid and stokes the fire tugging at Lena’s clit. “Yes, ma’am,” she says quietly, kissing Lena as she presses in so deliciously. All it takes after that is an expert twist of fingers and thumb and Lena feels her thighs shake where they’re being held open by Kara’s hips.

The cry she lets out is lost in the wet of Kara’s mouth.

Lena’s body goes tight and then limp, falling back against the couch and pulling Kara with her, knees still tight against Kara’s hips. It feels so good she might laugh, but breathes deep instead and finds the energy to reach between them for Kara’s pants.

“What do you need?” Lena asks softly, pulling apart Kara’s belt, and the top button of her pants to reach inside and find her hot and wet and wanting.

Kara’s laugh is shaky as is the way she presses forward into Lena’s hand and drops their lips back together. “Just touch me,” she says into their kiss and Lena’s helpless to obey.

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It slows down after that but not by much. After Kara comes with a broken cry pressed against Lena’s lips, they both realize they’ve managed to stay nearly fully clothed as they groped each other on the couch and laugh a little.

The second time, they actually make it to one of the beds in the room, Kara kicking her pants the rest of the way off and Lena stripping her dress off on the way.

Lena gets bent over the mattress, cries out when Kara presses back into sensitive flesh and she feels overstimulated with Kara’s mouth against her spine. It’s too good. It’s always been too good and it’s not better necessarily, but Lena feels so much more uninhibited than she ever has before.

A quiet I missed this escapes her lips when Kara flips her back over and presses in close. Kara’s lips are drawn up into a smile where they’re hot against Lena’s neck and she barely catches the sentiment repeated back to her there. It pulls tightly against her chest and there’s heat behind her eyes, but it gets lost in the way Kara’s fingers are strong against her hips, pulling her closer.

Not for the first time, Lena spares an idle wish that she’d packed a few more things in her suitcase in anticipation of this event, but Kara rips the thought away from her with her tongue swiping strongly through heated flesh.

Lena cries out, doesn’t think twice about tangling her fingers in Kara’s hair and letting her know just how good it feels. Kara laughs hotly between Lena’s legs and damn is it possible to get nerve damage from this kind of overstimulation?

“Stop, stop, stop,” Lena breathes out, tugging Kara back up. She doesn’t want to come. Not yet. Not before she’s had a chance to push Kara back into the mattress and reward her for a good game.

“What?” Kara asks when she slides back up Lena’s body, the hard cut of her abs pressing in against wetness that steals the breath out of Lena’s throat. “You don’t like it?”
Lena’s laugh is throaty through the thick oppressive taste of arousal on the back of her tongue. “No, I liked it,” she says, pressing a hand on Kara’s chest to flip them over. “But there’s something else I want more right now.”

It’s a strange kind of exhilaration that thrills through her when Kara gasps a little at the first brush of Lena’s fingers. It makes her feel powerful and hot to feel Kara’s eyes follow her every move.

“Yeah, sure,” Kara says, laughing a little at the shaky way the words come out. “Whatever you want, baby.”

Lena’s gut clenches as she makes her way down Kara’s body, her fingers and lips tracing the lines of Kara’s muscles until they’re playing at the juncture of her hip. There’s a heady mixture of urgency and intimacy in the air and if Lena spends a little more time than usual between Kara’s legs it’s only because Kara sounds so fucking blissed when she comes like that.

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The sound of rustling and the feel of the bed dipping is what pulls Lena back to consciousness and she spots Kara pulling her pants off the ground and stepping into them - barely visible in the dark of the room.

“What are you doing?” Lena asks, clearing her throat against the hoarseness she feels there. Her body feels exhausted, but warm and she’s sure she’ll be sore in the morning. It makes her fingers itch to pull Kara back into bed, but Kara continues to zip her pants up. “Come back to bed.”

“I can’t stay,” Kara says, sounding put out by it enough that Lena feels a little better at the rejection. Shirtless, Kara plants a knee in the mattress and leans down to kiss Lena, swift and solid. “Cat’s been religious about bed checks.”

Lena feels a chill when Kara pulls away, scraping fingers through her hair to bring it up into a loose bun. It pushes Lena to step out of the bed herself and shuffle towards her suitcase to put something on. Staying in bed without Kara feels a bit lonely at the moment and she’d rather brew a cup of coffee and watch as Kara prepares to leave.

“How does your back feel?” Lena asks when they make their way out to the front of the room and Lena goes about pressing the correct sequence of buttons to get her coffee maker working.

“Great,” Kara laughs, tugging her shirt off a lamp and pulling it over her head. “But I’ll probably need to chug about sixteen recovery drinks to get all the electrolytes back in my body.”

“Sorry,” Lena says though she’s not really. It still feels like maybe their post-game romp was a tad irresponsible - as much as her body ached for it.

Picking her jacket up from the floor and striding closer, Kara’s lips twist with amusement. “You have nothing to be sorry for,” she says, suggestive enough that Lena’s suddenly hyper aware of all the sticky, cooling parts of her body.

Kara’s hair has that messy just fucked look about it that always makes Lena’s knees feel weak. Her lips are red and swollen and Lena can’t help but notice the splotchy look of her neck, a trail of fading lipstick retreating down the collar of her shirt.

It makes her lips go dry and she licks against the feeling, a rush threading up her chest when Kara’s eyes follow the motion.

“You should go,” Lena says, but the throaty way it comes out belies how she really feels.
Kara laughs, the sound dark enough that it throbs between Lena’s legs. “Yeah, I probably should,” she agrees, though her expression is regretful.

It doesn’t stop her from winding an arm around Lena’s waist, pulling their bodies back in close and kissing her thoroughly. Lena holds Kara in close by her cheeks and smiles against her lips, enjoying the solid way Kara feels held against her.

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There’s a day break between games and Kara spends the entirety of it in meeting after meeting. Though she texts Lena short updates about what she’s doing - including a long sequence of pictures telling the story of some prank Maggie’s playing on Eve - they don’t see each other.

It’s the first time Lena’s made this trip to Vegas without scheduling her own long list of meetings. Regardless, she takes the day to visit her properties and drop in on some local managers and regional directors.

In the evening, she meets Jack for dinner and they spend their night wandering around the floor of their hotel casino.

After regaling Lena with a tale of how he’d won big at the craps tables last night, Jack gets a look in his eye that Lena’s always known to be wary of. “How was your night? Win big?”

Instead of her usual reply - a scandalized shut up, Jack - she decides to turn the tables on him.

“Big?” Lena repeats, a suggestive arch of her brow as she pretends to consider his words. “You could certainly say that.”

The way she says it drips with implication and it’s clear that Jack didn’t expect it from her. His eyes go wide a second before he chortles almost giddily, peeling off into laughter that has her rolling her eyes.

“Oh my god, I don’t need to know that much about Kara Danvers,” he says between giggles.

Though she does shove him a little, she shrugs unapologetically. “You asked.”

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The Lakehawks win the second game, though it’s a lot closer than the first. The Aces seem to have a better answer for having Kara back in the lineup and switched to a more aggressive defensive style.

It seems to agitate Lucy and Kara for the first half of the game, but by the second they’ve adjusted. The game slogs about much slower than the first, but they pull of a five point win in the end.

Though Kara doesn’t put up quite the statline as she had before, she seems happy enough as she celebrates the win with her team on the court and waves to the Lakehawks fans in the crowd.

They don’t get to spend another night together in Vegas - the Lakehawks head back to National City immediately following the game - but Kara calls her late that night and her suggestive I’d ask what you’re wearing, but I’m hoping it’s nothing shouldn’t do it for Lena, but she nearly trips over her skirt when she tries to shove it off on the way to her bed.

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The playoffs start moving fast after that. There’s games every day, and the Lakehawks play every
other day - she manages to do some work on off-days, but it starts to feel a little like her life starts to revolve around the games.

The brightest point of game three is undoubtedly that it’s Kara’s first start back at home. The crowd noise is nothing short of deafening as her name is announced in the starting lineup.

In her usual seats, Lena has a front row show to the way Kara smiles at the sound, stripping her warmups off and looking up at her own picture displayed on the jumbotron over their heads.

It becomes clear fairly early that the Aces don’t stand a chance in this game. Kara becomes a one-woman wrecking crew, fueled on by the way the fans shout their encouragement throughout the entire game.

The eventual scoreline has the Lakehawks winning by twelve on the back of Kara’s triple-double. Jack claps loud enough when the final buzzer sounds that Lena fears his hands might bruise.

As the fans leave the game they make a great show of collectively making sweeping motions towards any stray Aces fan and Lena feels a bit embarrassed with how much she enjoys the petty display.

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Game four doesn’t go quite as well.

The talking heads will suggest Kara burnt all her energy in game three, but Lena knows that’s ridiculous. Kara doesn’t have finite reserves of energy like that. Not when it comes to basketball.

The more likely factor is an Aces team finally adjusting to how the Lakehawks play with Kara back in the lineup after such a long absence.

Kara plays well, but the Aces have found a way to defend her that’s effective enough to keep her shooting percentage below her average. Jack spends every game break reading the stat sheet and relaying as much to Lena in increasing frustration.

The chippy way the Aces are playing is agitating the Lakehawks enough that both Lucy and Maggie are in foul trouble early on and when Alex gets a technical in the third quarter for whatever she says to the referee, Cat nearly throws her clipboard into the stands.

It’s a four-quarter slugfest that has Kara looking downright pissed by the end of it.

The Lakehawks lose by one after one of the Aces players hits a turn-and-shoot three right over M’gann’s head. It ripples dismay all the way up the stands.

“Back to Vegas,” Jack mutters, his arms crossing over his chest and a look of disappointment on his face. They’ve retreated to the tunnel exiting the court and the team is slowly walking past.

Lena leans back against the wall to watch them, humming in agreement with Jack. “Who thought you would ever be disappointed about that,” she murmurs and he laughs.

Kara is at the end of the long line of players and she’s next to Alex, gesturing passionately about something with her hands and moving her body around as if to demonstrate what she’s talking about. It makes Lena want to smile and she has to twist her lips to prevent it.

When they get closer, Alex notices her, nudges Kara a bit mid-rant until she’s looking over as well.
Lena nods at Alex who returns the gesture and then does the same with Kara who smiles - albeit a touch sadly. As they pass, Kara reaches out, subtle as can be, and squeezes Lena’s fingers.

It’s quick and hardly noticeable to anyone else lingering in the tunnel, but Lena feels the warmth of it all the same, squeezes back and smiles when Kara winks at her.

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Game five takes place early in the day on Sunday in Vegas and features an Aces team that’s learned how vulnerable the Lakehawks perimeter defense is. The away team gets absolutely crushed under an onslaught of threes. Maggie nearly launches a basketball into the crowd at one point until Alex stops her and even Kara looks liable to fight the next player that gloats after sinking a shot from beyond the arc.

The Vegas crowd is loud and obnoxious and very vocal about their team still being alive in the playoffs.

After the game, she and Jack retreat to the hotel and share a postgame cocktail on the casino floor. Eventually he abandons her for the slot machines to boost his mood with a promise they’ll meet up again for dinner.

She wonders what Kara’s doing, how she’s feeling after dropping two straight games in the playoffs. They haven’t been able to see each other much in the last few days and she knows the Lakehawks are on a quick trip back to National City for game six. The team plane leaves late that night so they’re able to have a morning shootaround at home the next day.

Pulling her phone out of her purse, Lena intends to send Kara a quick text, but just as she’s swiping her phone open and finding Kara’s contact, she turns away from her chair and walks directly into a familiar, solid chest.

“Hey,” Kara laughs, reaching out to hold Lena upright by the elbows.

Lena startles, her heart leaping enough that she presses the hand holding her phone over her chest and glares at Kara.

It doesn’t do much, Kara just laughs again and shrugs, clearly unapologetic for spooking Lena. “I saw you sitting here as I was heading up to my room and I just wanted to say hi.”

She’s in a more incognito disguise than normal - a baseball hat pulled low over her glasses and her jeans and t-shirt ensemble nothing too flashy. Lena’s sure it’s to avoid attracting any unwanted attention after a loss. The memory of Kara slouching low at the hotel bar months ago in this exact situation makes Lena feel a sudden unstoppable wave of empathy.

“Hi,” Lena says, allowing a smile at the goofy way Kara is looking at her. “How are you doing?”

Kara’s hands retreat from Lena’s arms to her pockets and she shrugs again, the twist of her lips betraying her feelings quite easily. “Pissed,” she says simply. “But at least we have a chance to end it at home.”

Lena nods and can’t resist reaching out to press her hand against Kara’s bicep in a friendly squeeze. It makes Kara smile again and Lena’s chest loosens.

“You want to get something to eat?” Lena offers. “I happen to know a few good places.”

“What about room service?” Kara counters.
It sounds a little suggestive, if Lena’s honest, and the thought must telegraph to her face because Kara starts to blush in that adorable way she has, so at odds with all the smooth confidence she usually exudes.

“Not in a - I don’t mean it like room service,” she starts, making a little face. “I just meant I’d rather be somewhere without televisions or like, Aces fans.”

Lena laughs, but lets her off the hook with a tilt of her head towards the elevator bank all the way on the other side of the floor. “I think I know a place to get room service,” she jokes and Kara rolls her eyes, but chuckles.

“Thanks,” Kara says softly, a dejected expression taking hold of her face again. It makes Lena’s fingers ache. “Tonight really sucked.”

“I know,” Lena says, equally as soft. Before she can think otherwise, she steps into Kara’s personal space and brings her arms up around Kara’s shoulders.

It tugs them into a hug that Kara takes a second to react to, but she does, bringing her hands to Lena’s back to keep them tight together.

It feels good and natural and Lena honestly forgets they’re standing in the middle of a crowded casino floor for long moments. Doesn’t even think to care about watching eyes until a loud exclamation from a nearby roulette table is breaking them apart.

“Come on,” Lena murmurs when they step out of their hug and she flushes with the realization that anyone could have seen them pressed together even if a big part of her has stopped caring.

It’s hard to care about anything other than the look on Kara’s face.

They make their way to the elevator bank together and when Lena’s sure no one is really paying attention to them, she tangles her fingers with Kara’s and presses the button for her floor.

Up in the suite, they order room service and sit on the expansive couch in the outer sitting room. Lena waits until Kara’s had her fill before she coaxes her back onto the cushions and peels her jeans off.

It’s soft and easy and Kara falls asleep snoring against Lena’s chest, the setting sun breaching color into the room as the lights of the strip start to dance outside the window.

She sets an alarm on her phone for when she knows Kara needs to start leaving to catch the team plane and then strokes a soothing hand down Kara’s spine, falling into the feeling of having her so close.

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They don’t end the series at home.

Vegas takes a ten point lead on the Lakehawks into the second half and most of the starting lineup is in foul trouble by the middle of the third, Maggie fouling out completely by the start of the fourth.

Alex holds a huddle right in front of Lena and Jack after it happens, screams at her team about defending their house and not letting Vegas off the hook. It’s loud and inspiring, but isn’t enough to get the Lakehawks back in the game.

They lose by three when Lucy misses a game-tying shot as the final buzzer sounds. Kara stands at
the top of the key and just stares at the scoreboard for a long time, hands at her hips as the Vegas team celebrates bringing the series to seven games.

They catch each other much later as they’re both leaving the arena, Kara heading towards the player lot and Lena texting George to bring the car to the underground parking. Lena had stayed late to speak with James about travel plans and tried to pretend it wasn’t an excuse to linger around in wait for Kara.

Kara’s freshly showered and changed when they spot each other, and Kara hitches her bag higher up on her shoulder and paces the few feet between them with a smile.

“Hey, you’re still here,” Kara says, sounding brighter than Lena expects. It makes her stomach swoop.

“I got caught up talking to James,” Lena says, enjoying the fresh, crisp scent of Kara that wafts over her.

The hallway is empty and quiet and Lena breathes in the feeling of just being near Kara for a moment. The idea of walking away seems somehow loathsome and she feels rooted to the spot.

Kara must feel similarly because her lips quirk a little and a vulnerable sounding, “Come over?” escapes her lips.

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They end up in Kara’s bed, Kara sipping at a nutritionist-approved recovery smoothie and Lena flipping through channels on the huge television mounted across from them. She pointedly clicks faster through the long list of sports stations Kara has included in her cable package, but Kara catches a glimpse of it anyway and stops Lena by plucking the remote out of her hand.

“Wait, I want to see that,” she says, turning back five channels to the late night SportsCenter covering the games that night.

It’s the tail end of coverage from the Gotham Grenadiers win over the Midway City Railsplitters that ended the series in six games. It turns then to the Lakehawks game. A picture of Kara looking dejectedly up at the scoreboard with the Vegas team celebrating behind her is what starts the segment and Lena’s brow pulls down.

“Why?”

“Maybe they have some brilliant insight as to what went wrong,” Kara deadpans, setting her empty drink down and sitting up a bit.

“Doubtful,” Lena replies, already seeing Kara begin to give into her own form of wallowing.

When the Lakehawks lowlights start to show a sequence of missed shots, balls clanging off the rim into Aces players’ hands, Lena retakes the remote and clicks the television off to the sound of Kara huffing.

“You’re torturing yourself,” Lena says, setting the remote down on the table.

“You know, I’ve never lost a championship,” Kara says, sounding more irritated than anything else.

“You haven’t lost this one either,” Lena points out.
“Yeah, not yet, and I might not even get the chance at this point.”

“That doesn’t sound like you,” Lena says, a bit taken aback by the uncharacteristic defeated tone in Kara’s voice.

Kara blows out a breath, slouches down in the bed. “I just want to win. I hate losing.”

“You’ll win another championship,” Lena says, believing it and wondering when Kara stopped. The idea that Kara won’t spend most of her career collecting trophies is somewhat baffling to Lena - like something she’d just expected to be true.

“I want this one,” Kara says, nearly whining it.

Lena smiles, strokes an errant hand of hair off Kara’s forehead. “Then win this one,” she says simply.

It does something to Kara’s demeanor, her face softening. “You’re right,” she says quietly and Lena’s a little surprised that’s all it took to shift Kara’s mood, but happy it did nonetheless.

Kara yawns, and Lena feels weak to the exhaustion in her face. With a soft smile, she squeezes Kara’s shoulder and says, “I should go.”

“No,” Kara says quickly, reaching out to pull Lena back in by her shirt when she tries to slip out of bed. “Stay. Please.”

When Lena looks a bit surprised at Kara’s reaction, Kara just laughs at herself, shrugging a shoulder. “I’m too exhausted to have sex, but I kinda wouldn’t mind if you stayed tonight.”

It takes no consideration for Lena to give into that entreaty and she slips back in against Kara easily.

“I have an early meeting in the morning,” Lena mentions even as she’s giving into the tug of Kara’s fingers.

“I’ll set an alarm,” Kara says, a happy smile on her face when Lena sinks back down against the pillows.

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Lena’s told on more than one occasion that in the last two Lakehawks championship runs, no playoff series was taken to seven games. Though Lena had already planned on it, she’s also told by numerous people around the offices that she should be at the game. As if Jack would let her miss it. As if she’d want to.

The atmosphere is packed with tension. The crowd feels larger and somehow louder than its been at any other game in Vegas during the series. There are a few points the noise swells to such a level that Jack begins accusing the Aces of pumping in crowd noise.

The Lakehawks are all business from the moment they step up onto the court. It’s Kara this time that pulls her team in for a huddle in front of the bench and Lena can just make out what she says over the roar of the fans. Forty-eight minutes guys. Leave it all out there.

They all clap in unison and as they move to take their positions around the tip-off circle, Lena catches Kara’s eye.

It’s a quick connection of their eyes, but Lena feels a thrill down her spine at the look on Kara’s face.
There’s none of the shaky nerves that were there after game six, nothing tense or anxious on her face. Instead, there’s the confidence Lena’s always associated with Kara and when she notices Lena in the crowd, she smirks.

And just like that, Lena’s sure the Lakehawks are about the win.

Coverage of the game won’t know what to make of Kara’s fifty-two points nor of her fifteen assists. The headline that night will read *Skippers Beware: Kara Danvers is Back.*

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The Lakehawks plane flies back the night of the game and arrives before Lena’s, so she doesn’t expect to see Kara right away, but when she gets into the car waiting for her, Kara’s sitting on the leather seats right beside her.

“George offered me a ride,” Kara tells Lena, a sly smile as her eyes go sideways towards her driver. “I thought maybe he was trying to kill me before the Skippers series, but he insists he’s neutral.”

From the front seat, George laughs and Lena looks between them, sensing a continually clearing picture of her future come into focus.

“Nice of him,” Lena says, dry as can be when George catches her eye. He winks at her and presses a button to raise the partition and leave her in the silence of the backseat with Kara.

“Hope it’s okay,” Kara says, her arm coming to rest over the back of Lena’s seat as the car starts to pull away from the airport.

“It’s a nice surprise.”

There’s a restless, triumphant energy exuding off of Kara, fresh from the game and clearly having enjoyed the quick flight from Vegas to National City with her teammates. She’s practically thrumming, the kind of pulse of anticipation that Lena’s body reacts to. She slides up under Kara’s arm, her hand finding Kara’s thigh and they press together so warmly that she can’t look at Kara’s face lest she start something she can’t finish in the back of this car.

She manages. Though just barely.

Kara’s fingers spend the ride stroking against Lena’s shoulder and the low tones of her voice talking about matchups for the Skippers games is doing something to Lena’s insides.

By the time they make it to Lena’s apartment she feels shaky with impatience. Kara’s smiling like she knows where Lena’s head has gone and Lena’s fairly sure the little smirk she has when she plucks Lena’s bag out of the trunk along with her own is on purpose.

Though she knows she’s being played with, Lena still can’t stop herself from pressing forward to kiss Kara in the elevator of her building. She feels warm and solid and a kind of intoxicating that starts to block out the rest of the world even when the elevator doors open and they take the few steps towards Lena’s apartment, Lena remaining pressed in close against Kara.

“Someone might see,” Kara reminds her in a murmur, breath warm against Lena’s lips.

There’s a careful moment before Lena responds – like something clicking together between them – and Lena’s surprised to find what drops easily from her mouth. “I don’t care,” she says back, and Kara’s eyes widen just enough to be noticeable.
It might not be the entire truth. Tomorrow’s Lena will certainly care. But for the moment, standing there with Kara in front of the door to her apartment, she really doesn’t.

There’s something careless about the way Lena surges forward and recklessly pushes their lips together. Kara makes a squeak of a noise, but sinks into the kiss easily, her hand perching on Lena’s hip to bring them in close.

They back up against the door and Lena fumbles with it to get it open, reaching behind her and refusing to detach from the single-minded way Kara’s kissing her. It feels good and Lena’s not going to deny that the risky way it feels to still be standing out in the hallway is doing something to the heat in her stomach.

Kara seems a little more concerned with their position and helps Lena get her door open, walking them inside carefully, but remaining tangled together. The minute they get in the door, Kara drops both of their bags, her grip tightening on Lena in a way that makes Lena’s guts go liquid.

If Lena’d been paying attention, she might have noticed the familiar pair of sandals kicked off in her entryway, or the decanter of scotch sitting on her kitchen counter. She might have smelled that weird mixture of sandalwood and coconut that would have tipped her off to the new presence in her apartment.

But she can’t pay attention to anything other than Kara’s arm around her waist, the heady feeling of their hips pressing together and the warm play of Kara’s lips as they start to move down her jaw. Kara’s body presses her back into her closed door, her hands catching on the hem of her skirt. There’s nothing else in the world but them.

Which is why her heart nearly leaps out of her chest when she hears a soft laugh to her right.

“Well, well, well, what do we have here?”

Lena’s fingers clutch at Kara’s shirt and she doesn’t need to turn to know who the voice belongs to. It’s as familiar to her as her own. Kara’s lips are frozen where they’re pressed under Lena’s ear and ever so slowly they pull away from each other.

Heart thudding uncomfortably in her chest, Lena turns to see her brother leaning casually against the back of her couch, watching the two of them as they’d been stumbling through the apartment. He’s wearing an obnoxious looking floral print shirt and khaki colored cut-off pants. His hair looks windblown and wild, sunglasses perched on his head, his eyes dancing with delight as he holds up the tumbler of scotch in his hand. He has a beard.

“Lex,” Lena breathes, trying to calm the racing of her heart as she carefully extracts herself from Kara’s embrace. She supposes there’s no explaining away what he’s seen.

He smiles at her, wide and almost too happily, his laugh the kind of sound she remembers from when they were younger, and he’d cheat his way into beating her at chess. “Hey, sis. Long time, no see.”
Chapter 10

The shock of seeing her brother after so long, standing in her own apartment, stupefies Lena for a moment. He just grins at her, with that insufferable and boyish looking smile he has, until she finally shakes out of it.

“Lex, what the hell?” Lena exclaims as she detaches from Kara to pace toward him. “How did you get in here?”

Lex laughs, opens his arms up to hug her. “Stan likes me,” he says.

It feels good to step into Lex’s embrace. He stands just slightly taller than her and his arms feel warm and solid as he pulls her in. When they finally let go of each other, Lena leans back to really look at him.

“And what is this?” Lena tugs playfully at his beard, laughing as he does. It’s scruffy, wiry, and far away from the occasional Sunday evening stubble she’s seen him with on occasion.

“Don’t you like it?” He puffs his chest up a bit, chin lifting as he asks it. “I think it looks distinguished.”

“It looks unkempt,” Lena corrects, giving him a look that makes him laugh.

He shrugs, unaffected as always by her disapproval, and his eyes dart over her shoulder, grin only widening at what he sees.

When Lena registers what – or who – that is, she goes a little cold again, unable to fight the wave of anxiety. But she back up a bit, and Kara must step forward, because they bump into each other lightly, Kara’s palm steadying Lena by the small of her back.

“Kara Danvers,” Lex greets, voice full of delight and jest.

“Mr. Luthor,” Kara returns, sounding some mixture of overly official and amused. When she turns to look at Kara there’s a hint of a smile on her lips.

“So formal,” Lex teases, eyes wagging up and down when he looks at Lena. She feels her heart start to kick off against her will as Lex continues to just look at the two of them. Kara’s hand on her back is feeling all too hot as the seconds tick by.

“Good to see you back in town,” Kara says politely, as though Lex hasn’t just caught them climbing each other in Lena’s entryway. Lex’s eyes narrow just the slightest, a critical look taking hold for a moment, though his smile never falters.

“So, this is really a thing,” Lex says, gesturing between the two of them with the hand still holding his tumbler of whiskey. It’s not a question really, more like a statement, and though Lena knows it to be true, her cheeks flush. “A thing thing.”

On instinct, she deflects with a casual, “What are you talking about?”

Lex laughs and though Lena doesn’t look up at her, she can hear Kara laugh softly as well. Traitor. She knows it’s ridiculous. They’d been steps away from tearing each other’s clothes off just seconds ago, but still.
“You and the Superstar,” he clarifies kindly, a look of pure delight in his eyes as he looks between them. “I’d heard all the fun rumors, but seeing it in the flesh is certainly illuminating.”

“Lex,” Lena says quietly, suddenly full of insecurity. The very real prospect of being outed – even if just to her brother – is twisting in her gut in a way she’d not felt when they’d just been out in the hallway.

But her brother waves off her wariness in that easy way he has, his expression open and casual. “I think it’s great,” he says, smiling at them both. “I mean, I’d suspected as much before with all the pictures.”

“The pictures?” Lena asks, arching a brow.

Lex laughs. “You’re not as sneaky as you think, Sis. The Internet’s sharks have been circling you two for a few months now,” he tells them, wagging his finger as if to scold a small child. “Don’t worry, I’ll be sure to bill you for what it cost to keep some of those shots out of the public eye.”

Lena feels her eyes go wide, Kara shuffling closer to her. “What...shots?”

Lex just laughs again. “Come on,” he says, walking towards her kitchen like this is his apartment instead of hers. “Let’s have a drink and catch up. We have a lot to talk about.”

He waltzes out of view, but Lena feels rooted to the spot, watching him disappear towards her wine cooler with wide eyes. “What’s happening?” she murmurs, almost to herself. She jumps when Kara answers her.

“I should go, right?” Kara says, though her hand remains solid against Lena’s back. “Let you catch up with your brother.”

The thought of Kara leaving her alone right now tugs her brain into full working order. Even if it’s just her brother, she feels a bit steadier having Kara nearby. Turning, Lena hooks her finger in the waistband of Kara’s pants and looks up at her with narrowed eyes. “You’re not leaving.”

“You should have some time alone with him,” Kara argues, but she doesn’t move. Just acquiesces to the pull of Lena’s finger to bring their bodies closer together. It’s funny to have someone so strong bend to her will without argument. Nice because Kara’s eyes are focused on hers, amusement sparking in them even as they dart away towards the kitchen for a moment. “I don’t want to intrude.”

“You’re just trying to run away from whatever it is he has to say to us, you coward,” Lena accuses, but she smiles a little at the end of it. The way Kara flushes just the slightest makes Lena want to kiss her.

“I’m trying to be respectful,” Kara insists, but she doesn’t make a move to leave, obeys the way Lena’s finger stays tucked in the waistband of her pants.

“Thanks,” Lena says sincerely as she presses a fleeting kiss to Kara’s jaw. “But we’re facing this one together.”

“You sound like we’re headed into a firing squad.”

The sound of Lex popping a bottle open in the kitchen floats over them. “Time to face the music, lovebirds,” he calls out. “Get in here, Sis, or I’m calling Mom.”

Lena sighs, steels herself and reaches out to fix the collar of Kara’s shirt. “Welcome to the family,”
she jokes, but Kara’s grin is so genuine she kisses her once, twice, three times, before tugging her into the kitchen.

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They drink a bottle of champagne – or at least Lena and Lex do – while they talk. Lex catches Lena up, albeit briefly, on his time away. There’s a lot of vague handwaving and don’t worry about its that make Lena want to roll her eyes, but she decides not to pester him just yet.

It’s nice, in a way Lena hadn’t anticipated, to sit in her kitchen with Kara and her brother. It feels normal and warm and it’s a reminder that Lena hadn’t thought to consider all the benefits of bringing her relationship with Kara out into the open. She’d been far too focused on the negatives. Negatives that Lex had a hand in preventing, apparently.

“It shouldn’t be all that surprising,” Lex says, looking ponderous while he rubs his beard and explains the kind of paparazzi photos he’d somehow encountered during his time away. “You’re both allegedly attractive, wealthy, so on, so forth. People take an interest in that sort of thing. Present company included.”

Kara makes an amused humming sound into her glass of water that Lena cuts a glare to. The I told you so is as clear as day and Lena reflects on Kara saying the exact same thing just days ago in the front seat of her car.

“But the first time I ever really had to do any work to prevent anyone asking serious questions was at that infernal musical with the rapping,” Lex says. Lena can feel Kara’s body coil in defense of Hamilton, and reaches out to press her hand to Kara’s on the counter before she gets a chance to derail the entire conversation.

“So you’ve known this whole time,” Lena says.

“Someone like Kara stops spreading the love all around on her nightly escapades and their most dedicated fans take notice.” Lex shoots Kara a look, lips quirking up. “No offense, Danvers.”

“Lex,” Lena chastises. But Kara shifts closer and laughingly interjects with a casual, “It’s fine.”

“Oh come on, Lena,” Lex says. “You know it’s true.”

Lena’d rather not acknowledge his point, true as it may be. “Don’t be rude.”

“Is it rude if it’s just fact?” Lex arches a brow and makes a show of looking down his nose at her.

“Yes,” Lena answers at the same time Kara says, “No.”

Lena clicks her tongue and elbows Kara softly, glaring at her brother. “You should remember your manners,” she scolds him.

Scoffing into a laugh, Lex shakes his head. “What? It’s not as if any one of us is a stranger to romantic exploits. What about that time in Singapore with you and the tattoo -”

“Lex,” Lena warns lowly, feeling her cheeks start to flush at the memory he’s digging up.

“Okay, what about when we went to Mexico and that lady with the foot fetish -”

“No,” Lena interrupts, coughing on a sip of champagne. “Kara doesn’t need to hear about that.”

“I don’t know,” Kara says with a shrug, smiling at the two of them. “Sounds interesting.”
“See, Lena,” Lex says, but Lena just rolls her eyes.

“Shut up, Lex,” she says, taking another heavy sip of her drink and trying to glare at both Lex and Kara at the same time.

“Just saying,” Lex says, looking teasing and nice and playful, and Lena’s just - happy, strangely, to have two of her favorite people in the room at the same time.

It’s easy to get caught up in the moment, in the warm feeling of having Kara at her back while they listen to the animated way Lex always tells stories. Thankfully, the conversation turns towards a discussion of the Lakehawks, a topic Lena is more content to sit back and listen to while Kara takes the lead. They go over some of the developments in the franchise since Lex’s been gone and Kara takes him through her injury and recovery process.

As Kara tells him about how the team is doing, how Eve did her work in filling in during Kara’s absence, Lex grows contemplative and leans back in his stool a bit.

“You know…we should do a family dinner,” he says, playing with his beard as he talks. “With the team.”

Lena arches a brow, unsure what he means, but Kara lets out a soft laugh. “We haven’t had one of those in forever,” she says,

“What does that mean?” Lena asks, eyeing the gleeful look on Lex’s face with trepidation.

“We’ll have the team over for dinner,” Lex answers, reaching for the bottle of champagne between them. “Here.”

“Here?!” Lena can’t help but exclaim, glancing behind her at Kara to see if they’re joking. Kara places her palm again on Lena’s back, but otherwise doesn’t comment, her expression caught between amused and bland.

“My apartment isn’t quite ready for guests, what with its lengthy disuse,” Lex says, haughtily. “Come on, Lena, it’ll be fun. We used to do them all the time, don’t you remember?”

Lena doesn’t. She’s pretty sure if she’d had dinner with the entire Lakehawks at Lex’s apartment… she’d remember.

“She never came to those,” Kara answers for her, leaning an elbow on the counter to prop herself up against it. When Lena sends her a quizzical look, Kara just shrugs and adds, “What? I think I’d remember if you’d been there.”

It makes Lena’s cheeks feel a tad flush, but Lex laughs and moves past it. “Well, we’re long overdue and I think we should have one. It’d be a fun way to reintroduce myself as well.”

“Maybe,” Lena answers, leaning into the way Kara continues to rub at her back. Something about the moment feels like a novelty, every pass of Kara’s thumb across her spine making her feel soft. It’s perhaps the leading factor into why she feels herself relenting to Lex’s ideas.

“After we beat the Skippers,” Kara suggests.

Lex laughs again, picking up his champagne glass and lifting it in Kara’s direction. “I’ve missed your confidence, Danvers,” he says. “You’ll fit into this family just fine.”
Lex leaves, eventually. Finally. And she and Kara are left alone, staring at the closed door like neither of them are really sure of what just happened.

“So, your brother’s back,” Kara murmurs softly.

Lena hums affirmatively and leans heavily into Kara’s side, grateful when Kara brings her arm around her to keep her there. “Quite the surprise.”

“A good one though, right?”

“Yeah,” Lena nods. “A good one.”

“How are you feeling about…” Kara pauses long enough that Lena looks up at her, eyebrows raising. “How do you feel knowing that he knows?”

Lena’s brow stays lifted until she realizes what Kara’s referring to and she relaxes, unsure how to explain the ups and downs of how she feels about it.

“It’s a bit nice, I suppose,” she settles on, shrugging a shoulder but feeling Kara relax just the smallest bit at her words. “You’re right, people are going to find out.”

“He seemed fine with it.”

“As if Lex is anyone to judge,” Lena says wryly, pulling away from Kara and moving to the empty champagne bottles and glasses in the kitchen to clean them away. Kara ambles after her.

“I guess that’s true,” Kara replies with a laugh.

“He’s probably more thrilled than he’s letting on, truth be told,” Lena says, handing a champagne glass off to Kara so that she can set it in the dishwasher. “He used to talk about you like you were the second coming, riding in on your horse to save the Lakehawks.”

Kara laughs, leaning a hip against the kitchen counter and watching as Lena fiddles with the controls of her dishwasher. “Well, sure, but that’s about basketball.”

There’s something uncharacteristically shy about Kara’s posture, her hands crossing over her chest when Lena straightens and the dishwasher starts its cycle, the low hum of it wafting between them. “It was about you,” she clarifies with a soft smile.

“And how good I am at basketball,” Kara adds, shrugging a shoulder. “Which, I am. Obviously. But that’s not about like…”

“About what?” Lena asks when nothing else is forthcoming. She shuffles in closer to Kara, happy when it forces Kara’s arms to relax.

“I don’t know,” Kara says, eyes darting away now. “It’s different now. I’m like your...girlfriend. Or whatever.”

Lena catches on at that. Her heart warming at the faint flush in Kara’s cheeks and the nervous way she chews at her lower lip. “Or whatever,” Lena repeats, teasing and stepping in even closer until Kara brings her arms up to embrace her.

“You know what I mean,” Kara says, a hint of a whine on the last word.

Lena enjoys the strong, solid feel of Kara’s body when she presses in and remembers quite suddenly what they’d been about to do when they’d first walked into the apartment. “I didn’t think that would
be something you were worried about.”

“I wouldn’t say worry,” Kara says with a put-upon show of dismissiveness.

“He liked you,” she reassures Kara, pressing a kiss to Kara’s jaw.

Kara hums at the pressure, lets her hands find Lena’s hips and the small of her back. “That’s good, I guess,” she says and Lena laughs.

The champagne is making Lena feel loose and relaxed, the ebbing of adrenaline from her brother discovering them making her sag into Kara’s embrace and the added feel and scent of Kara has Lena’s fingers creeping in between them to play at the buttons of Kara’s shirt.

“You played well today, you know,” Lena says, looking up into Kara’s amused blue eyes. “I don’t know if I mentioned.”

“Thanks,” Kara laughs, taking the change of subject in stride.

“Tired?”

A smirk plays at Kara’s lips, her arm moving to wrap solidly around Lena’s waist until she’s lifting her just a bit off the ground and into Kara’s body. “Not especially,” she murmurs, tone low enough that it runs down Lena’s spine.

“Good,” Lena whispers back, arms lifting around Kara’s neck and lips pressing forward.

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Jack calls her in the morning sounding rough and exhausted. “Your brother’s back in town,” is his only greeting and Lena makes an amused sound, curious how Jack would know that.

“Yes, I know. He was here last night,” she tells him, setting her cup of coffee down. “How did you find out?”

“Well a bit of a warning would have been nice, love,” Jack grumbles, sounding severely in need of a breakfast cocktail and a plate of bacon. “He showed up here sometime around midnight and dragged me out.”

Lena laughs imagining it, hoping Lex was at least discreet. Considering she’s yet to see his picture plastered across any of the news sites this morning, he must have been. “That explains why you sound as if you’ve swallowed a bag of cotton balls.”

“Don’t mock me,” Jack complains. “Not unless you’re planning on bringing me coffee and getting me breakfast.”

“Surely you have ways of acquiring that that don’t involve me.”

“Sure, but how are we going to debrief the great return of Lex Luthor if you don’t come over here and buy me eggs and toast?”

Kara saunters in from the bedroom at that and Lena’s attention gets drawn to the way she’s pulling a shirt on over her head, still only in her light blue Calvins as she strides towards the pot of coffee on the counter with a yawn. There’s sun streaming in through the blinds of Lena’s living room, Kara’s hair is in a messy ponytail, and she starts pulling a mug from the cabinet with her eyes still half-closed.
It’s such a disarming sight that Lena forgets to answer Jack’s question. “Hello? Lena?”

“Yeah, sorry,” Lena says, shaking her head and rolling her eyes when Kara raises a questioning brow her direction, smirk and all. “I have meetings this morning, I can’t just blow them off because you don’t know how to drink responsibly.”

“I do know how,” Jack complains. “It was your brother that’s the problem.”

Kara’s leaned up against the counter now, observing Lena as she sips at her fresh cup of coffee.

“You should learn how to say no to him.”

“Easier said than done,” Jack says, more of a groan than anything else and Lena takes pity on him.

“Can you be presentable in thirty minutes?”

“Do I have to shower?”

“Yes,” Lena says with a laugh, enjoying the way Kara smiles at her over the rim of her coffee mug. It feels quiet and easy and Lena wants to bottle the feeling for safekeeping.

“Then make it an hour.”

“I’ll send George,” Lena tells him and then promptly hangs up on the sound of his laughter.

“Jack?” Kara asks, setting her mug down and moving towards Lena to kiss her good morning. Her hands slip along Lena’s waist and grip there.

Lena hums into the contact and nods. “It seems Lex went to see him after us last night.”

“Busy man,” Kara says, her hand slipping underneath Lena’s t-shirt at her lower back. It’s not necessarily sexual, but comfortable. “So you’re off to soak up his hangover?”

“It seems that way,” Lena sighs. “Do you have practice today?”

“And a walkthrough and like ten meetings,” Kara says, pulling an annoyed face. “You’d think we’d get the day after we close out an important series off, but nope. Cat will probably have us in the gym all week.”

Lena’s hands have traveled of their own accord up under Kara’s shirt, sitting lightly against the relaxed muscles of her abdomen. “Do you have to be there soon?”

There’s something about the soft way Kara looks and feels right now that makes Lena want to wrap her up and tumble back into bed. Jack can wait.

“I have some time,” Kara says, voice lowering with the slide of her lips into a smirk. She’s clearly caught onto Lena’s wavelength. The palm at Lena’s lower back spreads out, fingers reaching across the warm expanse of her skin there. “Why? Something in mind?”

Lena shrugs a shoulder, playing at being coy and smiling at the amused crinkle it pulls in Kara’s brow. “Just curious.”

“Oh, really?” Kara arches a brow far too attractively and pulls Lena onto her feet by only the strength of the hand she already has at her back. It’s swift and powerful and Lena’s brain drops low in her body.
They don’t make it all the way to the bedroom, but spend the rest of their time together in the sunlight streaming through the living room windows. Kara ends up running ten minutes behind schedule, racing out of Lena’s apartment in a tumble of clothes and messy hair. Even still, she takes the time to bend over the back of the couch and press a solid kiss to Lena’s lips, smiling into the pressure and whispering her goodbyes.

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After taking the quickest of showers and answering the five we’re waiting for you and one I just saw Kara leave so why aren’t you down here texts from Jack, Lena slides into the back seat of her car to find Jack lounging against the seats with sunglasses and a baseball cap on. George merely sends her an amused smile in the rearview mirror before pulling away from the curb.

“You look awful,” she greets, flicking at the brim of his hat.

He flips her off, but sits up a bit. “You sound too chipper. It’s annoying. Who gave you the right?”

“I’m deeply sorry my personal happiness is an inconvenience.”

He laughs, but his smile turns into something genuine even though she can’t see his eyes. “I’ll be sure to send Kara a fruit basket for doing my best friend so well.”

Lena spares a glance for George as he maneuvers through early morning traffic. Jack is being casual about it, and George knows, but it feels like every time anyone brings up her and Kara she has to be on high alert. She tries to fight back the instinct to tell Jack to shut up, or hit him, and just breathe.

“Maybe I’m just happy to be having breakfast with you,” Lena teases, a haughty lift of her chin.

Jack scoffs. “As if.”

Swatting his leg, but laughing, she changes the subject. “So, where did Lex take you last night to put you in such a state?”

“I don’t even remember it all,” Jack says, groaning and pulling his hat down lower on his face as sunlight glides over them in the car. “There were just so many shots, Lena. So many.”

“I could have used a few of those myself,” she jokes. “He caught Kara and I in a compromising position last night at my apartment.”

Jack freezes and pulls his sunglasses down to observe her, eyes puffy and bloodshot. “You’re fucking having me on.”

“Christ,” Jack whispers. “How did it go?”

“Fine,” she says with a shrug of her shoulder. “It seems he wasn’t all that surprised. Apparently a few paparazzi photos had already made their way to his hideaway during his time on the lam.”

“Like, scandalous photos?” Jack asks, waggling his eyebrows suggestively enough that Lena digs her knuckles into his thigh until he helps. “Okay, fuck, sorry,” he says, though he’s laughing and not sounding sorry much at all. “Did he seem okay with it? How was Kara?”
She thinks for a second of how calm she had felt, Lex and Kara chattering about the Lakehawks tactics this year, Kara’s steady presence behind her and Lex’s familiar one in front of her. How Lex had never once acted like he was judging them, and how Kara hadn’t run away even when she had the chance before or after Lex sat them down. She gives a slow shrug to Jack and can’t help her smile.

“They were fine,” Lena says. “It went great, even.”

“Your smile is disgusting. Love really is affecting you for the worst,” Jack says, though he smiles anyway.

“Shut up, Jack,” Lena says, rolling her eyes.

“Sure, sure,” Jack says.

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The promos for the Lakehawks-Skippers Conference Final Series market it as if it’s the championship series instead of the semi-finals.

“That’s because everyone knows the West is so much better than the East,” Kara explains, eating snap peas on Lena’s couch. “Not that random things couldn’t happen, but it’s pretty much a guarantee that whoever wins the West will win the championship.”

“Really?” Lena finds herself a bit intrigued, curled up next to Kara on the couch, feet tucked under her. She’s going over the last board meeting notes while Kara lounges and snacks. Work has been more of a chore recently as she’s started to think about how to bring Lex back into the fold, but it’s not so arduous to go through it while Kara sits next to her snacking and talking about basketball. It’s funny how comfortable she finds it, having another person so casually in her space.

Kara hums, throws another snap pea in her mouth. “Yeah, I’m not really worried about playing the Grenadiers or the Wonders. We can for sure beat either of them, no problem. But the Skips hate us and are good, and we’ve knocked them out of the playoffs for the last like, five years.”

On the screen, a replay of Kara’s injury plays and Lena winces, finding the clip to be in poor taste. Watching Kara’s body hit the hardwood flat on her back, twitch on impact like an electrical shock’s gone through her, and then roll over sends Lena immediately back to the panic that had beset her seeing it in person. But Kara just laughs softly, seemingly more distanced from the memory than Lena. “There’s that, too.”

“I hate watching that,” Lena comments, mostly under her breath as they watch a quick post-practice interview with Leslie Willis replace the video of Kara’s injury. Leslie is pretty, in a mean-looking way, tall and with strong shoulders. Lena’s seen enough of her play to understand her gameplay as a bit more bruising than Kara’s or really any of the Lakehawks’ apart from maybe Maggie.

“Feels like forever ago,” Kara says, shuffling sideways on the couch with her bowl of snap peas and throwing an arm around Lena’s shoulders. It seems almost unconscious, because Kara keeps talking. “I wonder how much it’ll affect things. Should be interesting.”

“Like someone might try to injure you again?” Lena asks, setting her tablet to the side and adjusting until she’s pressed against Kara’s side fully.

“Siobhan wasn’t trying to injure me,” Kara says, raising her eyebrows at Lena and laughing at her skeptical look. “She really wasn’t.”
“I guess,” Lena grumbles, unable to keep the memory of Kara twisting midair out of her mind.

“You could accuse Leslie of that kind of stuff, but Siobhan is a little - I mean she visited me after and apologized. Brought me a box of donuts and everything.”

Lena hums, watches as Leslie answers questions on the television in front of them. The reporter seems to be asking a long list of rote, predictable questions, ending with a classic, *how are you feeling about going up against your old teammate Kara Danvers now that she’s returned from injury? Are you guys worried about that at all?*

Leslie makes a scoffing sound, shrugging a shoulder and turning a laughing smile down at the reporter. *“Worried about Kara Danvers? Last I checked there are five players in a basketball lineup.”*

The reporter takes the deflection in stride, laughs at Leslie’s little joke, but persists at the question with an added, *“Has anything changed in your preparation knowing Kara will be back in that lineup?”*

It’s clear Leslie is irritated by the question, her brow setting as her hands find her hips.

*“Honestly, I don’t think much about her,” she says, jaw tight. “Everyone thinks she’s such a great player off and on the court, but I don’t really care. Last time I saw her on a basketball court, she was being stretchered off of it. It seems she’s at her best on her back.”*

Leslie punctuates the jab with a little smirk, the implication clear, and the reporter seems shocked for a moment, but manages to recover, trying to steer the conversation back on topic.

*“The Lakehawks seem fairly confident now that she’s returned. Do you have anything to say about -”*

*“Kara Danvers can come meet me on the floor in game one and I’ll do my talking there,” Leslie interrupts. “And it’ll take more than a stretcher this time.”*

Without saying much else, Leslie turns away from the reporter to walk down the team tunnel and away.

Lena blinks at the television as it turns back to the anchor desk and fights the acrid taste of indignation on the back of her tongue. *“Did she really just say that?”*

*“Like I said,” Kara says with a laugh, popping another snap pea in her mouth. “Should be interesting.”*

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Leslie’s attack starts a cavalcade of dialogue in the three days leading up to the first game of the series. Lena gets called into a meeting with James and J’onn that involves developing a party line the team can stick to. Between that and the meetings regarding Lex at Luthor Corp it feels like all Lena does these days is talk to her PR teams and lawyers.

Eventually they issue a teamwide press release that’s filled with boilerplate reprimanding like *as an organization, we do not condone personal attacks, nor do we endorse violence and unfair play.* Both Lex and Jack send her endless memes and even Lana gets in on the fun. Cat gives a press conference that more vociferously attacks Leslie’s rhetoric around Kara’s injury in particular.

“I’ve never in my life wished for any player to be injured. I was in the hospital with Kara. She couldn’t feel her legs,” Cat says. “That’s beyond basketball. I understand that trash talking is a part of
our game and it’s a great confidence builder for those who need it - but I’m disappointed in Leslie.”

At the next Lakehawks media availability, it’s all anyone can talk about.

“I’m not exactly a fan of people attacking Kara or her character,” Alex says. “What do I think of what she had to say? It was asinine and we’ll see her on Thursday.”

“I never played with her, and I never really noticed playing against her,” Maggie says. “A lot of bark, not a lot of bite.”

“Leslie feels how she feels,” is Kara’s quote, thrown with a loose shrug, but she makes unnerving eye contact with the camera as she adds. “But if she wants to come for me, she better not miss.”

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Having Lex back in town is certainly a change to say the least. Lena hadn’t realized just how much she’d gotten used to his absence in all things until he’s suddenly back, lounging about her office like he’s contemplating changing the carpets. She and the board are still working out the specifics of his role, and Lex seems content to let them hash it out while he relaxes.

“I hope you were careful coming up here,” Lena comments absently when Lex nearly tips over a potted plant she has sitting on a table near her couch.

“Of course I was,” he scoffs, looking around the room. “When do you think I’ll get my office back?”

“Never,” Lena answers quickly, not taking her eyes off the e-mail in front of her.

Lex scoffs, but Lena ignores him apart from a roll of her eyes. “I’m still on payroll,” he argues.

“For now.”

Laughing softly, he sits up from the couch and strolls across the room to drop into a chair across from her at her desk. “Speaking of,” he starts, and Lena does glance up at him then, the light tone he has sounding ominous. “When are we going to talk about the Lakehawks?”

She arches a brow. “Pardon?”

“The Lakehawks,” he repeats, steepling his fingers together. “And the Harriers, I suppose.”

“What about the Lakehawks?”

“The ownership situation,” he answers. “Now that I’m back.”

“I own the Lakehawks,” Lena says, abandoning her work completely to give him her full attention. “There is no situation.”

It strikes her momentarily how protective and possessive she feels over a team she wanted nothing to do with months ago. And if she’s completely honest, the change in heart isn’t completely due to her relationship with Kara. She appreciates the organization for far more than just Kara, now.

“There will be one when you and the face of the franchise go public,” Lex says matter-of-factly, wiggling his fingers annoyingly over face of the franchise. “Isn’t that what you’ve been so worried about this entire time?”

It’s irritating that even though Lex has been gone for the entirety of her journey with Kara, he still sees straight to the heart of her like it’s written on her forehead. It’s an annoying big brother trait.
“I’ll cross that bridge when we come to it,” she says though her brain starts to move through the realization that they’re coming closer and closer to that bridge every day and she has no plan other than to just weather the storm and hope for the best. Absently, she rubs at her brow.

“Why put it off when I have such a simple solution to your problem?”

He has that smug look about him that makes Lena want to kick him in the shins, but she doesn’t give him the pleasure of reaction. Instead, she affects as unimpressed a look as she can muster and leans casually back in her desk chair. “Oh, do tell, dear brother. What genius have you concocted?”

“Give the team back to me,” he says simply with a flair of a gesture that looks ridiculous.

She blinks a moment before barking out a laugh. “You’re not serious.”

“Think about it, Lena,” he says and when he leans forward to prop his elbows on his knees, she can tell he’s not joking. “Relinquishing full ownership will do a lot to soften the blow of going public with the superstar.”

He’s right in some respect. It’s not like this hasn’t occurred to her before – even if giving the team back to Lex certainly hadn’t. But she can’t figure out how to explain how much she doesn’t want to give the team up, how she’s come to love the Lakehawks and all their quirks. The thought of not being a part of it anymore…

“It doesn’t have to be a full transfer,” he adds. “We can be co-owners and we’ll just restructure the agreement, make it clear you have no hand in personnel decisions. I’m not trying to take anything away from you.”

He puts his hands up, his expression genuine and Lena can’t deny the offer is attractive. He’s right. Even though it’s not a full shift, it might be enough to assuage concerns over Lena’s involvement in both the Lakehawks and with Kara. It brings Lex back into the business without really involving him in the company and the story of that alone might eclipse anything that leaks about her and Kara.

“We don’t have any immediate plans to go public,” she says softly, sinking down a bit into her chair. “All the better. Do it now and it won’t look like that’s the reason.”

“All the better. Do it now and it won’t look like that’s the reason.”

“People will still think that,” Lena argues, making an attempt at due diligence.

“You can’t control what people think, Lena,” Lex says, shrugging a shoulder. “I know that better than anyone. But you can control whether or not you let that run your life.”

Lena regards him a moment, lets the easy way he looks back at her steady the nerves in her chest. It feels good to have him back, tackling problems as a team like they used to. “Okay,” she says, sitting up and rolling her eyes at the gleeful smile that one word produces. “I’ll talk to my legal team.”

Lex eyes her for a second longer, a calculating look about him. It reminds Lena of playing chess with him when they were younger, when she was better than him but still got intimidated into thinking he knew better.

“That was easier than I thought it’d be,” Lex says. “Must be love.”

It’s a surprisingly serious thought, one that cools the annoyance in her chest. It’s not as if it’s a foreign idea - Lena knows she loves Kara, but to be talking about it like this in her office flips something in her stomach.
“Surely you didn’t think it would be that difficult to take a basketball team away from me,” she says in jest, clicking her tongue at him.

“Oh, please. You’re giving up business control over an entity. Doesn’t matter if it’s a basketball team or something else. I know how you are about these things.” He cards his fingers together, crossing a leg over his knee. “You must love her quite a bit to give something like that up.”

She doesn’t have much of an answer for that. He’s right. The fact that she’s letting a personal relationship affect a business decision is a sobering thought and even though she’s long ago confronted the feelings she has for Kara and just how serious they are, Lex’s stare makes her feel exposed.

It reminds Lena unbidden of standing in an elevator across from Kara and hearing the desperate I’ll put in for a trade resound loudly in the small space. How it had felt like a burn on her skin for days.

“You couldn’t tell that from all those photos you saw?” Lena asks, clearing her throat. Lex snorts, shrugging and adjusting the collar of his shirt.

“I could tell a lot of things, believe me, but the question of feelings was left unresolved,” Lex says and then pauses, a soft smile on her face that pulls a matching one across her own. “You know, I missed you.”

“I missed you too,” Lena says, but she rolls her eyes at the end of it, her cheeks feeling warm.

There’s a small moment of silence.

“Great, that’s settled,” he says, slapping his thighs with his palms and standing. “This calls for a drink.”

“It’s barely one in the afternoon, Lex,” Lena chastises as he strides towards the small wet bar on the side of her office.

“All the more reason,” is his only answer as he inspects the decanter on the counter.

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The day before the game, they’re lounging about in Kara’s bedroom, SportsCenter playing in the background, volume low. Lena’s stretched back against the pillows of Kara’s bed dividing her attention between her phone, the television and the mobility routine Kara’s putting herself through at the foot of the bed.

As Kara pulls into a particular stretch that has her lunging forward and reaching for the ceiling - a move that exposes the play of muscle in her biceps and quads - Lena refocuses on the television lest she interrupt Kara’s routine.

There’s an old package of shots playing to promote the saga of the Lakehawks and Skippers rivalry. After Leslie’s comments, the footage of Leslie as a Lakehawk seems particularly relevant. A clip of Leslie jumping on Kara’s back enthusiastically as they celebrate a championship in the locker room plays and it’s so jarring, Lena has to comment. “It’s a tad bizarre to think of you two as friends.”

It pulls Kara’s attention from her stretch and she adjusts her glasses to look at the screen. The footage has moved on to a quick clip of Kara spraying champagne and beer over Leslie’s head. “It was a long time ago,” she murmurs as the screen moves on to highlights of the two of them on the court - a particularly savage pick-and-roll in which Leslie dunks over a Wonders player’s head.
Though they’d talked about this briefly, more than once, Kara’d never really gone into detail about what went down between her and Leslie. Nothing more than a *she wanted more from me than I could give her.*

The screen shifts from old footage to the much newer interview in which Leslie all but threatens Kara with another injury in between accusing her of being a player.

“What exactly happened to make her hate you so much?”

Kara stands up completely and moves to the bed, scooting to sit next to Lena and shrugging. “I don’t know.” Lena shoots her a look that makes Kara laugh and insist, “Seriously. I think I’ve already proven to you I’m terrible at understanding emotions. Especially when they involve my own.”

Lena chuckles, rolling her eyes and shoving a little at Kara’s shoulder. “Come on, you have to have some idea. I feel like you’re not telling me something.”

Kara pulls her leg up and rests her arm on her knee, regarding Lena with an honest expression. “I really don’t know. I knew she was mad when I like - when I made it clear I thought we were just having fun,” Kara explains, fumbling a bit around the words. “But that was two years ago,” Kara says, her head dropping back a bit in exasperation.

Lena shifts down in bed, laughing at Kara’s expression. “Perhaps you’re harder to get over than you realize,” she says, pulling Kara down with her until they’re settling under the sheets.

Kara shoots her a doubtful expression that Lena can’t help but find endearing. “There wasn’t really anything to get over.”

“According to you,” Lena points out trying very hard not to remember the feeling of Kara assuring her *I don’t have feelings for you* - it’s an incredibly distant memory now. Tempered by the shift in their relationship and the warm feeling of Kara’s body scooting closer to hers, but there’s still a pang there that Lena’s not sure will ever leave.

“She threw like four pairs of shoes at my head when I told her I didn’t think we were dating and now years later she’s threatening to put me on a stretcher,” Kara says dryly, slipping further down in the bed. “Kind of an overreaction, don’t you think?”

Lena hums neutrally and shifts down next to Kara, accepting the invitation into Kara’s body when Kara lifts her arm to bring her in. Her leg shifts over Kara’s and her cheek settles against Kara’s shoulder. “Some broken hearts don’t mend, I guess,” Lena says quietly, watching the program on the television shift to a stat comparison between the duos of Kara - Alex and Leslie - Siobhan.

It’s quiet for a moment, nothing but the low sounds of a sports announcer talking about Alex’s shooting percentage outside the arc filtering across the room. Lena’s palm slides across Kara’s abs, stroking absently over the fabric of her shirt.

“I’m sorry if I broke your heart,” Kara says softly, her hand stroking down Lena’s spine.

Lena picks her head up enough to look at Kara, brow raising in surprise. “You didn’t,” she says immediately, not meaning to imply otherwise - true as it might be. It’s not really how she’s ever thought of it. It was *her* choices that ended their fling, not any of Kara’s, and if her heart may have been broken, she can only blame herself.

“You sure?” Kara says skeptically, eyes squinting a bit as if the answer is on Lena’s face.

Hand travelling up under Kara’s shirt until it can press against warm skin, Lena lets out a little
chuckle, warm and reassuring. “I didn’t throw any shoes at you, did I?”

It makes Kara laugh, a rumble of a sound that Lena feels under her hand. “I guess not.”

Lena watches her carefully for a moment, thinks of pushing Kara away in an elevator ages ago. “I’m sorry if I broke yours,” she says, and after a beat, Kara laughs.

“You should be,” she says, full of tease as she captures Lena’s hand where it’s roaming up her stomach and shifts so they’re facing each other. “You should be really sorry.”

Lena rolls her eyes and makes to move away but Kara keeps her in place. “How ever will I make it up to you?”

In a shift of strong movement, Kara pulls Lena under her, maneuvers until she’s slipping between Lena’s legs and pressing a solid kiss to Lena’s neck. “I have a few ideas, actually.”

“Is that so?” Lena arches her neck, accepting the pressure of Kara’s mouth there easily and feels heat pull up her gut when Kara presses down against her.

Kara doesn’t answer other than slipping her hand up Lena’s side, dragging her shirt with it. The lips Kara has pressed up against Lena’s neck slip into a smile. It shouldn’t be enough for Lena to squirm, but she’s moving anyway.

“Kara,” she breathes out softly, arching her hips up into Kara’s body.

“Shhh,” Kara murmurs, trailing up Lena’s jaw until they’re kissing, Kara’s body rocking downward enough to make Lena’s skin break out in tingles.

It feels good to let Kara lead the way, stripping them of their clothing and spreading Lena out across the bed. Kara’s mouth tripping down her skin and her hands pressing just so, before they slide open the bedside drawer.

It feels even better when Kara’s hand closes over Lena’s mouth to silence a particularly loud whine just as Kara’s hips snap forward violently and choke all the sound from Lena’s throat.

Lena feels herself walk the line of overwhelmed, overstimulated, and strung out. Kara plays her body as expertly as she commands a basketball game, pressing all the right buttons and pulling all the right strings. It’s hot and fast and makes Lena wonder how she ever thought for a second she could give this up. Kara knows Lena’s every tic, knows how to make Lena feel too much and nothing at all.

“Good?” Kara asks, panting the word into the space between their mouths, one hand holding Lena’s hip down into the bed as she fucks into her, rolling her hips so perfectly that Lena feels her eyes roll backward.

“Fuck,” is all Lena can manage, hating and loving the smile it pulls across Kara’s lips.

“Tell me it feels good, baby,” Kara whispers, sending heat down Lena’s spine, making the stretch between her legs burn deliciously when Kara pushes in deep.

Lena doesn’t do as she’s told, just picks her neck up so their lips push together. Kara lets the kiss go on a few seconds before pulling away and propping herself up on her hands. “Tell me,” Kara orders again, putting her hand lightly at Lena’s neck when Lena attempts to stretch back up for another kiss.

It thrills Lena more than she wants it to, the pressure at her throat making her clit throb and ache. “It
feels good,” Lena breathes out, hips opening more to invite Kara in and enjoying the play of muscle and strength in the body hovered over hers.

Kara has a look of intense focus that makes Lena squirm. It’s nothing new. Not really. Kara’s always seemed to be perfectly in tune with Lena’s body, even the first time they slept together. But there’s something now, with the weight of everything that’s happened, that makes Lena feel seen in a way she never has before.

It’s too much, just for a moment. The significance of it pricks heat behind her eyes, but thankfully Kara drops down to kiss her, the hand at her neck dropping between them to push any sort of rational thought out of Lena’s head.

It does the trick immediately, her back arching at the contact and a gasp ripping out of her throat to beat across Kara’s mouth. It barely takes a second before she has to give in.

“I’m gonna come, can I come?” Lena asks, hand gripping the back of Kara’s neck and holding hard when Kara drops her face to Lena’s shoulder. She doesn’t get a response immediately, just Kara’s lips on her neck. “Please?”

Kara’s soft yes up near her ear is all she needs to drop her jaw in a silent moan of pleasure. Her legs try to snap closed, but are held open by Kara’s hips and her front pressing hard up against Kara’s front. So close and warm and present, Kara’s lips pressed against her skin as she works Lena through it.

After all the tension rips out of Lena’s body, she goes boneless against the mattress and gives into the soft, languid feeling of Kara’s weight holding her there. She has to work to unclench her fingers from Kara’s neck and bicep, turning her head a little to press a kiss to what she can access of Kara’s temple. There’s a small huff from Kara in response, her body shifting.

“Jesus,” Kara says into the skin of Lena’s neck. It makes Lena laugh a little, her fingers threading up into Kara’s hair.

“Yeah,” she murmurs. And it’s warm, calming, and good for a few moments as they come down. Until, of course, Kara’s hips jog the slightest, and the fire in Lena’s chest roars to life again. Just like always.

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Though the first two rounds of the playoffs had seemed intense as far as atmosphere was concerned, Lena realizes quickly nothing could quite prepare her for a Lakehawks-Skippers Conference Championship.

The Skippers have home court advantage in the series which means the first two games are at their arena across town. Kara goes on a long tirade about how home court advantage isn’t really a thing in a crosstown series like this one but matters when it comes to things like crowd management and ticket sales. Lena catches a brief blurb on SportsCenter that night about the different methods the Skippers ticket office has employed to bar Lakehawks fans from getting into the game.

Nonetheless, there’s a decent contingent of Lakehawks fans tailgating outside the stadium and a large enough number inside that Lena can pick apart their cheers from those of the home crowd. Jack is on some other level of excited, high-fiving every other Lakehawks fan he sees. Lex had unhappily agreed to remain away from either stadium until their lawyers can get the language of the ownership agreement restructured, but he keeps texting her throughout the leadup and warmups.
The jumbotron keeps the camera on Kara and Leslie as they greet each other at centercourt. It’s not especially warm - Kara reaches out her hand for a handshake, receives a cold look and a nod instead. Siobhan ambles over soon after and slaps Kara’s hand, stopping for a second to chat. It’s still not especially friendly, but Siobhan is clearly trying to fill the gap of Leslie’s coldness.

“Do you think Siobhan and Leslie could be fucking?” Jack asks. Lena sighs heavily, taking a sip of her double vodka cran as the warm-ups continue in front of them - M’gann draining corner threes in quick succession.

“Is there a reason you think everyone is fucking?” Lena asks as her eyes follow the arc of a basketball bouncing off the rim.

“Usually because they are,” Jack replies dryly into the rim of his beer glass and Lena swats at him.

“You should mind your own business.”

“But that’s not nearly as much fun as minding other peoples’ business,” he teases with an exaggerated whine in his tone.

She doesn’t bother responding, because the horn is sounding and Kara is ambling past their seats towards the scorer’s table, tucking her jersey into her shorts. Lena can’t help but feel a sort of anticipatory warmth shoot up her spine when she sees the look Kara throws her way.

The Lakehawks win on the road on the back of a massive shooting performance from Lucy. Leslie doesn’t make much good on her threats to meet Kara on the court and put her on a stretcher. Instead, Kara seems to get the better of the matchup whenever they’re on the floor together and though Leslie’s frustration with that is clear, no blood gets shed.

Instead, Kara seals the game with an absolutely brutal three point shot over Leslie’s outstretched hand, shrugging at her arrogantly as the shot sinks. Leslie’s expression looks about ready for murder, but Kara’s already jogging away and the Skippers are calling a timeout.

The Lakehawks fan section goes absolutely wild when the clock hits zero and the Lakehawks have taken the lead in the series. Lena gets caught up in the cheering, Jack jumping up and down next to her, screaming his jubilation and when the team heads out towards the tunnel, Kara catches her eye with a devastatingly triumphant smile.

One of the lucky things about a National City-only conference finals, Lena finds out later that night, is that Cat has no maniacal bed check policy. Kara shows up at her apartment that night in a blazer and t-shirt and presses her into her couch within seconds of getting in the door.

Winning in the playoffs does something similar to Kara as winning in the Olympics had and Lena finds herself out of breath most of the night. It isn’t until Kara’s smirking at her over a cup of coffee much much later that Lena feels like she finally catches it.

“You know,” Lena says into the rim of her mug. “You’re very good at that.”

Kara laughs. A husky, throaty sound that makes Lena shift up against the pillows behind her. “I’m only as good as my dance partner.”

“I’m not so sure about that,” Lena says with a soft chuckle, enjoying the play of muscle in Kara’s arms as she props her elbows on her knees and drains the last of her coffee.

“Agree to disagree,” Kara says, setting her mug down on the bedside table and sliding down onto the bed, the mess of sheets tangling up in her legs as she does it.
Lena hums noncommittally, but stays sitting up, reaching to her own bedside table to exchange her empty mug for her phone and check it, ignoring the way Kara silently stares at her while she does so.

There are four texts - two from Jack that include gifs of Kara’s arrogant shrug at Leslie during the game, one from Lana about coming into town next week and lastly from Lex pestering as he has been about her timeline when it comes to both her relationship with Kara and announcing his return to the company.

She sighs at the last bit, closing the messaging app and shifting to her e-mail to make sure she hasn’t missed anything important in the last few hours. There are a few messages there, nothing incredibly urgent, but Lena opens them anyway.

“Are you doing work right now?” Kara asks, mirth in her voice as she props up just enough to spy the screen of Lena’s phone.

Lena shields it away from her and gives her a half-hearted glare. “No,” she lies, trying to answer a message from her marketing team about a meeting the following afternoon while leaning sideways enough that Kara can’t see it.

“And they say I’m the workaholic,” Kara tsks, plucking Lena’s phone out of her hand deftly and holding it out of Lena’s reach even when she tries to grab it back. “Clearly I wasn’t that good if you can even think about work right now.”

Lena laughs, rolling her eyes, but giving up her stretch for her phone and instead holding her hand out with a pointed enough look that Kara gives her the phone back. “I’m sorry that the real world doesn’t just stop when you ask it to,” she tells her and Kara makes a noise caught between a scoff and a laugh.

“That’d be a cool superpower,” Kara says, contemplative as she shifts down on the bed again, her hands held behind her head and the play of her biceps doing the job of making Lena forget about any notion of doing work right now.

“You think?”

“Yeah,” Kara says, lips pursed in a thought for a moment, eyes on the ceiling. “If you could just shut the world off for however long you want?”

“I suppose,” Lena says, setting her phone aside and sliding down next to Kara. “What would you do with it?”

Kara turns her head to the side to regard Lena, moving an arm to invite her in closer. “Take you out to dinner and hold your hand the whole time,” Kara says and though she’s clearly joking, her smirk casual and eyes dancing, Lena feels a spike of guilt all the same.

“That seems like a waste,” Lena says, sliding up against Kara’s side and enjoying the warmth of connection.

“Not at all,” Kara says, sure and solid.

“Hand holding,” Lena deadpans, her palm splaying over the still heated skin across Kara’s stomach, her fingertips reaching to trace the line of tattoo towards her side.

“Well, you have top tier hands,” Kara murmurs, picking Lena’s hand up and bringing it to her lips. Lena lets a laugh out through closed lips as Kara kisses her fingers.
“Glad you think so.”

Kara makes a suggestive sound and wiggles her eyebrows up and down until they’re both laughing at each other in the soft quiet of the bedroom.

After a moment, Lena sags against Kara’s body, shifting upward enough so they’re at eye level. “We’ll do that, you know.” Lena says quietly, no more than a whisper and though Kara’s smile never fades, her eyes go serious.

“Do what?”

“Go to dinner and hold hands the whole time,” Lena says, chest tight and achy and heavy with a mixture of emotion she can’t entirely identify. “Without the superpower.”

Kara regards her for a few seconds before her smile goes deep and warm and Lena feels her chest expand. “I know we will.”

“I want that,” Lena admits, somehow more scared by that then the prospect of actually doing it.

Kara lifts up until Lena’s turning over onto her back, blue eyes hovered over her. “Me too, baby,” she breathes out between their lips before closing the distance and kissing Lena’s thoughts completely away.

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It takes the better part of the morning for them to get out of bed the next day, wrapped up in each other. “I needed that,” Kara says into a groan as she stretches her arms above her head.

Standing, Lena laughs and pulls a shirt off the floor to cover herself. “Needed what?”

Kara looks smug as she eyes Lena up and down. “That,” she says and Lena throws a pillow at her even as she laughs again.

They linger around each other for longer than they should, really. Parting only because Kara’s off to an optional pre-walkthrough shootaround with the team and Lena’s got a team meeting with her engineers about a Model L software update.

There’s an anticipation in the air as they say goodbye, Kara’s smile nothing if not devastating when she answers Lena’s good luck tonight with a confident, “I don’t need luck.”

“I know you don’t, darling,” Lena responds, leaning up against the door jam and watching her walk backwards towards the elevator at the end of the hall.

“See you there?” Kara calls out as she pushes the button to call up the elevator.

“You can count on it.”

The atmosphere is just as wild as the first game when Lena and Jack settle in their seats at the arena. Skippers fans are particularly raucous, but Lena can tell perfectly well how that’s going to go for them when Kara reaches out to fist bump Jack on her way into the game.

Game two ends with Kara dragging the Lakehawks to a win on the back of a hard-earned thirty-eight points, gained mostly in a struggle against Siobhan that seems to swing back and forth throughout the game. Alex plays particularly crushing defense against Leslie and manages to frustrate her enough that she’s fouled out of the game in the middle of the fourth.
After it’s all over and the Lakehawks are celebrating another road win, Lena finds herself cheering along with the away crowd as the team makes their way to the locker room. Even Cat catches her eye as she exits the court and gives a little victorious fist pump, but it’s Kara’s wink as she passes that makes Lena feel most triumphant.

On their way out, Lena finally capitulates to Lex’s persistent texts about meeting up for a post-game drink and invites him over to her apartment, dragging Jack along with her.

Which is how she finds herself sitting in her living room sipping at perfectly made manhattans and discussing the game. A topic of conversation Lena’d never thought she’d be having with her brother and best friend late at night...and enjoying.

“Early leads make me feel antsy. We need to capitalize on the momentum,” Lex is commenting and Lena can’t help but glance at her phone every few seconds.

“Expecting a call?” Jack asks when he notices her divided attention. When she looks at him, his smile is all too knowing and she doesn’t give him the satisfaction of a response other than taking a sip of her drink and turning her phone over.

Lex seems to pick up on the joke and laughs, taking a sip of his cocktail as well and regarding Lena with an arched brow. “Kara played well tonight. Hopefully she can perform like that for the rest of the series.”

Instinctively, Lena reacts to the implication Kara’d ever take her foot off the gas, but as she does her phone vibrates and she turns it around to see the picture of the Tokyo Tower displayed there.

“Sorry,” Lena says, absently and lacking sincerity. “I have to take this.”

She stands to walk away from them, hearing only Jack’s outright laughter before she’s answering the call with a warm, low, “Hello, darling.”

Victory is practically oozing out of Kara’s voice when she responds, “Busy?”

It sends a thrill down Lena’s spine, her free hand flexing unconsciously where it sits against her hip and she wonders how hard it will be to kick Jack and Lex out of the apartment.

Glancing back towards the living room, she spots Jack standing up from his chair and draining the last of his drink. “Not at all,” she says. “Would you like to stop by?”

Kara’s laugh is liquid heat and it bleeds into Lena’s chest insistently. “I’m already on my way.”

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Lena doesn’t understand how it gets better. How every single time they do this, Lena feels like it’s a new experience all over again. There’s the familiar, sure. The soft way Kara’s mouth feels against her neck, or the way Kara smirks when Lena makes a particularly helpless sound.

But there’s that point of desperation in the middle of it all when the whole world blocks out and all Lena can focus on is the pressure between her legs. Every time it seems to come quicker and quicker, overwhelming Lena before she can even think about it.

It shouldn’t be like that. If anything, Lena should be used to the way Kara toys with her body, used to the strong feeling of fingers and lips across her skin. She should be used to the way Kara looks at her, the burning intensity and focus in her eyes and the warmth of her smile.
There’s a short, careful moment when Kara looks as if she’s about to say something. Lena can read it clear as day in the way blue eyes dart across her face and her jaw works around like its trying to formulate the words. It occurs to Lena what those words might be and it’s like the silence in the room becomes deafening. All of a sudden, it feels like Kara’s shouting it even when she’s saying nothing at all and it makes Lena want to press in closer, bathe in it.

The moment passes and Kara drops down to kiss her, their fingers twining where Kara’s holding her hand down against the mattress. “You okay?” Kara asks, voice a whisper near Lena’s ear.

Lena nods, thinks maybe she’ll just say what she’s feeling, give voice to the crushing weight of emotion in her chest, but then Kara’s twisting them to the side, pulling Lena on top of her and she can’t say much of anything after that.

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Before he’d ran off into hiding, Lex and Lena had a standing happy hour date in which they’d meet for drinks and talk about anything except work. Sometimes it’d be too late to really consider it happy hour, but Lex would always say something obnoxious like the happiest hours are the ones spent with family and order them both a shot of tequila they’d regret later.

Though Lena hasn’t so much as thought about those meetings in close to a year, she can’t fight the warmth of anticipation when Lex officially reinstates them with a particularly formal looking e-mail that makes her laugh. The header reading: Urgent Meeting, 5pm Locke Hart Bar, Luthor Only.

They don’t meet at Locke Hart - one of Lex’s favorite dive-y haunts on the other side of town - and instead Lena manages to persuade him to keep their happy hours at home for the time being. The liquor is free there, she argues and he laughs enough to agree.

He shows up with a bottle of Lena’s favorite scotch and a wide smile and Lena breathes in against the feeling of having her brother back in her life.

“Are we ever going to talk about your time in hiding?” Lena asks as they eat a block of cheese at her kitchen counter and sip their scotch.

Lex laughs, popping a piece of cheese in his mouth and shrugging. “I prefer to call it a sabbatical.”

“I’m not sure it qualifies if you’re spending the time partying,” Lena says drily, but Lex just laughs again.

“I don’t know why you think so lowly of me that you imagine I spent the entire time partying,” Lex says. “Perhaps I pursued spiritual enlightenment. Or found a nice girl. Or designed a new battery cell for the Model L.”

“If this were two truths and a lie, I’d ask for the blueprints,” Lena says dryly.

“I’m fine-tuning them,” Lex returns with a grin. “My time away was spent well, I assure you. We’ll talk about it one day, when you’re older.”

“Shut up, Lex,” Lena huffs, picking up a piece of cheese and throwing it Lex’s way.

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Game three means the Lakehawks are finally back on their own hardwood and Lena marvels at how intense the crowd sounds when she gets to the arena during pregame. She supposes the two game lead the Lakehawks have in the series must be contributing to some of the fan ardent. All the same,
it’s the loudest Lena’s ever heard Luthor Corp Arena - even the littlest things get loud cheers, like Eve tagging Lucy off towards the end of the second quarter or the Skippers getting called for a reach-in foul.

The problem is that even though Luthor Corp Arena is more excitable, the Lakehawks seem just as excitable. They’re playing at an effort level Lena isn’t sure she’s seen them reach, and it seems like it leads to some uncharacteristic mistakes - overeager defending and a few too many wayward shots put them in a close game.

The Lakehawks are down by five as the fourth quarter’s waning seconds wind down, and neither team seems like they’re relenting. The Skippers seem intent on expanding the margin of victory as much as possible, just as much as the Lakehawks are playing like they’re ready to raise hell to at least tie the game. Leslie in particular looks more out for murder than she usually does. Which is certainly saying something.

Though she and Kara have been jostling on and off all series, it hasn’t escalated much. But this game has clearly started to push into real chippiness, with several fouls exchanged between the two of them. There’s been a lot of Leslie chattering and Kara smiling. Lena has spent enough time around Kara and is competitive enough to know how frustrating that would be if she was Leslie, especially on the end of a hard-earned victory that seems set to close with only a few points for Leslie to show off with.

Kara seems amused by the way Leslie tries to body her in the paint or gets in her face whenever she has the ball at the top of the key, but there are a few moments where she looks confusedly over to Alex and Lucy when Leslie gets a little too wild. Overall, the referee seems content with the physicality of the game even though Cat has almost screamed herself hoarse. The game is winding down easily enough, Jack pocketing his phone and Lena finishing the last dregs of her drink, wondering what kind of mood Kara will be in postgame, depending on how these last few seconds play out.

It happens almost too quickly for Lena to even notice, but one second, Kara is covering Leslie at the side of the three-point arc, arms up and stance strong. Leslie is trying to dribble back into the arc, almost right in front of Lena’s end of the Lakehawks bench. Kara is guarding well, her arms hovering close enough to the ball that Leslie can’t quite turn a pass, and Kara’s reaching further around to try to loosen Leslie’s hold, and Leslie snaps her arm back -

The game stops immediately, though whether that’s because the game clock’s reached zero or because of the loud what the fuck Kara lets out, who knows. It’s like everyone freezes for a second after it happens and then all hell breaks loose. Jack shoots out of his seat, along with plenty of the rest of the crowd, and Cat comes crossing right in front of them to start haranguing the ref closest.

“Oh fuck you, Danvers,” Leslie retorts, clearly unapologetic about clocking Kara straight in the face with her elbow.

Kara picks her head up from where it’d been snapped to the side and Lena gets a good look at the damage, the blood flowing out of an already swelling nose. “The fuck is wrong with you?” Kara lets out, voice terse. She’s in Leslie’s face fast, their bodies bumping, and there’s enough of a crowd around them that it’s getting harder to hear what’s happening - but Lena can read clear as day the annoyance on Kara’s face transcend into real, absolute anger at something Leslie says, her arms reaching fast to grab ahold of Leslie by the jersey with one hand and her other fist clenched and wound back.

Three whistles go off at once as a crowd descends on them.
The entire Lakehawks bench has stood up to defend their star player and even the Skippers bench has started jogging towards the fray. Lena catches sight of Alex wrapping an arm around Maggie to keep her from darting forward into the fight and Lucy grabs ahold of Kara to start trying to pull her back and off Leslie.

The crowd is booing at this point as J’onn enters the fray to help Lucy pull Kara away. Siobhan manages to get both arms around Leslie’s waist and lift her bodily off the ground and away. Lucy is pushing Kara backward, toward the bench, while J’onn pulls her with a strong grip on the back of her jersey. Kara is paying them almost no attention, her head craning around the mess of people between them to keep her eyes on Leslie.

“Come on, Danvers, you want to go? Let’s go,” Leslie taunts even as she’s being pulled back by her team.

Kara has blood dripping onto her jersey at this point, but she very clearly attempts to bulldoze through Lucy to get back to the fight. “Screw you, Willis!”

“Get her out of here,” Cat growls out, though which her she’s referring to isn’t clear.

“Kara, you need to calm down,” Lucy is saying, her hands wound in Kara’s collar. “Get off the court and get your face fixed.”

As if on cue, the main ref blows his whistle again and makes a gesture at both women. “You’re both out of here,” he says, but neither Kara nor Leslie make a move to exit the court. Cat starts screaming that Leslie’s at fault and Kara shouldn’t be ejected, ripping her suit jacket off and throwing it in her frustration. The game’s over, the Lakehawks have lost, and ejecting either of them feels superfluous. Plenty of the crowd reacts to notification of their ejections the same way.

There’s still a stream of blood coming out of Kara’s nose, dripping down to her jersey and making Lena want to intervene. If not for the fact that both teams seem to be facing off right in front of her as if in preparation for an old school rumble, Lena might have walked onto the court and marched Kara off it herself.

Jack is tense next to her, watching the entire thing with wide eyes and Lena crosses her arms, clenching her fingers into her biceps. Lucy gets pulled aside by a trainer with gloves on to wipe her hands free of Kara’s blood, leaving Kara in J’onn’s hands right in front of them.

He’s trying to talk her down as the crowd still jostles, but Kara still picks her head up when Leslie yells.

“Hey, Superstar! Tunnel,” Leslie says even as she’s being pulled backwards by an assistant and a trainer. “Tunnel.”

“Oh yeah?” Kara’s yelling at her as they get farther apart, nodding up and down and acting like she and Leslie are about to meet on the playground after school to settle all this. It’s maybe the angriest Lena’s ever seen her, blood on her jersey and hands clenched tight.

“Kara, let’s go,” J’onn is saying, now in front of her and pushing her off the court by her shoulders. Another trainer is next to him, gloves on and looking for a way to get at Kara’s face somehow.

“Yeah,” Leslie yells back, gesturing towards the player tunnels behind her. “Tunnel.”

There’s a wild look in Kara’s eyes, Lena’s never seen before. “See you there.” Kara says with a jut of her bloody chin and then Leslie is turning to jog towards the tunnel and Kara turns towards her own. Lena gets a sense of what she’s about to do just as her legs start churning. She almost steps out
on the court to stop Kara.

Before Kara can start running away like she clearly intends, J’onn gets a grip on her jersey and pulls her to a halt, just barely restraining her.

They both go together towards the tunnel, J’onn trying to keep her from running off and Kara gesturing angrily at him. The entire scene is ridiculous and when all is said and done everyone left on the court and in most of the arena is weirdly quiet, trying to figure out what they just saw.

It happens in the span of at most a minute. It feels like the entire game leading up to it was less important than the last few seconds of insanity.

“The fuck was that?” Alex half-yells, looking at Lucy in confusion as she turns away from Cat and the ref’s very loud argument which has now been joined by the Skippers coach. Lucy is looking up at the scoreboard, her head shaking.

“I don’t know,” Lucy answers, looking just as bewildered as Alex.

The arena bursts into another round of boos when the ref interrupts the relative calm with an announcement for Cat’s ejection in addition to Kara and Leslie’s.

As everything settles and the refs take a good ten minutes reviewing all the footage to put two more seconds on the game clock and force the Lakehawks to inbound the ball, the game finally ends with the first Lakehawks loss of the series.

Immediately, Lena gets up and retreats to the tunnel ahead of the team ambling off the court. When she gets there, players and coaches filtering in behind her, she spots Kara talking to Leslie heatedly in a corner of the hallway. It seems that at least a trainer got Kara to stop long enough to get her nose to stop bleeding and plugged up, but whatever it is they’re arguing about, both Kara and Leslie seem intensely focused on each other.

“Don’t play fucking dumb, Kara,” Lena hears Leslie hiss.

“I’m not playing dumb, Leslie,” Kara says and Lena idles back, not trying to eavesdrop, but undeniably curious. It’s not like either of them seem like they’re trying to hide their conversation, but they’re tucked away enough that no one seems to have caught on to them yet, apart from Lena.

“You’re such an ass,” Leslie says, pointing angrily at Kara’s face. They’re both soaked with sweat from the game, red cheeks and messy hair and look about seconds away from swinging at each other. Lena’s not sure if she should intervene and she looks back to see if any of the coaches or players might do so, but they’re caught up in their own thing, filtering towards the locker room and getting pulled aside for post-game interviews.

“What the hell did I do to you?”

“As if you didn’t fuck your way into getting me traded,” Leslie accuses, and Lena’s brow turns down in confusion at what that could mean. She actually takes a step forward and it draws Leslie’s attention her way, the angry set of her scowl only deepening when she registers Lena’s presence. “Oh speak of the fucking devil.”

Kara turns at that to see Lena standing there and immediately steps in way of Leslie’s eyeline. “Don’t talk to her,” Kara warns.

“You dumb fucking slut,” Leslie spits out, though it’s unclear whom she’s talking to. Kara reacts immediately, her fist clenching and back straightening. Lena’s eyes widen, glancing around at all the
reporters and other personnel lingering around, watching the interaction with distracted interest. She lets out a low, “Kara,” to stop her from doing something stupid, but thankfully Alex comes striding towards them.

“Kara,” Alex barks out, coming close enough to grab at Kara’s elbow. “Let’s go, Coach wants us in the locker room.”

Jack, whom Lena didn’t even know had followed her all the way into the tunnel, has his hand at Lena’s back in silent solidarity and Lucy seems to come up next to Alex to help. “You’re not supposed to be back here, Willis,” she says and Leslie looks like she might continue spitting venom, but instead just cuts a glare to Winn who’s come up upon the scene with his phone out and decides better of it.

“This isn’t over, Danvers,” Leslie says quietly, so soft Lena barely catches it.

Leslie leaves and Alex manages to pull her sister towards the locker room with Lucy. Kara disappears into the room, but not before she spares Lena a look, long enough to wink at her, a playfully discordant gesture considering the last few moments.

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They meet much later that night. Kara showing up to Lena’s apartment with tape over the bridge of her nose and a sheepish expression.

“Does it hurt?” Lena asks, when Kara sits at a barstool near the kitchen counter and Lena steps between her legs, gingerly touching the purpling skin under Kara’s eye and gripping her chin to get a better look at the injury. It looks better than she expected, but it’s still noticeably swollen and bruising.

“Nah,” Kara dismisses, capturing Lena’s hand and pulling it away. “It’s fine. Looks way worse than it is.”

“Why don’t I believe you?” Lena tsks, exasperated at Kara’s flippant attitude.

Kara laughs entreatingly, pulls Lena in closer. “Honestly, she didn’t even get me that bad. Noses just bleed.”

“What happened?” Lena asks, still feeling like she has no idea how the end of the game escalated so quickly. She’d seen some of the discussion on social media over what went down between Kara and Leslie, but no one seemed all that confident as to what the catalyst was other than Leslie’s frustration at the way the game had gone.

“She elbowed me in the face,” Kara says, dismissive. “Did you eat before the game? I’m starving.”

“Why did she elbow you in the face?”

“Because she’s Leslie,” Kara sighs, shrugging a shoulder and then letting out a deep breath. “Is there any chance we could not talk about it?” Kara asks in a small voice. “I kind of have a headache.”

The admission of pain makes Lena’s curiosity about the altercation tamper significantly and she puts her hands at Kara’s neck, kneading softly at the spot behind her ears. “I’m sorry, what can I do?”

Kara hums into the contact, her eyes closing and hands gripping at Lena’s hips. “That feels good,” she murmurs.
“You didn’t have to come over here if you’re hurting,” Lena tells her softly, enjoying the way Kara goes limp at the continuing contact of Lena’s fingers.

Her head moves forward, forehead resting lightly against Lena’s sternum and she sighs against Lena’s chest. “You make me feel better,” she says quietly.

Throat thick, Lena smiles down at blonde hair. “Come on,” she says, pulling Kara up and away from her chest. “Let’s order food and go to bed.”

Kara smiles, strong fingers gripping tightly at Lena’s hips. “Best offer I’ve had all night.”

They eat Chinese takeout out of cartons on Lena’s bed and watch some mindless documentary on one of the multiple streaming services Kara’s downloaded to her smart TV. When they’re finished, Lena runs her fingers through Kara’s hair and over her temples until she’s snoring against Lena’s chest.

After the chaos of the game and its aftermath, the quiet of Lena’s bedroom feels still and perfect and she has to blink against the heat in her eyes as the feeling overwhelms her. Kara murmurs in her sleep, her leg shifting over Lena’s in a familiar dance of their limbs and Lena decides to just let the feeling overtake her and pull her into a restful slumber.

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Speculation over the cause of Kara and Leslie’s feud dominates the majority of all sports news outlets the next morning and even some mainstream shows cover it. Theories range from the blander variety - Leslie’s frustration over Kara’s statistical domination - to much spicier - Lovers Quarrel Gone Wrong.

Lena tunes most of it out, uninterested in gossipy speculation over a situation so close to her and knowing the truth is somewhere in between those two extremes. Instead, she focuses on work, engrossed so much in an upcoming project in South Africa that she forgets to think about the whole thing for most of the day. It isn’t until Kara calls her late that evening when she’s just arrived home, tone wary and hesitant, that Lena thinks to worry about it.

“Have you maybe seen the news at all today?”

The question gives Lena considerable pause. As does the careful, uncharacteristically serious way Kara asks it. Immediately her mind goes to the worst case scenario and she’s sure Kara’s about to tell her they’ve been outed, but Kara seems to sense her spiraling brain in the moments of silence that follow and scrambles to add, “Sorry, it’s not - it’s not that bad, I was just curious if you caught my locker room interview.”

It doesn’t assuage her worry, but she calms down a bit. “No, I can’t say I have,” she says, pouring herself a glass of wine and glancing towards the silent television just visible in the living room. “Why?”

A beat of silence. “I got asked a kinda weird question today that I wasn’t expecting.”

It ramps Lena’s paranoia back up and she nearly drops the wine bottle on the counter. “About?”

“Oh,” Kara makes a noise that does nothing to make Lena feel better.

“Kara, kindly get to the point before I completely lose my mind,” she says.

“So apparently there’s this rumor that I slept with Lex in exchange for him trading Leslie to the
Skippers,” Kara says in a quick tumble of the words, so rapid Lena has to take a second to process them all.

“I’m sorry, what?”

“Yes,” Kara draws out the word a moment, “So they caught enough of what Leslie was yelling at me during the game and now there’s this rumor that I slept with Lex to -”

“What could she have possibly said to you that would lead anyone to that conclusion?”

“Probably the part where she accused me of fucking my way into getting her traded and stuff,” Kara says, sounding sheepish.

Lena had heard the comment in person, had maybe assumed it was something to do with Kara and Leslie becoming romantically involved and not anything else. “What -”

“It’s not a big deal,” Kara rushes to reassure her. “It was ridiculous, and the media team shut it down pretty quickly.”

“What did you say?”

“I didn’t really get the chance to say anything. It came out of nowhere.”

Honestly, Lena can’t decide if that’s better or worse. “Okay,” she says, still trying to process.

“I just wanted you to know so it doesn’t blindside you if someone asks.”

The absurdity of the situation starts to make itself known to her and she gets a horrible flash of her brother and Kara kissing. It makes her cringe, but she lets out a laugh. “How ridiculous.”


“At you? No.” Lena chuckles wryly. “Unless you’re really calling me to tell me you’re having an affair with my brother.”

Kara makes a choking sound. “God, no.”

They share a laugh, the tension calming considerably until Kara adds, “But, I think Leslie might know about us.”

It doesn’t cascade anxiety over her head like she thought it might, but she does feel a tad caught off guard, an instinctive rush of adrenaline up her throat. “Why do you say that?”

“It would just make sense.”

As Lena thinks on it, she realizes Kara’s probably right. Her comments about getting traded make far more sense in that context than the implication Kara might have been sleeping with Lex. “I can’t say it’s all too comforting knowing your nemesis has the power to expose our relationship in such a way.”

Kara acknowledges that with a soft hum. “I’m going to talk to her. She might know about us, but I think she’s confused about a few other things.”

“She can’t possibly think I had a hand in her trade, I didn’t even know you when she was on the Lakehawks.”
“That’s why everyone naturally went to Lex, but I really don’t know what she’s thinking. Like I said, I’m going to talk to her.”

Lena hums, thinking about the situation. “Actually, there’s something I’ve been meaning to tell you.”

“Yeah?”

“Lex has offered to take control of the team back,” Lena explains succinctly. “And I think, as long as we get the language worked out, that I’m going to give it to him.”

Kara’s quiet for a moment. “Oh.”

Somehow that one word manages to encapsulate just how Lena feels about it – hesitance and all. “It would give us a buffer against insinuations like Leslie’s.”

“Yeah, totally,” Kara says, but she draws the words out enough that they sound insincere.

“I thought you’d be pleased,” Lena says - not entirely the truth. She imagines Kara feels similarly to herself. Something closer to resigned, but optimistic.

“I - uh - I guess I am. I just - I’d gotten used to you as the owner. Being around and everything.”

“Well, it’s a better option than trading you to a different team.”

“You wouldn’t let me do that,” Kara says, sounding exasperated by the memory.

“And have you resent me for the rest of our lives?” Lena replies.

Kara laughs and then goes quiet a moment. “No, you’re right. Definitely the better option,” she says. “Can’t have you resenting me far into our old age together.”

Cheeks warm, Lena presses her lips together a moment. “No, can’t have that.”

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Lena watches the clip of the interview on her phone when she gets into bed. Kara’s sitting in her locker, sweaty from practice with a towel around her neck. Her hair is still in its ponytail, but she reaches up to tuck flyaways behind her ear as she looks up to answer questions, a circle of microphones and recording devices held out in front of her.

When Lena finally hears the question, she sees Kara’s jaw drop in shock, her eyes wide. It sounds like the rest of the crowd silences too, just as surprised, before ramping up again with a flurry of shutter clicks.

Kara pulls a deep look of confusion, shaking her head and blinking dazedly at the reporter who just asked the question. All she’s able to get out is a bewildered what before her media team is pushing through the journalists and ending the interview immediately.

Separated from its content, it’s almost funny. Kara’s expression is so taken aback and stunned it’s comical, and Jack seems to think so too based on the amount of memes he sends her that use the image. Lena rolls her eyes as the pictures roll in, but allows herself a laugh and saves a few good ones to show Kara later.

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Lex is inappropriately smug about the entire thing.
“People aren’t even supposed to know you’re officially back in town and now you’re about to re-enter the public circle the same way you left it. In scandal,” Lena scolds him as he lounges casually about her living room.

“Out with a bang, in with a bang,” he says, hopping up from his seat to move to her wet cart and start rifling through the bottles there.

“Don’t say it like that,” Lena groans, scraping a hand over her face and wondering how feasible it’d be to just ship Lex back to wherever he’d been hiding the past year.

“Oh, come off it. You should be pleased,” Lex tells her, laughing at her incredulous look. “No one seems to care all that much about the implication I’ve slept with Kara. It’s the tabloids and little else.”

“And that should please me why?”

“Think of it as a primer for when they find out I’m not the Luthor she’s sleeping with,” he says dropping ice into glasses.

Pinching the bridge of her nose, Lena takes a breath. “That’s not at all comforting.”

“It’ll be fine, Lena,” Lex tells her, this time more serious, though he doesn’t move away from where he’s pouring a drink. “It will fizzle over. Neither of us traded Leslie in exchange for sleeping with Kara. You weren’t even part of the organization then and it wasn’t me that wanted Leslie gone. That was Cat and James. It’s all laid out in very provable e-mails and inter-office memos.”

“That’s all very nice, but –”

“Lena,” Lex interrupts firmly, walking over to hand her a tumbler of amber liquid. “I promise you. It’s going to be okay.”

There’s something reassuring in the way he holds her gaze, steady and strong, his smile soft and eyes easy.

Taking the offered drink, she returns the expression and exhales. “I suppose I’ll just have to trust you on that one.”

“Indeed,” he replies with a wink, clinking his own glass against hers and moving on, “So, remember that nanny we had that one summer we spent in Greece?”

“What do I even want to know?”

Lex smirks. “Probably not,” he says, but tells her anyway.

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Lex turns out right, for the most part. Kara’s reaction to the question is clearly so shocked that most major news outlets dismiss the question of her sleeping with an owner out of hand; the only people who seem to pay any attention to the story are gossip rags and tabloids. Apart from some mention on the bigger sports news networks, most outlets move on to a more interesting discussion of the Lakehawks-Skippers series, filing the incident away as just another moment in the never-ending saga of Leslie and Kara.

Thankfully, Lena’s not faced with giving any kind of formal interview to address the issue, but for a few days she does get questions yelled at her whenever the press so much as catch a glimpse of her
in Luthor Corp Arena. It keeps the drama in the forefront of her mind for far longer than she’d like it.

When Kara arrives at Lena’s apartment the next night it’s with a bag of takeout and a tired expression. She’s wearing a simple black hoodie and jeans, and she flops onto Lena’s couch with enough drama that Lena laughs a little before settling down beside her and inspecting the contents of the bag while Kara seems content to just stare at the ceiling in silence.

“I talked to Leslie,” Kara says after a moment and Lena glances over from where she’s pulling boxes out of the bag and setting them out on her coffee table.

“Oh?”

From the way Kara’s slouched against the couch looking exhausted, she can’t imagine the conversation went particularly well. But National City doesn’t seem to be on fire and her phone isn’t blowing up with notifications, so it can’t have gone too poorly.

“Yeah,” Kara says, drawing the word out. “We got everything squared away.”

It’s said sarcastically enough that Lena stops what she’s doing and shifts on the couch to face Kara, a spike of nervousness collecting on the back of her tongue.

“What happened?”

“Well, she definitely thinks I intentionally tried to railroad her career,” Kara says, her head lolling to the side to look at Lena, her expression a mixture of incredulity and indignation. “But she didn’t throw any shoes at me so that’s a plus?”

Lena sends Kara a look, suppressing her urge to laugh through thin lips. “Why would she think you wanted to railroad her career? You two won a championship together.”

For a moment, Kara looks like she’s not going to say anything, her eyes studying Lena a few seconds. “Apparently she saw us together at Seven way back when the season started and I guess she got the impression we’ve been together this whole time.”

“Despite having never seen us together once before,” Lena adds, trying to understand the level of hysterical you’d have to get to stew in this kind of conspiracy.

Kara throws her hands up, seeming just as lost. “I’m just telling you what she told me,” she says. “She really thinks that you slept with me so that I’d trade her to the Skippers?”

Blowing out a heavy breath into a laugh, Kara nods through a shrug. “Yeah,” she says. “Or that you’d tell Lex to trade her.”

“That’s just -” Lena shakes her head, can’t understand how Leslie’s just been sitting on that for months, stewing in the paranoia of it.

“She was very confident,” Kara says. “And when she started talking about seeing us out in Tokyo and at that one club on the north side and she had this whole thing about how we must have been fucking on the down low while I was with Leslie which is ridiculous because I was never with Leslie, right? But then she was all -”

“What did you say?” Lena interrupts as the words start to tumble all too rapidly out of Kara’s mouth.
“The truth. That I was an idiot about realizing she had feelings for me, that I didn’t get her traded, that you and I only met like eight months ago and that we only just got together two months ago,” Kara says. “And that if she didn’t shut up about you I’d try to fight her again. And then she told me I was a dickfuck and to get the hell out of her apartment.”

“So you…” Lena tries to move past whatever kind of playground insult dickfuck is and focus on the important details. “You confirmed we’re together.”

“I -” Kara’s mouth opens and closes soundlessly. “Yes?”

“And then she kicked you out of her apartment.”

Kara nods.

“And that’s…squared away, in your mind,” Lena says. She sort of feels like she could have a heart attack, considering Leslie Willis apparently has enough information to topple her carefully planned series of moves to deflect attention from she and Kara’s eventual coming out.

“Well…” Kara winces. “At least she’s mad at me for things I did now instead of a bunch of stuff I didn’t.”

“Comforting,” Lena deadpans, but takes pity on the longsuffering look Kara’s affected.

“I’m sorry you got dragged into all this,” she sighs and Lena reaches out to tangle their fingers together.

“Ah, that’s part of the fun in relationships isn’t it? Dealing with each other’s dirty laundry and all that.”

It makes Kara chuckle, just the slightest. “Does that mean you’re going to finally tell me where Luthor Corp hides the skeletons?” Kara punctuates the tease with a wink that makes Lena laugh.

“You don’t have high enough clearance yet,” Lena jokes. “But I can tell you where I hide them.”

Kara lets out a deep laugh, genuine enough that Lena’s chest warms as she sinks closer to her on the couch. “Even better.”

It doesn’t feel resolved, but Lena can’t find it in her to be too worried about it. At this point, she’s accepted the circumstances. If Leslie outs them, so be it. With Kara looking at her like this, bright blue eyes and happy smile even through all that exhaustion on her face, Lena feels like they could maybe face anything.

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“There’s no harm in delaying this with everything going on,” Lena suggests to Lex as they shuffle into a conference room. They’re set to meet with company and team lawyers about restructuring the ownership agreement for the Lakehawks and Harriers. She’s not sure she’s really ready for their scrutinizing faces as they try to sort through their intent on the matter, but there’s a part of her looking forward to putting it all behind them.

“We’re not signing anything,” Lex tells her, pulling her chair out and striding to a cart on the side of the room to pour himself a drink. “This is just a meeting of the minds.”

He drops casually into a chair next to her, his smile as if he hasn’t a care in the world and Lena takes in his well-tailored suit and brightly colored tie. “You look too happy these days,” Lena grumbles,
but she’s unable to fight her smile at the way his grin broadens.

“As if you’re one too talk,” he says, crossing his legs and leaning back in the chair. “I leave for a little bit and my baby sister not only took my team to another winning season, but fell in love with the star of the show.”

Lena arches a brow at him, glances to the glass wall on the far side of the room. “Did you hit your head out in the Bahamas or wherever you were?”

“Yoga,” Lex answers, a grin on his face as he steeples his fingers over his stomach. “It does wonders. You should try it.”

“I’m fine, thanks,” Lena tells him, trying to roll her eyes, but his happy expression just makes her laugh.

The lawyers arrive then, and the meeting begins. Lena focuses on going through the pros and cons, reading through the different agreements and trying to think through the situation as a businesswoman. It makes sense, she must admit. And though she tries to keep her opinion professional, she knows the decision will do wonders for her personal life. If anything it will give her peace of mind going forward.

All said, it won’t be too difficult. The way the contracts are structured make it rather simple to confer ownership power to Lex and after they’ve gone through the entire thing once, twice, three times, the lawyers leave and she’s left alone with Lex again.

“Well?” He fiddles with his tie, regarding her with a neutral look.

“You’re right, it’s a smart move,” she says, closing her laptop and falling back into her chair.

“But?”

Lena smiles, lets out a little laugh through her lips. “But I think I’m more attached to the Lakehawks than I realized.”

“Don’t think of it like you’re losing them,” he says, leaning forward in his chair to catch her eye. “Think of it more like…”

He pauses, searching for words, but Lena already knows them. “It’s more like I’m gaining Kara.”

Chuckling softly, he shifts back, shrugs a shoulder. “I wasn’t going to say that exactly, but yeah, sure. I suppose it is like that.”

“It’s the only reason I’m doing this,” she admits softly, looking away a moment.

Lex takes a breath, nods. “She’s worth it then?”

Smiling, Lena nods back. “Yeah. I think she is.”

The serious look on Lex’s face fades into something more mischievous and he stands. “Plus, it’s only right when I’m still not confident you know the difference between a point guard and a shooting guard,” he teases, moving towards the door to open.

“Oh, as if you do,” she jibes back, and they laugh at each other as they pick their things up and exit.

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In addition to the Lakehawks loss, Kara, Cat, and Leslie all get suspended for game four. The NWBA announces it the day before, sending much of the city into a neverending argument over whether it was an appropriate punishment for any of them.

“To be honest, I’m just glad that it wasn’t longer,” Kara says, when Lena asks about whether she’s upset about it.

So, Kara is forced to spend game four at home and Lena finds herself courtside with Jack to watch a Kara Danvers-less Lakehawks take the floor. It feels eerily similar to Kara’s injury when she’s been barred from the arena and Lena discovers once again how unsettling it is to watch the Lakehawks have to adjust to having their centerpiece out of the lineup. They’re still a great basketball team, but it takes them the entire first quarter to seem to remember that fact.

It doesn’t go smoothly. It seems the Skippers are more prepared to play without Leslie than the Lakehawks are without Kara - though all the journalists will speculate the real triumph of the game is Siobhan Smythe’s thirty-six points and Eve Tessmacher’s inability to guard her.

After the game, Lena brings food over to Kara’s apartment to find her sulking over the loss and pacing about with restless energy, carrying around a mini basketball printed with the Lakehawks logo. The purpling under her eyes and around her nose has deepened, but otherwise she looks fine.

“I hate not playing,” Kara says, picking at her food and practically pouting. Lena reaches over to clasp her hand and tries not to laugh at her miserable expression.

“You’ll be back next game.”

“I just want to win,” Kara groans, letting her head fall back dramatically enough Lena can’t stifle her laugh this time. Kara gives her a listless glare from her head’s position.

“How does your nose feel?” Lena asks in an attempt to distract her.

Kara takes a breath, pokes at her nose lightly until Lena slaps her hand away to get her to stop. “It continues to be fine, but the doctors want me to wear a mask anyway. They made me get molded for it today.”

Kara’s eyes are still ringed with purple, so it seems altogether amusing that she’s so surprised the doctors would act with caution in this situation. Lena can’t help but laugh again.

“You’re experiencing a lot of hardship, then,” Lena says. Kara picks her head up to glare.

“Don’t be mean to me,” Kara whines.

“I know you’ve never been in a relationship before, but traditionally, your partner is allowed to levy constructive criticism,” Lena says dryly, lifting her wine glass and taking a sip as Kara huffs.

“That was you making fun of me for how much I care about my livelihood, not constructive criticism,” Kara mutters. Her face is contorted into a funny frown that Lena just can’t stop laughing at.

“I’m sorry, darling, let me rephrase,” Lena says. “Maybe next time you get into an important workplace scenario that requires your full concentration to achieve good results, don’t get goaded into a playground fight.”

“Wow, if this is what a relationship is…” Kara says, though she’s smiling softly now, her eyes twinkling and focused on Lena’s face.
“Second thoughts?” Lena asks. Kara laughs, sliding slowly along the couch cushions, leaving her food abandoned on the coffee table.

“I don’t know. Can’t complain about my mask, can’t get into fights with a former teammate, can’t do anything really,” Kara jests with tease in the lines around her eyes.

“Must be so suffocating,” Lena says dryly, enjoying the way Kara looks at her as she comes closer, her hands pressing into Lena’s thighs. Lena’s own hand presses into the line of Kara’s jaw, drawing her close.

“So suffocating,” Kara agrees with a hum. “I can barely breathe.”

“That could be your nose,” Lena whispers, just before Kara leans forward to kiss her.

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Games five and six run similarly to the slog of game four.

Kara, Leslie, and Cat all return, but the Skippers have stumbled onto a strategy of badgering the Lakehawks quick passing game until they’re forced to grind out points. Kara scores low in both games even when the Lakehawks claim game five.

It’s one of the first times Kara’s come over after a win and looked somewhat dejected, lying on the couch and watching a movie Lena picks out with her head on Lena’s lap and frowning heavily for most of it.

She’s clearly frustrated, and pundits ponder if her broken nose is affecting her more than she’s let on - the clear facemask she’s made to wear an easy reminder of her fight with Leslie. It doesn’t help that it’s apparent how much she hates the thing, snapping it off every timeout and nearly throwing it into the stands after game six ends in a tough loss.

One of the only good things about both games is that Kara and Leslie stay away from each other, Leslie’s jaw working any time they come close while not in play, but thankfully not opening up. It’s about as solid an improvement as Lena could imagine after hearing the depth of Leslie’s anger from Kara.

Lena manages to catch Kara’s press conference after game six at Luthor Corp Arena. She idles behind the row of cameras in the back and stays mostly out of view, giving a small smile to Winn where he hovers off to the side of the stage. Kara is dressed in a pair of dark jeans, a pair of nice boots, and a light pea coat, and she takes the barrage of questions with impressive grace even when Lena can read the slight irritation in her spine.

“What did you think of your performance tonight, Kara?”

“Not amazing. I think I need to work on getting more involved in the transition game, turning points quick,” Kara says, running her hands through her hair. She glances toward the back of the room and her eyes stick to Lena for a second, her shoulders loosening up as she leans more into her podium.

“Are you feeling affected by the mask?”

“The mask sucks, but I’ve played through worse,” Kara says, smiling. She adds after a second: “Though it is really sweaty.”

The comment sends up a round of chuckles, easing up the amount of concern palpable through the press corps over something as stupid as a mask. It’s funny how even though she knows Kara more
intimately than ever, Kara somehow still feels larger than life in moments like these.

“Kara, how do you think your, uh, altercation with Leslie Willis has affected this series?” asks one reporter. Kara sighs heavily, clearly tired of talking about Leslie, and there’s a little round of laughter when she makes a bit of an eye roll.

“Leslie and I are both one of twelve people on two different basketball teams,” Kara says. “I can’t say how much it’s affected the series as a whole.”

“The Lakehawks have held a lopsided record against the Skippers since you’ve been here, Kara,” says another reporter. “Do you think that maybe it’s just not the Lakehawks’s turn?”

“Uh, no,” Kara says, then shakes her head as laughter comes over the room. “I do not think that.”

“Kara, Mark from the Press here,” says a man hovering off to the side of the room. “There’ve been rumors that Lex Luthor is back in town and looking to regain control of the team from his sister. How do you feel working under Lena Luthor versus her brother?”

It’s a curveball, but still a soft question, all things considered. The first time Lex has been brought up in one of Kara’s interview with no reference to the previous rumors, though the tone of the question and the titter of noise it brings up around the room brings Lena pause. It makes Lena happy she thought to mention to Kara about the possible change in ownership earlier so as not to have her caught off guard.

A ghost of a laugh passes over Kara’s face and her eyes flicker towards Lena before back to the reporter.

“The Luthors have owned this franchise its entire existence and it’s seen its share of different people at the head. We won under Lex and we’ve won under Lena and both of them have shown a deep care for this team. Frankly, it hasn’t affected our ability to win in the past and I don’t see why that would be any different going forward.” Kara grins, shrugs. “We’re the Lakehawks.”

“Last question,” Winn says at the side of the stage and nods towards an eager reporter at the front waving his hand frantically.

“Kara, what’s the game plan for game seven?”

It’s clear even from so far away that Kara’s doing her best not to look at the reporter like he’s an idiot. She does an admirable job even if Lena can read it easily in the quirk of her lips. Shaking her head, Kara looks casual as ever and fixes her stare on the reporter. “Simple,” she says. “Win.”

—

It’s never really that simple. Winning. Lena knows that perhaps better than anyone.

Winning takes work, it takes careful planning and precision execution. In chess, the process of winning starts before even the opening move when you take measure of your opponent across the board.

From what Lena’s come to understand about basketball and about Kara, it seems the approach to game seven is no different. Kara may act like it’s simple, but Lena has a front row seat to just how complicated and involved it is.

The two days between games six and seven are spent with Kara locked in meetings and practices and long film sessions. Even when Kara insists Lena should still come over for a late dinner, Lena
finds her poring over a playbook and comparing it to game footage on a small tablet at her counter.

The city feels no different, wrapped up as they are in the series. Every single resident seems to have picked a side and are out in staunch support ahead of the game. Even the counter at a local coffee shop Lena sometimes frequents has two tip jars in front of the register - one in support of the Skippers and the other the Lakehawks. Do your part to help your team win, the little sign between them reads.

(Lena drops a hundred dollar bill in the Lakehawks jar as subtly as she can.)

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Game seven goes to triple overtime.

The atmosphere is tense and electric and Lena feels her heart beating rapid and heavy against her ribcage as the Lakehawks inbound the ball down two with sixteen seconds left. She doesn’t know where to look. At the clock ticking away above the basket or where Alex is passing Kara the ball at the top of the key.

It’s Leslie that’s guarding her, waving her hands out wide and tracking the ball. Kara dribbles between her legs, attempts to juke Leslie off balance with a quick move, but is unsuccessful. It doesn’t look like she’s going to get very open and time is running out. Lena looks at the rest of the floor, Alex posting up against Siobhan under the hoop and Lucy jostling with another Skippers player Lena doesn’t know. M’gann makes a run like she’s going to set a pick for Kara, but Lena can already tell there’s no time.

Kara doesn’t look all too concerned though. Lena feels like her heart might beat straight out of her chest, but Kara’s low, eye to eye with Leslie and she looks deadly calm. As the seconds evaporate Kara makes one last move and despite her inability to shake Leslie she takes a step back and jumps, the ball arcing out of her hand at an impossible angle as she fades backwards.

There’s no way the shot should fall. Leslie bodies Kara as she goes up for the shot and Kara’s well outside the arc, but as the buzzer sounds loudly in the arena everything goes still, all eyes on the ball as it moves in a perfect line towards the hoop and swishes there definitively.

The place erupts.

Though they’re not on home court, Lakehawks fans makes so much noise they might as well be. Kara, who’s making a shushing gesture with her finger against her lips, gets absolutely swarmed, a pile of players falling somewhere near center court right in front of the scorer’s table as they cheer in jubilation.

Even Cat is making victorious gestures, high fiving her staff and hugging J’onn.

Jack loses his mind, grabs Lena by the shoulders and full body shakes her. It spills what’s left of her drink all over her hands and the floor, but she can’t even find it in her to care. For one ridiculous moment she gets it.

The camera on the jumbotron is showing a close up of Kara’s face at the bottom of the pile, confident smirk and calm expression like of course she hits a buzzer beater to win it, she’s Kara Danvers. It runs a thrill up Lena’s spine, a primal sort of vindication that makes her contemplate letting out a loud yell.

It’s not the championship game, but it sure feels like it.
There’s a short ceremony celebrating the Lakehawks victory - a Conference Championship trophy and everything. It’s quick and then the Lakehawks are off to their locker room to celebrate in private.

Lena’s invited back, but declines, feeling like if she so much as gets within four feet of Kara right now she’ll have to kiss her. Anything else would be torture.

Instead, she joins Jack for their ritual post-game drink and then heads home. Her phone buzzes constantly, but it’s just Lex texting her in all caps about how WE’RE GOING TO THE SHIP over and over again. Lena doesn’t know how to tell him that yes, she’s very excited about that, but could he stop texting so she can wait patiently to see if Kara’s interested in celebrating with her.

But time passes and Kara doesn’t text. It goes on long enough that Lena thinks maybe she won’t. She’s disappointed, but she understands - it was a long series and a long game and Kara’s got a team to celebrate with.

Just as she’s given up hope and is set to undress and get in bed, there’s a knock at her door. Her heart jumps in anticipation and she strides quickly to answer it.

“Hi,” Kara says, sounding breathless and bright, her hands propping herself up on each side of the door. She’s changed from the game into jeans and a light blue oxford shirt under her leather jacket, but there’s still the same intensity in her eyes she had when she took that final shot. Just like that, Lena’s whole body wakes up.

“Hey,” she greets. She spares a brief thought that maybe she needs to have a chat with her doorman if he’s just keying people into the penthouse without notifying her.

“We won,” Kara says, sounding exhilarated. The way Kara says we does something to Lena’s insides.

“We did,” Lena replies, stepping back when Kara takes a step inside. It feels predatory in a way that makes Lena think she should have already taken her clothes off before Kara got here. Kara is looking at her like she can see right through them anyway.

“Yes,” Kara says, kicking the door closed behind her and stripping her jacket off. “And now we’re going to celebrate.”

“Are we?” Lena asks, arcing a brow and crossing her arms, but unable to take her eyes off the way Kara throws her jacket carelessly to the side. “You still have a championship to win.”

It makes Kara stop in her stalk towards Lena, her look a little incredulous as she starts to laugh, hands at her hips. “Is that so?”

“Last I checked,” Lena replies, faux defiance in the way she lifts her chin. She’s sure the smile she’s unable to suppress is giving her away.

Kara regards her a moment, so fondly Lena feels like she’s being touched all over. Her words take the hot feeling in Lena’s chest and make it heavy.

“I love you, you know,” drops softly out of Kara’s mouth and Lena hears the words like a warm blanket over her shoulders.

Her arms drop from where they’re crossed over her chest and she fumbles for how to respond, so
taken aback by how casually Kara’s said it. It’s absurd. It’s not like the words don’t already sit between them, but there’s something about the open way Kara says them now.

“You don’t have to say that to get laid,” Lena says, finally, knowing her cheeks are flushing, but unable to stop it. The smile on her face feels almost too wide.

“If anything’s getting me laid tonight it was that buzzer beater I sank to take our team to the finals,” Kara says with a cocky little smirk Lena’s never been able to resist. “I don’t know if you saw.”

“Yeah, I saw,” Lena says, laughing a little.

“So…” Kara shrugs a shoulder. “I just love you and want to make sure you know.”

Lena’s chest feels tight, her throat thick and yeah, “I love you too,” she murmurs.

It makes Kara grin, wide and cocky. "Sorry," Kara says, feigning as if she's hard of hearing with a hand cupped over her ear. "I couldn't hear that."

Lena rolls her eyes and pulls Kara closer by her lapels. She gets halfway through a shut up, Kara before the words get cut off by Kara closing the distance between their lips and just like that the rest of the world stops around them.

End Notes

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