The Shape of Things To Come

by Argyle_S

Summary

With the help of Sara and M’gann, Kara travels back in time to a year before she becomes Supergirl from a future where all her worst fears have come to pass, and replaces her younger self.

Notes

This fic draws inspiration from a lot of places. The idea is based very loosely on one of my
favorit Harry Potter Fics, Harry Potter And The Nightmares of Future Past by S’TarKan (warning, the fic is unfinished, and on long term hiatus due to author health issues), but it also takes ideas from Fictorium’s Asking Too Much, Tender Mercy by lisaof9, and the new 52 run of Supergirl, including the Sanctuary and Red Daughter of Krypton story-lines, as well as, of course, the classic X-Men Story, Days of Future Past (the comic was much better than the movie, and easily one of the greatest X-Men stories ever written).

The Kara in this story is a bit more Kara Zor-El than Kara Danvers. She’s older, wiser, and perfectly willing to channel her inner Cat and Alex to save the lives of everyone she loved.

This story was started before season two began and is canon divergent pretty much from the moment Kara says "Love Bonds Us All" at the end of Better Angels. There is no Kryptonian Pod in this universe, and no Mon-El of Daxam.

A word of warning. If you are the kind of reader who can't stand the thought of one member of your OTP even looking at someone else after they've met the other half of your OTP, this is not the story for you. While Supercat is endgame, Kara and Sara's relationship is an important part of the story, and is not as completely in the past as you might expect from the way the story starts.

Thanks to @ifourmindbeso for her great work as a beta. Any remaining mistakes are entirely my own.
The City of Argo, Krypton: May 21st, 1977

Kara jumped through the shattered window of her childhood bedroom a moment before the floor gave way, but even the increased strength from Alex’s old exoskeleton didn’t give her enough of a push to clear the distance to the Waverider’s waiting hatch. Fortunately, M’gann was there to catch her. One second, Kara was falling, the next M’gann’s right arm was a thick tentacle, wrapped around her waist, and the Martian woman was hauling her into the open airlock.

“Thanks,” Kara said as M’gann sat her on the floor. M’gann didn’t really respond. She just nodded as she released Kara, and hit the button to close the door. Kara tapped her ear piece. “Get us clear,” she said. Almost immediately, she felt the gut twisting nausea that came with a time jump. Not trusting herself to move during a jump without her powers, she just looked up at M’gann.

The blank look on M’gann’s face hadn’t changed since Harley had died nearly a week earlier. Kara wanted desperately to do something, anything, for her oldest remaining friend, but she didn’t know what to say. She and Harley had been the only things holding each other together for the longest time.

There was a part of her that knew it wouldn’t matter, not if their plan worked, but she couldn’t help it. The desire to help was still there.

She waited until she felt them exit the time jump, then she stood up and headed towards the bridge. M’gann followed along silently as they picked their way through the debris-strewn corridors of the ship to where Sara was waiting for them.

“Did you get it?” Sara asked.

Kara held up the spy beacon.

“That’s it?” she asked. “It doesn’t look like much.”

Kara shrugged. “It’s not much,” she said. “Just a paired-key homing beacon.”

“How is that going to change the course of the war?” Sara asked.

“If I play my cards right, this will add twenty-nine very angry Kryptonians to our side. It will also keep the Hope function of the Anti-Life equation from ever falling into Darkseid’s hands. If he can’t complete the equation…”

“Then we’ll only be fighting Apokolips, not the entire galaxy,” Sara said.

Kara looked around the ruined bridge of the Waverider, then back to Sara. “Where’s Thea?”
“She’s bundling up the care package,” Sara said.

“Good. Where’d you set us down?”

“On top of your apartment building,” Sara said.

“Um, are you sure it will hold the weight?”

“Doesn’t have too. I’ve got the Higgs dampeners running. The ship weights about as much as a bicycle right now.”

“Alright then. I guess it’s time.”

Sara nodded, and stood up out of the Captain’s chair. Before Kara could turn away, Sara reached out and slipped a hand around the back of her neck, pulling her down into a kiss. Kara reacted immediately, slipping her arms around Sara and pulling her close, kissing her with everything she had. It wasn’t a long kiss, but it didn’t need to be. After so many years together, there wasn’t a lot left to say between them. Nothing, in fact, except thank you and goodbye.

Sara pulled back, and Kara gave her a weak smile, neither of them quite able to hide the tears in their eyes.

“Let’s do this,” Sara said.

The walk to the Waverider’s medbay seemed both too short and too long. Too short, because she could be about to make everything worse, and too long because she was going to see her sister again, see Cat, Winn, J’onn, and all the people she’d lost since the war started.

She just had to die to do it.

“You have it?” Thea asked as they entered the medbay.

Kara nodded and held out the spy beacon. “Be careful,” she said. “My sister may not be up to the same standard she was at by the time Myriad was over but she’s still a DEO field operative.”

Thea shrugged. “Honestly, I’m more worried about the other you,” she said as she put the spy beacon in the case with the three power rings, their power batteries, the portal generator Vibe had given her after the Dominator incident, and the Kryptonian Constructor Crystals.

“I should be down there before you, even with the Velocity 12,” Kara said.

“Here’s hoping,” Thea said. She closed the hard case, then picked it up and slid it back into the cardboard box Gideon had fabricated for them, and started taping it shut.

Kara climbed up onto one of the medical tables and lay down. “You ready, M’Gann?”

“Yes,” was the only reply. The Martian stepped around the table so she could place her fingers on Kara’s temple, then looked at Sara. “Whenever you’re ready.”

“Right,” Sara said. “Gideon, I need the telepathic booster serum.”

“Of course, Captain Lance,” the AI said as a small door opened in the wall, and a loaded injector gun was extended.

“This stuff will work, right?” Sara asked as she picked up the gun.
“Oh course. The serum will allow Ms. M’orzz to open a telepathic link with Ms. Zor-El’s past and present selves and merge Ms. Zor-El’s present consciousness with her past self. However, the serum is highly toxic, and will terminate Ms. M’orzz life functions within ten minutes of injection. There is no antidote.”

“As long as it works,” M’gann said.

Kara watched as Thea picked up a second injector, and pressed it to Kara’s neck, injecting the Velocity 12 into her carotid artery. Thea nodded to Sara, who stepped over to M’gann and inserted the needle into her neck.

“Go,” Sara said as she pulled the trigger. Thea vanished along with the cardboard box in a swirl of blue lightning, and at the same moment, M’gann began to pull, tearing Kara’s mind from her present body, killing her in the process, as she forced Kara’s current mind to merge with her younger one. It was agony. Indescribable, beyond any pain she’d felt in a life far too full of it. Feeling her mind ripped out of her body, forced through a place infinitely too small, before being crushed together with her younger self. Her younger self, who was living everything that happened over twelve long years in a fraction of a second.

She’d been worried about this moment. Worried she’d wake Alex, who was sleeping on the couch, worried she’d wake the whole building. In the end, she needn’t have.

It hurt far too much to scream.

Kara Danvers’ Apartment. National City. Earth 38, September 14th, 2014

Kara sat in her bed, shaking as she stared at the box left on her bed. She wanted to reach out for it, take it, tuck it away somewhere safe, but she was paralyzed by her own fear. She’d hoped for this moment, dreamed of it, of the chance to go back and fix so many mistakes. But now, in the moment, there were so many doubts, so many things she was afraid of.

The first, though, was easy enough to take care of. Her glasses were already on the nightstand, so she didn’t have to take them off to sweep the apartment. No bugs, no cameras, no surveillance. She knew that wouldn’t last, but she was relieved that it was the case tonight. She couldn’t afford a confrontation with the DEO, and if they saw Thea run into her apartment, or figured out that she had three power rings and power batteries in her hands, it would be an all-out war even J’onn wouldn’t be able to stop. Kryptonians were powerful enough to scare the government without throwing weapons that could devastate entire worlds into the mix.

Fortunately, she never intended to keep them for herself.

She forced herself to move, to act. All the fear was still there, but time was of the essence. For now, she had to preserve as much of the timeline as possible. There would be changes, that was the whole point, but nothing that would tip her hand too soon. Nothing that would stop her sister from getting on that plane.

She used a touch of super-speed to tuck the box onto a shelf in her closet. It wasn’t perfect, but it would do until Alex was out of the apartment, at which time, she could head up to the Fortress and tuck it away among all the things Kal didn’t want other people finding. That would do until she could get the sanctuary crystals out of her pod.

She sat back down, picked up her phone, and checked her email. Sure enough, there was a message containing a link waiting for her. She tapped the link, and confirmed that their little stop in 1998
before they headed to Krypton had paid off. With a decent broadband connection, and seventeen years to work, the AI Gideon had whipped up for them had built up a bank account that would make the Prince of Dubai jealous.

She sent a couple of quick commands to the AI before locking her phone and lying back down, using a Kryptonian Meditation to calm herself. What she really wanted to do fish the spy beacon out of the box and turn it on, but it was too soon. If she turned it on now, it would call Astra, but it would call Non and the other Kryptonians as well. Because Astra still thought, or at least suspected, Kara betrayed her and Kara wouldn’t be able to tell her otherwise. Not for another year.

But she could wait, and she could hope, and in a couple of very short hours, she’d be able to hug her sister again.
Taunting Cerberus, Challenging Athena

Chapter Summary

Two weeks after she arrived in the past, Kara goes for a job interview, and reaches out to an old friend.

Chapter Notes

I'm glad so many people seemed to like the first chapter of this story, and I promise there is plenty more to come. Some of the dialog in this chapter is lifted from season one of Supergirl, specifically 1x01, 1x03, and 1x17.

Update: This story has now been betaed by ifourmindbeso. Any remaining mistakes are entirely my own.

National City. Earth 38, September 14th, 2014

Kara walked into Noonan’s at seven minutes after eight, dressed in a purple and white checked dress, a purple cardigan, and carrying a large brown leather bag with her resumé tucked inside. She’d been eating there every morning for the last two weeks, chatting with people she’d worked with while she’d been in college, and watching Cat’s assistants come and go. She’d seen Winn once. She’d been careful not to notice him, even though her face wanted to split wide open in a smile. It had been so long since Indigo had killed him, and all she wanted to do was pick him up and hug him within an inch of his life. She’d had to be careful though, because she wasn’t alone.

She’d been in the past for two days when she’d first spotted Rogers. Miller and Stevens had joined the follow team the next day. Wentworth has always been better at surveillance than anyone else in the DEO’s field teams, so Kara wasn’t sure if she’s missed the plain-looking woman the second day, or if she just hadn’t been there, but she’d definitely spotted her the third day. Kara wasn’t sure if she should be annoyed or flattered that J’onn had four agents on her, but either way, it had to stop. She needed to move freely, which she could not do if she had to keep ditching tails any time she needed to do something away from prying eyes.

Which was why she walked right up to Wentworth’s table and sat down, because Wentworth was the one least likely to shoot first and ask questions later.

“Um…” the woman said.

“Hey, Katie,” Kara said, as she waved over a waitress.

“I’m sorry, I think you have me mistaken for someone else,” Wentworth said.

“Katheryn Michelle Wentworth. Born in Fairfax, Virginia. Undergraduate degree in Criminal Justice with a minor in biology from Georgia State University. Odd mix, but it’s part of the reason you were recruited into the DEO. Of course, that was after you did a masters in Criminal Justice,
and spent three years in Metropolis working in the Science Police division. I could keep going but…” She held up a finger as the waitress came into earshot.

“What can I get you ladies?” the waitress asked.

Kara smiled up at her. “Hey, Sally. I’d like three of the Orange sticky buns, a pumpkin spiced latte with extra foam and cinnamon on top, a bowl of fruit salad, and a slice of the death by chocolate, with extra maraschino cherries. My friend will have the cranberry bagel with peanut butter, a large lemon zinger tea with honey, and a Georgia peach if you have any, otherwise she’ll have two California plums, but she needs hers to go.”

The waitress nodded. “Separate checks?”

“No, my treat today.”

“I’ll have it right up for you gals,” the waitress said as she walked away.

Kara turned back to Wentworth. “You have a terrible poker face,” she said, when she saw how large the agent’s eyes had gotten. “That can’t be helpful in your line of work.”

“I-“

“Don’t know what I’m talking about. I get it. I mean, when you drag Rogers, Miller and Stevens back to the DEO and tell Hank what happened, he’s going to be grumpy. Well, extra grumpy. He’s always a little grumpy, except when he’s eating Choco’s. In fact, I can hear him now.” Kara’s voice dropped several octaves. “‘You mean to tell me four of my best agents got made by a little girl?’”

Kara grinned and leaned forward. “You like that? The way I kind of dragged out the word ‘girl’ the same way he would, because he always drags out the last word when he’s yelling at you.” Kara tilted her head. “Or do you think he’ll go with ‘pretty blonde’? Personally, I think he’ll go with little girl, but he could go with ‘pretty blonde’. He seems to find it personally insulting when pretty young blondes are competent. It could go either way I suppose, but I’d be willing to bet you fifty bucks he goes with ‘little girl’.”

She leaned back, watching the absolutely flabbergasted look on Wentworth’s face. She wanted to cut the woman some slack, she really did, but she needed to make a point to J’onn to get him to back off, which meant it was time to get just a little bit scary.

“Now, I imagine you’re thinking about those special green bullets you have, just in case. Because you’re terrified. How did the big, scary alien know all this stuff? Don’t. I promise you, I can have all four of you disarmed and the guns field-stripped on the table in front of me before one of you could even get your hand to your weapon, much less draw it, drop your magazine, reload with the magazine full of kryptonite bullets and cycle the action to get a kryptonite round into the chamber.”

Kara turned and reached into her bag, and pulled out the custom printed card she’d picked up from the stationary shop that morning. She slid it across the table to Wentworth.

“Now, I am going to sit here, and eat my breakfast. In about 90 minutes, I’m going to walk across the plaza, into the CatCo building for a job interview. If I see any DEO agents when I come out of the building, I will turn back around, walk right back inside and give Cat Grant, Queen of All Media, one hell of an exclusive on the secret alien prison being run by a super-secret non-existent government agency in the desert northeast of town.”
“You should take that,” she said, pointing at the card, “to director Henshaw and tell him Lady Kara, Chatelaine of the House of El, Daughter of Zor-El and Alura In-Ze and the last daughter of Krypton says to back off.”

They both sat in silence for a moment, and Kara could feel the tension in the room. All four agents were staring at her as she leaned back and watched Wentworth. Kara could see the woman had pretty much no idea how to handle the situation. It was one thing to get made by a target, but Kara hadn’t just made her, she’d blown the whole detail, possibly even the whole DEO. The woman had to see Kara as a threat and the DEO’s job was to neutralize alien threats. But she also knew there was absolutely no way four unprepared humans could take a Kryptonian who had the drop on them, and even worse, there was no way they could do it covertly. And there was the message for the director.

The waitress broke the tension. She turned up with a tray, and started setting down Kara’s sticky buns and cake. “Someday, you’re going to have to tell me how you can eat like this, and still look like that,” she said as she sat the bowl of fruit in front of Kara.

Kara smiled up at her. “I’m an alien,” she said.

Wentworth just reached up and covered her face with both hands and Kara could just hear her mutter “I am so screwed.”

Setting foot inside the CatCo building again was one of the hardest things Kara had done in a long time. Not because she didn’t want to, but because she wanted it so much, had wanted it so much for the past ten years. Kara had loved CatCo, right up until the very end. Right up until the day Cadmus’s last abomination had come for her.

Right up into the day she’d had to kill Jeremiah Danvers.

She’d done everything she could, tried every trick she knew to lure the monster that had once been her foster father away from CatCo, but nothing had worked. She hadn’t found out until later that he had been given specific orders to kill Cat, James and Winn. Winn had been at the DEO, working with Vasquez to crack Cadmus’s firewalls and when Kara had landed on Cat’s balcony, knowing the building was about to go, Cat had just shoved Carter and an unconscious Snapper Carr into her arms. Kara had known what it meant and for a brief moment, she’d considered leaving Snapper to die and taking Cat instead, but in the end she’d done what she always did when Cat told her to do something.

Snapper had come up to her weeks later to thank her for saving his life. She’d looked at him for a long time and told him that it he really wanted to thank her, he would leave National City and never come back. It was far from her finest moment, but she could never quite bring herself to regret it, because in all her life she’d never quite come to hate a man as much as she did Snapper. Even when the world was burning around her, even when Darkseid’s armies were marching across the multiverse, she’d never found it in herself to forgive him for needing to be saved that day, for being alive when Cat Grant wasn’t.

One of the reasons she’d been spending time at Noonan’s was to take the edge off those memories, but she still had to stop and take a deep breath before she set foot inside the building.

This was a good day, she told herself. A good day. One of the happiest of her life. Today, she met Winn and today she met Cat Grant.

She took one more deep breath, and opened the door, walking right up to the security desk.
“Kara Danvers,” she said. “I have a 10:15 appointment with Cat Grant.”

“Excuse me, pardon me,” Kara said as she slipped between people to escape the elevator, hoping she got the timing right. She took one step out, then two and sure enough, on the fourth step, Winn plowed right into her. “Oh! I’m sorry, I’m really sorry, I didn’t mean it. Sorry,” she said, smiling as she turned to walk towards Cat’s office.

After a moment’s hesitation, he followed her. “That’s okay. I’m Winn… Schott… Junior. And who are you?”

“Kara Danvers,” she said, sticking her hand out. He took it, and she squeezed just a little too hard as she shook it.

“Oh, WOW. That’s quite a firm handshake you’ve got there.”

“Oh, yeah,” she said. “I work out.” The earlier pain and hesitation gone. She suddenly wanted to laugh, to jump for joy and to hug Winn at the same time. Winn. He was standing in front of her again and things were right with the in a way they hadn’t been in a long time. She’d played this day through in her mind so many times. One of the happiest of her life. The day she’d met one of her best friends and she’d met Cat Grant, who was a friend, a mentor, her inspiration and one of her heroes, both in the span of about five minutes and now, she was here again.

“Yeah?” Winn asked.

“I mean, um, I read in this article somewhere that when you’re going for a big interview you should start with a firm shake,” she said, trying to project the awkwardness she’d felt the first time she lived through this day. She wasn’t sure she succeeded, because she could feel the smile on her face, but it seemed to work, because Winn responded exactly as she remembered.

“Um, interview? What job?”

“Assistant to Cat Grant,” she said, letting the pride she’d always taken in that title show through.

“Oh. Does her current assistant know she’s, uh…”

Right on cue, the assistant in question walked by, crying. Kara felt a small tug of pity, because she knew how mean this Cat - younger, more bitter, before Supergirl and the change the Hero had wrought in the woman - could be. She didn’t let it stop her though, because the girl’s departure was what opened the door for Kara, and Kara was going to step through it again and reclaim a life she’d believed lost to her. This time, she was going to do better, by herself, by Cat, and by everyone else.

“She knows,” Winn said.

“Okay, next!” Cat’s voice rang out through the bullpen, and Kara had to force herself to keep her feet on the ground because she wanted to fly just at the sound of it.

“Oh, is that you?” Winn asked.

“Where’s my 10:15?” Cat called.

“I guess that’s me. Any advice?”

“Nah,” Winn said. “Just be yourself.”

Kara nodded. “Right. Myself. I can do that.” Kara reached out, giving his shoulder a small squeeze.
“Thanks,” she said, before turning and heading into the office.

“Hello, Ms. Grant,” she said.

Cat took one look at her and rolled her eyes. “Oh, for God’s sake.” Cat turned away from her, looking up at the wall of video screens. “I told them not to send me any more millennials.”

Kara felt the grin on her face get wider, and didn’t even try to fight it. “I’m sorry,” she said.

Cat sighed, too caught up in her own melodrama to catch the hint of amusement in Kara’s tone. “You are the ultimate example of what is wrong with parenting today. All that God-awful self-esteem building. Everyone is special. Everyone gets a trophy. And you all have opinions that you think deserve to be heard. And yet, the truth is, you need to earn the right to have an opinion in the first place.”

Cat did a slow turn, something Kara recognized as one of her power moves, and that’s when Kara noticed the first change. Cat looked at her, and there was something different… A moment of hesitation before she spoke. “So, my ten fifteen, tell me why you’re so special.”

Kara felt just a moment of fear, because this is where she was going to make the first change that could do real damage. Her relationship with Cat had been tenuous that first year, and she wanted to shore it up, make it stronger so that she wouldn’t have to hide her dual identity from her for so long. She thought she knew Cat well enough to predict how the change would affect things, but she knew a very different Cat Grant. A post-Supergirl Cat Grant. This was the Cat Grant that had gone over a year without realizing Kara was adopted, or that she had a sister, or acknowledging Winn’s existence. This was a Cat Grant who, when she stepped away from her son, turned off any emotions other than ambition, irritation and disdain. A Cat Grant who’d forgotten how to hope. Not the woman she’d eventually called a friend.

“I’m not,” Kara said. There was no hesitation in her voice this time. Instead, there was confidence, self-assurance. She let the woman Supergirl had made her show through. Cat stopped shuffling papers as she looked up at her as she continued. “I’m not special at all, Ms. Grant. Just a normal girl.”

“Yes,” Cat said. “You are.”


Kara laughed as she reached up and adjusted her glasses. “Less than average vision.”

Cat leaned back in her chair, considering her for a moment. “You’re not really selling me on hiring you.”

Kara smiles a little wider. “I thought you’d prefer the truth, Ms. Grant. The agency probably has a dozen other applicants with resumes every bit as impressive as mine. I know that. I know there’s a line of people desperate for this job. But I’m here because I’m committed. I want to help.”

“That’s refreshing,” Cat replied, voice dripping with sarcasm and she picked up a pen and started marking up a set of layouts.

“I mean it, Ms. Grant. I want to help. I can do whatever you need. Run to the pharmacy, pick up your dry cleaning, stand in line at midnight to make sure your son gets the latest game he wants,” Kara reached over and picked up a pen out of the holder on Cat’s desk, “or make sure your pens get refilled when they run out of ink.”

Cat looked up and took the pen from her.
“I just want to be useful to somebody. To be worthwhile.”

“And you’re not? Worthwhile?” Cat asked.

“I want to be, but I haven’t done anything to prove I am. Not yet. It’s like you said, Ms. Grant. You have to earn the right to be considered worthwhile, the right to have a voice. No one will listen to you if you have nothing to say, and even if you do, no-one is going to listen until you’ve proven you’re worth listening to.”

Cat leaned back in her chair, and Kara could see the wheels turning as Cat looked at her.

“I think you should know I expect complete and utter devotion to this job. Are you willing to sacrifice everything in your life to be my assistant?”

“No,” Kara said, and she almost laughed at the look of shock on Cat’s face. “No, I’m not. If you give me the job, I’ll be available to you twenty-four seven. I’ll be committed to you, to CatCo, to the job. I’ll make your life easier in every way I can, and I’ll be the best assistant you’ve ever had. But asking me to give up everything outside of the job would be doing a disservice to both of us. If I give up everything outside of the job, I’m giving up everything unique I can bring to the table. You’re thinking of an assistant as someone to do things you don’t want to do, or don’t have time to do, and I can be that for you, but wouldn’t it be better if I could also be someone who can do things you can’t do for yourself? Someone who has contacts and reach that complement and extend your own, instead of just someone who’s competent at wielding your contacts and reach? Giving up my life outside of CatCo would mean giving that up. It would make me a worse assistant, not a better one.”

Cat just stared at her for a few moments with what Kara always thought of as Cat’s ‘thinking face.’

“And what kind of reach do you think you’d have that I don’t?”

Kara turned, and reached into her bag, carefully pulling out an engraved invitation. It had taken a lot of work over that last week to get, and she was pretty sure she owed Diana her first born daughter, but last time not being able to get an invitation to Diana’s annual Peace Gala had nearly gotten her fired. The only thing that saved her hide was the fact that in the ten years the event had been running, the only two reporters to ever set foot inside were Clark Kent, and Lois Lane. It was well known that the only reason they were invited was that Clark was a close friend of Diana. The first time she’d lived through this, she’d been so determined to make it on her own she’d never even considered calling in a favor from her baby cousin. This time, she’d hadn’t even hesitated. One of the first changes Kara was going to make was to make sure Cat knew Kara was extraordinary *before* Supergirl appeared on the scene.

She slid the invitation across the desk to Cat. The woman picked it up and opened it. If Kara hadn’t known her so well, she would have completely missed the moment of shock on the woman’s face before she closed the invitation and laid it back on the desk.

“Well,” she said, “I will admit that this isn’t a terrible start.”

Kara just smiled at her as she asked, “Should I head down to HR for the new hire paperwork, or should I see if my sister wants to go?”

Cat laid her hand on the invitation, and practically growled. “You certainly have more backbone than most of the candidates that come through the door. I don’t hate that. Yet. But don’t get too cocky. The standard contract has an at-will clause for the first hundred and eighty days.”
“I can live with that.”

“You mean to tell me that four of my most experienced agents got made by a little girl?” J’onn asked.

Wentworth winced and took half a step back. “Sir,” she said, “she didn’t just make us, she knew everything about us. She knew our names. Our real names, not our cover identities. She knew where I was born, where I want to college. Hell, she even knew my breakfast order. And she did an uncanny impression of you.”

“An impression of me?” he asked, putting his hands on his hips.

“Yes sir. She actually tried to get me to bet her on whether you’d call her a little girl or a pretty blonde when you asked if four of your most experienced agents got made. I think I might actually owe her fifty dollars.”

J’onn sighed and looked over at Vasquez. “Please tell me Agent Danvers is still in the training room.”

Vasquez nodded. “She’s busy wiping the floor with Nguyen right now.”

He nodded. “Well, at least that’s one bullet I won’t have to dodge today,” he said as he turned back to Wentworth. “Any idea how she made you?”

Wentworth shook her head. “No sir. She just said to tell you, and I’m quoting here, ‘Lady Kara, Chatelaine of the House of El, Daughter of Zor-El and Alura In-Ze and the last daughter of Krypton says to back off.’” She held up a heavy parchment envelope. “She did give me this, and told me to give it to you. I had security irradiate it, and run every scan we have. It appears to be plain old earth stationary, with the card inside printed within the last thirty-six hours. Once you open it, we could probably do a high-rez scan and get the serial number of the printer if it was printed on a commercial inkjet.”

J’onn took the envelope and tore it open. Inside was what looked like a single fold piece of card stock. He pulled it out, and nearly dropped it in shock. On the front of a card was a green circle, surrounded by a thick black border, and crossed with two red stripes. Under it, in perfectly formed Green Martian, was his name. J’onn J’onzz.

“I can have it scanned and run through the Kryptonian translation matrix, if you’d like,” Wentworth said.

“It wouldn’t do any good,” he said. “It’s not written in Kryptonian. It’s written in Martian.”

“Why would she send a message in Martian?” Wentworth asked.

“Because it appears our pretty blonde is more well informed than I thought. It’s a reference to a mission I went on about a year after she landed.” He opened the card. The message inside was in English. It was simple. ‘My roof. Tomorrow night. 21:00 hours local. Come alone.’

Kara stood near the edge of the building, trying not to roll her eyes at the sight of the sniper three rooftops over. She hadn’t really expected J’onn to come alone, but she had hoped. It would have made things easier in the long run, but it didn’t really matter. Not much.

She tilted her head slightly, opening up her hearing a bit more, nodding as she confirmed that she’d
caught the sound of J’onn on the stairwell. He was good, she’d give him that, but there had always been something unique about the cadence of his footfalls. It had taken almost a year of working with him before she was even consciously aware of it, but she’d recognize it anywhere.

He moved quickly, coming up the stairs with a purpose. Six flights at that pace would have had even the healthiest human a little winded, but of course J’onn wasn’t human, even if he wore a human face. She didn’t turn when the door opened. She let him approach, slowly and cautiously. She could feel the buzz of the Kryptonite bullets in his weapon.

“Did you come here to kill me, Hank?” she asked.

“No,” he said. “But your little stunt-“

“My little stunt was just that. A stunt. A way to get your attention without showing up on your front door.”

“If you know where the door is, why didn’t you?”

She turned around to face him. “Because if I turned up, the base would have gone to full alert, and Alex would have come running out of that training room you’ve got her in ready for a fight. There’s no way you’ve have been able to keep her from finding out I know about the DEO. Know that she works there. I’d rather that didn’t happen.”

“How do you know about the DEO, Ms Danvers?”

“The same way I know about what happened in Peru. Not what you put in your report. Not what everyone else believes. I know about the special bullets, and the knife. I know how a knife ended up in Jeremiah Danvers’ gut. I know what happened between Jeremiah and J’onn J’onzz, and what happened between Hank Henshaw and J’onn J’onzz. I really wish you’d come alone. It would have made talking about this so much easier.”

She watched as J’onn lifted his hand off his side arm and raised it in the air, giving a signal. She turned and watched as the sniper picked up the rifle and disappeared off the roof.

“We can talk freely now,” he said.

Kara sighed and shook her head. “Not as freely as I’d like,” she said. “The city is crawling with Fort Rozz escapees. But yes, J’onn, this should do.”

“How did you know?” he asked.

“I’ll tell you that, some day. I promise. But you’ll have to give me about a year. For now, though, unless you want all your surveillance teams killed in awful ways, try buying some unscented soap for the soap dispensers in the base’s bathrooms. The brand you’re currently using is manufactured for use by the military, so when I smelled it and saw the person wearing it didn’t have a regulation haircut…”

“That’s remarkably observant of you,” J’onn said, and he had the decency to look impressed, which made Kara feel a bit bad for what was only half the truth. She had noticed the soap, but she’d also recognized the agents because she’d worked with them for years.

She shrugged. “I was taught by one of the best, and I’ll tell you who when I tell you how I know about Peru. For now though, I need you to back off on the surveillance. No bugs, no teams following me. If you must, you can go ahead and embed someone at Catco to keep an eye on me. They won’t see much, other than a bit of heat vision to make sure the boss gets a hot latte and the
occasional bit of super hearing.”

“This is all about you being upset about us following you?”

She shook her head. “No. This is about me needing to be able to move and prepare without Sam Lane and people like him knowing my every move.”

“Prepare? Prepare for what?”

“Come on, J’onn. You have to know by now that the Fort Rozz prisoners are moving towards end game. It’s slow going. My source says another twelve to eighteen months before they’re ready to execute, but it’s obvious something is coming. When the time comes, you’re going to need my help.”

“Ms. Danvers, I assure you-“

“There were thirty Kryptonians in Fort Rozz when it landed. Thirty. You can easily go toe-to-toe with me or my cousin, you *might* even be able to take both of us if you don’t mind killing us in the process. But even using your powers, you and the DEO wouldn’t stand a chance against thirty of my people in open warfare.”

“We’d last longer than you think.”

“What? Because of the kryptonite? You’ll get one engagement before they neutralize that advantage. And even if you kill them, what about the Coluan? She’s more dangerous than the rest of the prisoners combined, and you will never see her coming.”

J’onn stared at her for a minute, and she could see him thinking. “What do you want?” he asked.

“I want you to reclassify my case as threat level epsilon. You can be my reporting officer, or if you’d rather, you can designate Susan Vasquez. Or you could just designate Alex and have her file the reports, and let her think I don’t know. Either one is acceptable.”

He gave her a small nod. “That’s doable.”

“I also need a kryptonite emitter. Something small. Maybe the size of a quarter. Something I can wear concealed, but is powerful enough to take away my powers.”

“What for?” he asked, and Kara could see the curiosity written on his face.

“I wanna take a kick boxing class, and not have to worry about killing someone.”

“Kickboxing? Really?”

“No,” she said, shaking her head. “But since there isn’t a Klurkor studio in National City, I’m probably going to end up settling for Jeet Kune Do, Krav Maga and Bojuka classes. Kickboxing just sounds more like something a twenty-four-year-old assistant should be taking.”

“You’re really serious about this, aren’t you?”

“Yes. Which is why I need one more thing.”

“You want your pod.”

Kara rolled her eyes in a near perfect imitation of Cat Grant. “Oh, yeah. Because nothing says ‘I’m not an alien’ like having a space ship in your parking space.” She shook her head. “No. Leave the
pod where it is, and by Rao’s Light, get my sister to get it working again. It might come in handy someday. I just need something out of the pod.”

“Okay.”

“There’s a hidden compartment behind the seat. It contains a small case emblazoned with my house Coat of Arms. I want that.”

“What’s in the case?”

“A Kryptonian lego set, similar to the one my cousin has up north.”

Realization dawned on J’onn’s face. “Ah. And where are you planning to put your lego set?”

“International waters, if that helps,” she said.

He shrugged. “I’ll do my best to keep it off the radar as long as possible, but try to pick a spot that’s out of the shipping lanes.”

Kara nodded. “I will. I’ll even give you the GPS coordinates once it’s up and running. I’m probably going to ask you for a few other things over the next few months. Small things. A piece of equipment here, a bit of information there. Nothing that would compromise the DEO, or your promise to Jeremiah, but there are bigger forces at play than just the Fort Rozz escapees and I need to lay some ground work.”

“What exactly are you planning?”

“It’s better you don’t know ahead of time, because when the time comes, I need your reaction to be real. I need you to do exactly what you would do if we’d never had this conversation.”

He shook his head, “I do not like the sound of that.”

“Well, if it will make you feel any better, I can give you the name of an alien criminal, and his current location.”

“Now that, I am definitely interested in.”

“Carl Draper. He’s a detective with National City PD. He was a guard on Fort Rozz. He escaped in a small prisoner transport shuttle during the break out. The shuttle’s stashed under a cabin 80 miles north of the city. He’s been hunting Fort Rozz escapees down, taking them to the shuttle and executing them.”

J’onn shook his head. “That does not sound like someone we want roaming the streets.”

“No, it does not. But I’d suggest taking him down fast and hard. He’s got a suit of power armor that would let him go toe-to-toe with a Kryptonian. If he gets to the suit before you take him down, you’ll have one hell of a fight on your hands.”

“We’ll get it done.”

“Good. There were a lot of nasty people in Fort Rozz, but there were also some good people who were just in really crappy situations. People who are no threat to anyone. This guy does not distinguish. He just kills, and he’s doing it in my mother’s name.”

“Now, there’s one more thing,” Kara said. “I need to talk to you about a man named Maxwell Lord.”
Rebirth

Chapter Summary

After a year in the past, Kara makes her public debut as Supergirl.

Chapter Notes

In this story, Kara will occasionally lapse into Kryptonian. The first instance of this happens in this chapter. The Kryptonian in this story is taken from Doyle Kryptonian which is where most of the Kryptonian used on the show is taken from. Translation was done using the resources at Kryptonian.info, and I suspect the quality of the translation will vary widely.

In the earlier drafts of this story, I either didn't use Kryptonian, or I wrote the sections in English and set it off using special formatting, but I was unhappy with that, so I went back and rewrote them in Kryptonian. The problem with that is, the Kryptonian sections were written out of order and my skill with the language (such as it is) has improved considerably over time.

I’ve tried to go back and fix any errors, but:

1). The dictionary is fragmentary and I’ve had to work around holes in the language, or when I couldn’t, construct new words with guesswork.

2). I am absolute shit at learning languages that are whole and functional, so one that only exists in fragmentary form is even worse.

Any errors are mine. Any weirdness with the language and phrasing is either me being an idiot, or an artifact of my take on how Kryptonian culture and religious beliefs would influence speech patterns. My Krypton sticks as close as possible to the show, but I have made huge changes from comic canon to make Krypton fit more closely with our current understanding of what the reality of life would be on a planet in order around a red sun.

Most translations are fairly literal translations, though the order of the words is different, because English uses a Subject Verb Object sentence structure, whole Kryptonian uses Verb Subject Object sentence structure (example: The sentence "Kara punched Maxwell Lord" would be "Punched Kara Maxwell Lord" in a Verb Subject Object language like Kryptonian). In some cases however, the meaning in English can vary from the literal translation. In those cases, I will give the literal translation first, followed by the Semantic Translation.

Two final notes.

1). I take it as a given that Alex speaks Kryptonian, because she grew up with Kara, and she spent two years fiddling with Kara's pod and the hologram, and anything in canon that says she doesn't will be cheerfully ignored because it's bullshit.
Kara *does* know how to swear, but she’s only good at it in Kryptonian.

Update: This story has now been betaed by ifourmindbeso. Any remaining mistakes are entirely my own.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kara Danvers’ Apartment. National City. Earth 38, October 8th, 2015

(One Year Later)

Kara opened the door to find a very annoyed J’onn standing there, glaring at her.

“Good morning,” she said brightly, waving him in. She walked over to the kitchen and pulled down a package of Chocos and a glass, which she filled with milk.

“You do realize the DEO is not eHarmony for aliens, right?”

“Compatible Partners,” Kara said as she took a bite out of her pre-breakfast bagel.

“What?” J’onn asked as he picked up a cookie and dunked it in the milk.

“eHarmony only does listings for straight people. Compatible Partners is the one for Gays and Lesbians. Besides, I use Chemistry.com.”

“I don’t care if you used gayalienbootycall.com. This arrangement is not so you can vet your dates.”

Kara sighed. “J’onn, I am not *dating* Maggie Sawyer. We’re just friends.”

“Oh, so you aren’t meeting her tonight at some place called Girlbar?”

“Well, yes, I am. But I don’t date women who are still heartbroken over their ex-girlfriends. Think of it as recruitment.”

J’onn held up his finger and started to say something, then stopped. He started to speak again, but stopped, before finally just shaking his head. “First you wanted me to do a full security clearance on that little computer nerd. Now this. How does any of this help us with your friends from Fort Rozz?”

“Winn helps because Winn is one of only six or seven hackers on the planet that can go toe to toe with a Coluan and come out on top, and unless you’ve suddenly managed to convince Victor Stone, Felicity Smoak or Rabiah Zinoman to sign up, we don’t have a lot of other options, because Tim Drake and Barbara Gordon are serious no-fly zones and the other two people who could potentially pull this off are definitely not on our side. Maggie Sawyer, on the other hand, will give us an in with NCPD, which is going to be incredibly useful when it comes time to lay the smack down on Maxwell Lord.”

“You know, you keep talking like you’re in this fight, but so far, all you’ve done is sit on the sidelines and feed us a few names.”

“You’re mad about the armored car last night,” Kara said.
“You’re damn right I am. Two agents in the hospital. One of them may never walk again. You could have stopped it, but instead, you’re fetching coffee for some—”

“Don’t finish that sentence, J’onn,” Kara said. “You know nothing about Cat Grant and much as I like you, if you insult her in front of me, I will put your green ass through a wall.”

J’onn sighed and held up his hands in surrender. “Fine.”

“Besides, you’re every bit as capable as I am, and you didn’t do anything to stop it either. We both have our reasons for keeping secrets.”

“Yeah, but your case is a little different.”

“It is,” Kara said. “But it would expose me while the leader of the escapees was away. If that happened, there would have been open war in the streets.”

J’onn sat down on one of her stools and picked up another Choco, dunking it in his milk. “You keep talking about this leader like you know him.”

“Her,” Kara said.

J’onn froze, with the cookie half way to his mouth. His eyes narrowed. “You do know her.”

“I do. General Astra In-Ze, War Leader of the House of Ze, Daughter of In-Ze and Myara Bar-Ul, and twin sister of Alura Zor-El.”

“She’s your aunt?” J’onn said.

“Yes,” Kara said.

J’onn popped the cookie in his mouth and started chewing, and Kara watched the emotions playing over his face.

“I didn’t tell you until now, because I thought you might decide I was a security risk.”

“Then why tell me now?”

“Because this is the last thing I need from you before I openly declare myself. Once Alex is safely out of the way in Geneva, little Kara Danvers is going to take the first of Astra’s heavy hitters off the board.”

“You have a plan?” J’onn asked.

“I do. You’re probably not going to like it, but I do.”

He reached up and started rubbing his temples. “What else is new?”

She smiled at Winn as he approached her with his tablet, walking beside her on her way to her desk.

“Did you see this? There was an armored car robbery last night. Now, there were no witnesses except this homeless guy who swears the perp had horns.”

“Thanks,” Kara said as she excepted a shipping tube from Brad with the proof of the new bus stop poster Cat needed to approve.
“Like, on his head,” Winn said as she turned back to him.

“Well, that’s usually where horns go,” she said. “But you’re sure it wasn’t just a prominent brow ridge?”

“Come on Kara, it’s an alien.”

“I don’t know, Winn. I mean, Superman’s an alien, right? He seems to look pretty normal.”

“Well, how do we know? He could be hiding anything under that suit.”

Kara shrugged. “Isn’t James Olsen taking over the art department today? Maybe we could ask him. They seem close.”

“Now you’re just making fun me.”

Kara shook her head as she sat down. “Never. Well, except for when you lose at Small World.”

“Hey, your sister cheats.”

“Keep telling yourself that.”

“Fine,” Winn said, as he went over to his desk and sat down, pointedly turning his back to her, which gave her just enough privacy to zap Cat’s Latte with her heat vision. “I won’t invite you to go see ‘The Martian’ with me then.”

“Tonight?”

“Yeah,” he said, turning back to her.

“I can’t,” Kara said. “Maggie and I are going to Girlbar.”

“Really?” Winn said, a grin on his face. “When are you gonna introduce me to your hot cop girlfriend?”

“Winn,” Kara sighed. “She’s not my girlfriend.”

Winn shook his head. “I never should have started you on Rizzoli & Isles. Now I’m destined to lose my gaming buddy to some tall, dark Italian Detective with a smoky voice.”

Kara laughed. “I told you I’m into blondes, but the medical examiner thing is just icky. Besides, Maggie is Latina and shorter than you are, which is saying something since I’m pretty sure you get carded going into PG-13 movies”

“That hurts,” Winn said, putting his hand over his heart. “That really hurts, Kara.”

“You were asking for it, standing there, being so short.” She paused for a moment, then looked up. “She’s here,” she said as she stood up, picking up her tablet and Cat’s Latte.

The elevator door opened, and Kara’s heart gave the same small little flutter that it always did when she saw Cat.

“Good morning, Ms. Grant,” she said, letting every bit of the happiness she felt come through. She’d been in the past for a year, and seeing Cat walk off that elevator never got old.

She saw the small tug of a smile that pulled at Cat’s lips before she started on her tirade. “The only
reason I bought this building is because it has a private elevator. That way, I don’t have to get soaked in cheap cologne every morning getting to my office. Find out who used it, and have them reprimanded, or bathed. I don’t care which.”

Kara just nodded as she followed Cat into her office. “Here’s your Latte, Ms. Grant. Hot.”

Cat took it from her. “As always,” she said. “I have a meeting with the board today at lunch, so cancel sushi with my Mother.”

“Got it. Should I also cancel your therapist, since you aren’t seeing your Mother?”

“Good idea, Keira,” she said, then took a sip of the Latte. “Hmmm… This tastes different.”

“Noonan’s was out of hazelnut so I got you almond instead. I hope that’s okay.”

“I don’t hate it, but do have a talk with the management down there. If they’re going to take up space in CatCo plaza, they should at the very least be able to keep their supplies stocked. Also, I’ve emailed you a list. Prepare termination letters for the Tribune as noted.”

“Oh. Ms. Grant, I’ve been thinking about that and I’d like to make a recommendation.”

“You’ve been thinking about a decision you knew nothing about until ten seconds ago?” Cat asked.

“I’ve been thinking about it since the financials came in back in January. The Daily Planet’s the only print newspaper that isn’t taking a beating, and that’s pretty much entirely Superman’s doing. They put him on the cover something like fifty-three percent of the time.”

“Are you going to tell me something I don’t know, Keira?”

Kara nodded her head. “Well, we already do a lot of content sharing with digital, but I was thinking, why not merge the Tribune with digital entirely and try doing an interactive newspaper.”

“And how, exactly would that work?”

“A smartphone app. We could put QR codes at the end of each story, which link up to a digital expansion of the story. It’s sort of a hybrid monetization model. Digital gets the basic story for free, but people who buy the tribune get free access to the expanded story content, but digital-only users have to subscribe to get the expanded content.”

“Hmmm… That’s actually an interesting idea, but it doesn’t solve the immediate issues with circulation and it will increase the editorial load.”

“Not if we’re sharing the content across digital and print. We can even tie in to broadcast by including video segments as part of the expanded articles behind the pay wall. And the best part is, we can do a hybrid subscription model as well. Customers can choose to watch an ad before the video segment and have inline ads embedded in the expanded article, or they can pay for the content to get it ad free. We’d have to eat the losses on the Tribune while we restructured and built out the new workflow, but it would save a lot of jobs and we’d be ahead of the curve on digital and print integration.”

Cat stared at her for a minute, then nodded. “Hold off on the letters for now. Type this up as a proposal and go get me the layouts from the new art director.”

Kara grinned. “The proposal is already in your drop box. I added it last night. I’ll go get you the layouts now, Ms. Grant.”
She stepped into James’ office with no small amount of trepidation. Her relationship with James was one of the biggest regrets of her previous life. It wasn’t that she hadn’t been attracted to him. She liked guys well enough, from a purely physical standpoint. She mainly told people she was a lesbian because homoromantic bisexual was confusing to a lot of them and that was before she even got into questions of species. The problem with James was, she’d been more in love with the idea of him than she had been with him and James had been more in love with his idea of her than with her. Things might have gone differently if they’d gotten together before Myriad and her death ride with Fort Rozz, but that day had changed something inside Kara. It had burned away so much of what Eliza and Jeremiah and society in general had saddled her with in terms of expectations of who and what she wanted to be and left a truer, purer version of herself behind. Her feelings for James had been part of that, but it had resulted in a lot of awkwardness and hurt feelings on James’s part.

It didn’t matter, because Kara was determined not to not make the same mistakes again. No dating James and no Battle of CatCo plaza, either.

“Mr. Olsen, are you here?” Kara asked.

“I’ll be just a minute,” came a muffled voice.

Kara stepped a bit further into the office, and spotted James digging through a pile of boxes.

“I’m just here for the layouts,” she said. “If you tell me where they are, I’ll get out of your way.”

“No trouble. Just let me finish here and I’ll get them for you.” He looked up from the box of trophies and plaques he was going through and stopped for a moment. “Hey,” he said as he stood up. “I’m the new guy.”

Kara nodded. “James Olsen, I know. Clark speaks very highly of you,” she said.

“You know Clark?” he asked.

“Of course. Oh,” she stuck out her hand. “Sorry, I’m Kara Danvers. Clark’s my cousin.” She saw a bit of surprise in his face, probably at the idea that Kara would be so open about their relationship. “Don’t tell anybody though. Cat would probably think I’m spying for the Planet if she knew.”

James laughed and took her hand, shaking it. “Now that does sound like the Cat Grant I know.”

Kara looked over, and let herself smile as she caught sight of the print of James’ photo of Kal. “And there’s the photo,” she said, letting go of James’s hand, and stepping around him. “You do good work. This almost looks like he posed for it.”

“He did,” James said. “Don’t tell anyone though. They might take away my Pulitzer.”

“Couldn’t have that,” Kara said as she lifted the print. “I’ve got to ask. What what’s he really like?”

This time James smiled, and Kara wanted to kick herself for not seeing the way he felt written on his face the first time they’d had this conversation. “He’s everything you want him to be and more. I mean…” He chuckled. “I was scared to move out here, but, uh, he told me the biggest risk was never taking any, so…”

Kara nodded and looked down at the print again, running her fingers over the image of her baby
cousin in all his heroic glory. It was easy to let the longing shine through. She hadn’t seen Clark since she came back, and before that, he’d been dead for years in her personal timeline.

“Take it.”

“Hmmm?” she said, looking up at James.

“Take it.”

“Really?”

“Yeah.”

Kara smiled. “Thank you.” She looked down at the print for another moment, then back up at James. “Layouts?”

“Oh,” he said. “Yeah.” He picked them up off the light table and handed them to her. “Nice to meet you, Kara Danvers.”

“And you, James Olsen,” she replied, taking the layouts. “I’d better get these back before Ms. Grant fires someone.”

In the year since Kara’s trip back from the future, she’d mostly avoided dating. She hadn’t done it at all in the first month or so, but Eliza had kept hounding her. Finally, during Thanksgiving Dinner, she’d just told Eliza she didn’t want to be set up on a blind date with her old college roommate’s son because she didn’t want to date men at all. That had gotten Eliza to back off for exactly two weeks.

It wasn’t terrible, but Kara always felt a little guilty since the dates weren’t going anywhere. She wasn’t really over Sara and the Supergirl thing was coming. She knew what that would do to any potential relationship. She dated mostly to humor Eliza, and to help Alex keep Eliza off her back. She’d actually made a handful of casual friends she hung out with now and then and she’d managed to talk Cat into adding an LGBT-focused section to the CatCo website and to the magazine, which had done so well Cat was considering launching three topic-focused print magazines, and five topic-focused websites.

Maggie, though, had been one of the few good things that had come out of the dating thing. She knew the woman from the previous timeline of course and never would have agreed to a date with her, because dating your sister’s future wife was surely against some rule somewhere. But she’d been sitting in a bar, nursing her third virgin strawberry daiquiri after one of her Eliza-arranged blind dates had failed to show, when Maggie had sat down next to her and ordered a whiskey. Kara couldn’t believe her luck. She’d struck up a conversation and for the last four months, she’d spent almost as much time with Maggie as she did with Winn. There wasn’t anything romantic about it, mostly because of the future Kara had lived through, but also because Maggie had been going through a long and nasty break-up with a girl named Darla, so Kara had spent a lot of time being a shoulder to cry on.

It hadn’t even really been much of a decision to bring Maggie into the fold earlier than before, because Maggie was amazing.

Tonight though, was something Kara had arranged carefully. She’d checked to make sure the bar had TVs that ran local stations so she’d get the news. She’d also set up news alerts for flight 237 Geneva and National City Airlines and directed them to her burner phone. The driver’s license in
her purse was a duplicate, and the glasses she was wearing were a pair of cheap reading glasses she’d picked up at a Walgreens. The purse had a few other odds and ends in it. A spare lipstick, and a tube of lip gloss, a half empty tin of breath mints, a couple of tampons, an expired can of pepper spray left over from her college days. A couple of Noonan’s receipts, a bit of loose change, 62 dollars in cash, and a prepaid debit card. Nothing she couldn’t afford to lose, on the off-chance Maggie reacted poorly to finding out she was an alien without almost a year of history as Supergirl under her belt, but enough that it looked like it was Kara’s actual purse.

The whole thing would look careless to Maggie, like she was in a blind panic. Maggie, being Maggie, would try to return the purse and that would give Kara a way to induct her into team Supergirl.

She spotted the woman sitting at a table, checking her watch. When she looked up, her eyes fell on Kara, and Kara waved as she walked over.

“Hey, Maggie,” she said as she dropped into the seat across from her.

“Hey,” she said. “You look great.”

“Thanks,” Kara replied. “Not too bad yourself.”

“How’s Cat treating you?”

“Oh, you know. Same old, same old. It’s a good week though. She’s only fired me twice.”

Maggie laughed. “Only you would consider that a good week.”

Kara shrugged. “It’s not like it ever sticks.”

“What’s the count up to?” Maggie asked.

“One hundred and ninety-eight. Looks like Kelly from fashion is going to win the pool.”

“I bet Winn will be disappointed.”

“Probably,” Kara said. “How’s the X-Files treating you?”

“Oh, you know, same old, same old. Men in black apparently abducted a birdman in Chinatown last night, and a Klingon with a glowing axe jumped the fence at the airport.”

“Sounds like a fun week,” Kara said, but she felt a small moment of worry. The Klingon with the glowing axe sounded a little too close to Vartox for comfort.

“Yeah. One more day and it’s over,” she said.

“Any plans for the weekend?”

“Not really,” Maggie said.

Kara rolled her eyes. “You are not going to sit at home and mope over she who will not be named.”

“I’m not moping,” Maggie said.

“No, you’re not. We’ll do something.”

“Like what?”
“There’s a women’s volleyball tournament down at National City Beach this weekend. We could go watch.”

“More like go so you can drool over the players.”

“I was thinking something more along the lines of me being your wing woman.”

“Kara, you would make the worst wing woman in history.”

“I would not!”

“Oh, do not give me those puppy dog eyes. No one is going to take a second look at me if you’re there.”

“That wouldn’t be an issue if you’d let me introduce you to my sister.”

“Your sister is straight,” Maggie shot back.

Kara snorted. “My sister is in denial,” she replied. “Trust me, she’d take one look at you and there would be an Alex-shaped hole in the closet door.”

“I’ll pass on the sister and the volleyball. Seriously, I-”

Kara held up her hand as she turned around.

“If you’re just joining us, shortly after take-off, National City Airlines, Flight 237 bound for Geneva is experiencing some loss of altitude. The pilot seems to be circling the city after apparent engine failure.”

Kara turned back to Maggie as she pulled open her purse, and took out two twenties. “I’m sorry, I’ve got to go,” she said as she threw the money on the table.

“What? Why?”

“That’s my sister’s flight,” Kara said as she started towards the door. She didn’t wait to see if Maggie followed her. She didn’t need to. She heard the scrape of the feet of the bar stool as Maggie stood up. Heard the sound of the soles of her shoes hitting the ground. Felt the disturbance in the air as Maggie chased after her.

Kara moved more slowly than she could have. She knew she had time to spare. She’d picked the bar because it was along the flight path, and this time, she was neither out of practice flying, nor was she unfamiliar with the aircraft in question. She was already pulling her jacket off as she ducked into the alley, and she could sense Maggie coming around the corner as she tossed it aside. She ripped off the cheap drug store glasses and threw them in the same direction as the jacket as she ran, then she bent her knees and kicked off.

She nearly laughed when she heard Maggie scream, “Holy shit.”

Then she put everything out of her head but the task at hand.

She approached faster this time, her flight skills fresh and practiced from her regular runs out to Sanctuary, which is what she’d named her own not so little Fortress of Solitude. When the engine broke free, instead of plowing through it and showing the city with flaming debris, she caught it, and with a deft spin and shove, sent it splashing down gently into the bay. She wasted no time trying to push against the wing. Instead, she flew up under the plane and punched through the skin,
grabbing the frame member tightly, and pushing up. There was no desperate turn to keep the wings from getting clipped. The plane cleared Otto Bender Bridge easily, and then Kara started a slow, gentle turn. The plane cleared the bridge a second time, before Kara guided it down gently into the water.

Once it had settled into the water, she kept pushing, sliding it along the surface, using her x-ray vision to make sure she didn’t hit anything until she ran it aground near the I-210 off ramp for National City Bay Beach. Once the nose of the plane was pushed up on dry land, Kara let go of the plane, and swam out, climbing up on the right wing. She stood, watching through the skin of the plane as people took movies and snap shots, before she gave Alex a nod through the window, and shot into the sky.

Kara had gone back to the alley, not at all surprised to find her purse, jacket and glasses gone. She’d known Maggie wouldn’t leave them. She’d been a bit worried she’d find the detective at her door, but as luck would have it, she was alone. She’d showered, eaten an order of fifty buffalo wings, and was most of the way through her large supreme pizza, while watching the news coverage.

“The passengers of Flight 237 appear to have a guardian angel. When, what many report to be a female flying form rescued them from certain death.”

“Leyna Nguyen is live at the scene.”

“Thank you, Rick. Guardian Angel would appear to be right. Not only did she rescue the passengers from a tragic end, but reports also indicate that she caught one of the plane’s engines as it broke free and kept it from falling on the city, and prevented the plane from hitting Otto Bender Bridge not once, but twice. Then, after setting the plane down in National City Bay, she pushed the plane up on shore, making rescue efforts and clean-up easier and much safer.”

“Oh, my god,” Alex said.

Kara hopped up from her spot on the couch and hugged her sister, careful not to bruise her this time. She stepped back, holding Alex by her shoulders.

“Are you okay?”

“Yes, thank you.”

She watched as Alex rubbed her forehead, and did her best not to sigh. She knew what was coming, and she’d been dreading this part of the night.

“Let me get you a drink,” she said. She walked over to her small kitchen and poured Alex a glass of the Johnny Walker Blue Label Alex kept at her apartment. She put the glass in Alex’s hand, and waited for her to drink it.

“So, let’s hear it,” Kara said.

“Hear what?” Alex asked.

“The part where you yell at me for exposing myself to the world, and tell me I can never use my powers again.”

“It sounds like you already know what I’m going to say,” Alex said.
Kara nodded. “You know, given how much you complain about Eliza, you sound just like her.” It was a low blow, and Kara knew it, but the flinch from Alex still made her wish it hadn’t been necessary.

“Because she’s right about this, Kara,” Alex said. “It’s not safe. What if people figure out who you are? What you are?”

“Then they figure it out. I didn’t travel two thousand light years to be an assistant my whole life. I had a mission, and maybe, yeah, it was already over when I got here, but that doesn’t change who I am. I didn’t travel two thousand light years to be an assistant my whole life. I had a mission, and maybe, yeah, it was already over when I got here, but that doesn’t change who I am.

I am Kara Zor-El

I am the last daughter of Krypton

I am the eldest child of the house of EL

Rao’s first law is to make the universe whole.
“Pretty cool, huh?” Kara asked as she walked by Winn.

“A plane-saving lady?” Winn scoffed. “How is the world supposed to take her seriously if she can’t even come up with a suit? What… Metropolis gets him and what does National City get? Some rookie superhero?”

Kara laughed. “Maybe she wasn’t expecting to save a plane last night. Ever think of that? Maybe she was out having drinks with a friend. Or maybe, maybe she just needs her best friend’s mad cosplay skill to help her come up with a suit.”

Winn looked over at her. “Seriously? That’s what you’re going with?”


“You’ve given this a disturbing amount of thought,” Winn said.

“Maggie got called in to work, so I went home early,” she said.

“Sorry.”

Kara shrugged. “It happens.” She turned her back to Winn and took a second to heat vision Cat’s Latte before announcing “She’s here.”

“I know many of you are used to being second best but it's new to me. The most incredible event in the history of National City and yet we have no exclusive of any kind.”

“We don't have much to go on. The image we're working off is low res... I guess she's around 5'9”. It's tough to Gauge with her height measured up against an airplane.”

“Hair color brown. Or black.”

“Or maybe her hair is just dirty. You know, from soot. The plane exhaust,” James said, cutting off
all the rambling.

“James, you make an excellent point. Do you think there's any connection between this hero and...” Cat asked.

“To my friend in blue? I don't know. I mean, not that he mentioned, but if she's anything like him, she's a hero. Saving people is what they're born to do. She'll be back.”

Cat smiled. “Hmm. She better be. This girl is the answer. She is exactly what I need to save the Tribune. Besides fatty foods, there is nothing people love more than a hero. We are going to blow her up. We will feature her online and in the paper, but we need images, we need video, we need an interview, and exclusive content. So go. Go get me that girl. And, Keira... Go get me a lettuce wrap.”

Kara nodded, a smile on her face. She’d forgotten just how good that little speech had made her feel the first time around. How much confidence it had given her, especially after the fight with Alex the previous night. She turned around and started to head out of the office, only to find James falling in beside her.

“It's funny,” He said. “That was the first thing he did. Save a plane, I mean.”

“Must run in the family,” she replied as she walked over to Winn. James gave her a slightly puzzled look as he headed for his office.

“Winn, come with me.”


“The roof.”

“The roof? What’s on the roof?”

Winn looked around nervously as Kara led him up onto the helipad. Kara felt a little bad for him, because she knew he hated heights almost as much as Cat, but she also knew this was the only way to convince him.

“Hey, uh, just whatever you have to say, can you make it quick? I'm not really into being this high up,” he said.

“Listen, Winn, I'm going to tell you something about me that only a handful of people in my life know. Can I trust you to keep a secret?”

“Yeah, yeah, of course.”

“Good. I just really need someone to be excited for me. There's something about me that for most of my life, I've kept hidden. But last night, I embraced who I am and I don't want to stop.”

“Um, Kara, I know you’re gay.”

Kara laughed. “Please, like that’s a secret. Winn, what I’m trying to tell you is, I’m her. The woman who saved the plane.”

Winn stared at her for a moment, then he started laughing. “Okay, that’s a good one. You almost had me believing you were serious for a second there. This is because I made fun of her for not having a suit, it’s it?”
Kara sighed and walked over to the edge of the building.

“Kara. Hey, Kara, what are you doing. No, stop. Kara, you’re going to get hurt.”

Kara just pitched back off the edge of the roof, arms out, letting herself fall for a couple of seconds before she flipped over and shot straight up, flipping over again and coming down in the center of the helipad.

“Ta da!” Kara said.

“You’re her!” Winn shouted. “Holy shit, you can fly!”

Kara gave him her widest smile. “Yep. And now I need my best friend’s mad cosplay skills to make me a suit, because Mom did not put a serger in my escape pod with me, and I do not know how to sew stretch knits.”

Winn nodded. “Okay. Yeah, okay.”

“The good news is I do have bomb proof fabric.”

Winn stared at her for a moment as a smile slowly spread across his face. “This is gonna be so cool!”

The elevator opened and Kara stepped out, rushing as fast as she could and wishing she already had her Supergirl suit because it would have made getting Cat’s lettuce wrap a thousand times easier. Of course, it would probably have been faster if she hadn’t taken the little detour to reveal her secret to Winn, but that had been necessary. She was not doing this without her support structure, which in the first few days had consisted entirely of Winn.

Of course, that was before Kara had deliberately rigged the game. Which probably explained why Maggie Sawyer was standing next to her desk when she walked into the bullpen, talking to Cat Grant.

“Hello, Ms. Grant,” Kara said as she approached them.

“Keira,” Cat said, turning around with a somewhat predatory smile on her face. “You didn’t tell me you were dating a member of NCPD’s finest.”

“Well, that’s because we’re not dating, though I do appreciate the vote of confidence in my game. Also because you’ve never shown any interest in my love life before.” Kara held up the bag with Cat’s lunch. “Your lettuce wrap.”

She turned to Maggie. “What brings you to CatCo?”

Maggie held up a large paper bag. “You left your purse and jacket at the bar,” she said.

“Oh,” Kara said, trying to give her face just the right about of panic. “Thank you. I went back for them and they were gone…”

“Well, I wouldn’t be much of a friend if I let your things get stolen, would I?”

Kara felt Cat watching the back and forth and knew the woman was picking up that there was a lot more going on, which was actually helpful in the long run, but inconvenient in the short term.

“Ms. Grant, would you mind if I took a few moments to talk to Detective Sawyer?”
“Oh, no. Not at all. After all, she was nice enough to return your things. Which you left in the bar, where you were not on a date,” Cat said.

Kara blushed about five shades of red as she realized Cat thought she had caught her in a booty call.

“Thank you,” was all she said. She gave a small nod to Maggie, then turned and lead her towards the nearest conference room.

“So,” Kara said, as she closed the door behind them.

“That was you,” Maggie said.

“Yeah.”

“So, are you and Superman...?”

“He’s my cousin. Younger cousin.”

“Younger.”

“Yeah. It’s a long story, but the basics are, he came straight here, while my pod got knocked off course. I spent twenty-four years in suspended animation before my guidance system rebooted. The long version is a bit more complicated than that, but there are not enough tissues in the room for me to go through the entire thing.”

Maggie shook her head. “You know, back when we met, you told me you had trouble finding someone with shared life experiences. I figured there was a bad break up, or maybe a girlfriend who died or something.”

“Hey, I told you you’d have to come to Thanksgiving dinner to unlock my tragic backstory.” Maggie laughed, and Kara found herself smiling a bit at that, but she kept going. “Look, Maggie, things are about to get really, really nasty. Superman and I, we weren’t just nobodies on Krypton. We’re both the heirs to dozens of dynastic titles, and because we’re the last survivors of those houses, all of their enemies will be coming for us. What’s more, my mother was the Kryptonian equivalent of a federal prosecutor and a federal court judge and when Krypton died, more than one of our prisons was broken open. Now that they know I’m alive, the criminals my mother sent to those prisons are going to be coming straight for me.”

“The smart thing for you to do would be to go home and forget what you saw in that alley last night. Pretend it never happened.”

Maggie looked at her for a moment, then shook her head. “Fuck that,” she said. “You went out last night and exposed yourself to all of that to save lives.”

“My sister’s life, Maggie. My sister was on that plane. It was not an unselfish gesture.”

“Yeah, but what about next time, and the time after that, and the time after that? I’ve seen the good your cousin has done over the years, the lives he saved. If you’re anything like him, this city, hell, the whole world needs you. And if I can help, what kind of person would I be if I refused?”

Kara smiled, and held out her hand. “Welcome to the team,” she said.

Of course J’onn was waiting for her when she got home.
“You can’t be here,” she hissed as she walked towards him. “What if Alex shows up?”

“She won’t,” he said. “I’ve got her putting together a tac team whose job it will be to bring you in for questioning.”

“Yeah, I figured that was coming,” she replied as she stepped by him and unlocked the door. “You couldn’t just drive over with her and let her introduce you. By Rao’s light, you are such a drama queen.

“We need to talk,” he said as he followed her inside.

“No, actually we don’t. I’m expecting company, so please, skedaddle.”

“Skedaddle? What kind of word is that?”

“One I picked up from someone I probably shouldn’t have been hanging around with in the first place, but there it is. Now, I’m serious. Winn and Maggie will be here any minute.”

“Did you know about the bomb?”

“You seriously think I would have let my sister get on a plane if there was any danger she’d get hurt?” Kara asked, and she felt just a bit guilty, because she *had* done just that, but only because she already knew how it would turn out and had taken every precaution to make sure her sister was safe.

“No, but I can’t help but feel like you knew this was coming.”

“I knew something was coming. I heard Vartox had been at the airport about two minutes before I got word about the plane being in trouble.”

“Vartox did this?”

“Unless Aunt Astra sent two assassins to National City at the same time.”

“Great. I’ve read his file. He’s a nasty piece of work.”

“Yes, he is. But he’s also predictable. He likes carnage, but he’s a planner, and he’s obedient. He’ll check in with his control before he moves again. We’ve got a couple of days. I doubt he’ll move again before Monday.”

“I take it you have a plan?”

“I do.”

“Want to share?”

“Yeah, I’m going to kick his ass, then let him go.”

“What?”

“I need to get a message to Astra. When Vartox comes after me, I’ll give him the message, and then you move in a strike team to drive him off. We’ll give him time to report the message back, then take him down for good.”

“I hate that plan,” J’onn said.
Kara shrugged. “Yeah, well… that’s because it sucks, but it’s the best plan I’ve got right now.”

“That’s encouraging,” J’onn said.

“Well, if I can just get her the message, we might be able to end this without bloodshed.”

“I don’t see that happening.”

“Honestly, neither do I. The Coluan is going to have to be put down. Probably my uncle Non as well. The others though, we might be able to negotiate a conditional surrender. Bring them into the fold. That many Kryptonians working for the DEO would be a hell of a response force come the day.”

“It would be, if we can trust them.”

“If I can bring Astra around, we’ll be able to trust anyone she vouches for.”

“I don’t suppose you want to tell me where you’re getting all your information.”

“Doesn’t matter. The well ran dry the moment a picture of me hit the news. I can make a few predictions based on how well I know the players, but one of the reasons I haven’t fed you more names over the last year is the risk of poisoning the well, which is exactly what I did when I caught that plane.”

“I knew you were holding out on me.”

“Yeah, well, someday I hope you’ll forgive me, but if we had pushed them into accelerating their time table, it wouldn’t have been good. Alex wasn’t ready, the DEO wasn’t ready, and honestly, I’m not ready, but I should be if Vartox will hold off until Monday morning.”

“And if he doesn’t?”

Kara shrugged. “I fight him in my yummy sushi pajamas and a pair of bunny slippers.”

“That’s not funny.”

“No, it’s not, but right now, I’m not too far from that.” Kara said. “One other thing. I’m going to need you work up a security clearance on Jimmy Olsen.”

“Why?”

“Because I’m pretty sure my baby cousin is a blabber mouth, and spilled the beans about me. Olsen has been dropping hints. He’s about as subtle as a coyote with an anvil, but he’s been working with Kal for eleven years or so. If he already knows who I am it makes sense to read him in on it.”

“Sometimes I hate when you’re right.”

“Well, I’m right about you needing to leave. Winn’s just pulled up downstairs, and I need to help him carry in the sewing machines.”

“Sewing machines?”

“If you’re gonna fight a war, you gotta wear a uniform.”

“Did you just quote Captain America to me?”
“She’s not flying around the city, fighting aliens in that,” Maggie said as she looked at the first design sketch Winn held up.

“Oh, come on, it’s great,” Winn said. He turned to look at Kara, and she just looked right back at him, completely ignoring the puppy dog eyes.

“She’s not wrong,” Kara said. “I wouldn’t wear that to the beach.” She took a drink of her orange juice, then asked, “And where’s the cape?”

“Capes are lame. You can tell your cousin I said so. Actually, never, never do that.”

“Lame or not, capes make you more maneuverable when you’re flying,” Kara said.

“Really?” Maggie asked.

Kara nodded. “The extra drag helps you corner tighter. Also, the fabrics we’ll be using could insulate a fusion reactor, and serve as a micro-meteor barrier, so I’ll be able to wrap them around someone to protect them from fire, explosions, stray bullets. You name it.”

“Oh, okay,” Winn said. “So, we’ll go with a cape.”

Kara nodded. “And don’t forget the El coat of arms,” she said. “When I go out there, I want people to know who I am.”

Winn nodded. “You know, now that I think about it….” He started flipping through his sketch book until he found something. He turned it around, and Kara smiled. It wasn’t quite right, but it was clearly a working sketch of her first suit.

“We’d go with blue,” Kara said.

“Of course, but we’d do the skirt in red,” Winn said.

“Black sheer tights underneath,” Kara said.

“You really wanna go save the day in a skirt?” Maggie asked.

“I like the skirt,” Kara said. “I think it’s cute.”

“Okay,” Maggie said.

Kara could tell she wasn’t quite convinced, but that really didn’t matter. She wanted the original suit, because anything else would remind her too much of the war, and what it was like after Cadmus. After things started going south.

“I don’t like the boots though,” Kara said, turning back to the sketch.

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “You’re going for superhero, and Doc Martens are about two decades out of fashion.”

“Hold on,” Winn said. He flipped over a couple of pages, and held up a sketch of a pair of knee boots. “How about these?”

Kara smiled. “Those are perfect. Can you put pockets in the boots for my phone and some other things?”
“Sure,” Winn said. “I do have one question though.”

“What’s that?”

“If this fabric is so tough, how are my dinky little sewing machine and serger going to work it? Heck, how am I going to cut it?”

Kara smiled. “Oh, did I forget to mention that?”

“Mention what?” Winn asks with more than a little trepidation.

“Konex,” Kara said.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” a disembodied voice replied, causing Winn and Maggie both to jump, just a bit.

“End stealth mode,” Kara said.

“Whoa!” Winn shouted as he jumped up from his seat and backed away from the gold and silver robot appeared out of thin air above the table where he was sitting. “That’s… um… that’s… Kara, what is that?”

Kara laughed. “This is Konex,” she said. “Konex, scan and approve for level two command access. Winn Schott Jr. Formal address, Mr. Schott, familiar address, Winn. Konex, scan and approve for level two command access, Detective Sergeant Margaret Sawyer. Formal address, Detective Sawyer, familiar address, Maggie. Addendum. Detective Sergeant Margaret Sawyer is tier four law enforcement. Set ancillary privileges as appropriate under Earth, United States of America, State of California and National City laws. Addendum. Mr. Schott and Detective Sawyer are pledged allies of the House of El. Access Levels House General, Cadet Branch General, Cadet Branch Compartment Three. Approval Code, Kara, El Mayarah, Su-Von.”

“Acknowledged. Greetings Mr. Schott, Detective Sawyer.”

“Um… hi,” Winn said.

“Hello,” Maggie said.

“Konex and his brothers Kolex, and Kelex are tier four cyber constructs. Konex was my personal attendant when I was growing up.”

Kara watched Winn’s face, and could tell he was torn between being slightly frightened, and completely fascinated.

“You had a flying robot butler?”

“Butler, doctor, teacher, playmate.”

“That is so cool,” he said as he stepped forward, reaching out and stopping just short of touching Konex. “You’ve had him all this time?”

“No,” Kara said. “The original body was destroyed along with the rest of Krypton. But Konex is technically software. His memories had been downloaded into a storage unit on my ship. I had Kelex, Superman’s attendant, build a new body for Konex about a year ago. Konex built Kolex a couple of months ago so I could bring him back here while Kolex runs my secret lair.”

What Kara didn’t add, because it would have needed weeks of explanation, was that she hadn’t even known about Konex or the sanctuary crystals stored in her pod until nearly a year after
Myriad. She’d asked Kal about how he built the Fortress, and he’d told her about the set of crystals hidden in his pod. She’d gone and asked the hologram of her mother why she wasn’t given a set, and the hologram had politely explained to her that she was, and they were still stored in her pod.

Having her own Fortress, which she’d dubbed Sanctuary, tucked in neatly a couple of hundred miles off the California coast had seriously upped her Superhero game. It had also given her, J’onn and Alex a place to operate out of after the situation with the DEO had gone south in the fallout from Cadmus.

“Wait, secret lair?” Winn asked. “You have a secret lair, and you didn’t share?”

Maggie just shook her head.

“Well, it would have been a little hard to explain why I had a secret lair without mentioning the part where I’m an alien.”

“Yeah, that’s actually a good point. I’m not sure I forgive you though.”

“Yeah, yeah. You say that now, but wait until Konex shows you the Kryptonian fabric extruder.”

Kara stared out into National City from the roof of her apartment building, listening to the sounds, letting it all wash over her. She didn’t open herself to much, because if she did, she’d hear the cries for help, the pain, and the struggles. Noises she hadn’t been entirely able to ignore for the last year. She had dozens of rescues under her belt, starting with the eight campers who’d died in the California wild fires a year earlier in the original timeline. Her super-speed, and a few tricks she’d learned from Barry, Oliver, and Bruce over the years had kept her from drawing too much attention. She suspected NCPD and NCFD might be scratching their heads over some of the things she’d done. Muggers suddenly hanging from a street lamp by half a roll of duct tape. Fires that mysteriously went out before the fire department arrived. A mud slide that froze solid in the middle of summer, fifteen feet from the road, giving them time to finish an evacuation before it thawed enough to be a hazard.

She couldn’t help it. She’d been Supergirl for so long, even a war across dozens of different universes couldn’t take the desire to help away from her and now that she was almost there, almost to the point where she could help out in the open again, every moment she wasn’t helping weighed on her.

“You okay?” Maggie asked from behind her.

Kara nodded. “Yeah. I suppose it might not seem that way, but I am.”

“That’s good,” Maggie said. “You wouldn’t do anyone any good out there if your head wasn’t in the game.”

“I know,” Kara said. “Experience was a bitter teacher on that point.”

“Sounds like there’s a story there.”

“Not one I want to remember,” Kara said, and it really wasn’t. Barry had tried to talk her out of fighting the day after Alex had been killed, but Kara hadn’t listened, and the results had been ugly.

“I keep thinking you’re too young, you can’t possibly know from experience, but something tells me you do.”
“I am a ruined vessel of sorrow and regret. But I am free.”

“Something from Krypton?”

“No. Mass Effect 2. Winn made me play the whole trilogy.”

“I’m afraid to ask.”

“You’d like it, it’s a series of video games about a Lesbian Space Cop, her partner, who’s a dinosaur rooster thing, and her hot blue archeologist girlfriend.”

“Sounds like something the little troll would be into.”

“Nah, he plays the male version of the main character, and hooks up with the gay shuttle pilot in the third game.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Winn’s bisexual. He’s just… He’s not perfect, there’s a hell of a lot more baggage there than you’d think, but after I told him I was gay, he never once made so much as a suggestive comment.”

“I think that outfit he tried to put you into counts.”

Kara laughed. “Yeah, you should see some of the ones he’s drawn my cousin in.”

“Oh,” Maggie said, right before she giggled. “Did he show them to you?” she asked, barely able to hide the mirth in her voice.

Kara frowned, not getting the joke. “Yes?”

“Oh, to be a fly on the wall when he makes the connection…”

Kara’s jaw dropped, and after a second, they both exploded into a fit of laughter.

“Oh, God,” Kara said, “I needed that.”

“I don’t doubt it,” Maggie said. “You looked like you had the weight of the world on those unfairly muscular shoulders.

Kara raised an eyebrow. “Don’t tell me you’ve got a cape crush.”

“No, no, no. I adore you Kara, but you are definitely not my type.”

“Not into aliens?” Kara asked.

“Actually, Darla is a Roltikkon,” Maggie said.

“Wait, you mean to tell me the girl you’ve been crying on my shoulder over on and off for four months is a telepathic alien?”

Maggie shrugged. “Yeah,” she said. “That’s how I found out she was cheating on me. When you can read someone’s mind every time you kiss, sooner or later, stuff like that comes out.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

Maggie shrugged. “I’m over it, thanks in large part to this really friendly Kryptonian who let me
cry on her shoulder.”
Kara smiled. “Glad I could help.”

“I need you to promise me something, though,” Maggie said.

“What is it?”

“What you’re doing. It can’t just be about humans. There are a lot of aliens here, and they don’t have any recourse. No way to seek justice.”

“I know,” Kara said.

“Do you?” Maggie asked. “I don’t mean to be harsh, Kara, but you pass for human every day.”

Kara reached out and took Maggie’s hand, giving it a squeeze. “I know, Maggie. Trust me.”

“Okay,” Maggie said.

Kara looked away, staring out into the city. “I didn’t want to do this alone, Mags. Not like my cousin. It’s easier for him. He was born on Krypton, but he doesn’t remember. He didn’t watch it die. I have issues. Anger. Rage. I sometimes, I forget that I can’t let those out. That I’m not normal. I need help, people who know me, who can remind me what it means to be a hero when all I want to do is tear someone apart. That symbol that Winn is sewing on my costume, it’s the Ancient Kandorian Glyph for a word that literally means hope, but it also stands for my family’s motto. El Mayarah. It means ‘stronger together’. But the person I want with me the most isn’t ready to accept this. Not yet. I thought… hoped you and Winn could be that for me, be the people I drew strength from, but it wasn’t fair of me to ask you. You don’t owe me anything. You can still walk away.”

“No, I can’t,” Maggie said. “Kara, whatever else you are, you’re family. You have been since the night I met you. I’m not sure why I felt that way about you so quickly, but I did, and I do. I’m here for you. But we’re going to do this the right way. No back alley beat downs. No Star Chamber justice. We do this in the light of day.”

“I can’t promise that,” Kara said. “The part about the light of day. There are reasons I’ve stayed hidden, and some of them are pretty scary. And there are times even police don’t tell the public the entire story, to avoid causing a panic, or because it will lead to reprisals against innocent people. I’ll promise you though, that if I hide something, it will be because there’s a good reason.”

“Those prisoners you mentioned?”

Kara sighed and gave the city one last look. “Come on downstairs. Winn deserves to know what he’s getting himself into just as much as you do, and I don’t want to tell this story twice.”

“How do I look?” Kara asked as she stepped into the living room.

“Good,” Winn said, smiling at her from his spot on the couch.

“He’s right. I’m still reserving judgement on how practical the skirt is, but it definitely has style.”

“The swagger helps,” Winn said.

Kara turned around, looking at herself in the mirror. The suit was nearly identical to her original Supergirl outfit. The only real difference was the hidden pockets in the boots. The original suit only had one for her phone. This one had two phone pockets, one for money, and one which held an anti-kryptonite shield. She hadn’t told J’onn about that last one, because if she had, she wasn’t sure he’d have given her the kryptonite in the first place. She knew J’onn had come to trust her, but this J’onn was still the J’onn that she’d known her first few months at the DEO. The J’onn before he confronted the White Martian.

She stopped and took a deep breath. So many of the befores were going away soon and she could start rebuilding her family.

She turned around. “What have you got for me?”

“Car chase on the 112 Freeway,” Maggie said. “You in?”

Kara smiled, remembering how this went the first time. “I got this,” she said. “Konex, you ready?”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” it said as it vanished into stealth mode.

“Wait, you’re taking him with you?” Winn asked.

“How else do you expect a live camera feed,” Kara said before she launched herself out of the window.

Her first time living through this day, Kara was still a weak flyer. She was running on instinct alone, and didn’t have the advantage of a cape to aid with maneuvering. When she’d tried to catch the car, she’d flown into an embankment when it cut a corner far too sharp for her. This time, she had years of combat flying experience under her belt, and could turn on a dime at anything less than supersonic speeds. When the car skidded around the corner, Kara took the turn without a second thought, and put on just a bit of altitude. She used her X-Ray vision to aim, then used her heat vision to cut the battery cable on the car. A few seconds later, she landed next to the car as it rolled to a stop, jerked the door open, and pulled the driver out, dragging him to the rear, and bending him over the trunk. As the cops approached, she gave him a quick once over with her X-Ray vision, then turned to the closest of the cops.

“He’s got a knife in his right boot,” she said. “Don’t forget.”

The cop nodded as she stepped back, only letting go one the man had the suspect’s arms secured. She tapped her fingers to her forehead, a quick acknowledgment, then kicked off, taking to the sky again as she took flight.

“Okay, what else have you got for me?” she asked.

Kara ducked through the window of her loft, smiling as she caught a whiff of fresh pizza. She’d circled the block twice while Winn was paying the delivery guy, but now that the coast was clear, she was eager to eat. Konex followed her in through the window and decloaked once he was safely inside.

“Hey!” Winn said. “A car chase, three ambulances carried to the hospital, a mugging, and a bank robbery. Not bad for your first day.”

“Not bad at all,” Kara said. She looked around, and frowned. “Where’s Maggie?”
“She left right after the bank robbery,” he said. “Said she got called in to work because apparently there’s some alien flying around playing superhero.”

Kara signed. She’d been looking forward to sharing their success with both Winn and Maggie, but she couldn’t blame Maggie for having to work.

“So, are we done for the day?” Winn asked.

“You have plans?”

“No,” he said. “But I was going to see if I could borrow Konex for a bit.”

“What for?”

“I wanted his help with my Winter Soldier outfit,” he said. “Most of it is really easy, but the metal arm is a pain.”

“Tell you what,” Kara said. “If you can show Konex how to tie into 911 dispatch, along with police, fire and ambulance dispatch, as well as the emergency broadcast network so he can run superhero central when you’re not around, he’ll help you with your costume.”

“Awesome!” Winn said.

“No Kryptonian technology though,” Kara said in her Supergirl voice. Winn’s face fell slightly, but Kara ignored it. She knew she was going to have to introduce several Kryptonian technologies to the world at large, but she was going to do that in a very carefully controlled way, and she needed to make sure the patents stayed in friendly hands. That meant either Wayne Enterprises or Themyscira Enterprises. Letting Winn use any Kryptonian tech risked Maxwell Lord, Simon Tycho, or Lillian Luthor getting their hands on it.

The two of them ate in companionable silence for a while, and Kara used the time to rest for the confrontation she knew was coming.

“Four-alarm fire at Gates and Igle.”

The sudden sound made Winn jump, but Kara had been expecting it. She swallowed her last bite of pizza, and stood up.

“Konex, stay here with Winn. Let him show you how to run the equipment, and incorporate as many functions as possible into your internal hardware. Winn, after this, we will be done for the night. Let Maggie know, then, go home and get some sleep.”

“See you tomorrow?”
“I’ll text you,” Kara said as she jumped out of the window.
Kara had been considering how to handle this moment for a year and for a year, she hadn’t been sure she’d reached the right decision, but she did know she wasn’t about to let herself be dosed with Kryptonite tranquilizers and chained to a gurney again. She’d forgiven J’onn long, long ago, but that didn’t mean she’d forgotten the indignity of the incident, or the fact that it prevented her from helping fight the fire she’d been on her way to assist with.

She started by altering the route. She knew that she’d been caught last time because the DEO had a spotter on her apartment, and time to maneuver the team into position along the flight path to the fire. So, she swung wide, using her X-Ray vision to spot the team while keeping out of their line of sight.

The fire was easy to deal with. A few puffs of freeze breath, a couple of quick air lifts to get trapped people out of the building, followed by a far, far more liberal application of freeze breath. It was the work of about ten minutes before everyone was safe, and the firefighters were walking the building, making sure there were no hotspots that might flare back up. She didn’t wait for a thank you, or to talk to anyone after. She just headed back home, making sure to pick a route that would give the team a clear line of fire.

The team was good, the ambush well-laid. A perfect trap if the prey was unsuspecting like they thought she would be.

She hit the first dart with her heat vision, vaporizing it before it was close enough to be a threat. The second and third darts, she caught as she started to descend. The fourth dart, she let hit her, watching with amusement as it bounced off the Kryptonian barrier fabric a moment before her feet touched the ground.

“The next person who shoots at me will regret it,” she said, loud enough for the entire team to hear.

Of course, it would be Alex that would step out of cover and fire a shot.
Kara was not as fast as Barry, or even as fast as Wally. She couldn’t touch the speed force the way they could, not without Velocity 12 in her system. But not being as fast as they were didn’t mean she wasn’t insanely fast. Alex hadn’t finished pulling the trigger before Kara was across the distance, barrel in hand, squeezing. It’s something she’d never do with a fire arm, but the tranquilizer darts were fired via compressed air, so the dart jammed in the barrel nice and solid, without the bolt blowing out of the back of the rifle.

Kara moved again, snatching the rifle out of Alex’s hands, careful not to break any fingers, and brought it down over her knee, destroying it beyond repair, before she grabbed the zip cuffs hanging from Alex’s belt. They were useless against most aliens, but they worked against Kryptonians under the influence of Kryptonite, and some of the weaker species. And against humans.

From the time Kara issued her warning until three DEO agents were on the ground in zip cuffs, their smashed rifles laying on the ground next to them, it was less than ten seconds.

“Mouse trap,” Alex yelled, her voice garbled by the voice changer built into her mask. Almost instantly, the entire alley flooded with green light as Kryptonite emitters came online.

Kara made a big show of raising a fist to her mouth and yawning into it. “You know, Alex, you could have just come by my apartment and picked me up. It would have probably saved a lot of money out of the DEO budget.”

“What?” Alex asked, and even through the voice changer, Kara could tell she’d shaken her sister. Which was exactly the point.

The cell emitters back at the DEO base, as well as the wrist shackles, used real kryptonite in a fail deadly arrangement. They required power to stop or reduce their emissions. Loss of power would result in them being turned up to maximum power instantly. The portable emitters in the alley used banks of super-high-intensity LED’s that emitted radiation in the same wavelengths as Kryptonite. Wavelengths which were harmless to humans, but which disrupted the function of the photocondria, the organelles in each cell that stored and released energy absorbed from sunlight.

Real Kryptonite or not, Kara should have been on the ground writhing in pain. Except, her left boot carried a kryptonite shield, similar but more refined than the ones Astra and her people had developed shortly after fighting her for the first time.

“Tell your agents to stand down,” Kara said. “This doesn’t have to be a fight.”

“You need to surrender, Kara,” Alex said.

“No,” Kara replied. “I could fly away from here, and there isn’t a thing you can do to stop me, because Hank Henshaw did not send you out here with Kryptonite bullets.”

The alley was deathly silent for a moment as they stared at each other, until finally, Alex shouted, “Stand down.”

Kara sighed and shook her head. She turned and used her heat vision to burn through each of the kryptonite emitters one by one. When she was done, she looked at Alex again. “Now, I call shotgun for the ride back to your base.”

Alex shook her head. “That’s not how this works,” she said.

“Well, I could just fly off and meet you there, but I suspect Director Henshaw would be a little upset by that.”
Alex reached up and pulled off her mask. “First, you just trashed half a million dollars in equipment, and rendered another ten million or so completely useless, in the span of sixty seconds. I’m pretty sure he’s going to be upset either way. Second, how do you even know that name? Third, how do you know what the DEO is?”

“He really sent you out here without telling you?” Kara asked. Then, she held up her hand to stop Alex from answering. “Fine, I’ll ride in the back, but I’m not wearing a bag on my head.”

“Wouldn’t matter,” Alex said. “We didn’t bring one made of lead.”

“And I’m telling Eliza about this,” Kara muttered. “See if she makes you any sweet potato pie for Thanksgiving.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Like that was gonna happen anyway.”

“You mind telling me what the hell happened out there?” Hank asked as he entered the observation room. Alex was standing there, looking through a two-way mirror at her sister who was sitting in the interrogation room next door.

“I don’t know, sir,” Alex said, turning towards him. “It’s almost like she expected us. She swung wide and missed the ambush on her way to the fire, so we switched around. I detached Michaels and Winslow to take up position under her outbound flight path, then set the mousetrap under the least time flight path. I held Marks and Wilson back to trigger the kryptonite emitters. She burned the first dart out of the sky, caught two and three. The fourth one caught her center of mass and bounced. She disarmed me, tied up my team, and I hit her full blast with four emitters. She just stood there and faked a yawn. I told her she needed to surrender, and she pointed out there wasn’t a damn thing we could do if she decided to just fly away. Then she burned through the emitters, and said she called shotgun for the ride back here.”

J’onn reached up and pinched the bridge of his nose, wishing away the headache he always seemed to get when Kara Danvers was involved.

“Anything else?”

“She knew who I was, she knows who you are, and she knows about the DEO. The whole thing felt off. If it were anyone *but* Kara, I’d think we had a mole who tipped her off. Which brings up two questions.”

“Which are?”

“Well, first, why am I not under arrest?”

“You’re not under arrest, because I know you didn’t tip her off.”

“Wanna tell me how? Or anything else? Because when I asked her how she knew your name, she said, and I quote, ‘He really sent you out here without telling you?’ So, my second quest is, what the hell are you not telling me?”

“I know you didn’t tell your sister about us because a year ago, she walked up to one of our field agents and demanded a meet with me.”

“What?” Alex shouted.

Hank held up his hand. “When she first moved into your old apartment, I put Wentworth’s team on
her. She made Wentworth, Rogers, Stevens and Miller. Sat down at Wentworth’s table at Noonan’s one morning and handed her a card with my name on it and a reference to a mission I went on about ten years back. The card asked for a meet. I went. She offered me a deal. I pull surveillance off her. In exchange, she’s been feeding me information. Assumed names of Fort Rozz escapees, among other things. She’s the one who tipped me off about Carl Draper, about Rampage and her sister, Vril Dox, Facet Jens and maybe a dozen others we’ve brought in over the past year. Her information has also helped us bring about sixty low-threat individuals into our self-reporting program, which has likely kept them from being recruited by the prime faction."

“Sir, why wasn’t I told about this?”

J’onn could feel the anger radiating off of her, along with hurt and no small amount of betrayal. The feeling twisted in his gut, because try as he might to keep his distance, he loved Alex like one of his own daughters. “It was one of the conditions of the deal. You weren’t allowed to know she knew about the DEO.”

“And you just agreed to that?”

“Agent Danvers, need I remind you that the DEO exists to do more than watch out for your little sister?”

“No, sir,” Alex said through gritted teeth.

“You should be proud of her, Alex,” he said, his tone softening. “She’s saved a lot of lives, and I don’t just mean on that plane.”

“Then why bring her in?”

“Because there are rules. We’re supposed to keep aliens out of the public eye, and nothing says covert like a pretty blonde flying around in a red miniskirt.”

The room suddenly erupted with the sound of laughter and both of them turned to look at Kara, who was bent over, holding her sides as she laughed.

“Can she hear us?” Alex asked.

“The room is supposed to be sound proofed,” J’onn said.

Kara, seemingly laughing even harder, raised a hand and pointed at the floor, making a small up and down motion with her hand to emphasize her point. J’onn and Alex both looked down, then up at each other as they realized the concrete floor must have been carrying the vibrations from their conversation into the next room.

Alex threw her hands up. “Of course. She can probably hear everything in the whole damn base.”

Kara stopped pointing at the ground and gave a thumb’s up.

Alex reached up and started rubbing her temples. “I’m gonna kill her. I’m gonna kill her, except I can’t kill her, because Kryptonite doesn’t work on her.”

With that, Kara finally looked up, and smiled. She reached down into her left boot, and pulled out a device of some sort. “That’s because I had a year to prepare,” she said.

“I think it’s time we had a talk with your sister, Agent Danvers.”
Kara watched as Hank and Alex walked into the interrogation room. They both took seats across from her, and Kara rolled her eyes a little at the look on Alex’s face. The disappointed big sister face had stopped working on her around her sophomore year of college.

“Ms. Danvers,” J’onn said.

“Hank,” Kara replied. “Alex.”

J’onn nodded towards the kryptonite shield she’d sat on the table. “You care to tell us what that is?”

“Anti-radiation shield. It was fairly common tech on Krypton. Didn’t take very much effort at all to adapt it for the wavelengths Kryptonite puts out. Took a bit more work to integrate it into the suit design, so I didn’t have to wear it exposed. Making it strong enough to take a hit from a Kryptonian or a Martian… That was hard.”

“Martian?” Alex asked, turning to look at J’onn. “Really? I haven’t heard about-”

“They’re extinct.”

Kara shook her head. “Green Martians are nearly extinct. White Martians are still around. Not as tough as the Green ones, but still nasty customers.”

“That’s why you wanted the Kryptonite emitter,” Hank said.

Kara shook her head. “No, I wanted the Kryptonite emitter so I could take a few Martial Arts classes without my sparing partners breaking their hands, just like I said. I already had a sample of Kryptonite when you gave me the emitter. I used that to develop the shield.”

“Why build it at all?” Hank asked.

“Because the DEO might not always be run by someone with your background. Imagine a DEO with, say, General Sam Lane in charge. My cousin and I would be in cells inside of a week. In project Cadmus the week after that.”

Hank winced. “I see your point.”

“I also thought it would help make my point about how you can’t expect to keep the advantage Kryptonite gives you.” Kara reached out and tapped the shield. “Fort Rozz must have had hundreds of these in their supply lockers.”

“How do you know about Fort Rozz?” Alex asked.

“My mother put about ninety percent of the inmates there, including close to thirty other Kryptonians. Not to mention some of the dregs of the galaxy. She also put away more than a few people who really didn’t deserve the sentence they ended up with, but by the time she realized that even a five or ten-year sentence was about to turn into an eternity trapped in the Phantom Zone, she was too busy planning to save me and Kal-El to care.”

“I didn’t know it had followed me when I escaped the Phantom Zone. It was years before I found out that I only got out of the Phantom Zone because Brainiac 8, who’s on your prisoner manifest as Indigo, managed to reboot my pod’s drive system, and slave Fort Rozz’s guidance computers to
my Nav system, and lock out the guards’ controls. She’s also the one who opened the cells when
the ship crashed.”

“How do you know all of this?” J’onn asked.

“If I told you, you’d lock me in one of your cells. I’d offer to prove it, but unfortunately,” she
reached up and tapped the side of her head, “Kryptonian brain structure.”

Alex looked back and forth between Kara and J’onn for a moment. “What are you talking about?”

“Not now, Agent Danvers,” J’onn said.

“You know,” Kara said. “This might be easier if we had this conversation somewhere else.”

J’onn glared at her for a moment, then sighed. “Fine. Follow me.”

“Hey, Alex?” Kara said as she stood up. “Can you get me a cheese Danish and a pack of Choco’s
out of the vending machine in the break room? I don’t think Hank will let me go by myself, and all
I’ve had today is two extra-large pizzas and a dozen pancakes.”

Alex looked at her for a minute, then just shook her head. “Fine.”

Five minutes later, Alex walked into the training room and handed Kara her Danish, a bottle of
Grape Fanta, and the pack of Choco’s. Kara immediately handed the Choco’s over to J’onn, who
took them and tore them open, closing his eyes as he ate the first one. Kara tore the wrapper off her
Danish and finished it in about three bites, before cracking open the soda.

“So, you want to tell us why you’re so afraid to talk on camera?” Alex said.

“I don’t want General Lane to hear a lot of what I have to say,” Kara said. “Like, how the leader of
the hostile faction of Fort Rozz escapees is my Aunt Astra, and her Lieutenant is her husband, Non.
I doubt he’d react well to the part about how Hank is actually a Green Martian named J’onn J’onzz
either.”

“What?” Alex demanded, turning towards J’onn. “You’re a what?”

J’onn just glared at Kara for a moment. “You’re doing this on purpose, aren’t you? You’re trying to
make my head explode.” He let out a long suffering sigh, and turned towards Alex. “Do me a
favor, and don’t scream,” he said, then he shifted into his true form.

Alex stood there, her mouth open, looking back and forth between Kara and J’onn. “What the
hell?”

Kara reached out and rested a hand on Alex’s shoulder. “You remember the night when Jeremiah
and Eliza caught us flying?”

Alex sat on the edge of the raised sparring platform in the center of the room, a look of numb shock
on her face. J’onn, wearing his human form, sat next to her with what Kara always thought of as
his ‘I’m too old for this’ face. She hadn’t laid out everything, because she wasn’t going to bring up
time travel and alternate realities and that entire can of worms just yet, but she had laid out
everything she knew about Astra, Non, and the Fort Rozz prisoners, along with Myriad and Indigo
(though she did leave out the small detail about Indigo’s connection to the Guardians of the
Universe). Between her and J’onn, they also brought Alex up to speed on what happened to
Jeremiah, though Kara carefully kept the fact that he was alive to herself. She knew his time at Cadmus was awful, but they could not afford any distractions while they focused on Myriad, because if it was ever deployed, it would attract the attention of Darkseid and while they couldn’t put that confrontation off forever, they needed to deal with other issues first.

“How do you know all this?” Alex finally asked.

Kara sighed, because she’d been expecting that question. “You remember the night I moved into your apartment?”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “I remember, because you hugged me so hard the next morning, you cracked two ribs, and every time I spared for a month, some wise ass punched me in them.”

Kara winced, and had the decency to look sheepish. She’d tried to control herself, but hugging Alex again, years after watching her die, made it hard. “Sorry. That was the night my source contacted me.”

“I don’t suppose you’re ready to tell us who this source is?” J’onn asked.

Kara shook her head. “Not yet.”

“When?” Alex asked.

“Once Myriad is off the table, I’ll tell you everything,” Kara said.

“How do you know you can trust this source?” Alex asked.

“When you find out who the source is, you’ll understand that too.”

“Kara…”

Kara looked at J’onn. “Can you give us a few minutes?”

J’onn nodded. “I’ll be in the command center, Agent Danvers.” He stood up and walked out of the room.

Alex at least had the decency to wait until the door closed behind him. “What the actual fuck, Kara?”

“Alex-“

“No,” Alex said as she stood up. “You’ve been lying to me for a fucking year.”

“And you’ve been lying to me for two,” Kara replied.

“Well, apparently, not very well,” Alex said.

“Better than you think,” Kara said. “If someone hadn’t tipped me off about all of this, I would have spent the last year doing nothing but fetching coffee and dating whatever loser you and Eliza fobbed off on me.”

“I was trying to protect you,” Alex said.

“Yeah, and I’m over here trying to protect everyone in the entire world,” Kara said. “But I knew if I told you, you wouldn’t let up. Not until I told you everything. And I would do it, too. Sooner or later, I’d give in and tell you everything. Because I hate lying to you. I hate not telling you every
little thing about my life. The last year has been a nightmare, Alex, because every time I hesitated, every time I doubted myself, all I wanted was to ask your advice.”

“Then why didn’t you?” Alex asked.

“Because you needed this place. More than me, more than I needed you. Or are you going to tell me you weren’t drinking yourself into an early grave? I could see it, Alex. I was watching you crash and burn, and I didn’t know what to do, and then, practically overnight, you just got better. You were happy again, driven in a way I hadn’t seen in so long, and when I found out it was this place, I couldn’t take it away from you.”

“Yeah, except it was all a lie.”

“No. No, it wasn’t. You brought in Caren and Moyner. You brought in Carl Draper. Alex, you took down Vril Dox and Facet. Either one of them would have given *Kal* a run for his money. You have saved hundreds of lives. What does it matter if I passed a couple of names to J’onn? Why does the fact that the intel came from me change the amazing things you did?” Kara stepped forward and placed both of her hands on Alex’s shoulders. “You spend so much time feeling like I make you less, Alex, that you’ve never realized how extraordinary you are. You charge into battles that would give a Kryptonian or a Martian pause, and you do it without being able to fly, without unbreakable bones or impenetrable skin. Just a human girl, kicking ass and taking names.”

Somewhere along the line, Kara wasn’t sure exactly where, tears had started to flow down both of their faces. Kara, because she’d wanted to say this to Alex from the moment she’d woken up in her younger self, and Alex, because she’d needed to hear this for years.

“Alex, you are everything I want to be,” Kara said, pulling her crying sister into her arms. She held her for a moment, rocking her gently, until she felt the sobs start to die down. “Well, maybe not the hair. I’ve definitely got better hair.”

“You know I have kryptonite scissors, right?” Alex said, laughter mixing in with the other emotions in her voice.

It was a long time before Kara let go of Alex and stepped back, giving her sister a watery smile. “Come on. Give me the dime tour, and then we can find J’onn and talk about Vartox.”

Chapter End Notes

A quick note for those of you following the story. I am basically done writing ‘The Shape of Things to Come’. I have a hand full of scenes I need to go back and expand to flesh out parts of the story, and one more scene to write, but that’s it. I finished it a good deal earlier than I expected, not because I reworked my outline or anything, but because I got to a point in the arc I’m following and realized that it was the right thing to do to end *this* story there. The original plan was for ‘The Shape of Things to Come’ to encompass four major narrative arcs. The first of those is the Myriad Arc, the second is the Cadmus Arc, the third is the Oa Arc, and the final one is the Apokolips Arc. When I got up to chapter 41, I couldn’t make it work for some reason, and I went back, and looked over what I’d done, and realized the problem was, I wasn’t writing the same story anymore. Yes, it’s the same overall narrative, but I had really finished this story several chapters earlier.
With that in mind, I stepped back, and looked at the structure of what I was doing. I waffled a bit over whether to end with Chapter 37 or Chapter 38, but in the end, there wasn’t any real question. Chapter 38 is absolutely an ending, and if I rearranged the order of scenes in Chapter 39, and rewrote one to be from Astra’s POV instead of Clark’s, it became the perfect opening chapter for the sequel. My one real disappointment with that decision is that Kara will not get to punch Rip Hunter in the face in this story. The sequel was very nearly entitled “Kara punches *all* the faces and kisses *all* the girls”, but I believe in truth in advertising, and truthfully, Alex, Maggie, Astra and a surprise guest hero end up punching a lot of the faces.

What this means, in practical terms is simple. “The Shape of Things to Come” is now the first story of a series entitled “Future Shock” and it will end with Chapter 38, “The Motion of Falling Bodies”, which is probably one of the strongest chapters of the story. A week or two after that, I will start posting “Devils in the Dark” which will cover the Cadmus arc. Once that story is finished, it will be followed by two more stories, tentatively titled “A Plague of Righteousness” and “In The Shadow of Rao”.

I will be honest. I have no idea how long these stories are going to end up being. “The Shape of Things To Come” ends on the Friday after Thanksgiving, which means it covers the first five episode of season one (for those who don’t know, ‘How Does She Do It’ was originally episode 4, and ‘Livewire’ was originally episode 5, and this story places those events in that order). It also clocks in at a whopping 168,000 words. Given what ‘Devils in the Dark’ has to cover, I expect it will be at least as long. A Plague of Righteousness was originally intended to be fairly short, but it’s gotten larger, because there’s something from the show that fits in so perfectly with the themes of the Oa arc, I couldn’t leave it out, so it may end up being fairly long as well. I can’t even begin to guess about how big “In The Shadow of Rao” will be, but big, would be my guess.
Queen, Knight and Pawn

Chapter Summary

Kara has to deal with Cat's suspicion, Alex's mixed emotions, and Vartox's attempt to kill her.

Chapter Notes

Update: This story has now been betaed by ifourmindbeso. Any remaining mistakes are entirely my own.

“Of course, leave it to media magnate Cat Grant to but a name to a face. Miss Grant dubbed National City’s new female hero ‘Supergirl.’ And if Twitter is any indication, the name appears to be catching on.”

Kara stormed into Cat’s office, happy that her acting skills had improved over the years, because it was hard not to laugh herself silly when she yelled, with all the indignity she could muster, “Supergirl?” she dropped her files on Cat’s coffee table, then practically slammed down the tray with Cat’s coffee. “We can’t name her that.”

“We didn’t,” Cat said, with her usual flare for theatrics.

Kara had to bite her lip for a moment, before she could play through the moment again. “Right,” she said. “I’m sorry. It’s just… I don’t want to diminish the importance of this. Shouldn’t we call a female superhero ‘Superwoman’?”

Cat sighed. “I’m sorry, darling, I can’t hear you over the loud color of your cheap pants.”

“But if we call her ‘Supergirl’ isn’t that reductive? Isn’t that labeling her as something less than she is? Doesn’t that make us guilty of robbing her of her adulthood, just because she’s female? You said it yourself. She’s a hero.”

“I’m the hero,” Cat said. “I stuck a label on the side of this girl, I branded her. And she’ll forever be linked to CatCo. To me.”

“And what is so wrong with ‘girl’? Hmmm? I’m a girl, and your boss, and powerful, and rich, and hot, and smart. So, if you perceive ‘Supergirl’ as anything less than excellent, isn’t the real problem you?”

“Now, Keira, you’ve been an excellent assistant, so good at finding me everything I need. So please, find me one reason I shouldn’t fire you?”

“I printed it,” James said.

Both Kara and Cat turned to look at him as he came into the room.
“And it’s in even higher resolution than you hoped for,” James said.

“James,” Cat said, “you are interrupting a very craftily-worded termination.”

“Kara wanted to surprise you, but she has a teller friend that works at West National City Bank,” James said.

“No I don’t,” Kara said.

James looked at her for a minute. “Yes, you do. The friend you had send me the picture from the branch that got robbed.” James held up the picture of Supergirl before Kara could say anything else.

Cat looked back and forth between Kara and James. “Keira, you got a clean picture of Supergirl?” There was challenge in her voice. She was practically daring Kara to lie and take credit for the image.

Kara sighed and reached into her pocket, pulling out a thumb drive. “Yes,” she said. “Just not that one. That one is James thinking he needs to save my job, because he doesn’t know I get pouty and start feeling neglected if you don’t fire me at least once a week.”

“My, my,” Cat said. “Someone’s feeling brave today. Let’s see what you’ve got, Keira. If it’s better than Mr. Olsen’s picture, I might even let you keep your job.”

Kara held up the thumb drive. “Almost fifty high rez images of Supergirl, all in uncompressed Raw format, plus about two hours of video, including footage from police dash and body cams, couple of security tapes, and even two 3D images. Oh, and signed photo releases for all of it, except the police footage. We’ll probably have to have legal look over it before we can publish, because it wasn’t officially released, and my source wants to remain anonymous.”

Cat took the flash drive from Kara, looking suitably impressed. “Well done, Keira,” she said, before turning to James. “Mr. Olsen, I’m not sure how things are done at the Daily Planet, but lie to me like that again, and Perry White can have his photographer back. Now, run along, both of you.”

Kara turned around and picked up Cat’s latte, popping the lid just enough that she could give it a quick blast with her heat vision before closing it again and turned back around. She sat the latte on Cat’s desk.

“Caramel Macchiato today, Ms. Grant,” she said, before turning back around, picking up her own coffee and her papers and heading to her desk, James right on her heels.

“What was that?” he asked.

“What was what?” Kara replied.

“I was trying to help you in there, and you threw me under the bus,” he said.

“James,” she said, taking a sip of her coffee, “I know my cousin sent you here to keep an eye on me, but first, tell him he’s got a big mouth, and my secrets are not his to share, and second, I don’t need you to ride to my rescue. I’ve outlived every assistant Cat Grant has ever had. She’s fired me one hundred and ninety-eight times. It has yet to stick.”

“Look, Kara-“
“No…” Kara didn’t get to finish her thought, because a painfully loud, high pitched squeal suddenly filled the room.

“I’m communicating at 50,000 hertz,” Vartox said. “If you can hear this...”

“Kara?”

“...you were not born on this Earth.”

Kara waved James off, and headed for the stairs.

“Painful, isn’t it? The humans of National City will suffer 10 times this pain if you don’t face me. Meet me at the National City Power Plant. How many innocent people are going to die until you prove that you are not a coward, Daughter of Alura?”

Kara did a quick sweep of the stairwell, to make sure it was clear before she used her super-speed to race up to the roof. A quick change behind the air conditioners, and she was airborne. A quick tap of the earpiece Alex had given her the night before, and she was tied into DEO comms.

“Director Henshaw, tell me you picked that up,” she said.

“Affirmative,” he said. “I’ve got Agent Danvers and the assault team headed to the gunship as we speak.”

“Just make sure they hold off until I give the signal,” she said.

“Have I mentioned how much I hate this plan?” J’onn asked.

“Repeatedly,” she said. “But trust me when I say this is our best option.”

Kara touched down at the National City Power Plant, having a weird moment of déjà vu. Of course, she *had* lived this moment before, so that might not be exactly the right term, but none of the languages she knew really had phrases specific to time travel, so it was also as close as she could get.

A lot of the structures were lead-lined, which rendered her x-ray vision useless. Of course, just like last time, she could hear Vartox’s heart. The difference was, she had years of experience using her powers that she didn’t have last time she’d stood there, so instead of taunting him like she had last time, she just listened, localized him, and waited.

He pounced at her from the top of the Demineralized Water Tanks, just like last time, only this time, she kicked back, catching him in the gut before his feet even touched the ground, and kicking him through a cinderblock wall. With her super-speed, she was on him before he could even start to get up, punching him in the face before reaching over his shoulder and jerking his axe out of its scabbard.

She stepped back, flipping it open, and examining it.

“Valeronian fire axe,” Kara said as she ran her thumb along the edge of the blade, discreetly using her thumb nail to flake off a piece of the metal. “I haven’t seen one of these in years.”

Vartox glared at her as he climbed to his feet. “On my world, women bow before men.”

“No your world,” Kara said. “And no Valeronian woman would bow to a man so weak he lost his weapon before he’d delivered a single blow.”
Vartox charged her, and Kara raised the axe, slamming the end of the handle into the enraged alien’s face, causing him to stagger back. She swung the axe down, hooking it behind Vartox’s ankle, and jerking his leg out from under him, sending him to the ground on his back. She stepped forward, bringing the axe around, and pressing the blade against his neck.

“I have a message, for Astra.”

“She doesn’t care what you have to say. She’s the one who ordered your death.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “Try again, pal. She’s not around right now. Won’t hear about this for days. Now, the message is simple. You tell her I didn’t know. That’s it. The entire message. ‘Kara didn’t know’. Think you can get it?”

“I’m sure she’ll weep over your heart-felt words, when I deliver them along with your head.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “Fine,” she said, dropping the axe on Vartox. “Come on. Let’s get this over with, you cut-rate Klingon.”

That particular taunt seemed to hit a nerve. Vartox charged her, shouting his rage as he swung his axe. Kara dodged blow after blow with such ease she felt embarrassed that she’d lost this fight the first time around. Part of her wanted to deliver the beat down he so richly deserved, but she did her best to make it look like the ferocity of his attack was driving her back, but once she was clear of the structures, she reached up and tapped her ear piece.

“Trap leader, I could use some backup.” She said it loudly enough for him to hear, and he looked around, spotting the incoming Blackhawk. He growled, and took off at a run as the first of the rockets left the launchers. Kara turned and watched as he ran for the hills.

“Trap leader,” Kara said, “pursue the hostile.”

“Affirmative,” Alex replied.

Kara smiled as she turned around and headed back to pick up the piece she’d broken off the axe.

“So, now that we’ve succeeded so spectacularly in letting a dangerous alien criminal get away, do you care to let us in on the next part of your grand plan?” J’onn said as Kara walked down the corridor to the control center.

“Well, I’m going to Big Belly Burger and get Ms. Grant a Cobb Salad with a Bacon Double Cheeseburger on top.” Kara said. “But,” she held up the broken piece of the axe, “if you run an analysis of this, you’ll probably be able to work up a tracking algorithm for his weapon in a few hours. Once you do, call me, let me know where he is, and I’ll bring him in. Just have a clean-up crew ready. The fight might get messy.”

J’onn took the small piece of metal from Kara. “What is this?”

“I chipped a piece off his Fire Axe. The weapons are hand forged by the owner. Some kind of rite of passage thing. Each one has a unique signature. Once you have it, the axe will light your sensors like a solar flare. Now, I really do have a salad to fetch.”

“Kara, this isn’t a joke,” Alex said.

“I don’t think it is,” Kara replied. “Trust me. I know what the stakes are.”
Kara was smiling as she walked into Cat’s office carrying the bag from Big Belly Burger, which was just about the only chain food Cat would eat. The Mondays after Carter spent the weekend with his father were always better for everyone if Cat had a Caramel Macchiato instead of her regular Latte, and if her lunch involved a cheeseburger. She knew for a fact that there were people who were still employed at CatCo only by the healing grace of the Big Belly Bacon Double Cheese Burger.

“Hello, Keira,” Cat said in a voice that put Kara’s nerves on end. She knew that voice. It was Cat’s ‘I know I’m on to something, and I just need to find the right question to crack the story’ voice.

“Ms. Grant,” Kara said. “I brought you lunch.”

“Yes. I can see that,” Cat said. “Care to tell me where you’ve been for the last two hours?”

“Um… working?”

“Are you asking me, or telling me?”

Kara narrowed her eyes as she sat Cat’s food on her desk. “That depends on what you know, and what you don’t and are trying to get me to reveal by asking open-ended questions.”

Cat sighed. “You’ve paid far too much attention to my interview techniques,” she said.

“What can I say? I like to watch.” Kara didn’t realize quite how suggestive that sounded until she saw the slightly startled look on Cat’s face, and could feel the heat rising in her cheeks as she watched a Cheshire grin spread across Cat’s face.

“If it’s okay with you, Ms. Grant, I’m going to go back to my desk and pretend this conversation never happened.”

“Well, if you must,” Cat said. “But we are going to discuss how you got those pictures of Supergirl at some point, Keira.”

“Oh, believe me, Ms. Grant, I never had any doubt about that.” She turned and started heading out of the office, only to stop dead when Cat spoke again.

“We might even have a discussion as to where you were when Supergirl was spotted at the National City Power Plant this morning.”

Kara turned around slowly, to find Cat ignoring her and unpacking her lunch. She decided discretion was the better part of valor, and fled to her desk.

Kara leaned back on her couch and stared up at the ceiling of her apartment. “No, seriously,” she said into the phone, “there I am, like, my third day on the hero job, and there’s footage of me, taken by the Cat Copter no less, clearing a truck load of lingerie off the interstate.”

Maggie just laughed at her, right through the phone.

“Oh, I know you can’t see me right now, but I’m wearing my angry face,” Kara said. “If you were here, I swear I’d melt your face.”

“Yeah, yeah. You talk a big game, but all I’d have to do is play a kitten video on my phone and you’d forget all about me,” Maggie said. “You can’t hold a grudge to save your life.”

“Yeah, well, that’s just because you’ve never seen me in the same room with Maxwell Lord.”
“Okay, while I’m inclined to agree with you that the man is a douche bag just for the hair alone, what did he ever do to you?”

“I think the way he ogles Ms. Grant’s ass is grounds enough for justifiable homicide.”

“Well, that’s because you’ve got a power crush on your boss the size of Kansas.”

Kara sighed. “What can I say? I have a type.”

“Rich, hot older woman?” Maggie asked.

“Bad-ass blondes with more baggage than Samsonite,” Kara replied.

“It’s better than ‘self-centered bitch,’” Maggie said.

“Wouldn’t be a problem if you’d let me introduce you to my sister,” Kara said.

“Your sister is straight,” Maggie said.

“So’s spaghetti, Mags,” Kara said.

“Jesus, Kara,” Maggie said, laughing.

Someone chose that moment to knock on the door, and Kara looked over, activating her X-Ray vision, only to see Alex standing outside.

“I’ve gotta go,” Kara said. “Spaghetti is here.”

“Okay. Don’t let her give you too hard a time.”

“You could come over. She’d be too busy drooling over you to yell at me.”

“Why are you so desperate to set me up with your sister?”

“Maybe I just think she’d be mellower if I got her… um…”

“God, you can’t even say it,” Maggie laughed.

“Kara, I know you can see me,” Alex yelled through the door.

“Bye, Maggie,” Kara said, as she stood up. She cut the call and slipped her phone down into the boot compartment as she walked over to the door and opened it.

Alex looked her up and down. “You shouldn’t answer the door like that,” she said.

“First, I know it’s you. Second, there’s literally no one else in the building. I checked. Third, come in.”

Alex stepped past her, and Kara closed the door. She did a quick X-Ray of Alex’s bag, and was a little surprised to find the hologram of her mother in the bag. Last time, Alex had brought it to convince her to get back into the fight. She wondered why Alex had brought it this time.

“I… I brought you something. I wasn’t sure if you knew about it or not, but I thought you might like to see it.”

“It can wait,” Kara said. “How are you doing?”
“Me? I’m not the one who fought an alien a few hours ago.”

“And cleaned up an underwear spill on the one-twelve.”

Alex cracked a small smile. “That too.”

“Alex, I…”

“Kara, I…”

They both stopped, and Kara nodded at Alex. “You, first.”

“I’m sorry,” Alex said.

“For what?”

“For being angry with you,” Alex said. “For… God, this is so hard.”

Kara sat down and patted the sofa. Alex dropped down next to her.

“You know, I resented you,” Alex said. “When you first came to live with us. Before you, I was the star. But then, there you were. Someone who could actually touch the stars. I couldn’t compete with that. I can’t. I was so glad when you decided not to use your powers, because somehow, you feeling like less made me feel like more. And I thought I could be the star again. I thought I could be the hero, that I could matter, and you’d just be Kara. And when I found out you’d been using your powers, that you knew more about what was going on than I did, it was like you took that from me. But if half of what you say is true, the world needs you, a lot more than it needs me.”

“No,” Kara said. The first time they’d had this conversation, on the same night in another timeline, it had been about Alex building up the confidence Vartox had shattered. This time, though, it was clear Alex’s confidence was shattered, and she’d been the one to do it. That needed to be fixed.

“No. That’s not true. The world needs you, even more than it needs me. I can’t do this without you Alex. I’m not my cousin.”

She reached up and tapped the El Coat of Arms on her chest. “Do you remember what this means?”


Kara nodded. “Yes, but it also stands for our house motto. El Mayarah, which is Kryptonese for ‘Stronger Together’. We believed, and I still believe, that strength, power, and the ability to make the world a better place all come from working with those around us. Rao gave me life. Sol’s yellow light gives me the ability to fly, to shoot lasers out of my eyes, to freeze things with my breath, to lift… anything. But you, Alex, you have always been where my strength and my light come from. You protected me, even when you resented me. You cared for me, you loved me, you taught me how to live a better life, to be a better person than I ever could have been on Krypton.”

Kara reached out and took Alex’s hands in her own. “Every good thing I do, from now until the end of my life, will be because of you. Because you took a little orphan girl who was shoved into your life, and loved her like a sister. That’s you. Without training, without a degree, just plain old Alex Danvers. The biggest, most wonderful hero I’ve ever met.”

“If that’s true, Kara, why didn’t you tell me about all of this? Why keep this secret?”

“I had to, Alex. The same way you had to keep the DEO secret from me. I hated it every day. I hate
that there are still things I can’t tell you. But you needed time to find yourself again, to crawl out of the bottle you were so determined to drown yourself in. You needed to find a way to be who you were born to be in a world where your little sister can juggle aircraft carriers.”

Kara felt the tension in the room finally break when Alex laughed.

“Please don’t try that,” Alex said while she laughed.

“I’ll only do it if there’s some sort of aircraft carrier juggling emergency,” she said.

Alex laughed again and punched her in the shoulder, only to wince and shake her hand. “That’s so not fair.”

Kara stuck her tongue out at Alex, before sighing. “We should head back to the DEO.”

“Wait,” Alex said. “I have something for you.”

Kara sat back, watching as Alex extracted the hologram projector from her bag and sat it up. It was only a couple of minutes work before Alex started the recording, and Kara watched the message from her mother play out.

“Kara,” the message began, “my brave daughter. By now you have become the woman I knew you would grow up to be. And though you were sent to Earth to protect young Kal-El, your destiny is not tied to his. There is no correct path in life. You will lose your way many times. What's important is that you find your way back to the brave girl you always were. Be wise, be strong and always be true to yourself.”

She hadn’t watched the message in a long time. Not since she’d found out her mother had used her to lure Astra into a trap. Seeing it again after so long left her with decidedly mixed feelings. She loved her mother, would always love her mother, but the rage she felt when she thought about what her mother had done, both to her and to Astra, still had sharp edges. If she touched those memories carelessly, they could still cut. Tonight though, for all the baggage anything connected with Alura inevitably brought with it, she was happy to see her, because it reminded her of the first time she’d become Supergirl. Even when she’d been making mistakes, even when it had been hard, being Supergirl those first two years had made her so happy. They’d given her a wonderful sense of purpose. Right up until Cadmus.

Right up until Jeremiah.

Kara reached out, taking Alex’s hand. “Thank you,” she said, turning to face her sister.

“We need to go,” Alex said.

Kara nodded. “Yeah.”

“Well, if it isn’t Agent Danvers and her sister from another planet,” J’onn said as they strolled into the control room.

“Director Henshaw,” Kara said. “Found anything yet?”

“Not yet,” he said.

“Actually, sir,” Vasquez said, “I think we might.”

J’onn turned around. “Agent?”
“Give me a moment. I didn’t want to say anything before but… GOT HIM!” Vasquez said. “I used the piece of his axe Ms. Danvers gave us, and I managed to localize him. He’s parked at a truck stop about thirty miles outside of town.”

Kara frowned, because this was different from what she’d expected. Different from what happened before. Of course, she knew things would begin to change, already had over the last year, but she wasn’t sure if this was a good sign, or not.

“Director, let’s do this together,” she said. “I’ll move in and subdue him when he leaves. You have a team nearby to take him, recover his possessions and act as backup in case I need it.”

J’onn stared at her for a long moment, then nodded. “Just make sure you win.”

Kara nodded. “I’ve got this.” She turned to Alex. “Gear up.”

She caught him as he was climbing out of the tank attached to his truck, picking him up and carrying him out into the desert before she dropped him and landed a few feet away.

“You,” he said as he slowly climbed to his feet. “You think putting that symbol on your chest makes you like him. Fighting him would be an honor. Fighting you-“

“Did you pass along my message?” Kara asked.

“If you were expecting mercy, you’ll be disappointed.”

“No. I just wanted to make sure Astra got it.”

“I passed it on,” Vartox said. “She’ll get it. Not that it matters. By the time she hears your pathetic plea for mercy, you’ll be dead.”

He charged her, fists raised, and Kara noted with a bit of relief he didn’t seem to have his axe with him. That was good. That would make this easier. As he came at her, she braced herself, lowering her center of gravity, rooting herself to the spot, and waiting for just the right moment. When it came, she shot a hand out, grabbed his wrist and pulled forward as she lifted her leg and drove it into his chest, sending him flying.

“You think you can stop me?” he asked. “You think you can stop any of us?”

“Honestly? I think you’re kind of a joke,” she said.

“We’ll see who’s laughing.”

She raised and hand and motioned for him to come at her. “Come on. I’ve got work in the morning.”

He screamed as he charged her, and she used her super-speed to side step, and swung her leg up, driving it into his gut, doubling him over. Before he could react to right himself, she brought an elbow down on the back of his head, dropping him to the ground, unconscious.

She reached up and touched her ear piece. “Hostile down. Containment teams move in.”

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Kara frowned at the copy of the Tribune in front of her. Cat had only been in the office long enough to deposit it on her desk and collect her latte before she was off to a meeting down on the twenty-sixth floor to work on the integration plan for the five new radio stations CatCo had just purchased. The reason she couldn’t take her eyes off of it was simple. Her own face was staring back at her. She’d been expecting that when she handed Cat the thumb drive with the high rez stills Konex had captured, but she’d forgotten how easily Cat had seen through her disguise the first time around. On top of that, she’d spent the last year making sure Cat didn’t ignore her. Not like the first time through.

She’d pulled strings she hadn’t known existed before, traded on Clark’s contacts as much as he would let her to build working relationships with Bruce Wayne and Diana Price, which led to dozens of other connections along the way. She’d opened doors for Cat that no regular assistant should have been able to and it gave her a degree of credibility she hadn’t had in the previous timeline. Unfortunately, it was starting to look like it may have caused Cat to recognize her earlier than she had before.

Whether that was a good thing, or a bad one, remained to be seen.

“Hey, Kara,” James said.

Kara jumped slightly, a reaction that was completely fake because she’d heard him approaching, but which helped to sell the ‘hapless assistant’ disguise. “James!” she said. “You scared me.”

“Heh. Sorry about that, but I was wondering if you had a minute?” he asked.

“Sure,” she said.

“Meet me on the roof,” he said, before turning and heading towards his office.

Kara leaned back in her chair and sighed. She’d known this was coming but she wasn’t sure how to handle it. She needed James in the inner circle, but she also needed to make sure he didn’t develop a crush on her and unlike Winn, she didn’t expect her sexuality to be any sort of inhibitor.

“Hey, Winn,” Kara said.

“Yeah?” he asked as he looked up from his game of Minecraft.
“Keep an eye out and text me if Ms. Grant comes back?”

“Sure. You, going to be okay with James?” Winn asked.

Kara smiled when she heard the question in his voice. “It’ll be fine. It’s not like I can’t throw him back to Metropolis if he gets handsy.”

Kara was more than a little surprised when she saw not one, but two figures standing on the Helipad on the roof of CatCo. She was even more surprised when she figured out who the second figure was.

“Kal?” she asked.

The man standing next to James turned around, and sure enough, it was her baby cousin. She didn’t even try to stop herself. She was up the stairs and across the helipad in the span of a breath, crushing him in a hug that would shatter bones and pulverize organs if he was human, and Kal was hugging her back.

“Hey, Kara,” he said.

“Hey,” she replied, pulling away from him. “What are you doing here?”

“Um, well, Jimmy said you were mad at me, and I thought maybe I should talk to you so you don’t take it out on him, because that would make things awkward.”

Kara smiled, and turned to James. “Give us a minute?”

He nodded. “Sure. I’ll just go run interference with Cat.”

“Good luck with that,” Kara said, watching as he disappeared through the roof top door. She turned back to Kal, and gave him a shove, hard enough to make him stumble back a couple of steps. “What’s the big idea, telling someone about me without my permission?”

“I’m sorry,” Kal said. “I just wanted to make sure someone was looking out for you.”

Kara sighed. “Kal, I can look out for myself.”

“I know. I’ve just been worried. Kelex told me he helped rebuild Konex for you and he told me you’d finally used your Construction Crystals to build yourself a stronghold, but I’ve been worried ever since I found out you asked Bruce to get you some samples of Kryptonite.”

“Yeah, about that. How long are you in town?” she asked.

“Just overnight,” he said. “I volunteered to do a story on the rebuilding efforts in Starling City. Merlyn Global has finally started construction on Glade City.”

Kara frowned. “You know, I’d completely forgotten about that.”

“What?” Clark asked.

Kara shook her head. “Nothing,” She said. “Though you might want to tell your friend in Gotham to look into the connection between Malcolm Merlyn and someone called Al Sa-Her.”

“Why? What have you heard?” Clark asked. Kara smiled at seeing him switch into Superman mode.
“A little bird told me that Malcolm might be cut a bit more in the Lex Luthor mold than in the Bruce Wayne one.”

“This bird have a name?” Clark asked

“Ta-er al-Sahfer,” Kara said.

“That’s not good news, at all,” Clark said with a frown. “I don’t suppose you’re going to tell me how you know someone in the League of Assassins?”

“Not a chance,” Kara said. “I’d deal with Merlyn myself, but honestly, most of that damage is already done. He’s not an active threat. Plus, I’ve got a prison barge full of Kryptonians gunning for my city.”

“What? Kara, if there are other Kryptonians—”

“Kal, slow down,” she said. “I’m working with the DEO. We’ve got things covered for now.”

“Kara, no. This is serious. Fighting other Kryptonians—”

“Kal-El,” she said in a hard-enough tone to stop him. “You being here would make the situation harder. I knew their leader before. She’s from the House of Ze. She’s family. I can talk to her. Make her see reason. But if you’re here, she’ll just see a threat, and it will turn into General Zod all over again. Except on her worst day, Astra In-Ze makes Dru-Zod look like a first-year cadet.”

“You’re sure?” he asked.

“Yes,” she replied. “Do me a favor though.”

“What’s that?”

“Don’t share my secret identity with anyone without checking with me first.”

Kal nodded. “Okay. Sorry. I just remember how much of a help Jimmy was to me when I first started. I wanted you to have someone. Keeping all this to yourself is hard.”

“Yeah, which is why I haven’t done that. I’ve got my friends, Winn and Maggie, I’ve got my sister and the entire DEO. I may also have a certain Martian up my sleeve.”

“Seriously?” Kal asked. “You know about J’onn?”

Kara nodded. “I might need your help getting him in the clear as far as his legal status, but that’s a whole other conversation.”

“Whatever you need,” he said.

“Well, in the interests of not being a complete hypocrite, I might need to share your secret identity with a couple of people,” she said.

“Oh. Um… Kara, that’s…”

Kara just raised an eyebrow.

“There’s no way I can say no here without coming off sounding like a complete ass, is there?”

Kara shook her head.
“Can I at least ask who?”

“Winn Schott Jr. and Detective Maggie Sawyer. They’re my best friends. Winn works here in IT, and Maggie works for the National City PD Science Division.”

“Okay. I mean, Alex, Jimmy, and J’onn already know, so it’s not a big deal.”

“Good.” Kara said, completely ignoring the way his tone indicated that it was a *very* big deal. She and Kal stood there for a minute, staring at each other, not quite knowing what to say. There were a lot of things Kara wanted to say, but right now, she was mostly focused on keeping Clark from getting involved with the Fort Rozz situation, which had to be dealt with before she and the DEO could move on to dealing with Cadmus.

Kara bit her lip as a thought occurred to her.

“You know… There is something I could use some help with.”

“Oh?” Kal asked.

Kara nodded. “You’ve heard of Project Cadmus?” She watched as Kal’s features darkened, and he nodded.

“Yes,” he said.

“I think I might know where it is,” she said.

“I’ve been looking for Cadmus since before you landed, Kara.”

“Come downstairs with me. I’ll give you what I have. Just be careful, okay?”

“Okay.”

“They can’t know you’re looking for them until you’re ready to go in and liberate all the prisoners there.”

“I’ve been doing this for a while, you know.”

“I do, but I also know that there’s someone in there that I care about, a human, and they’re running out of time. I can’t deal with Cadmus until I get Fort Rozz off the board. I know you guys are busy, but you, Diana, Bruce and the rest of the Gotham crew… Your hands are a lot freer than mine.”

“Who have they got?”

Kara shook her head. “I can’t talk about it. You’ll know them when you see them, but it doesn’t really matter. You and I both know no-one belongs in Cadmus.” She turned towards the door. “Come on.”

“Clark Kent,” Cat said, making Kara wince. She’d gotten distracted talking to Kal as he leaned against her desk in the bullpen and hadn’t been listening for Cat’s elevator.

“Cat,” Clark said, sounding every bit as cheerful as Kara usually did as he turned around to greet Cat. “It’s good to see you again.”

“Oh, I’m sure it is,” she said as Cat sashayed towards Kal. “Finally decided to dump Lois and come work for a real paper? I’m sure we can make room for you at the Tribune.”
Clark laughed, and shook his head. “No. Just visiting,” he said.

“Oh? I don’t remember seeing you on my schedule. Or were you just asking my assistant for directions to James’ office so you could steal your photographer back?”

“He’s here visiting me, Ms. Grant” Kara said. “Clark’s my cousin.”

“Really?” Cat said. “I had no idea.”

“Oh, well, you know how it is,” Kara said, feeling every eye in the bullpen on her. She tried not to notice that Winn’s eyes had gotten as big as saucers, and he was staring at Clark in pure awe. “I’ve only really met Lois a handful of times, and there’s not a checkbox on the standard application for ‘are you related to my mortal frenemy’s boyfriend?’”

“I might have to look into adding it,” Cat said. “So, what’s the occasion, Clark?”

“Layover,” Kal responded. “I’m on my way to Starling City for an interview with Malcolm Merlyn about the ground breaking on Glade City. The flight with a layover in National City was cheaper than the one with a layover in Keystone City, and the travel budget at the Planet has been slashed again. Perry actually tried to get me to do the interview on Skype.”

“That’s shocking,” Cat said.

“I know,” Kal replied. “It takes the personal touch out of journalism.”

“I meant it was shocking that Perry White knows what Skype is,” Cat said, a Cheshire grin on her face, “but I suppose you have a valid point as well.”

“It’s good to see you haven’t changed a bit, Cat.”

“It’s good to see you without all that dead weight you used to carry around. How is Lois, by the way?”

“Oh,” Clark said with a shrug, “you know, same as always.”

“And yet, you’re still dating her,” Cat replied. “Now, as lovely as this has been, I have an empire to run. Clark, I’m sure we’ll see each other next month during my Annual Pilgrimage to Gotham for the Wayne Foundation Gala. Keira, when family time is over, I’d like sushi for lunch.”

Kara watched as Cat walked into her office, and took the chair behind her desk the same way a Queen would take a throne. She turned back to Kal, “That’s my cue,” she said. “You want to grab dinner tonight?”

“Sure. I’m staying at the Airport Marriott.”

“Oh!” Kara said. “Steak buffet?”

“Steak buffet,” Kal said, smiling.

Kara couldn’t help the ear-to-ear grin she was wearing as she crossed the bullpen carrying Cat’s sushi tray, along with her own family platter. She was a little worried that Kal being in town might throw everything off, but honestly, she wasn’t sure how that could happen unless he decided to jump in and help with some disaster or other. But seeing him, and better still, getting him on the trail of Cadmus while she dealt with Myriad, took a huge load off her shoulders.
If enough of the original timeline was still intact, they were still within the window where they could save Jeremiah. That was one of the reasons she was so willing to push things with Myriad far more quickly than they had progressed in the original timeline. But if Superman, Wonder Woman and the Bat Family could deal with Cadmus, not to mention this universe’s version of Malcolm Merlyn, that would make her life easier. Having the help would also increase the chances that they could save Jeremiah before he became… the thing he ended up as.

She gave Winn a slight nod as she approached her desk, and she could tell by the look on his face, not to mention the way he was slightly bouncing in his seat, that he wanted to ask her about Kal, but that was a discussion for later once she could talk to him and Maggie together. She started to drop her own lunch on her desk, only to be stopped by the sound of Cat’s voice.

“Keira, bring your lunch in here,” Cat called, and Kara felt a subtle sense of dread spread up her spine. She’d almost let herself forget that Cat might be onto her secret. Still, there was no getting around it. She turned and carried both her and Cat’s lunch into the office.

“Would you like to eat in here, Ms. Grant, or out on the balcony?” she asked.

“In here will be fine,” Cat said without looking up from her computer. “Go ahead and close the door.”

That was definitely a bad sign. In the year Kara had worked there, Cat had closed the door exactly three times. One of those had resulted in security escorting a former department head from the building. The second had resulted in the police escorting someone from accounting out to face charges for embezzlement. The last one had been an ear-blistering screaming match between Cat Grant and her mother regarding Carter.

Kara sat both of their trays on the coffee table between Cat’s sofas, and closed the doors. Then she pulled a folding table top out of a carefully concealed recess by the bar and set it on the coffee table, providing an eating surface of the appropriate height. Cat kept working until Kara had finished laying out lunch, and poured Cat a cup of hot tea. Cat got up and walked over to the sofas as Kara sat down the tea pot, and took a seat. Kara, not entirely sure what to expect, sat down opposite her.

“How long have you worked for me, Keira?” Cat asked as she poured soy sauce into her dish.

“Thirteen months, Ms. Grant,” Kara replied.

“Hmm… Thirteen months. That doesn’t sound like much, does it?” Cat observed as she carefully blended Wasabi into her soy sauce.

“Depends on the basis for comparison, I suppose,” Kara said.

“Yes, it does at that. After all, before you arrived, the average length of employment for an executive assistant to Cat Grant was three weeks. The girl you replaced lasted barely lasted a week, and the previous record holder was with me for a staggering ninety-three days.” Cat picked up her tea cup and carefully took a sip. “What does that tell you, Kara?”

Kara picked up a piece of spider and dragon tempura roll. “They lacked commitment,” she said, before taking a bite.

“That’s an interesting way of putting it,” Cat said. “I’d say they were thin-skinned and lacked backbone.”

“I wouldn’t,” Kara said. “Ivana Martinez has done wonders since she started with Lucius Fox, and
Mark Solomon is practically running Big Belly Brands these days. Neither of those positions are for the faint of heart."

“No. I suppose not,” Cat said. “You, however, are an enigma.” Kara watched as Cat dipped a piece of her Nigiri in soy sauce, and then ate it.

“How so?”

Cat held up a finger as she finished chewing her food. She swallowed, then looked right at Kara. “How did you get that invitation you brought to the interview?”

Kara shrugged. “I called Clark and asked for Diana Prince’s phone number.”

“And he just gave it to you?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Why?”

“Because I asked him and because it was me,” she said. “He never would have given it to anyone else.”

“And you just called her?”

Kara nodded and popped another piece of sushi in her mouth, giving her time to formulate an answer. “I wanted this job. I wanted to work for you. I knew your reputation, but I’d also done a lot of research on things that happen to successful women. Ways they are punished for their success. I wrote a paper on Doxxing, and another one on how successful women are perceived differently than successful men. Getting that interview was probably one of the best feelings I’d ever had, because I was going to work for a woman who is probably the second most powerful woman in media.”

“Second?” Cat asked.

Kara shrugged. “You definitely wield more immediate influence, but Anne Cox Chambers is marginally more powerful long term, at least at the moment,” she said. “Cox Communications controls more media outlets than CatCo, though inheriting an empire gave her a huge head start. Don’t get me wrong, I don’t want to diminish her success, but she was born into it. You weren’t exactly under-privileged, but you built CatCo from the ground up. I admired that, and I wanted to learn from you.” Kara picked up the bottle of grape soda she’d bought for herself, and took a drink. “But wanting to learn from you doesn’t necessarily mean I want to be like you, just like wanting to learn from Clark doesn’t mean I want to be like him. Both of you are amazing, but both of you have this idea in your head that you have to do everything yourself. That it’s you against the world."

“I can understand how you’ve come to that, but something my mom used to drill into my head is that we’re stronger together. That accepting help isn’t something to be ashamed of. It’s an honor. It’s a sign that you are a person who others think are worth caring about and worth offering that help to. Accepting help is an affirmation of your value as a person, of belief in yourself as someone deserving of that help.

“When I finished my first internship after college, I was ready to go out and conquer the world, all on my own, but right after I got the interview I got reminded of what my mother had taught me. So, I thought about it. Clark had offered to help me any way he could, so I asked him for Diana’s number. He gave it to me. I called her. I explained who I was, why I wanted the invitation, and who I intended to bring with me.”
“And she gave you the invitation,” Cat said. “Just like that?”

“We traded favors,” Kara said. “Since then, I talk to her on the phone a couple of times a month. Bruce Wayne now and then as well.”

“What sort of favors?” Cat asked.

“I have access to a lot of information. Names of people and causes that can benefit from the attention of the Wayne Foundation, or the Artemis Society. Diana collects action figures and plushies, so I get her press kit and con exclusives. Bruce loves model trains and Lego sets, so I put him in touch with a few collectors I know to help him fill gaps in his collection. Dick loves the circus. I talked to the press rep over at Cirque, and Dick gets tickets and back stage passes every time they open a new show. I introduced Jason Todd to his girlfriend. Tim Drake is in the same World of Warcraft guild as my friend Winn. Kate Kane, Bruce’s cousin on his mother’s side, is a competition shooter. I made a couple of calls to the managing editor for CatCo Outdoors, so Kate gets to play with some of the samples we get sent for review. I know and have done favors for Carol Ferris, Hal Jordon, Arthur Curry, John Henry Irons, Jefferson Pierce, and a lot of others. Nothing that costs CatCo money or compromises our integrity.”

“So, that’s how you’ve been working all your magic?” Cat asked.

“Some of it,” Kara said. “A lot of it is just anticipating your wants and needs. I spent a lot of time watching what’s happening, following trends. Like with the Tribune layoffs. I knew that was coming, and I’d been working on the proposal for print and digital integration for months.”

“And the Supergirl pictures?” Cat asked. “How did you get those?”

Kara smiled. “That is a very interesting story that I’m not going to tell you.”

“Oh, really,” Cat said.

“Well, maybe not never,” Kara said. “But I would be burning at least two sources if I told you where I got them.”

Cat narrowed her eyes. “And if I told you your job depended on telling me where they came from?”

“If I told you, you’d never be able to trust me again,” Kara said. “If I caved that easily for one of my sources, how could you ever think I’d go the distance to protect yours?”

“That’s an interesting point,” Cat said. “But it’s an awful big risk you’re taking, assuming I share that opinion.”

Kara took another bite of her food, chewing slowly as she watched Cat. She swallowed, and took a sip of her soda, then leaned back, contemplating how this conversation would have gone in the original timeline. She would have been shaky, near panic by now. She would have kept the secret, but she never would have had the nerve to really stand up to Cat about it, and Cat would have made her life miserable for weeks. She was not going to let Cat do that here and now though.

“Do you know how much I love this job, Ms. Grant?” she asked.

“Enough that you’ve stayed here long after anyone else would have run screaming into the night,” Cat said.

Kara nodded her head in concession of the point. “I turn down an average of three jobs a week,”
she said. “Most of them with more authority and responsibility. Almost all of them higher paying. I’ve turned down junior editor positions and assistant director of HR positions. Six months ago, I sent Bruce a portrait of him and his family I did in oils and I’ve had to turn down a grant from the Martha Wayne Foundation five times since. Three months ago, Maxwell Lord approached me at the Salzburg Galley Opening, and offered to triple my salary if I came to work for him as a project manager. I’ve got standing offers from every event planner in town and half the personal concierge services, not to mention Bruce Wayne, Diana Prince, and an offer from Perry White that includes buying out my contract here and a thirty percent raise. Lucius Fox offered to buy out my contract and pay me five times my annual salary as a *signing bonus* to come head up an R&D team. And if none of that interested me, even without my trust fund, I have more money than I could spend in five lifetimes.”

“I’m here because I want to be, because I love it here. Because working for you makes me feel like I’m worthwhile. Like I matter. But don’t confuse me loving my job with me needing it.”

Kara wasn’t quite sure what to make of the expression on Cat’s face. It looked almost like shock, but Kara wasn’t entirely sure Cat Grant could feel shock. On the other hand, she didn’t say another word while they finished their lunches, and when Kara got up, the only request Cat made was for her to check to see if James had the layouts for the lifestyle section finished.
Cat Grant was many things. Smart, attractive, rich, powerful, funny, moody, given to whimsy, more than a little vindictive, a borderline alcoholic, and suffering from a rather severe case of PTSD that rendered her incapable of making it through a day of work without having a panic attack unless she had her regular doses of Lexapro.

What she was not, and never had been, was dumb.

Oh, plenty of people had assumed she was. Some of them had gone to great pains to make their disdain for her, and her intellect, very clear. She had given them polite and insincere smiles as they walked all over her. She had also remembered. There were no small number of men who found their careers completely destroyed because of the things Cat Grant remembered and because Cat Grant wanted to make sure that women who followed in her footsteps had an easier time on the trail she had blazed.

That did not mean that she would coddle anyone. She had never been coddled when she fought her way to the top. If someone was doing something stupid, she told them. She also, contrary to what many thought, told them when they were doing something well. She rewarded success, and excellence doubly so. She mentored, she guided, and if she used the stick more than the carrot, it was because she hated wielding a tool with which she felt unskilled and when it came to kindness, Cat felt very unskilled indeed. The only people she ever felt a natural inclination towards kindness with were her sons. At least, until Sunny Danvers had walked into her office at 10:15 one September morning.

The girl had surprised her, right from the start. Her protestations that she was not special had caught Cat’s attention, because it meant she had at least one skill that most of the applicants and most of Cat’s former assistants had lacked. Kara Danvers knew how to listen. That, in and of itself would have gotten her the job, but she wasn’t done. Oh, no. Not Kara “perfectly normal” Danvers. She’d given that stupid speech about wanting to help, wanting to be worthwhile. It had sparked something in Cat. A small, faint little fire of hope.

Cat knew she was aging. She was coming up on fifty, and she would be damned if she left her legacy in the hands of some walking personification of white male privilege. She took one look at Kara, and saw hope that she might have found the woman she’d been looking for since the day she bought the Tribune. A protégé, a successor. Everything she’d once hoped Leslie Willis might

Cat starts an investigation and Kara meets with Astra for the first time.

Chapter Summary

Chapter Notes

Update: This story has now been betaed by ifourmindbeso. Any remaining mistakes are entirely my own.

See the end of the chapter for more notes
become, before Cat had made so many mistakes with her.

Cat had known from just a few moments into the interview that Kara was special, that she had potential to be something far more than an assistant. She had, at the very least, the makings of a stellar reporter. One to put Lois Lane and Vicki Vale to shame. The backbone the girl had demonstrated in the interview had come as a bit of a surprise. Not as much as the fact that the girl had produced an invitation to a notoriously hard to get into event. Oh, Cat would have hired her, even without that. Would have even taken her as a *potential* protégé without that. But she had expected to have to put some temper and some steel into the girl herself, instead of finding it already there.

The invitation, though— that had made Cat pay attention to Kara as something more than some long-term project, and over the last year, Kara and done that time and again. Kara kept finding ways to reach into places Cat herself couldn’t, and the girl had become an enigma to her, a puzzle she was determined to solve. Everything from the fact that her lattes were actually hot, to the way she made suggestions that Cat would have expected from someone with years of experience in journalism, to the ease and comfort with which Kara wielded power, almost as if she’d been doing it for years. The girl was a leader, but more than that, she felt like a seasoned leader, not a gifted amateur. Cat had seen generals on the battlefield with less grace under pressure than Kara Danvers.

Which brought Cat back to the whole ‘not dumb’ thing.

Because she wasn’t. She was not dumb enough to believe that a twenty-four-year-old girl would just call Diana Price out of the blue and end the call with an invitation to one of the most exclusive social events of the year. She was not dumb enough to believe the same girl just a year later just happened to have Diana Prince and Bruce Wayne on speed dial, or that she had somehow managed to get dozens of pictures of Supergirl, all in stunningly high quality. Even if she was, apparently, sleeping with a detective over at the NCPD.

She also wasn’t dumb enough to look at those pictures of Supergirl, and sit across from her assistant at lunch as her assistant calmly but firmly shifted the entire power dynamic of their relationship, without seeing the resemblance, both in features and facial expressions.

She wasn’t dumb enough not to notice that her assistant was at her desk less often the past few days, and that her disappearances always seemed to coincide with Supergirl showing up in the news or on social media. Nor did she miss the not-so-subtle exchanges between Kara and the handsome little cardigan-wearing hobbit who did a surprisingly good job of respecting Kara’s sexuality despite the fact that he was hiding a crush the size of Cat’s beach house.

She didn’t have proof, but she wasn’t sure she wanted it. There was a part of her that didn’t trust herself with it. The only stories she could think of that would be bigger than Supergirls’ Secret Identity would be Superman’s or Batman’s. Except, if what she suspected about Kara were true, she already knew Superman’s identity, because it was one thing for Clark Kent and Superman to be tied to Lois Lane, but for Clark Kent and Superman to both be tied to Supergirl was a bridge too far.

“Here you go, Ms. Grant,” Kara said, making Cat jump a little, as the sound of Kara’s voice shocked her out of her thoughts. She looked up, to find Kara standing there, holding out a small glass dish with two Advil and her evening Lexapro in one hand, and a bottle of water in the other. “You’ve got that ‘I feel a headache coming on’ expression.” Kara’s smile and the concern in her eyes took any sting out of the words, and Cat just nodded.

“What would I do without you, Keira?” she asked.
“Fire a lot of assistants,” Kara relied, a faint twinkle in her eye.

Cat couldn’t help but smile. “True,” she said. She took the dish with the pills and dumped them into her mouth, handing the dish back to Kara, then taking the bottle of water to wash them down.

“I’m about to head out for the evening, Ms. Grant,” she said. “Do you need anything else before I go?”

Cat looked at Kara, and despite all the reasons she didn’t want to know, she wouldn’t be Cat Grant if she didn’t follow the story. “I need someone from research who’s good, loyal, and above all, discreet.”

“Bunny Watson,” Kara said, without a moment’s hesitation. “She’s the best we’ve got. Smart, fast, can find just about anything you need. Gifted with computers. Give her a good bottle of Champagne and she’ll take your secrets to the grave.”

“Champagne?” Cat asked.

“Give that woman a bottle of Cristal, and she would march into hell to find out if the devil wore boxers or briefs,” Kara said.

“Send her up before you go.”

“Yes, Ms. Grant.”

Kara sat on the hill overlooking National City, her feet dangling over the side of the cliff. In the original timeline, she’d had her first interview with Cat on this particular hill, but tonight, she was up here alone, waiting. She was supposed to be up early the next morning for missile drills at the DEO. A test of her strength and endurance. She knew how the day went. The dock fire. Both would be a lot easier this time. It was the next night that really worried her. The Hellgrammite would hit the chemical storage facility. This time she’d be there to save the security guards and capture him. This time, he wouldn’t stab Alex and force Alex to kill him. This time…

“Hello, Little One.”

Kara looked up, to fight Astra floating above her. She smiled, as she held up the light spy beacon. “I wasn’t sure you’d come,” she said.

“I received your message,” Astra said.

“Good,” Kara said. “That’s good.” She patted the ground beside her. “I don’t want to fight, Aunt Astra. I just want to talk.”

Astra slowly drifted down, landing, and then sitting beside her. Kara watched as she pulled the spy beacon from her pocket, and smiled as they touched them together. The lights vanished as the two connected.

“I do not wish to fight with you, either,” Astra said. “When I first heard you were alive, I was afraid it would come to that. I think, if I had not heard your message…”

“My sister was on that plane,” Kara said.

Astra stopped, her jaw literally dropping in shock. “Sister? Alura had another child?”

Kara shook her head. “No, Aunt Astra. My human sister.” Kara reached out, taking Astra’s hand in
her own, squeezing it gently. “There were supposed to be six pods, one for each of us, but only two of them were ready. Jor-El wasn’t done fitting the hypersleep systems on the others, and the end came faster than they expected. They put Kal-El in one pod, and me in another. His launched first and he cleared the planet. Mine launched a few moments later, but I got caught in the shockwave and knocked into the Phantom Zone.” She looked over at Astra, and saw the horror on her face. Horror she could understand. She’d experienced the Phantom Zone while awake, and it was nightmarish, at best.

“I slept for most of my time there, but I was there for twenty-four years, right up until I drifted within sensor range of Fort Rozz. Indigo hadn’t managed to completely bypass the security on Fort Rozz, but she had enough control to slave Fort Rozz’s drive system to my pod. Then she just rebooted my pod’s navigational computer and it followed the beacon Kal’s pod was still transmitting.”

“That’s what happened?” Astra said. “I’d always wondered how the guards lost control of the ship. But we never found Indigo.”

“She’s hiding from you,” Kara said.

“She’s wise to do so,” Astra said.

“When I landed, Kal-El had aged twenty-four years. He’d become Superman. He had enemies, and no way to care for me, so he found me a family.”

“Did they treat you well?” Astra asked, and Kara felt a knot of grief settle into her stomach, because this was a conversation they never got to have in the other timeline.

“They were amazing,” she said, “and I had the best sister. Oh, we didn’t get along at first, and we fight the way all sisters do, but it was like Rao saw the hole Krypton had left in my heart and gave me the one thing in the Universe that could possibly fill it. Sister, mother, she became a little bit of both, and she means everything to me.”

“Six nights ago, one of your people tried to kill her.”

“That’s why you interfered?” Astra said, and Kara could almost hear the relief in her voice. “Little One, I swear to you I did not know. We attacked the plane because there were humans on it who work for an agency which resists us.”

“Yes,” Kara said, “I know. The DEO. My sister is one of their agents. You tried to murder her.” She felt Astra pull her hand away, watched her scoot back a little.

“You do not understand what is at stake,” Astra said.

“You’re wrong. I understand what’s at stake better than you do. I know about Myriad.”

“Your mother told you?” Astra asked.

“No. I found out long after she was dead. I found out not long after I learned that you were alive.”

“How?”

Kara sighed and shook her head. “That’s a long story, one I’m not ready to tell you yet. Before you get any ideas, I’ve already told the DEO about Myriad.”

Astra just looked at her. “It does not matter. Myriad cannot be stopped.”
“It can,” Kara said. “We have a way to block its effects. Right now, we can shield individuals. In a few days, we’ll have a shield up over all of National City. In two weeks, every city in the United States over a hundred thousand people will have an anti-Myriad shield.”

Kara reached under her cape, for the small pouch she’d clipped to her belt. She’d been unsure about this part at first, but after going round and round with Konex and Kelex for months regarding the theoretical basis of Myriad, she was sure there was no way to alter Myriad enough to get around the ion blockers Maxwell Lord had developed. At least, no way without the rest of the Anti-Life Equation.

“Here,” Kara said, placing the pouch in Astra’s hand. “Take this. Study it. It will prove I’m right.” She watched the emotions playing behind Astra’s eyes, the fear, the confusion, the anger. Astra looked down at the pouch, then back up at Kara.

“Why?” Astra demanded. “If you know what’s at stake, why would you do that?”

“Because I need you to listen to me,” Kara said. “And you were never going to do that, not as long as Myriad was an option.” She reached out, gripping Astra’s shoulders as she looked her in the eyes. “Go back to your base. Examine the device. See if it does what I say. When you’re convinced… Activate the Spy Beacon, and I’ll meet you here. Then we can talk.” She stretched up onto her toes, and kissed Astra lightly on the forehead.

Kara leaned over, letting her weight tip her over the side of the cliff before she kicked off, and shot out into the night sky.

J’onn was waiting for her when she landed in her apartment, and, she noted with some amusement, helping himself to Choco’s and milk.

“Hey,” she said as she walked over to the fridge. She took a half gallon of chocolate chip cookie dough ice cream out of the freezer, then grabbed a spoon and sat down on a stool.

“How’d it go?” he asked.

“About as well as could be expected,” Kara said as she ripped the top off the ice cream. “I laid on the biggest guilt trip I could, gave her solid proof that we can defeat Myriad before it’s even deployed and now we just hope she comes to her senses and actually talks to me.”

“You know I hate this plan, right?”

Kara nodded. “I do,” she said, as she shoved a huge spoon full of ice cream and cookie dough into her mouth. “I need to ask you something.”

“Will it make my hair fall out?”

“You’re a Martian,” she said, “you don’t actually have hair.”

“I’m thinking of growing some, just so it can fall out every time I talk to you,” J’onn replied.

Kara laughed, before giving him a serious look. “We need to get Winn, Maggie, and as much as I’m reluctant to include him, James up to speed on the DEO sooner, rather than later. I was thinking maybe this weekend, we could bring them in, get the Non-Disclosures signed, and get them swipe cards and Consultant ID’s.”
“You’re still determined to do that?” he asked.

“I am. Also, I have a tip on another alien,” she said.

“Oh?” J’onn asked.

“Yeah. Hellgrammite. Chlorine-based life form. Check the records. You’ll find six robberies at chemical storage facilities around the country in the last year. He’s stealing DDT for food. I think he’s going to hit the storage yard up in Capital Fields Monday night.”

“You’re sure?” J’onn asked.

“No,” Kara said. “Not really. My information is old and too many pieces are in motion on the board. Taking down Vartox the way I did, flying around playing Superhero the way I have been, or talking to Astra tonight could have shifted things. He might be attacking tonight, he might not attack for another week, but the last timetable I had put it as Monday night, and I don’t *think* anything we’ve done will have changed that.”

“Why didn’t you tell me about this thing sooner?”

“This one isn’t like the others. I’ve been careful about only feeding you locations of aliens Astra has lost track of or doesn’t care about. This one is tied to Astra’s faction. I’m not sure of the nature of the connection, just that there is one.”

“So, we should expect Kryptonians?”

“It wouldn’t be a bad idea to have some gear to deal with them, just in case,” Kara said. “Which reminds me…” She walked over and grabbed a gray pelican case that had been sitting in the corner, and carried it over to the table. She popped the latches and flipped open the lid. “These are for your teams.”

She watched as J’onn walked over to examine the contents while she went back to eating her ice cream.

“We already have uniforms and tac vests,” he said.

“Not ones made from Kryptonian fabrics,” Kara replied. “Those uniforms will stop a 20mm rifle, as long as the slug isn’t depleted uranium. Combine them with a helmet, and they’re better than a standard bomb disposal outfit in terms of dealing with heat and kinetic impact. Whiplash is still an issue, but these will make the DEO field teams a lot safer.”

“Thank you, Ms. Danvers.”

“There’s more where that came from,” Kara said. “If you will give me a dedicated data line, I can get you set up so you can order anything you need. We’d just need to pick up a secure location for drop off and pick up.”

“Why not deliver them directly to the DEO?”

“General Lane,” Kara said. “I don’t trust him not to try to grab Konex.”

“Who’s Konex?” J’onn asked.

Kara smiled. “Let me introduce you.”
Translated from the Kryptonian:

ukiem w rrip , eh ,astruh,
I love you, Astra

,roa, sokao:divilodh w rraotiv giehrehd zrhig osh
Literal: Rao, please light your path of wisdom
Semantic: May Rao light your way
Kara turned in mid-air as the missiles closed on her, flying backwards as she hit one of them with a blast of heat vision, causing it to explode. She turned slightly, focusing on the remaining missile, and blew out a huge blast of freeze breath, encasing the missile in ice. The freezing temperature caused the fuel pump to seize, which made the missile lose thrust, and pitch downwards. She watched it fall, her breath having rendered it so cold it shattered on impact.

“Okay,” Alex said over the radio, “come on in.”

Kara laughed, knowing she was being called in because they were now out of missiles. She twisted slightly, shooting back towards the small command post. She slowed as she approached, dropping subsonic so she didn’t shatter any of the equipment, and finally pulled up at the last minute, then drifted down to a gentle landing.

“How was that?” she asked J’onn.

“I see you share your cousin’s appetite for wanton destruction, Miss Danvers” J’onn said.

Kara rolled her eyes. “You are enjoying this entirely too much.”

“I’m trying to make sure you’re going to be an asset. A novice Superhero can be a liability in the field. So far, all you’ve proven is you can manage an intelligence asset. I need to know you can control all of your abilities. Strength, Stamina, Speed.”

“Well, are you convinced yet?” Kara asked. “Because I wanna go get some breakfast and if I don’t get something to eat soon, you’re gonna see me not controlling the growling in my stomach and trust me, that’s not pretty.”

“She’s right,” Alex said. “No one ever comes out of that looking pretty.”

Both Kara and Alex turned around at the sound of a loud chuckle behind them, only to find Vasquez standing there, holding a large bag.

“Are those…?” Kara asked, not bothering to finish her sentence as she took two steps towards Vasquez.
“Breakfast burritos from that grill down the 975,” Vasquez said. “Extra hot sauce.”

“Oh, Rao Light,” Kara said as Vasquez handed her the bag. “Marry me?”

Vasquez laughed. “I think my girlfriend would object.”

Kara sat the bag on one of the work tables and pulled out a burrito, peeling the foil off it. “Does she cook? If so, bring her along. I’ll marry you both.”

“Kara,” Alex said.

Vasquez just laughed harder. “I do most of the cooking, but she’s the jealous type.”

Kara took a huge bite out of the burrito, chewing quickly, before swallowing. “If you can cook, I can see why.” She held up the burrito slightly. “Thank you.”

“It’s no problem, ma’am. My girlfriend was one of the agents on the plane with Alex, so I figure I owe you one.”

Kara smiled, and nodded. “Glad I could help,” she said, before she wolfed down the rest of her burrito, and reached for a second one.

“Are you heading into work today?” Alex asked.

Kara shook her head, mouth too full of food to speak. She swallowed. “No. Cat never works on the weekends she has Carter. I thought once we were done, I’d do a few runs through the city, rescue some kittens from trees, show the coat of arms. That sort of thing.”

“You sure that’s a good idea, Kara? I know you talked to your Aunt but there are still a lot of Fort Rozz escapees out there.”

“Well, if you’d rather, I could take you out to Sanctuary.”

“Really?”

Kara nodded. “Absolutely. I’ve got something out there I want you to see anyway. Something I think would be a huge help—“

“Supergirl. Come in, Supergirl” Winn’s voice suddenly rang in her ear.

Kara reached up and touched her eat piece. “Hey, Winn, what’s up?”

“There’s a huge fire raging down at National City port, and it is bad,” Winn said.

“I’m on it,” Kara said. She turned to Alex. “Fire down at the port. Don’t let anyone eat my burritos.”

“Are you sure, Kara? You’ve been dodging missiles and pushing pretty hard. Even you have your limits.”

“I know,” Kara said, “but this is just a bit of x-ray vision, some freeze breath. No big deal. I’ll be back before you know it.”

“Just… Be careful, okay.”

“I will. Love you.” With that, Kara kicked off and shot into the sky, but not without hearing her
The fire was as big and as intimidating as she remembered, but this time, as she approached, she spotted the source using her X-ray vision. One of the pipelines used to pump oil off the tankers was ruptured and feeding the fire, which explained why her freeze breath hadn’t worked the last time. She spotted the fire chief, and dropped down beside him.

“Chief,” she said.

“Thank God,” he said. “Can you blow this out?”

“No,” Kara replied. “Not yet. There’s a leaking oil line inside the flames. If I hit it with my freeze breath, it will just spread the fire.”

“Shit,” he said. “Can you move the tanker?”

“No unless you have tow chains handy. If I try to just grab on and drag it, the welds will split open like a rotten banana. I need to go into the fire, and cut off the fuel supply. While I do that, move your water line between the flames and the ship, to hold it back. Buy me five minutes, and I’ll be able to put this out.”

“Okay,” he said. “Will do.”

Kara nodded and lifted off again as he shifted his men’s focus to pushing the edge of the fire back and controlling the advance instead of trying to put it out. She dove into the heart of the inferno and grabbed a barrel, tearing it in half and slapped the metal over the tear in the oil pipe. A careful blast from her heat vision formed a weld which would hold for a while, then she kicked off, rising above the fire, and carefully used her freeze breath to put out the flames, as well as cool off the oil-filled pipes.

Once she was done, she flew back over to the chief.

“Okay, you need to get a repair crew in here as fast as possible. I’ve welded a piece of steel over the tear in the pipe, but the steel is low quality, and the weld isn’t especially solid since I couldn’t clean or prep the surfaces or get it hot enough to boil out the impurities without risking setting off what was in the pipe.”

The chief nodded. “Right. Is it cool enough to go in?”

“Yes,” she said. “You want me to show you?”

“Please.”

“Either I finally managed to get the last of the smell out, or my sense of smell has just given up on me,” Kara said as she came out of the DEO locker room dressed in a black t-shirt, and a black pair of BDU pants that had been tucked away in some storage locker or other, along with a fresh pair of boots and socks.

Alex sniffed, “Definitely the latter,” she said.

Kara reached out and gave her a light shove. “Shut up,” she said. “Seriously, that was terrible.”

“Yeah, it was bad enough with a human nose,” Alex said. “I can’t even imagine with a Kryptonian
“Any progress on the suit?” Kara asked.

“That’s probably going to take more time.”

“Just have them put it in a sealed bag,” Kara said. “I’ll take care of it at home.”

“How are you going to get home” Alex asked.

“Drive me?”

Kara sat the oversized bag of subs down on the counter as Alex locked the door behind them, and reached for a plate for Alex and a serving platter for herself. She took a moment to fish out Hot Pastrami and the bag of Salt and Vinegar chips and put them on a plate, before carefully arranging her two cheese steaks and two meatball subs on the platter.

“Where do you want this?” Alex asked, holding up the sealed biohazard bag containing Kara’s Supergirl suit.

“Konex,” Kara said, grinning. “End stealth mode.”

Alex jumped a bit as Konex decloaked.

“How can I be of assistance, Lady Kara?” the robot asked.

“Kara,” Alex said, “What is that?”

Kara turned around and opened the refrigerator, pulling out a diet coke for Alex and a two liter of grape soda for herself. “He’s a Kryptonian tier-four cyber-construct, designed to operate as a personal attendant.”

“Okay,” Alex said. “And you didn’t think to mention him back when we were growing up?”

Kara laughed. “Clark has one named Kelex in his stronghold up north. One of the first things I got from J’onn when we started working together was a crystal containing Konex’s memories. He was my personal attendant growing up. Kelex was able to build him a new body last year and download the memories from the crystal. I would have told you about him, but I couldn’t figure out how to do that without telling you I’d gotten stuff out of my pod.”

Alex frowned. “Kara, I’ve been all over your pod. Everything that was in it is catalogued at the DEO.”

“You didn’t know about the hidden compartment behind the seat,” Kara said. “Konex, this is Alex Danvers. Scan for identity match, and execute stored order four.”

Kara watched as Konex approached Alex and scanned her briefly.

“It is a pleasure to meet you, Lady Alex.”

“What just happened?” Alex asked.

“Konex just added your biometrics and genetic profile to the security protocols for his control programs, as well as for those of Sanctuary. In short, if anything happens to me, the chain of command goes You, Kal-El, J’onn, Diana Prince, Bruce Wayne. There’s a list of people after that, one.”
but honestly, right now, you’re the only person who even knows they are on the list.”

Alex turned to look at her. “Diana Prince and Bruce Wayne? Why… What…” Alex raised her free hand to cover her face.

Kara took pity on her and walked over, taking the bag with her Supergirl outfit and handing it to Konex.

“Clean that, please,” she said. “Or, if it’s easier, just recycle it and make a new one. Also, while you’re working, make me about twenty spares, and fit them all with anti-Kryptonite shields, and spare coms.”

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

She turned back to Alex, carefully prying her hand away from her face. “I’m sorry,” she said.

Alex shook her head. “No, I shouldn’t react like this. It’s just…”

“A week ago, I was your baby sister. Now, I’m pulling super advanced AI-controlled robots out of thin air and telling you Bruce Wayne is Batman and Diana Prince is Wonder Woman,” Kara said. “I get it. Believe me. I was on the other side of this once, and I did not handle it well.”

“Can we just sit down for a bit?” Alex asked.

Kara nodded. “Go ahead. I’ll grab the food and be right there.”

Alex walked over and dropped down on the couch. Kara gathered up their food and made her way over to sit down next to her sister. They ate in silence, Kara doing her best to eat at a human pace. She was finished with all four of her subs and about halfway through a family-sized bag of sour cream and onion potato chips when Alex finally spoke up.

“How much more haven’t you told me?” Alex asked.

Kara sat down the bag of chips. “Big things, or little things?”

“Big things?” Alex asked.

Kara thought about it for a minute, before answering. “Two,” she said. “There are two big things I haven’t told you yet. The first is how I found out about all of this, and believe me when I say that it’s not something I want to keep to myself, but I can’t tell you about the first one without telling you about the second one. The second one is…” Kara took a deep breath. “I’m afraid the second one will make you hate me,” she said.

“Kara,” Alex said, turning towards her, “You’re my sister, and I love you, no matter what.”

Kara nodded. “I love you too, Alex, but sometimes secrets can drive even the closest people apart.”

“Then why not just tell me?” Alex asked.

“Because you’d die,” Kara said.

“Kara, I’m not-“

“Alex,” Kara said, cutting her off, “I know how good you are. I would trust you to have my back in any fight. In fact, I’m pretty sure, if push comes to shove, you could take down a Kryptonian as long as you had time to prepare for the fight. But if I told you about this, you’d want to do
something. Because you’re good and kind and one of the most loving, caring people I’ve ever met. But this isn’t a fight you can win. Not right now. Not while we’ve got Fort Rozz to deal with.”

“Kara, you’re scaring me,” Alex said. “Whatever this is, you shouldn’t have to carry it alone. Please, let me help?”

Kara reached out and took Alex’s hands on hers, squeezing them as she looked at her sister, and remembering the last time they’d had a secret between them. The fallout from her sister lying about who killed Astra had nearly destroyed National City. It wasn’t a good memory, and the truth was, it had taken a long time for her to really get over it. The Red K incident had been proof of that.

The issue wasn’t that she didn’t trust Alex, it was that she knew Alex. If she told Alex, there was a good chance Alex would do something stupid, like go after Cadmus on her own. On the other hand, if she didn’t tell anyone, and something happened to her, the timeline could turn out even worse than before. And there was the simple weight of the secret itself.

“If I tell you, you have to promise you won’t do anything. Not until we deal with Fort Rozz.”

Alex nodded. “I get it, Kara. One threat at a time.”

Kara sighed. “No, Alex, you don’t. This isn’t small. This isn’t like promising Eliza you’d finish your homework before you go surfing. If you make this promise, you have to keep it, no matter how much it hurts. No matter what. You have to keep it. Okay?”

This time it seemed to get the message across. Alex sat there, and Kara could see her thinking it over, considering it, before she finally nodded. “Okay. I promise. I won’t do anything until we deal with Fort Rozz.”

Kara nodded. “Have you ever heard of Project Cadmus?”

“Yeah. Some sort of research project. We send them samples from any aliens we capture, and if an alien dies, either during capture, or in their cell, we send the remains to Cadmus for study.”

“They don’t just study alien remains,” Kara said. “Back before J’onn took over the DEO, Hank Henshaw… The real Hank Henshaw, deliberately killed a lot of aliens and classified the kills as ‘killed resisting capture’ so he could funnel the remains to Cadmus. If you go through the records you’ll also find a lot of aliens who were ‘transferred to other holding facilities’, only they never arrived. Instead, they wound up in Cadmus. After J’onn took over and their supply of live aliens dried up, they started their own capture program. Sam Lane procures for them sometimes too.”

“That’s horrible,” Alex said, “but—”

“They take humans, too,” Kara said. She took a deep breath. “This is the part I’ve been afraid to tell you… Alex, they have Jeremiah.”

“What?” Alex said. “They… They have my dad’s body?”

Kara shook her head. “No. Not his body.” Kara could see the exact moment realization struck. She could see the mixture of hope and fear flooding into Alex.

“He’s… He’s alive?” she asked.

Kara nodded.

“How long have you known?” Alex asked.
“Alex,” Kara said. “You promised.”

“How long, Kara?”

Kara let go of Alex’s hands and reached up to grip her shoulders. “Tell me you won’t do anything, Alex.”

“How long?” Alex asked, and Kara could hear the rage in her voice, but she didn’t answer. She just waited. “He’s my father,” Alex said. “We have to do something. We have to help him!” Alex tried to stand up, but Kara held her in place, her grip firm enough that there wasn’t anything Alex could do, but gentle enough that Alex didn’t hurt herself.

“I’m sorry, Alex,” Kara said. “I’m so sorry.”

“Let me go,” Alex said.

“You promised,” Kara said.

The slap surprised them both. One moment, Alex was sitting there, struggling, and the next, Kara felt the flat of Alex’s hand slam into the side of her face. It was so unexpected, she didn’t have time to roll with it, and instead of hurting her, Alex ended up whimpering and cradling her hand. Kara let her go, moving back a little bit as she looked down, checking with x-ray vision to make sure Alex hadn’t broken her hand.

Alex, for her part, was looking back and forth between her hand, and Kara’s face.

“I…”

“It’s okay,” Kara said.

Alex shook her head. “No. No, it’s not. I shouldn’t have…”

Kara reached out and took Alex’s injured hand in her own, blowing a very gentle stream of cool air over it.

“It’s okay,” Kara said. “I’m the one who should be sorry. It’s my fault Jeremiah was on that mission. My fault Cadmus has him. My fault Fort Rozz is here. My fault Myriad is a threat. My fault Cadmus even exists.” She looked up into Alex’s eyes. “Sometimes, I think it would have been better if I never made it off Krypton,” she said.

The look of horror on Alex’s face wasn’t something Kara expected to see in that moment, but on some level, it was comforting.

“No,” Alex said. “No. Kara, you can’t think like that. Please. I’m sorry. You’re right, this is big and I just…” she shrugged, helplessly.

“Please, tell me you’ll keep your promise. I swear, I have people working on getting your father out. Clark knows almost everything I do about Cadmus and he’s got Wonder Woman and Batman for backup. If they can get Jeremiah out, they will.”

Alex nodded. “Okay,” she said. “Okay. But, as soon as Myriad is out of the way—“

“We find Cadmus, and we burn it to the ground,” Kara said. “Every last bit of it.”

The next morning was rough. Kara didn’t really need sleep, but she and Alex had talked for hours
and it had been emotionally exhausting. Kara had told her everything she could about Cadmus, leaving out only Lillian Luthor, Simon Tycho and Hank Henshaw’s involvement. She’d told her everything about Astra, too, but it was all hard. It was like draining an infected wound, only stopping before it was entirely clean, and bandaging it up with half the rot still inside. There was so much she couldn’t tell her. She’d wanted to talk about the battle of CatCo plaza, about the Third Army and the war of light, about Darkseid and the anti-life equation.

She couldn’t. Not yet. She couldn’t tell Alex until she was ready to tell J’onn, and she couldn’t tell J’onn until she could prove all of it, because it sounded insane. Sometimes, she wondered if she was insane. On the other hand, if she got to hug her sister in the morning before she went into work to see Winn and Cat, maybe insanity wasn’t so bad.

Though today was the day Cat demanded an interview with her in the original timeline. She was wondering if that was still going to happen when the elevator door opened, and she saw Winn waiting for her, holding a large pink box.

“What’s this?” she asked.

“Just a little something Maggie and I chipped in for,” he said, lifting the lid.

“Is that a brownie pizza?” she asked, her face splitting into an enormous smile.

“Yes,” he said. “We wanted to do a cake, but we thought a ‘Congratulations on your first big disaster’ cake would be a little obvious.”

“Oh!” she squealed as she threw her arms around Winn, hugging him as tightly as she dared.

“Thank you,” she said. “You have no idea how much I needed something like this this morning.”

She stepped back, still smiling at him as she picked up the envelope containing Cat’s morning mail from the reception desk, before heading over to her own desk.

Winn sat the brownie pizza down on her desk. “You okay?” he asked.

“Rough weekend,” she said. “Alex and I had a big fight. We sorted it out. And I saw my Aunt.”

“Your Aunt?” Winn asked. “Like,” he made a wavey motion with his hand Kara assumed was supposed to indicate flying, “that Aunt?”

“Yes. That probably went as well as could be expected,” she said.

‘Drunk, 9:00 AM. That’s the last time I have breakfast with Ruth Bader Ginsberg.’

Kara shook her head as she reached for Cat’s coffee. “She’s here,” she said as she lifted the lid and gave it a quick zap of heat vision.

“At least now I know how you do that,” Winn said as he dropped into his seat and pulled up his goof-off spreadsheet so it would look like he was working.

The door to the elevator opened, and Cat strode out. Kara put the latte into her hand.

“Your latte, Ms. Grant,” she said.

Cat took a sip and let out a small moan of satisfaction. “Hot, as always,” she said. “Content meeting, two minutes. My office.”

“I assume we’re all aware of Supergirl’s latest act of derring-do,” Cat said.
“Walking into a burning oil fire to cut off the fuel supply, then blowing the fire out,” James said. “Pretty impressive for someone who’s only been on the job a week.”

“Hmmm, yes,” Cat said. “Our girl has been making quite a showing of herself all over National City.”

“Isn’t that a good thing?” James asked.

“It would be, if it weren’t the front-page story on the Daily Planet. Their fifth, in as many days. Which annoys me, because they already have their own go-to Superhero, and now they’re trying to steal mine.”

Cat stalked around from behind her desk to stand in front of it. “Now, when I branded her, there was a certain implicit expectation that she would be gracing the pages of *our* publications.” Cat turned towards Kara. “Tell me something, Kara.”

“Hmmm, me?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Cat answered. “Do you really think it was coincidence that one of the Planet’s star reporters just happened through these offices last week?”

Kara shrugged. “I never know with Clark.”

“Oh, huh,” Cat said. “Well, coincidence or not, the Daily Planet is not taking Supergirl from us. We are going to take back control of the Supergirl narrative, starting now.”

“How are we going to do that?” Dave asked.

“I want an interview,” Cat said.

“Okay,” Kara said. “When would you like me to set that up?”

Every eye in the room turned towards her.

“You, Keira?” Cat asked.

“Don’t I usually schedule all your interviews?” she said.

Cat’s eyes narrowed. “This one might be a little different.”

“Have I ever failed to deliver, Ms. Grant?”

“Do I need to bring up the Justin Bieber incident?”

“I believe there’s an amendment to my contract that prevents either of us from ever speaking of that again,” Kara said, shuddering.

Cat sighed. “Fine. Go ahead and see if you can arrange it, but I want a backup plan,” she said, turning to James. “Do you think your friend in blue could arrange a sit down?”

“It doesn’t really work that way,” James said.

“Mmmm… Well, if Clark Kent, or for that matter, Lois Lane or any of the other hags over at the Planet get this before we do, I’m going to hold you and Keira personally responsible since you’re inviting the enemy into my house.”
“Now, I want a sit down with Supergirl. A heart-to-heart, girl-to-girl. By the end of the week.” Cat waved her hand in a shooing gesture. “Go get it.”

Kara started to turn around, but Cat’s voice stopped her.

“Not you, Keira,” she said.

Kara turned back to Cat. “Something else I can do for you, Ms. Grant?”

Cat waited until the entire office was empty. “You really think you can get me an interview with Supergirl?”

“I do.”

Cat stared at her for a moment, and let out a breath. “You get me that interview and we’ll have a discussion about your salary, since apparently I’m not paying what other people are offering you.”

“That’s not necessary, Ms. Grant.”

“Yes, it is,” Cat said. “You’re never going to get ahead if you don’t learn how to demand what you’re due, Keira.”

Kara stared back at Cat for a moment, then nodded. “Okay,” she said. “How about we start with you using my real name, since I know you know it.”

Cat smiled. “Get me the interview, and we’ll talk.”

Kara laughed and shook her head as she turned and left the office, only to find James waiting for her at her desk.

“Are you sure you want to do that interview?” he asked. The question threw Kara, because in the original timeline, he’d been the one to reassure her when she said she couldn’t do it.

“I don’t see why not,” Kara said. “My cousin managed to hide right in front of Perry White’s face for eleven years.”

“Yeah, and Lois Lane was fooled for a good five seconds,” James said.

Kara rolled her eyes. “Yeah, well, Cat Grant isn’t checking out my ass every time I turn my back.”

James shook his head. “Could have fooled me,” he said, before he headed for his office.

Winn appeared a second later. “He bothering you?” he asked.

“A little,” Kara said. “He means well, but he hasn’t gotten it through his head that I don’t need a big brother.”

“Well, if he gets to be a problem let me know. I’ll get Maggie to rough him up.”

Kara smiled. “You and Maggie really hit it off, huh?”

“Yeah,” he said. “She’s like the really butch older sister I never knew I wanted.”

“Oh, please. She’s a soft futch, at best.”

“She loads her own ammo, Kara.”
“Don’t care,” Kara said. “If she can’t forge a sword out of a load of iron ore, she’s not butch.”

“Who have you been hanging out with?”

“Wonder Woman,” Kara said. “Now, the real question is, am I expected to share my brownie pizza?”

Winn laughed. “Now what kind of friends would we be if we made you share?”
A Beautiful and Terrible Thing

Chapter Summary

One of Kara's decisions has unintended consequences.

Sometimes Cat Grant was honestly amazed by the people who worked for her. Usually, she was amazed at how much they thought they could get away with before she brought down the hammer, but on a rare occasion, she had one of those moments where she could not believe that she wasn’t aware that she had someone working for her who could produce work of such high quality.

Bunny Watson was one of those rare individuals.

“That’s just a first pass, of course,” the woman said, as Cat looked at the file roughly the side of a phone book.

“This is more than adequate, Ms. Watson,” Cat said. She reached down, and slid open the bottom drawer of her desk, pulling out the box that had been waiting for this moment. “Kara said you liked Champagne?”

“I’ll admit to a certain fondness for the drink,” she said, one corner of her mouth turning up in a grin.

Cat set the box on the desk and pushed it forward. “I appreciate your attention to detail, Ms. Watson.”

“Please, anyone who buys me a three-hundred-dollar bottle of booze can call me Bunny,” she said.

Cat smiled. “Okay, Bunny. I trust I don’t need to emphasize the need for discretion?”

“Given what I found, I think you need to emphasize the need to that girl, but my lips were sealed the moment I realized what I was looking at.”

“Thank you, Bunny. I think this will be all for now, but if I need anything else…”

“You know where to find me,” Bunny said. She picked up the box that held the bottle of Cristal, and turned around, leaving the room with a bit of a spring in her step and leaving Cat to look over her research.

She spent hours going through it all. Birth Certificate, school records, death certificates for her parents, foster home paperwork, adoption papers. Child and Family Services Division reports. Payments out of a trust fund established upon her parent’s deaths. A special one-time Scholarship awarded by the Wayne Foundation. A death certificate for her foster father, Jeremiah Danvers. A copy of Eliza Danvers’ will, filed a month after Jeremiah’s death leaving custody of both children to Clark Kent in the event of her death. College transcripts for Kara and her sister, Alex. Tax forms indicating Alex worked at some sort of biology lab. Photos of Alex Danvers with a gun visible tucked inside of her jacket as she leaned across a counter at Noonan’s to grab a sugar packet. A photo of Kara side by side with a photo of Supergirl, and a report from a piece professional grade facial recognition software indicating a 99.7% match.
There were stickie notes all through out, pointing out places where documents were inconsistent, or where records were missing. There were even a couple pointing out signatures that were forged. The link to Bruce Wayne was odd. The lawyers who handled Kara’s adoption were the same lawyers who had handled the adoptions for all of Bruce Wayne’s children. The trust fund which had made regular payments to first Eliza Danvers, then to Kara from her eighteenth birthday right up until her start at CatCo, was administered by the same firm which handled Bruce Wayne’s finances. And of course, the special scholarship from the Wayne foundation.

If it weren’t for the Supergirl angle, Cat would almost be tempted to assume Kara was Bruce Wayne’s daughter. Some indiscretion when he was fifteen or sixteen years old. But the link to Clark Kent painted an entirely different picture. She didn’t even need the facial recognition match to confirm it.

Kara was Supergirl, which made Clark Kent Superman, which would almost have to make Bruce fucking Wayne Batman, in this little picture. And of course, Clark Kent, who had no real reason to be rubbing elbows with some insanely wealthy Greek Philanthropist just happened to be a close, personal friend of Diana Prince, who was tall, dark haired, and cut like a Greek Goddess.

Cat leaned back in her chair, and reached up to rub her temples.

It wasn’t the story of the decade. It was the story of the century. The secret identities of Superman, Supergirl, Batman and Wonder Woman. Oh, and probably Nightwing, Robin, Batgirl and Red Robin as well, because Nightwing would almost have to be Dick Grayson, which would make Tim Drake Red Robin, and Damian Wayne the current Robin, as well as making Cassandra Cain a strong suspect for Batgirl.

Cat did not want to know this. She really didn’t.

Okay, that wasn’t entirely true. Cat loved knowing things. She collected information and secrets like other people collected trading cards and stamps. She had files tucked away that could bring down everything from individual politicians to administrations to entire regimes. Given five minutes and internet access, she could start a war.

And she sat on those stories, more often than anyone would imagine. She’d spiked exposés because they would get people killed. She’d spent her entire life trying to make the world a better place. She’d passed on word to authorities, to people who could help, who could change things, but she’d deliberately avoided stories could hurt innocent people.

This was different. This felt heavier, more personal. The journalist in her screamed to tell the truth, to break the story, to shout it from the mountain tops. Or at least, the top of her office tower.

But the human part of her, the part that adored her assistant, the part that loved the fact that the girl had simply ignored being fired twice a week for over a year and just kept showing up and making Cat’s life better, railed against the very idea. The woman in her- the one who was normally content to stay locked safely away, so long as she got to come out and spend time with her son - howled with rage, beat her fists against her cage, because this was Kara. Kara, who made sure Cat never missed a moment she could spent with Carter, who made sure she had her Lexapro, who took care of her, who challenged her to be better, kinder, who pointed out ways CatCo could make a difference, who smiled at her like she hung the world. Kara, who was so often the bright point of Cat’s day. Kara, who was brave enough to tease her sometimes.

Cat picked up the bundle of papers Bunny had given her, and walked out of her office. She walked past Kara’s empty desk, and down the hall to the room which held the high-capacity cross-cut shredder, and dropped the stack of papers in, and hit the cycle button. Then she stood there and
waited until every last page was reduced to confetti. Then she carefully changed out the bag on the shredder, and dropped the one containing Bunny’s research into the chute that ended in the secure bin in the basement. The one that was emptied every day, and the contents taken to an incinerator.

She would give the world Supergirl, but they could have Kara Danvers over her dead body.

Alex moved along the walkway as a leisurely pace, trying to act like she did this every night. They’d pulled the regular security guards, and replaced them with ‘DHS’ agents, claiming they’d gotten word of a terrorist plot to steal ingredients for a chemical weapon. It was a fairly flimsy excuse, but one that was far more believable than ‘we’re here to catch an alien insect that eats pesticide for breakfast’. Lies, unlike the truth, were constrained by things like logic and believability.

She hated the entire scenario. She hated the fact that they had to move through the facility alone instead of in pairs, that they were limited to sidearms instead of the heavier weapons which might bring the Hellgrammite down. She hated being there, instead of out looking for her father.

Kara was right. She knew it. She also hated it. But they could not fight a war against Fort Rozz, and a war against Project Cadmus at the same time. Especially since Cadmus was technically sponsored by the US Government.

“Supergirl to Trap Leader, I have movement in Sector 52.”

Alex reached up and tapped her ear piece. “Acknowledged,” she said. “Trap seven through ten, movement plan Able. Trap three through six, movement plan Striker. Supergirl, remain on overwatch for now. Trap Leader will initiate contact.”


Alex felt a bit of tension leave her shoulders as she drew her sidearm and listened to the rest of the team acknowledge orders. She’d been prepared to fight Kara over control of the operation, but Kara hadn’t so much as blinked when Hank… J’onn, had informed her that Alex would lead the mission. Her comm discipline was tighter than some veteran agents and Alex hadn’t felt a moment’s hesitation from Kara regarding any order she issued. It was somewhat disconcerting how quickly and easily Kara took to it. If Alex hadn’t known better, she’d think Kara had prior military experience.

Alex came around the corner to find a man standing next to one of the DDT tanks, filling a five gallon can.

“Hey,” she said. “Everything okay up here?”

“Yeah,” the man said, without turning around. “Just finishing up.”

“Can you show me some ID?”

She sensed it, more than saw it. A shift in posture, a straightening of the back. She raised her weapon as she started falling back.

“Bughouse! Say again, bughouse!”

The Hellgrammite turned around, it’s lower jaw splitting apart in a ghastly display as it jumped towards the roof.
Alex didn’t waste time trying to outrun it. She dropped to one knee, and brought both hands up to steady her weapon, then exhaled and squeezed.

The break of the trigger was almost a surprise. The Hellgrammite hit the ground, clutching at its leg. Alex’s bullet had found the weak spot at the back of the knee, just where Kara said it would be. Alex moved quickly, pulling loose a pair of reinforced restraints and slapping them on the Hellgrammite before it could recover from the shock of its wound.

She looked up briefly at the wooshing sound she’d come to associate with her sister’s take offs and landings, only to find Kara smiling at her.

“You got him,” she said.

Alex looked down at her prisoner, then back up at Kara. “We got him,” she said.

Kara nodded.

“Mostly me, though,” Alex said. Kara just smiled.

Alex looked up from her report as Hank… as J’onn walked into her office. “I’ll have the field report done in a few minutes, sir,” she said.

“No hurry, Agent Danvers,” he replied. “But I would like your evaluation of your sister’s performance in the field. Off the record.”

“She did well,” Alex said. “Stayed in position, followed orders, did exactly what she was supposed to, without charging in until I called for it.”

“That’s better than I expected.”

“Why’s that, sir?” Alex asked.

“She’s been calling the shots in our little arrangement for so long, I expected her to try to just step in and take over the DEO. Honestly, Kryptonian pissing matches over authority make the hundred years war look like a friendly game of tag.”

“Sounds like there’s a story there.”

“Martians and Kryptonians had established diplomatic relations before the White Martians attacked. My people considered the entire planet a bunch of Divas.”

Alex snorted. “Sorry. I mean, Kara can be a little dramatic sometimes, but she’s about the least likely person I know to ever be called a Diva.”

“You try running her as an intelligence asset. That girl loves dropping uncomfortable truth bombs right in your lap.”

“That’s a relatively new habit,” Alex said, “but I have noticed it. Tell me something, sir.”

“What’s on your mind?”

“Why did you let her into the field without a hand-to-hand check out?” Alex asked.

J’onn frowned. “She hasn’t told you?”
“Told me what?”

“She started taking martial arts classes about a year ago.”

Alex nodded. “I remember her mentioning that during the in-processing interview.”

“She apparently forgot to mention the part where she burned through three separate three-year black belt programs in less than twelve months.”

“What?” Alex asked. She shook her head. “That doesn’t make any sense at all. I mean, I know Kara had some training with Klurkor on Krypton, but she had barely progressed past the equivalent of her second belt.”

“Well, I’ve kept a close eye on Ms. Danvers ever since she pulled her little name-dropping stunt, and she’s legally registered as a black belt in Jeet Kune Do, Krav Maga, and Bojuka.”

Alex frowned. “Sir, are you absolutely sure she learned those styles?”

“Yes. Why?”

“You know I favor Krav Maga.” Alex said. “I’m a third degree Black Belt.”

“Krav Maga makes a lot of sense for someone who’s going to be fighting stronger opponents.”

“Yes, because Kara will be doing a *lot* of that,” Alex said. “Sir, we have three hand-to-hand instructors here. Levi, whose specialty is Krav Maga, Nguyen whose specialty is Jeet Kune Do, and Lake, who—”

“Favors Bojuka,” J’onn said. “What are you thinking?”

“I don’t know, sir,” Alex said. “But she knows things she shouldn’t know. And yeah, Kryptonians develop muscle memory a lot faster than humans, but even so, she shouldn’t have been able to do *three* black belts in a year. That’s more like what you’d expect from someone who was brushing up on something, or relearning something they were out of practice with.”

“Or retraining muscle memory,” J’onn said.

Alex felt a cold lump settle into her gut. Something was off about this. Something was very off. Up until a year ago, Kara was horrible at keeping secrets. She hadn’t even been able to sneak an extra cookie before dinner without Eliza knowing it in about ten seconds. Now, suddenly, she was moving like a trained operative, functioning like a highly-skilled intelligence asset, and keeping secrets that Alex herself couldn’t keep. And then there was Jeremiah.

“Fuck!” Alex said, as she saw the shock spread across J’onn’s face.

“Jeremiah’s alive?” J’onn asked.

Alex sighed, mentally kicking herself, but she nodded. “Kara said he’s being held at Project Cadmus.”

“And she just let him rot there, for over a year? Something isn’t right here.”

“I know, sir. She’s hiding something big and it’s frustrating. In fact, it’s driving me crazy.”

“And you trust her?”
“She’s my sister.”

“Is she?”

“Sir?”

“None of this adds up,” J’onn said. “Your sister knows things no one can know. She has been using that to push to get her way, and we’ve been dancing to her tune for over a year, but we only have her word for the important parts of her story.”

“I don’t like where you’re going with this.”

“Neither do I, Agent Danvers, but at this point I only see three real possibilities. One, she’s telling the truth about her Aunt, but her Aunt has flipped her, and she’s working with the Fort Rozz escapees. Two, the Fort Rozz escapees are controlling her somehow. Or three, your sister has been replaced.”

“Replaced how?” Alex asked.

“A shape shifter.”

“A shape shifter that can mimic all the powers of a Kryptonian?”

“I can do everything she can do, except for the freeze breath, and the heat vision,” J’onn said. “You know the list of inmates in Fort Rozz isn’t complete and you also know Kryptonians aren’t the only ones affected by the Yellow Sun.”

“What about if she’s telling the truth?”

“What? That there is some huge secret that it’s too dangerous for us to know? We’re in the middle of a war and, if what she’s saying about Cadmus is true, on the verge of another one. She’s keeping valuable intel from us. I was willing to let that go when she claimed she was keeping things secret in order to protect this ‘source’ of hers, but even she admits the source isn’t giving her intel anymore. We need to know, Alex. One way, or the other, we *have* to know what’s going on.”

Alex sighed. “You’re right. I’ll talk to her.”

“No, you won’t.” J’onn took two steps over to the phone on the wall, and picked it up, dialing Vasquez’s extension.

“Has Supergirl left the base?” he asked. “Good. Find her, tell her I want to see her in the training room right how. Then, prep a strike team to take down a hostile Kryptonian. And Vasquez, text comm only.”

He hung up the phone, then turned back to Alex.

“Sir,” Alex said. “Whatever you’re thinking-“

“Save it, Agent Danvers. It’s past time your sister, if she is your sister, started answering questions.”

Kara knew something was wrong the minute she stepped through the door. There was something about the look on Alex’s face. J’onn was standing off to the side, looking vaguely angry, though these days it was hard to find a time when he didn’t. She missed the J’onn she knew. The one
who’d fought the white Martian and come out of it a little happier and a whole lot healthier.

“Hey,” Alex said. “Can I see your Kryptonite shield?”

“Um, why?” Kara asked.

“Because, Ms. Danvers, all DEO operatives have to undergo an evaluation of their hand-to-hand
combat skills. I need to make sure you’re ready for the field.”

“Ah,” Kara said, smiling. She remembered how this went the first time she’d lived the day, and
much as she loved Alex, she was looking forward to this. Payback was gonna be a bitch. She bent
down and pulled the shield out of her boot, and turned it off, before passing it over to Hank. “I
want that back,” she said, before stepping up into the ring.

She looked at Alex, smiling expectantly, right up until the emitters came on.

She screamed as the burning sensation hit her skin, and had to swallow to keep from emptying her
stomach. Standing was too much. She dropped down to her knees.

“Too much!” she groaned as she fell over onto her hands. “The emitters-”

“Are right where I want them,” J’onn said, as he stepped up into the ring. He knelt down in front of
her. “This does answer the question of whether you are actually a Kryptonian, which leaves the
question of whether your Aunt managed to convince you to switch sides, or whether the Fort Rozz
escapees have been controlling you all along. Either way, Ms. Danvers, it’s time you started
answering questions.”

Kara looked up at J’onn, and she could see two of him, swimming in her vision. She wanted to be
angry with him, she really did, but mostly she was just angry with herself. She shouldn’t have told
Alex about Jeremiah. She knew it was a weak spot for both of them. Knew it was the one secret
she could keep that would turn her sister against her. She turned, finding Alex. Focusing on Alex.
Alex who looked completely miserable, but had that determined look she used to get when she was
enforcing one of Eliza’s rules that she knew made Kara miserable.

“You’re making a mistake,” she managed to grind out as she slipped her right hand closer to the
compartment that hid her phone. “I haven’t told you the truth, because you wouldn’t believe me.”
She found the edge of her boot. “That my source is a White Martian.” She slipped her thumb inside
her boot. “That she was my friend. My sister.” She reached around, searching for her phone. “That I
know more about what’s going on that you do,” Kara said. “You wouldn’t want to believe me
when I tell you stopping Myriad is more important than saving Jeremiah.” Kara turned back to
J’onn. “You wouldn’t want to believe me when I tell you about thousands of worlds burning, while
I watched helplessly.”

There, the finger print scanner.

“Kara,” Alex said, coming over to kneel down beside her. “What are you talking about?”

“The future. The one I lived through. The one I’m trying to prevent,” she said, then she pressed
down on the home button of her phone. “Konex, launch K Shield.”

The backup Kryptonite shield Konex had built into the highly modified iPhone didn’t have nearly
the endurance of the standalone unit, but it didn’t need it. Sixty seconds was all the time in the
world when you could move as fast as a Kryptonian. J’onn might have been able to stop her, had
he not been taken by complete surprise. Instead, he slammed into the wall with enough force to
dent the concrete. Kara was on him before he could recover, snatching her shield out of his hand
and switching it back on before she slid it back into her boot. Then she walked over to the control panel, and dialed the emitters down to zero, before driving her fist through the panel.

She turned around and walked back over to Alex, holding out her hand.

“Give me your ear piece,” she said.

Alex looked over at J’onn who was slowly climbing to his feet and sighed. She reached up and pulled her ear piece out, handing it over to Kara. Kara shifted, moving so she could keep both of them in her line of sight as she put on the ear piece.

“Vasquez, this is Supergirl.”

“What can I do for you, ma’am?”

Kara sighed. Susan was good. She sounded perfectly calm, like nothing in the world was wrong, even though she had to be near panic right now.

“I’m gonna ask this once, Susan. Please keep in mind that I can hear your heart beat pounding in your chest, so I will know if you’re lying. Do you understand me?”

“Yes, ma’am.”

“Where’s the strike team?”

Silence.

“Susan, Director Henshaw, and Agent Danvers have made a very large mistake tonight. One that I am sure on sober reflection, they will regret and apologize for. However, right now, everyone needs some time to cool off before someone gets hurt. I do not *want* to hurt anyone, but I *am* leaving. Do you understand what I’m saying, Susan?”

“Yes ma’am. Perfectly, ma’am.”

“Good. Now, where is the strike team?”

Silence.

Kara took a deep breath, because she really did not want to do what she was about to have to do.

“Tell her, Vasquez,” J’onn said, and Kara sighed in relief.

“Strike team is down the hall from you, ma’am. There’s an unused room just around the corner from training.”

Kara knew that room. That room had housed the hologram of her mother in another life. She looked at J’onn and nodded.

“Susan.”

“Yes, ma’am?”

“Tell them not to follow me.”

“Director Henshaw?”
“Do it, Susan. Code word: Ice”

“Yes, sir. Standing down Strike Team.”

Kara reached up and pulled off the ear piece, then tossed it to Alex.

“When you’re ready to hear the truth, you both know where to find me,” she said.
Supergirl gets some hero time in preparation for her interview with Cat. Kara, Alex and J'onn work out their issues, and Susan gets a new job.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“You look like hell,” Cat said as Kara sat her Sushi tray down on the coffee table.

“Thank you, Ms. Grant,” Kara said. “It didn’t really sink in when the fifty people before you told me the same thing.” Kara leaned over, picking up the edited copy for the afternoon update of the Tribune website.

“My, aren’t we just little miss sassy-pants today.”

Kara sighed. “Sorry,” she said. “I had a bad allergy attack last night and I’m still trying to shake it.”

“I didn’t realize you had allergies,” Cat said, and Kara was surprised at the level of concern in her voice.

“I didn’t either until fairly recently,” she said.

“It’s nothing here at CatCo, is it?” Cat asked.

“No. It’s this stuff they use where my sister works,” Kara said, trying to wave off Cat’s concern. She looked down at the copy and smiled. “Supergirl’s Super Week?”

“Yes,” Cat said. “I thought it was rather catchy. For someone new at the Superhero thing, she’s doing an excellent job.”

Kara scanned the rest of the article and smiled when she found a number of small critiques. “Not cutting her any slack, are you?”

“Well, why should I? No one else will. She’s going to have to be better than Superman, just to keep up.”

“Work twice as hard, to be thought of as half as good,” Kara said. “Just like any other woman.”

Cat smiled. “Good to see you’ve been listening to me, Keira.”

“Always, Ms. Grant,” Kara said with a smile.

“So, how goes the quest for the interview with our Maid of Might?”

“Oh,” Kara said. “About that…”

“Get a little too big for our britches, did we?”
Kara laughed. “No. It’s just… Well, I did talk to her, and she has a list of conditions. It’s short, and I don’t think it’s unreasonable, but she won’t do the interview unless you agree.”

Cat nodded as she sat aside the proof she’d been editing and picked up her lunch tray, walking over to her desk. “Alright then, let’s hear them.”

“No questions about her day job. How she pays her bills. Where she lives. No questions about her secret identity, or anything that could lead back to people who are close to her when she’s not wearing the suit. Any questions regarding any relationship she might have with the government will be answered with a firm ‘no comment’. You agree not to publish her secret identity if anything in the interview gives you a clue to who she is.”

“She wants me to agree not to publish her secret identity if I find it?” Cat asked as she took out her collection of chopsticks and went about selecting a pair.

Kara nodded. “She was very clear that the restriction would only be in force if information in the interview revealed who she was. She didn’t expect you to hold back if you found the information through an outside source, though she did ask if you could give her some warning if you do ever decide to go public with that so she could get certain people to safety.”

“Those seem reasonable,” Cat said. “I do hope she understands that I will be reporting facts, not writing some little puff piece.”

Kara laughed. “Ms. Grant, I think she would be disappointed if you did anything else.”

Cat narrowed her eyes. “You seem to know an awful lot about her, Keira.”

“She was excited,” Kara said. “I think she admires you, Ms. Grant. I think she looks up to you.”

Kara wasn’t quite sure what to make of the look on Cat’s face, and she didn’t get very long to analyze it, before it was replaced with Cat’s usual mask.

“Well, of course she does,” Cat said. “I’m me.”

“Yes,” Kara said, not able to keep the smile off her face. “Yes, you are. So, how does Thursday evening sound?”

“Hmm… That will work. Headlines to carry us through the weekend, and a big article for Monday. Any idea where she wants to do the interview?”

“She said she’d come to you.”

Cat smiled. “Well, then, I’ll look forward to it.”

Winn didn’t really like to think of himself as a small person. Metaphorically small. Because physically, yeah, he was tiny, but that was beside the point. He didn’t like to think of himself as the jealous type. He knew he could be. He knew, when he loved something, he was terrified of having it taken away, because so much in his life had been. His mother. His father.

He also knew he had a terrible crush on Kara. It was hopeless, because Kara told him she was gay the first time they’d really talked. It was so casual, that he might have even missed it, if he hadn’t been so enamored of her that he was hanging on every word, but she’d mentioned the toughest part of adjusting wasn’t the new apartment or new job, it was that she’d just lost her girlfriend. In a way, it was kind of a relief because he knew there was no chance, so he didn’t feel pressure to
perform. They were better friends because he could be more relaxed, more himself. The crush was still sort of there, but it was dull, muted. The kind of thing you never, ever act on. And he’d never been jealous of Kara’s relationship with anyone.

Okay, maybe he’d been a little bit jealous when he found out she’d told Maggie about the Supergirl thing too, but that had been fleeting and momentary, because Maggie Sawyer was freaking awesome, and aside from a little ribbing over some of his costume designs, they’d actually become fast friends. A lot of that was because Maggie had taken one look at the Alien Conspiracy Website he contributed to and dove in head first. He’d listened to her rant for hours about all the details that were wrong, and learned more about the weird shit that happened in National City in one night than he had in all the years he’d live there.

But James Olsen was not Maggie Sawyer and Winn did not like the way he looked at Kara. Not one little bit. Because James Olsen looked at Kara like she belonged to him. Which is why, when he found James standing in the alley where he was supposed to be meeting Kara, he had to bite his tongue to avoid saying something he’d probably regret.

“Hey,” James said, “what’s up?”

“Nothing, nothing,” Winn said, casting around for some reason he’d be in the alley. “I… like to come out here to smoke. Which I like to do in private.”

“Actually, I’m meeting someone out here, so…”

“Yeah, you can meet them inside the building.”

“No, uh, my friend likes to make an entrance.”

“So does his,” a voice said from behind them. Winn smiled as he turned around to find Maggie walking down the alley towards them. “Also, you’re outvoted.” She lifted her hand, gesturing back towards the entrance to the alley with her thumb. “So, do us a favor, and take a walk.”

James looked back and forth between them, slightly panicked, and Winn couldn’t help feeling a little smug, right up until he heard the tell-tale swoosh of the cape. He looked up, just in time to see Kara turn and drop down for a landing.

Winn looked over at James, expecting to see surprise, but he moment he saw the look on James’s face he knew, and he turned back to Kara.

“You told him?” Winn asked.

“You told them?” James asked at the exact same time.

“My cousin told James,” Kara said, “and we’ve had some words about that.” Then she looked at James. “I told them, because they’re my friends and they deserve to know what that means. They’re here because they’ve already proven themselves.”

Winn felt himself stand up just a little taller at that. Something about the idea that someone like Kara respected him made him feel better about himself and a little less frightened of the shadow looming over him.

James held up his hands, a little defensively.

“Sorry,” he said.
Kara nodded. “Okay, this thing is off to a good start. The plane, the bank robbery, the fire, but right now, it’s important that I be seen out there, helping people.”

“Is this about your interview with Cat?” James asked.

Winn looked at James, then back at Kara. “You’re giving Ms. Grant an interview?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said.

“You sure that’s a good idea?” Maggie asked. Which Winn was happy about because it meant he didn’t have to.

“I know it seems a bit weird but right now, Supergirl needs as much public exposure and as much positive press exposure as she can get. So yes, in a way, this is about my interview with Cat, but it’s also about convincing Astra that there are better ways to help this planet that what she’s planning.”

“Who’s Astra?” James asked, and Winn felt that smug feeling come back, because here was something he knew, something Kara had trusted him and Maggie with, that James didn’t know.

“Long story,” Kara said. “I’ll fill you in later. The point is, right now, I need to be out there, helping people, and to do that, I need your help.”

“I’m in,” all three of them said at once.

“Next time, can you stop a robbery at a salad bar,” Maggie said as she grabbed another slice of pizza and dropped down onto the couch. “If I keep eating like this, I’m going to have to get bigger pants.”

Kara laughed as she put her feet up on the coffee table. “Maggie, we both know you’re too butch not to have at least one pair of pants at home with some extra room in them.”

“Okay, I would like to say that I am not comfortable with the direction this conversation is heading,” Winn said. He shifted a little closer to the table as he worked on unhooking the laptop from the police scanner. “It’s a little too close to hearing things like that about my sister.”

“And I feel like I’m missing something.” James said.

Kara looked over her shoulder to here James was leaning against the counter, a bottle of water in his hand. The last two days had been good. It had taken a little time, but Maggie and Winn had both eventually warmed up to him, and Kara had started to settle into a relationship with him that didn’t revolve around pining or guilt.

She turned back to Maggie. “You explain it,” she said.

“Oh, no, Danvers. You told the joke, you gotta explain it.”

Kara thought about it for a moment, and decided right then and there she’d rather fight Darkseid, Doomsday and a dozen White Martians at once, than explain packing to James Olsen.

“Sorry, James,” she said. “You’re gonna have to figure that one out on your own, or get Winn to explain it.”

“That will happen right around the heat death of the universe,” Winn said. “Sorry, James, you’ll have to figure out the mysteries of lesbian humor on your own.”
“Lesbian... Oh,” James said.

Kara turned around again, and saw a look of shock on James’ face. A small part of her wanted to jump up and do a victory dance, but there was another part that wanted to make sure to drive the point home.

“He didn’t know,” she said, turning back to Maggie. “Maybe I should have gone with a flannel suit and a rainbow cape.”

Maggie snorted, choking a little on a bite of pizza before she managed to swallow it. “I’d suggest a tattoo, but trust me, guys will completely ignore it.”

“Noted,” Kara said. “Seriously, though, I want to thank you guys. The last couple of days have been amazing, and I think the city is really starting to believe in Supergirl.”

“That’s all you,” Maggie said.

“She’s right,” James said. “You’ve been amazing out there.”

“Especially with Fluffy,” Winn said.

Kara turned around and glared at him. “It was a snake, Winn.”

Whatever Winn’s reply would have been was lost to the knock on the door. Kara looked through the door, and saw Alex standing there, looking like a kicked puppy. The only thing about it that surprised her was that it had taken this long.

“Maggie, would you get the door?”

“Why me?” Maggie asked, suspicion dripping from her voice. “James and Winn are closer. And you might want to change first.”

Kara smiled, “Because I’ve been waiting for this for months, and I’m pretty sure my sister knows I’m from Krypton.”

“You know, your obsession with pimping me out to your straight sister is a little disturbing.”

The knock came again, and James stood up. “I’ll get it,” he said.

“I will melt your face if you open that door,” Kara said. She gave Maggie a small push. “Go.”

“Kara, I know you’re in there!” Alex shouted through the door.”

Maggie stood up. “Fine,” she grumbled. “But if she’s not hot, I’m kicking your ass.”

Kara watched as Maggie walked across the room, and it was all she could do to keep from bouncing excitedly on the couch, when Maggie unlocked the door and swung it open. Alex looked up and stopped dead for just a moment, before her jaw dropped. Kara wasn’t entirely sure she would have needed her super hearing to hear the small pop of Alex’s jaw when it happened.

“Oh…” was all Alex could seem to get out, and Kara had to fight not to squeal at the look on her face.

“You must be Kara’s sister,” Maggie said. “I’m Maggie.”

“Oh,” Alex said. “Uh... Hi.”
The sound of Winn and Kara both bursting into laughter seemed to break the spell, and Alex looked past Maggie, into the apartment, and the vaguely punch-drunk expression shifted into pure, annoyed big sister the second Alex spotted Kara in the Supergirl uniform.

Maggie turned around, following Alex’s line of sight to care, and laughed. “Oh, somebody’s in trouble.”

Ten minutes later, Winn, James and Maggie were gone, and Kara was in civvies, pouring both of them a cup of tea.

“Do you really think it’s a good idea to tell your friends who you are?” Alex asked.

“You know what,” Kara said, “after that stunt at the DEO two nights ago, I don’t think you get to question how *I* am handling this.” She reached over and grabbed the sugar bowl, taking out three cubes and dropping them into her tea.

Alex winced. “Okay, sorry. I didn’t come here to fight. I came to apologize. What happened at the DEO was a mistake.”

Kara nodded. “Mine,” she said. “I shouldn’t have told you about Jeremiah or I should have trusted you and J’onn with everything. Fuck if I know what I’m doing.”

Alex flinched at the sound of Kara swearing. “Why didn’t you?”

Kara sighed and looked down at her tea. “I couldn’t,” she said. “There are so many moving parts, so many dangers and threats and I absolutely could not take certain risks. When we were setting this up, the entire plan, the entire strategy centered on preventing Myriad from ever being deployed. In order to do that, I have to convince Astra to give it up. The thing is, I didn’t know where Astra would be up until a week ago, and in order to preserve that knowledge, I had to make sure everything, or as much of it as possible, played out the exact same way as in the original timeline.”

“Original timeline?” Alex asked. “Kara, are you saying you’re from the future? Because that’s what it sounded like you were saying at the DEO and that’s what it sounds like you’re saying now.”

Kara took a drink of her tea, then looked up at Alex. “Sort of,” she said. “It’s complicated, and I’m not a Time Master, so…” she shrugged.

“Time Master?” Alex asked.

Kara reached up and pinched the bridge of her nose. “I’m too sober to have this conversation,” she said. “Where’s J’onn?”

“Back at the DEO,” Alex said. “He’s… Vasquez quit. The moment you cleared the base’s radar envelope, she stormed into the training room and ripped into him. Her girlfriend tried to defend him, and Susan told her, ‘You can pack your shit and get your ungrateful ass out of my apartment.’ Then she threw her badge in Hank’s face and just stormed out.”

“/..rao, i dovrrosh/” Kara said, and reached into her pocket, digging out her phone. “Konex.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” the robot replied as it decloaked.

“Hack the DEO’s computer and pull the personnel record for Susan Vasquez, then add her to my
“Kara! You can’t-“ Alex started.

“Done, Lady Kara,” Konex said, cutting Alex off.

“Thank you,” Kara replied, tapping the contacts icon on her screen and calling Susan.

“Hello,” Susan said.

“Hey, Susan, this is Kara.”

“Um… Hello, ma’am,” Susan said.

“Anyone who quits their job for me gets to call me Kara,” she said, “especially if they toss their girlfriend out in the process.”

“You heard about that?” Susan asked.

“Just now,” Kara said, “or I would have called sooner.”

“I appreciate that. Um… Don’t take this the wrong way, but how did you get my number?”

“Probably not a conversation for an unsecure line, but I want to ask you a favor.”

There was an annoyed sigh on the other end of the line. “What would that be, ma’am?”

“Go back to work,” Kara said. “I’m going to go back eventually, once my sister and Hank have finished removing their heads from their asses and finished apologizing and maybe done a bit of groveling. I could really use someone there I trust.”

“I… I appreciate the compliment, Kara, but I’m not really sure I’d be welcome back and honestly, I’m not sure I want to go back.”

Kara nodded. “Okay. I suppose that’s fair. Tell you what. I live in Hammersmith Tower, apartment 4-A. Do you know where that is?”

“Yeah,” Susan said. “I used to drop your sister off on nights when she was too beat up from training to drive herself home. I only live about ten minutes away.”

“Cool. Tell you what, I will phone in a pizza order at Antony’s. You know it?”

“You have to ask?”

“Not really, but I wanted to be polite. I’ll pay for it. Swing by, listen to what I have to say. If you don’t want to go back to your old job once I’m done, I’ll make a few calls. I might not be able to find you anything in National City, but I know people in Gotham and in Gateway city who will let you name your price.”

“You don’t have to do that,” Susan said, but Kara could hear the gratitude in her voice.

“I feel like I do,” Kara said. “And once I’ve explained why, you might too. Antony’s will probably take their usual thirty minutes. I’ll expect you in forty-five. Fair warning though, Hank and my sister will be here.”

There was a moment of silence on the line, before Susan asked, “Are you sure that’s a good idea,
“Kara?”

“No,” Kara said. “But honestly, I don’t trust my judgement on a lot of things right now, which is why it’s necessary. I just want you here because clearly, the three of us need some fucking adult supervision.” The sound of bright, happy laughter came through the phone, and Kara couldn’t help but smile.

“See you soon,” Susan said, before the line went dead.

Kara looked over at Alex. “Call J’onn. Tell him I said to get his green ass over here. I’m going to order pizza.”

“I’d ask how you know my favorite kind of pizza,” J’onn said, looking down at the pie in front of him, “but I’d probably just get some cryptic bullshit and I’m not in the mood.”

“No more cryptic answers,” Kara said as she sat a bottle of root beer on the table for him. “I think all of us have had enough secrets to last a lifetime.” She sat handed Susan a bottle of coke. “Sorry I don’t have the sugar sweetened kind but I wasn’t really expecting you.”

“That’s okay,” Susan said. “I drink this stuff at work, anyway.”

Kara dropped into her chair next to Alex. All four of them were sitting around Kara’s dinner table. Alex looked nervous. J’onn looked angry. Susan looked nervous, angry, and a little like she felt out of place.

“So, here’s the deal. I suck at keeping secrets. Not as much as I used to, but I hate them. I’ve only been keeping the secrets I have because there are lives at stake. Not a few lives, or a few dozen, or even a few million. When I say lives are at stake, I mean there are literally hundreds of trillions of lives hanging in the balance, across dozens of universes.”

She watched both Alex and Susan flinch at that, but J’onn leaned back, looking at her and there was a considering look on his face.

“Susan, before I go any further, you deserve to be on the same footing here as Alex and… Hank.”

Susan gave a small nod. “Okay.”

“I have knowledge of how a number of future events are going to play out, because I’ve already lived through the next eleven years. I’m making an attempt to change the outcome of those events in order to prevent a series of disastrous outcomes for Earth and millions of other worlds. Honestly, Susan, I hadn’t intended to read anyone other than Alex and Hank in on this, because I didn’t want to put the weight of this on anyone else’s shoulders. The thing is, I honestly think after what happened the other night, we need someone who’s going to be a *lot* more objective than any of the three of us will ever be capable of to yank the choke chain when we get out of line. Since you are the person I trust the most at the DEO after Alex and Hank and since you’re apparently perfectly willing to call any of us when we have our heads up our asses, I think you should have the job. But if you don’t want it or don’t think you can handle it, tell me now, and I will make those calls about alternate employment.”

Susan rolled her eyes. “Hey, Susan, do you want a job babysitting the immature brats who are responsible for saving the universe? You don’t have to take it, but if you don’t, they might be too busy having a hissy fit to stop the apocalypse. No fucking pressure.” She picked up her coke and twisted the top off, taking a swig before setting it back down. “Please tell me you have rum to go in this?”
Kara shook her head. “I can’t get drunk, so the only thing I keep in the house is Alex’s Scotch and some beer and tequila for Maggie.”

“Think Maggie would mind if I stole one of her beers?” Susan asked.

Kara got up and walked over to the fridge, fishing out one of the Blue Moons from the back. She carried it over to Susan, and used her thumb to pop the bottle cap off. Susan took it and took a long pull from it before she sat the bottle on the table in front of her.

“I’m in,” she said. “I may hate myself in the morning but I didn’t take the job at the DEO for the pay.”

Kara smiled, and turned to J’onn.

“I’ve been calling the tune for the better part of thirteen months, but I don’t want to dictate terms anymore. No more spilling each other’s secrets. If we do this, I need you to make the decision. I need you to be all in.”

“Ohay,” he said. He slid back a bit, then stood up, looking down at Susan. “Are you armed?”

Susan shook her head. “No,” she said. “I don’t have a civilian carry permit.”

“Well, at least I won’t get shot,” he said. Then he shifted, gaining height, turning green. “I am J’onn J’onzz.”

Kara rolled her eyes and muttered, “/zhaolium zw roskilahres :dhiviao/”

Susan picked up her beer and downed the rest of the bottle.

J’onn shifted back into his human form and sat back down.

“I feel like I forgot to do a presentation for class,” Alex said.

Kara laughed.

“So,” Susan said, looking at J’onn, “I take it you’re not from around here?”

“Mars,” J’onn said. “I’m the last of my people. We were slaughtered by the White Martians. Monsters from the planet’s core.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “About that…”

J’onn looked over at her. “What?”

“This all starts about twenty thousand years ago,” she said. “The history is long, and I’m not going to go through all of it because most of it’s not terribly relevant, but twenty thousand years ago, Krypton, Mars and Tamaran were allies. Together, the three worlds held dominion over a sphere of space almost fifty thousand light years across, and we were expanding. At the time, Kryptonians had powers even under the light of a red sun. Then the Guardians and their Green Lanterns came. They broke the alliance, smashed our civilizations, and drove all three of us, Krypton, Mars and Tamaran back to pre-space flight technology. They infected Kryptonians and Tamarans with a plague. Kryptonians were left unable to fully process the less energetic light of Red Stars, while Tamarans were left unable to process anything less than ultraviolet light to fuel their powers. Martians though, didn’t use light to power their abilities, so the Guardians split the race, dividing them into Green Martians, which were as they were before, and White Martians.”
“It took thousands of years of being trapped on our world, but Kryptonians eventually began to branch out, and spread through the galaxy again. This time, not as conquerors or as empire builders, but as diplomats, scholars, and when necessary, as enforcers of the law. This was fine, except the Guardians noticed that Kryptonian physiology, already highly adaptive, was starting to overcome the plague. Another four or five generations, and my people’s power would have been restored.”

“The Guardians wouldn’t allow that to happen. Almost a century back, they contacted the Coluans of the Brainiac clan who Krypton had been employing for centuries as cybernetic administrators. They are beings who can exist within the cybernetic realm and mold it to their will, and who can also take physical form which is very nearly a match for a Kryptonian in yellow sunlight. The Guardians hired them to murder Krypton, and to make it look like a suicide.”

“Minor changes here and there to mining plans, the introduction of slightly corrupted mining technology. The core chain reaction was carefully planned and calculated. My world was Murdered.

“At the same time, knowing that Earth was progressing rapidly and would likely reintroduce interstellar travel to Mars within a couple of centuries or so, the Guardians provoked the White Martians into a genocide of the Green Martians.

“The Tamarans, the least powerful of the three allies, have been kept tied up for centuries in never-ending civil wars, many provoked by the Guardians’ agents.

“The Guardians knew there might be a handful of survivors, but what they failed to take into account was how desperate some of us would be to save our planet and they certainly didn’t count on my Aunt Astra discovering a portion of the Anti-Life equation.”

“I’m sorry,” Alex said, “the what?”

“The Anti-Life equation is a mathematical formula which robs all sentient life of the seven primal emotions. Rage, greed, fear, will, hope, compassion and love. Myriad is the anti-hope function. Hope is a wellspring. You cannot have will without hope. Deprive a being of hope, and they become a mindless slave, devoid of any drive. The Anti-Hope function is at the core of the Anti-life equation. But Myriad can be broken, because it is just one of the seven functions. If someone were to possess all seven, then they would have absolute control over all sentient life in the universe.”

“Your aunt has this?” Susan asked.

“Only part of it and without the other six functions, the Anti-Hope function is easily defeated. Especially since it has to be constantly repeated into the minds of the victims to keep it fixed there. Block the signal transmitting it, and you defeat Myriad, make people feel hope and you burn away Myriad’s ability to affect them.”

“The only way to protect against the full Anti-Life equation is to have its opposite, the life equation, permanently imprinted on your mind.”

“In the timeline that I’m from, J’onn died to protect my and Superman’s minds. He used his telepathic abilities to imprint us, but the strain of the effort killed him. Fortunately, I still carry that protection, and I’ve since found a way to imprint Superman without requiring a Martian to do so.”

“Well, that’s certainly good news,” J’onn said.
“You have no idea,” Kara said. “Thirteen years ago, I went on a blind date. The guy ditched me after about fifteen minutes, but I heard that a flight to Geneva, the flight Alex was on, was having engine trouble. I left the bar and barely managed to catch the plane. It was sloppy. Otto Bender bridge was damaged and had to be closed for nearly three weeks while it was resurfaced and recertified for traffic. An engine fell off and the debris crashed through the roof of a store, causing a fire that burned a strip mall to the ground, and it took them nearly a month to fish the plane out of the middle of National City Bay. Two days later, the DEO shot me out of the sky, and I woke up locked in Kryptonite handcuffs, and found out Alex was a member of the DEO and met ‘Hank Henshaw’ for the first time.”

“I made mistakes,” Kara said, closing her eyes. “So many mistakes.” She started talking, telling them everything, from her first fight with Vartox, through the moment she woke up after carrying Fort Rozz into space. Somewhere around the Black Mercy, she felt Alex take her hand, squeezing it gently as the tears flowed down Kara’s face as she described the life slipping from Astra’s body. Then there was Red Kryptonite, and Cadmus, and Non deploying Myriad, and her carrying Fort Rozz into space. She’d barely covered a year of the future, and she could see the exhaustion on everyone’s face.

“Cadmus was bad,” she said, “but it was almost a distraction. We spent all that time fighting it, fighting to protect the alien refugees, not knowing Fort Rozz was still the real danger.”

“What about dad?” Alex asked.

Kara shook her head. “I… I killed him.” She ignored the soft gasp from Alex. “Cadmus has done things to him, turned him into a cyborg, twisted his mind. He showed up with a lump of Kryptonite embedded in his chest, and destroyed the CatCo building. He killed James and Cat. Winn survived because he was working at the DEO as an agent by that point. I tried Alex, I tried everything, but after he killed Eliza… I knew he wouldn’t want to live like that, and when he started for you, I ended it.”

She took her hand out of Alex’s and picked up a napkin, wiping the tears off her face. “I don’t think you ever forgave me,” she said. “I know you tried, but I think it was just too much, and there wasn’t time. We’d barely finished burying the dead when the Guardians arrived.” She shook her head. “They got here while we were literally still putting out the fires from Cadmus. We didn’t know they were here at first, but then the Third Army appeared, and everything just went straight to hell.”

“They decided that humans would be the basis for the Third Army. It was like an infection. One of them would touch a human, and the conversion would take seconds. By the time it was over, nearly two thirds of the population was just gone. India was empty, most of China, huge swaths of the rest of the world. When we broke the power source of the Third Army, everyone who’d been converted just crumbled to dust.”

“That’s when Darkseid hit us,” she said. “He’d been sitting out there, waiting at the edge of the Solar system. The fights were fast, hard, brutal. Alex and Maggie took down Granny Goodness, which… Be impressed. She’s the one who killed Superman.” Kara turned and looked at Alex. “You didn’t make it though. Either of you.”

She turned to Susan. “You held the DEO longer than anyone thought possible. They had to send Kalibak himself to break down the doors.”

“In the end, we lost. Darkseid had found Fort Rozz and Myriad. That had given him everything he needed to finish deriving the Anti-Life equation. Sara, Barry, and I, along with a dozen others, spent the next nine years doing everything we could to stop them, but in the end, we knew the only
way to stop the war was to prevent the war from ever happening, and the only way to do that, was to prevent Myriad from ever being deployed.”

“That’s… quite a story, Ms. Danvers,” J’onn said.

“You don’t believe it,” Kara said.

“You have to admit, it’s a lot to swallow,” J’onn said.

“It’s the part about the White Martian, isn’t it?” Kara asked.

“That and the part about the Guardians of the Universe.”

Kara nodded.

“What if I could provide you with proof?” Kara asked.

“That would be a good start,” J’onn said.

“Konex,” Kara said.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” the robot said as it decloaked.

“Contact Kolex. I need the caskets.”

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

A moment later, there was a bright glow in the empty corner where Konex usually hovered when in stealth mode, and the robot drifted over and picked up a large featureless white case off the floor, and carried it over to the table, setting it down in the middle. Kara reached up and pressed her hand to the top, and the surface glowed briefly where she touched it, then the top split lengthwise down the case, and the upper half of the case folded down, half on each side of the bottom, revealing three smaller cases. Each of them was hexagonal, with solid end caps connected by a translucent center section. Inside each was what looked like an old-style lantern, and an ornately-carved signet ring. One of them was a deep, angry red, another was the bright, brilliant blue of the sky on a new day, and the last was a soft, warm violet that felt like safety and home.

J’onn, one moment, was sitting at the table, and the next he was standing five feet back from his chair, eyes fixed on the red case as if it might explode at any moment.

“What are you doing with that?” he asked.

Kara looked up at him. “My best to never take it out of the case,” she said.

“You shouldn’t have it on this planet,” he said.

“I agree,” Kara said, “but we’ve both done things we aren’t proud of J’onn. That’s one of mine.”

“Um…” Susan said, “either of you care to fill in the unenlightened?”

Kara nodded. “Sit down, J’onn.”
Slowly, reluctantly, he returned to his seat.

“The Green Lantern Corps is one of nine different factions that have similar abilities,” Kara said. “Eight of those factions use rings as the focus for their powers. The ninth uses a staff. These are power rings and their power batteries.”

“The violet one is one of the Star Sapphire rings, created by the Zamarons and bears no connection to the Guardians of the Universe. The Blue Lantern Rings were created by Ganthet and Sayd, who had broken away from the Guardians and lack the back doors and other traps built into the Green Lantern Rings. The Red Rings were created by the demon Atrocitus, forged from pure rage and christened in blood.”

Kara took a deep breath, tearing her eyes away from the red case. “There are seven base emotions common to all sentient life. Anger, desire, fear, will, hope, compassion and love. Each emotion is connected with a color. Red for anger and rage, orange for desire or avarice, yellow for fear, green for willpower, blue for hope, indigo for compassion, and violet for love. Hope is the strongest of them all, but impossible to wield without will. Red rage, and the violet light of love are the extreme ends of the spectrum. The further you move from the center, from green, the more the rings can influence the person who wields them.”

“I have these, because I can wield them. Red, Blue, Violet.” She looked up, right at J’onn. “If I put on one of these rings and I use the telepathic link to show you what I’ve seen, will you believe me?”

“And if I say no?”

Kara looks over at Alex. “If I open the violet case, that ring will not even hesitate,” she says, before turning back to J’onn. “That would be on your head.”

“Wait,” Alex said, “what do you mean?”

“The rings,” Kara said. “They chose the person who best embodies the emotion they channel. If I open that violet case, that ring will go straight for you.”

“Me?” Alex said.

Kara nodded. “I have seen you on the edge of destruction, seen you fighting as you were literally torn apart and in all that, the one thing that never faltered was your love.” She reached up, putting her hands on the violet cask. “But I wouldn’t wish that on you.”

“What do you mean?” Alex asked.

“The further you get from the center of the spectrum, the greater the influence the ring can have on you. Love is a powerful emotion. It can overwhelm you, consume you just as easily as rage, if you let it.”

“You’ve worn one?” Alex asked.

“A violet ring? Yes.” Kara said. “It was no more pleasant than the red ring. Not for me.”

“No,” J’onn said. “No. If you wear the ring, Kara, that’s enough.”

“Now wait a minute,” Alex said. “If that thing hurts her-“

Kara reached over and put her hand on Alex’s. “I’m not going to wear the violet ring,” she said.
Alex relaxed, and Kara reached up, touching the Blue Lantern Emblem on the blue case. The top slid off, and the blue ring lifted up out of the case, hovering for a moment until Kara reached up and took it gently, sliding it on her finger.

“Kara Zor-El Danvers of Krypton and Earth,” a loud voice echoed through the room, “you have the ability to instill great hope.”

Blue light poured out of the ring, quickly covering Kara from the neck down. The outfit was not so different from her regular Supergirl costume. The parts of the suit that were normally red were replaced with white, the yellow trim on the El coat of arms was black, the blue was brighter, more vivid, and the Blue Lantern emblem sat above and to the right of the El coat of arms.

Kara pointed the ring at the Blue Power Battery.

“In fearful day. In raging night. With strong hearts full, our souls ignite. When all seems lost in the war of light, look to the stars, for hope burns bright.”

It was close to 2 AM by the time the rings and their power batteries were safely back at Sanctuary and Alex and Susan left. J’onn lingered, still sitting at her table, holding a mug of coffee and staring into the black liquid as if it held the answers to all his questions. Kara walked from the door back over to the cupboard, and dug out a pack of Chocos from behind a box of vanilla wafers.

“You going to sit there all night?” she asked as she sat the cookies on the table and slid them over to him.

He sighed. “I’m sorry,” he said.

“It’s okay,” she replied.

He shook his head. “No, it’s not. I... I’ve gotten so used to mistrusting people, to having to hide who and what I am. I hurt you after I promised Jeremiah-“

“J’onn,” Kara said, “it’s okay.” She reached out and covered his wrist with her hand. “You and Alex... Look, I loved my father. Zor-El was wonderful, he really was, and Jeremiah was too, but in the time I knew you in that other timeline, you were more of a father to me than either of them. Watching you die sent me to some really dark places. Before that, I’d only killed six people. None of them gave me a choice. After you died, I walked into the armory and I put on that fucking ring and I let my rage out. I lost it. I tore through entire divisions of Apokoliptians and Parademons and I didn’t leave anyone alive. I did things, horrible, horrible things. It was like the Red Kryptonite all over again, only I was stronger, more powerful, and I was able to direct my rage at the people I *wanted* to hurt.”

“I did it because it was easier to hold on to the rage than to live through the grief of losing another father. I did it because I was afraid that if I let myself feel *that*, I would never come back from it. Alex, before she died, she talked me into taking off the ring. Talked me into letting one of the Blue Lanterns cleanse me of its power. But even the blue ring couldn’t take away my anger, my fear, and my grief.”

“You have known Alex for two years. You’re closer to her than you want to admit. You already care about her like she’s your daughter. But me, I deliberately held you at arm’s distance, refused to tell you things that could have helped. I did this. I gave you reason not to trust me. I thought it was for the best, but I was wrong.”

“The thing I’m having a hard time with, is you knew about the bomb,” he said.
“I did, and I was scared. What if I’d done enough to make them decide to use a larger bomb, to make them not care if it looked like an accident? I was terrified. But everything hinged on being able to make contact with Astra, with convincing her not to deploy Myriad. And I knew I’d been able to catch the plane before. It was a risk, but I honestly believed it was less of a risk than sending Alex out into the field on any given mission. And Supergirl is important. That she’s out there helping, doing good. If Myriad does get deployed, Supergirl and the hope she will inspire are the surest ways to protect this world.”

J’onn sat his coffee down, and tore open the pack of Choco’s, eating one of the cookies slowly. “I really got to live out in the open?”

“As much as you wanted too,” Kara said. “Honestly, you mostly stuck to your human form, but you were out there with me, J’onn J’onzz, flying through the skies of National City helping people.” Kara smiled as she reached over and took one of the cookies. “They called you ‘The Martian Manhunter’.”

J’onn smiled. “I like that,” he said.

“I know. I swear I never told Cat that though.”

He laughed. “She does like naming Superheroes, doesn’t she?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “I—she stopped when she felt a faint vibration in her pocket. She reached down, and pulled out the spy beacon.

“I’ve got to go,” she said.

J’onn nodded. “Kara…”

“Yes?”

“Be safe.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

-rao, i dovrrosh
Literal: Rao’s Shadow
Semantic: Oh, hell

:zhaolium zw rroskilahres :dhiviao
Literal: Fucker who habitually seeks glory
Semantic: Fucking Drama Queen
“Hello, Little One,” Astra said as Kara touched down next to her. She was sitting in the same spot Kara had occupied the last time they talked, perched at the edge of the cliff, with her feet dangling. Kara sat down next to her and slipped one arm around her, hugging her gently.

“Hello, Aunt Astra.”

Astra slipped an arm around her and returned the hug. “I’m honestly unsure if I should be hugging you or fighting you at this moment, but I find I have little stomach for battle.”

“That’s good and bad,” Kara said. “Good because I don’t want to fight you. Bad because there is a war coming and I want you on my side when it arrives.”

Astra pulled back, looking at Kara. “What do you know of war, Little One?”

Kara sighed. “More than I want to, Aunt Astra. More than I want to.”

“I’m not sure it will matter. Your device does as you said, and none of my scientists can find a way around it. Myriad will not work, and this world is doomed.”

Kara shook her head. “No. This world can still be saved and as I said before, Krypton was too far gone before you even realized there was a problem.”

“You sound so sure of that.”

“Because I know things you don’t. Our death wasn’t quite the reckless suicide we’ve been led to believe.”

“What do you mean?” Astra asked, and there was a sharpness to her tone. Kara could tell the underlying emotions. Disbelief, curiosity, maybe even hope. The hope Kara understood. Hope that Astra would no longer have to carry this guilt.

“We may have held the knife, but the Brainiacs were the ones who pushed it in. They modified our mining data, sabotaged our equipment and hid what was happening from us, right up until the end. Our leaders were far from blameless, but the death of Krypton was assisted suicide at the very least and I’d call it a bought and paid for murder.”

Astra shook her head. “I dislike the Coluans a great deal, Kara. Especially the Brainiacs. But we cannot push our own guilt off onto others.”

“I have proof,” Kara said. “I know who paid them. I know why their employers wanted us dead.” She turned to look at Astra. “I’m not just offering you a chance to save this world, Astra. I’m
offering you a chance to find *justice* for those who orchestrated the death of our race.”

Kara climbed to her feet. “The ecological problems of this world are easy to solve. Teach them to make omegahedrons and betahedrons crystals, and we would gain decades to work out the issues with recycling. We even have technologies that could help with that. Give them sub-light propulsion technology and they have enough asteroids to mine that they’d never even be tempted to start core mining.”

“You cannot think it would be that simple,” Astra said.

“No,” she said. “I don’t. But I do believe in the humans. This is not Krypton, Aunt Astra. Many of them recognize the harm they’ve done to their world and work to mitigate and reverse the damage. Even their leaders, at least, some of them, are involved in the effort. We can help them, encourage them, give them the wisdom that can be gained from our mistakes. But taking away their free will… That’s not right. You were on the verge of committing a horrible crime. Worse, you were on the verge of attracting the attention of enemies this world is not prepared to fight.”

“What do you mean?” Astra asked.

“Did you seriously think that no one would take notice if you turned on a device that could sway the will of an entire species?” Kara shook her head and dug the spy beacon out of her boot. Astra held her own up, and Kara touched them together, turning the light off.

“I had not considered it,” Astra admitted.

“The humans have a saying. One that far too few of them take to heart. ‘Don’t cling to a mistake because you’ve spent a lot of time making it.’”

“Wise words,” Astra said.

“Yes, they are,” Kara said. “You’ve spent decades on Myriad. That is a *lot* of time.”

Astra climbed to her feet. “What would you have me do?”

“You’ve looked down on humans, judged them, condemned them, plotted how you would save them and rule them. But you haven’t lived among them or come to know them and understand them.”

“And how would I do that?”

“Surrender,” Kara said. “I know it goes against every instinct you have. I know you want to fight until the bitter end. But please, Aunt Astra, Surrender. We can integrate you into society. Find you a home, a purpose.”

“Your DEO will put me in a cage,” Astra said.

“At first,” Kara said. “for a few days. But if you give your parole, if you swear to obey the laws of this world, the director would be willing to help you. The help would not come freely. You’d be expected to work with the DEO, to help defend this world from those who would harm it, but that’s what you and your soldiers were sworn to do on Krypton, as well.”

Kara could see the conflict on Astra’s face and she knew she’d pushed far enough for one night.

“I have work in the morning,” she said.
“Work?” Astra asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “I help out at the DEO and with crime prevention, search and rescue, and emergency response, but that’s something I do because I can and because I want to. I’m not compelled. I have a job, a place I go to during the day. Duties and responsibilities. I have friends there, people who care about me. A boss who is amazing and who makes me proud of what I do.”

“You’ve found a vocation,” Astra said, a little smile in her voice.

Kara shook her head. “No, Aunt Astra. I’ve found a life and I will protect it. Even from you.” She took a few steps forward and slipped both arms around Astra, hugging her tightly.

“/u kim e w rrip , eh ,astruh,/>” she said. “Please, think about what I’ve said.”

“I will,” Astra said, hugging her back. “/u kim e w rrip , eh shod kir/ Next time I light the beacon, you will bring your proof that our world was murdered.” There was no question there, and Kara recognized it for the demand it was.

“I will,” she said. “Good night.” With that, she let go of Astra, and lifted into the sky.

Kara was sitting on the balcony off the bullpen, working her way through her fourth big belly bacon double cheese burger as she watched the city. It had been a good morning. Cat was in meetings for most of it, which had let her slip away to handle a small tenement fire before it had gotten out of control and she’d lifted a sinking Cabin cruiser out of the bay after its hull got ruptured by a snapped tow line. It made her feel useful, but it had burned a lot of calories, and even with her reputation for packing away insane amounts of food, she thought eight burgers and two jumbo chili-cheese fries might raise an eyebrow or two. Especially since she’d gotten a whole chocolate cake for desert. It was only a five-inch cake, practically a cup cake, really, but she knew Cat was already at least a little suspicious.

Honestly, she didn’t know how humans survived on two thousand calories a day.

She was so busy enjoying her lunch, and the sights and sounds of the city that she almost didn’t notice James approaching. In the end, it was his cologne that did him in. She’d learned that scent well in the original timeline. The brand was a Metropolis exclusive. The store custom blended the stuff and would not ship it. James had brought a couple of bottles with him and she knew he’d eventually get Clark to start shipping the stuff to him. She didn’t blame him. It really did smell fantastic.

“Hey,” he said. “Mind if I sit?”

She shook her head. “Go ahead,” she said after she swallowed a bite of her burger. “Just don’t expect me to share the food.”

James raised his hands in mock surrender. “I wouldn’t think of it,” he said. “I think the closest I’ve ever come to death was the night I ate the last slice of pecan pie at Clark’s.”

“You know, on Krypton, we sentenced people to eternity in the Phantom Zone for lesser crimes than pie theft.” James laughed, and Kara inwardly cringed at the smile he was giving her, because she recognized it.

He took a breath and looked at her with what she’d always thought of as his serious face. “Can I ask you something?”
“Sure,” she said, then took another bite of her food, chewing slowly.

“Did I do something wrong?”

She swallowed. “What do you mean?”

“Well,” he said, “You’ve been snippy with me on more than one occasion. You got me in trouble with Cat when I was trying to help you, and just now, when I smiled at you, you cringed.”

Kara frowned. “Sorry, I thought I hid that better.”

“You hid it pretty well,” James said. “If I hadn’t known Clark for as long as I have, I never would have noticed. But you and he both get the same look on your face when you’re uncomfortable and trying not to show it.”

Kara picked up her drink and took a swig of the grape soda to give herself time to think.

“You know I’m gay,” she said.

“Yeah,” he replied. “I got that last night.”

“You also know that I have better than average senses.”

He nodded.

“So… It’s a little uncomfortable knowing you’re attracted to me,” she said.

“Um…”

“Look, I get it,” she said. “Biological response. Not something you can help. Really, I understand. But every time I hear the tempo of your breathing shift, or your heart rate spike… Some guys are good at boundaries. Winn, once I told him I was gay, went out of his way to make sure he didn’t say or do anything that could be considered a romantic gesture. Made sure I knew he wanted me to tell him if he ever did anything he shouldn’t, so he wouldn’t do it again. So, I’m fine around Winn, because I know, even if he does find me attractive, he’ll never act on that. He’s going to respect the boundary I put in place.”

Of course, she’d been a bit firmer establishing that boundary in this timeline than in the original one, where she’d honestly been completely oblivious to most of his attempts at flirting, right up until he kissed her. She suspected he’d dealt with it better this time around both because it wasn’t a rejection of him, specifically, and because she’d laid down the law early enough that he hadn’t gotten his hopes up for over a year.

“You’re worried I won’t?” James asked.

She shrugged. “Sorry,” she said. “Like I said, Winn was great about it, but it took a while for me to be sure he wasn’t all talk about respecting my sexuality, but we kind of started with a clean slate. You and I… It’s harder, because you are already in my personal space, and I didn’t invite you there.”

“I’m sorry. I, um-”

“No, it’s not your fault. Clark shouldn’t have told you without getting my permission. I get why he did what he did, but it doesn’t stop this from being awkward. You’re somewhere I didn’t invite you, and it makes it difficult to trust that you won’t push for more.”
“That’s why you got so angry about me trying to help you with Cat,” he said.

“Yes,” Kara replied. “You were white knighting me,” she said. “I know it’s because Clark is worried about me and I know you’re trying to be friendly so I’m trying to have patience, because I know you must be a great guy if Clark let you in on his little secret.”

“Is there anything I can do to make it better?” James asked.

“You can tell me you respect that I’m gay and I don’t have to worry about you trying to pull a Chasing Amy.”

“I’m not sure I follow.”

“Ben Affleck movie,” she said. “Gay girl gets to be friends with a straight guy. He tells her he’s in love with her. Suddenly, she’s not gay anymore.”

“Yeah, I saw it.”

“Right. Pull that declaration of love crap, and I will give my cousin his best friend back by punting you to Metropolis.”

James nodded. “I think I can live with those terms,” he said. “I just… I want to help.”

Kara smiled. “That’s good, James. That’s a good thing to want, and I want your help. I *want* to be your friend, because like I said, I’m pretty sure you have to be a really great person. Clark is an amazing judge of character. I’ve just lost too much to have to worry about losing a friend because of something like a misplaced crush.”

“Fair enough,” he said, holding out his hand. “Friends?”

Kara reached across the table. “Friends,” she said.

It was just after sunset when Kara landed on Cat’s balcony in full Supergirl regalia, carrying a small package under her left arm. A quick check with her X-Ray vision confirmed that Cat was still inside working, so Kara unpacked quickly. The package held two freshly-washed tumblers, a gallon of bottled water, and a bottle of Scotch, plus an ice ball mold. She sat out the tumblers, then opened the water and filled the ice ball mold, then gave it a quick blast with her freeze breath. She lifted the lid, and dropped a perfect sphere of ice into each of the tumblers, then set the gallon of water and the mold under the coffee table, before turning to the Scotch.

She opened the box, and took out the bottle, enjoying the ritual. Green glass, wrapped in a black label. Ardbeg. 10 year, because Uigeadail never tasted quite right to her and Corryvreckan was peppery and Cat hated peppery Scotches. She broke the seal, taking her time, smiling as she remembered the first bottle of Scotch she’d ever opened. She’d been working for Cat for a week, and the decanter was almost empty. She’d knelt down, and opened the cabinet, and been confounded at the assortment of bottles there and almost afraid to turn and ask Cat what she’d prefer. Almost as if by magic, Cat had spoken up, telling her to open a bottle of Macallan 18. It had been such a simple moment, and one that nearly broke her when, years later, she’d been digging through the rubble of the CatCo building, after Jeremiah had torn it down and she’d found a case of Macallan that had somehow still been completely intact.

She reached up, wiping the tears from her eyes before she uncorked the bottle, and poured two glasses, then sat the bottle to the side before reaching into her boot and pulling out her phone and typing out a quick text. “She’s waiting on the balcony for you, Ms. Grant.” She hit send, then
checked to make sure her phone was on silent before tucking it back into her boot and picking up her drink and taking a sip.

A moment later, the door to Cat’s office opened and Cat stepped out, the surprise on her face carefully concealed.

“It’s you,” she whispered.

Kara dipped her head slightly in acknowledgement. “I hope you don’t mind,” she said. “Your assistant said you were a Scotch drinker. I can’t really afford Macallan 18, but I didn’t want to show up empty-handed.”

Cat lifted an eyebrow. “Most of the time, the person doing the interview supplies the drinks,” she said.

“I know,” Kara replied, “but this isn’t most of the time, Ms. Grant.” She gestured at the couch across from her. “Please, sit.”

Cat slipped her hand into her pocket and extracted her phone. “Do you mind if I record this?”

“No at all,” Kara said. “In fact, I insist. As long as you abide by the terms of our agreement.”

Cat sat down, placing her phone between them, and tapping the record button on her voice recorder app. Then she picked up her glass of Scotch and took a sip. “Mmmm... This is good,” she said.

Kara reached out and turned the bottle so Cat could see the label. “Ardbeg 10 Year. I used to have a friend who was fond of it.”

“Used to?” Cat asked, jumping on the detail like her namesake pouncing on a mouse.

“She died,” Kara said, leaning back.

Cat’s face fell, and Kara could see the honest consternation on her face. “I’m sorry.”

“I appreciate the sentiment, Ms. Grant, but if you stop to offer me condolences every time I talk about someone I lost, this will be a very long interview.”

There was a look on Cat’s face Kara didn’t quite recognize, but it was gone after a moment and Cat just gave a small nod.

“I suppose we should start with the basics then? Who are you, where are you from?”

“I’m Lady El. Eldest of my house. Daughter of Zor-El, Life Engineer, Second Degree of the Science Guild of Argo, and Alura In-Ze, Chief Adjudicator of Argo. Granddaughter of Seg-El and Nimda An-Dor through my father, and In-Ze and Myara Bar-Ul through my mother. Kal-El, the man you call Superman, is my first cousin. Zor-El, and Kal’s father, Jor-El were brothers. I am sorry, but I’m afraid I can’t give you my common name.”

“Why not?”

Kara took another sip of her Scotch, and pointedly ignored the question.

“I’ll take that at a ‘no comment’,” Cat said, a slight smile on her face. “But you said you were the eldest of your house. How is it that Superman, your cousin, has been our there for over a decade, and we’re only hearing from you now?”
“Are you?” Kara asked. “I thought you were a better journalist than that, Ms. Grant. Or did you think those wild fires last September just decided to blow themselves out just in time to save eight people? Or that the mud slide in the middle of the summer just decided to freeze itself solid one day?”

“That was you?”

“Yes.”

“But why stay hidden?”

“Because, I may have been born thirteen Earth Years before Superman, but things aren’t as easy as dates on a Calendar. He and I left Krypton less than two minutes apart. I arrived here two and a half decades later than him. My ship was thrown off course, and I fell into…” Kara frowned. “You don’t have a term for it,” she said. “The closest translation is ‘Phantom Zone’. It’s a kind of stress point in the fabric of space time. Time loses meaning. It seems to move at the same rate inside as out, but it doesn’t, not really. A person in the zone might live there for every moment of a thousand years, and when they left, they would remember every second of it, but their body would not have aged a day. I spent twenty-four years in there, drifting and dreaming.” She took a sip of her Scotch, then sat the glass down.

“Then… I wouldn’t call it a miracle. More like sheer luck. Something triggered a reboot of my pod’s systems. Once the computer was back on line, it restarted the engine, and brought me here.”

“Twenty-four years adrift and you’re thirteen years older than Superman,” Cat said. “That would make you about forty-nine.”

“Fifty-one, actually,” Kara said. “The small drives that fit in a shuttle pod can only reach about a thousand times the speed of light, and Krypton was two thousand light years from Earth. I was born in nineteen sixty-four, by your Calendar. September twenty-second, if I’ve done the math right. But I spent twenty-six years of that asleep.”

“But you remember Krypton?” Cat asked.

“I do. I remember the mid-day festival in Kryptonopolis, the mourning song for the lost city of Kandor, and the Mass of Rao Transitioning at the temple of the long twilight in Argo City.” She looked down into her glass. “I remember watching as it was wiped from the stars, taking my home, my culture, fifteen thousand years of recorded history, and thirty billion souls with it.”

She lifted the Scotch to her lips and drained the glass, then sat it down on the coffee table, and looked up at Cat. “Krypton might be a subject for another interview, Ms. Grant.”

She could see the sympathy, the compassion in Cat’s eyes and she wanted to fall into them. It was too easy to confuse this Cat with her Cat, with the woman she’s spent hours talking to, the one who’d listened to her bitch about Snapper Carr and Nick Farrow and taught her the best ways to jerk them up by their sexist little short hairs. The woman who listened as Kara mourned for Lena and talked her through the guilt she felt at being unable to save her friend from the hatred of her own family. This Cat wasn’t her Cat, this Cat was the potential that her Cat had grown out of and Kara had taken a far more active hand in nurturing that potential this time around, but sometimes, it hurt to look at, because they weren’t there, not yet.

“So, there will be other interviews?” Cat asked, and Kara felt herself smile as she watched Cat’s mask slip back into place.
“Maybe,” Kara said. “As long as what you write is honest. I’m no more interested in a puff piece than I am a hatchet job.”

“Why me?” Cat asked, and Kara felt the surprise hit her that Cat would even ask.

“I’m not sure I understand the question?”

“Why give me an interview?” she said. “I mean, I was half way into twisting James Olsen’s arm to get it, but somehow my assistant got you here with a phone call. If you are Superman’s cousin, why not run to his little groupie?”

Kara laughed so hard, she almost fell off the couch. “Oh,” she said. “If you ever call Ms. Lane that to her face, please, please make sure someone is filming it.”

“You know Lois?”

Kara shook her head. “If Supergirl and Lois Lane had ever met, don’t you think there would be a three page spread in the Planet about it?”

“Probably,” Cat admitted. “But you still haven’t answered the question.”

“I don’t want to be a footnote,” Kara said. “If I went to Ms. Lane, all I would ever be is Superman’s cousin. A detail in a story about a Lost Boy who made good. That’s not what I want to be.”

“What do you want to be?” Cat asked.

“Worthy,” Kara said. “Thirty billion people died on Krypton. and I’m one of the last who remembers. I’m the only one who saw them die, the only one who has walked the streets of my home and lived among you. People sacrificed, people died, so I could stand here, alive, free. So that I didn’t burn with my home or get dissected in a lab somewhere. I want to help people. I want to be worthwhile. I want to prove that those sacrifices weren’t in vain. That the world is a better place because I’m in it, because when the day came, I stood up and fought to make it that way.”

Kara stood up and walked over to the balcony rail. “People are out there, calling me a hero. I don’t feel that way. Being strong, flying, heat vision, freeze breath, those things make me able to do more, give more, but they don’t make me a hero. A hero is someone who helps when they don’t have to. Someone who sacrifices their time, their sweat, their blood, even their life, to help, to make things better, even if just for one other person.

“I was sent here to protect my cousin, to be his hero, and I failed. It wasn’t my fault. I know that. I was already asleep when my ship malfunctioned. One minute, I was racing down the launch track after my three-week old cousin. The next he was standing over me, a grown man of twenty-four.

“I can’t do what I was sent to do, but I can still help. Still find a way to be worth the sacrifices made when I was given that pod and worth the sacrifices people here on Earth made so I could have something resembling a normal life until I was ready to put on the crest again.” She turned around, to look at Cat. “That’s what I want.”

Kara looked at her, and she could see tears glistening in Cat’s eyes, and without really thinking about it, she walked over to the small bench seat and opened it, taking out a box of tissues and bringing it back to Cat. Cat looked at her for a moment, then at the tissue, then back up at her, and Kara realized what she’d done, and wanted to kick herself.

Cat, though, took a couple of tissues from the box, and delicately dabbed the unshed tears from her eyes.
“I hate this time of year,” Cat said. “My allergies always act up.”

Kara nodded as she sat back down.

It took Cat a moment to finish composing herself, then she turned back to Kara, and Kara waited for the inevitable, except it never came.

“Any long-term goals?” Cat asked.

Kara nodded, feeling a little shocked, but remembering the plan she had for this interview. “I’d like to prove to the people of National City, to America and to the whole world, that aliens aren’t something to be feared. That we can live here and contribute. It’s a bit daunting though, when I see the current crisis with the Syrian Refugees, how reluctant people are to help them, and they are human. It makes the idea that someone might extend us formal amnesty, much less asylum or even citizenship, that much further away.”

“I don’t know,” Cat said. “Superman’s been granted citizenship.”

“There are exceptions to every rule Ms. Grant. You know that. My cousin, me, we look human enough. We even look like the common conception people have when they think ‘American’, so granting us citizenship isn’t that much of a stretch. What about the aliens who can’t pass as human? What about the ones with green skin and red eyes? What about the ones who have horns, or four arms? How many of the beings Superman has had to fight were only hostile because they knew there was no place here for them? That they would never be allowed to walk around freely?”

“That’s an interesting question,” Cat said. “It sounds like you’ve given this a lot of thought.”

Kara shrugged. “It’s something that sets me apart from my cousin. He arrived here as an infant, two years old chronologically, but physically and mentally, barely three weeks of age. Earth is his home. He’s never known any other. I’m a refugee. I will never not be a refugee.”

“What about things that would make you feel more at home?” Cat asked. “Marriage, family?”

“Maybe someday. I haven’t had a lot of luck with dating.”

“No?”

“Off the record?” Kara asked.

Cat nodded.

“I mean it, Ms. Grant.”

“You have my word,” she said.

“You remember the answer I gave about the Scotch?” Kara asked, and again, Cat’s face fell. “Different person,” Kara said, “same answer.”

“I’m sorry,” she said.

Kara took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “Do you think you have enough for your article, Ms. Grant?”

Cat nodded. “I think so,” she said. “I… can I have my assistant call you if I have any follow up questions?”
Kara smiled as she stood up. “She has my number,” Kara said.

“I don’t suppose I could get it too?”

Kara smiled. “I won’t say no, Ms. Grant, but I will say not on the first date. I’ll think about it after I see what you write. Good night.” She didn’t wait for a reply. She just kicked off and flew into the night.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

ukiem w rrip , eh ,astruh,

I love you, Astra

ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir

I love you, Little One
Sticky Buns, Hope, and a Little Bit of Cheating

Chapter Summary

Kara deals with the aftermath of Cat’s Supergirl interview.

“And a fourth Orange sticky bun for my favorite alien,” the Sally said as she sat Kara’s order down in front of her.

“You sure I haven’t been replaced by Supergirl, Sally?” Kara asked.

“Nah, sweetie. You’re a better tipper,” the Sally replied as she walked away.

Kara grinned.

“Hey,” Alex said as she came around the bar, and sat down at Kara’s table. “Are you okay? I tried calling you a bunch of times last night.”

“Oh,” Kara said. “Sorry, I must have forgotten to turn the ringer back on.” She reached into her purse, and pulled out her phone, and turning the ringer back on. “Okay, for the record, forty-seven isn’t ‘a bunch’, it’s ‘I need to get a date before my sister gets a restraining order’.”

“Funny,” Alex said. “Seriously-”

“Hey, ladies,” James said, cutting Alex off.

Kara looked up from her phone and gave him a smile. “Hey, James,” she said. “You remember Alex, from the other night?”

“I do,” James said. “How’s the covert alien-hunting business?”

“Not as covert as we’d like, apparently,” Alex replied, turning to give Kara a glare.

Kara held up her hands. “Hey, I have already had a very sternly-worded discussion with my blabbermouth cousin.”

“Sorry,” James said. “I forgot that was still a sore point.”

“It’s okay,” Kara said. “You might want to tread lightly at the office today.”

“Oh?” James asked. “You know something?”

“Cat had her big interview last night,” Kara said. “She’s going to be writing today.”

“You say that like it’s bad,” James said.

“People have been known to schedule vacations around the features Cat writes every year.”

“Oh,” James said. “I’ll take your advice to heart.”

“You might also want to start laying out a special issue template for the magazine. I have a feeling
Cat’s going to want to go to press early this month.”

“You know, it’s a little scary how well you know her,” James said.

Kara shrugged, and gave a perfect imitation of Cat’s dismissive wave, earning her a chuckle as James headed for the door.

“Oh, I know it’s not your thing, but you know he is into you, right?” Alex said.

Kara rolled her eyes. “He thinks he’s into me,” she said. “It’s actually pretty convincing, right up until he starts talking about Clark.”

Both of Alex’s eyebrows made a beeline for her hair. “Really?”

“Really,” Kara said.

Alex glared. “That’s kinda sad.”

“It would be if I were interested in him, but you know, I’m just over here, being really super gay.”

“In a shocker of a news item today, Cat Grant, CEO of CatCo Worldwide Media, is reporting that Supergirl and Superman, are in fact, related.”

Alex turned around, looking at the TV, where a picture of Kara and Clark, both in full costume, were shown side by side. Kara had just made it to a three count when Alex turned back around.

“What did you do?” she asked.

Kara smiled and took a bite of her sticky bun.

“Ah, interesting choice,” Winn said, “mentioning that in an interview.”

Kara shrugged as she sat down behind her desk. “Not so much interesting, as strategic. It was bound to get out sooner or later,” she said. “This way, I can control the timing, the narrative, and with a little luck, the fallout.”

“Fallout is what I’m worried about,” Winn said. “Your cousin has a *lot* of enemies.”

“Keira!” Cat called from her office, and Kara jumped slightly, turning to look through the glass.

“She’s here?” Kara said, reaching for Cat’s latte.

“Apparently,” Winn replied.

Kara did a quick check to make sure no one was looking before she zapped Cat’s latte with her heat vision, then stood up, grabbing her note pad and tablet, then rushing into Cat’s office.

“Morning, Ms. Grant,” she said. “You’re in early.”

“I am,” Cat said as she looked around for a pair of glasses.

“On your head, Ms. Grant,” Kara said.

“Oh,” Cat replied, reaching up and pulling the glasses down. “Thank you.”

Kara sat the latte on the desk, and Cat picked it up, taking a sip, and giving a small, appreciative
“Congratulations,” Kara said, and Cat looked up at her.

“Oh?”

“You scooped the Daily Planet,” she said.

Cat sighed. “Yes,” she said. “I did.”

Kara frowned, because Cat didn’t seem excited and she didn’t understand why. She’d given Cat far, far more to work with this time around. The woman should be bouncing off the walls.

“Keira.”

“Yes, Ms. Grant?”

“Send out an email to the department heads. We’re going to press in six days with a special issue of the Monthly. I want a content meeting in two hours, where I will be handing out assignments. We’re going to pull content from online, social, and the Trib. I want anything we have on the refugees, natural disasters, and so on. Also, get Bunny Watson to pull everything we have from our archives and the Daily Planet. I want a list of every alien Superman, or any other superhero, has ever fought. The entire issue is going to be focused on Supergirl. Once the content meeting is done, I’m going to be busy writing the feature. While I’m doing that, I need you to plan a launch Gala for the issue for one week from today.”

“Okay, Ms. Grant,” Kara said, more than a little surprised. In the original time line, Cat had pushed the issue out in two days, with a single story on Supergirl. “I can do that.”

“Of course you can,” Cat said. “That’s why I pay you a soon to be increasing in size paycheck.”

Kara smiled. “Of course.”

“And Kara, something tasteful. I don’t want waitresses running around dressed in Supergirl outfits. And see if we can get a more refined guest list. Let’s go for Senators and Congressmen. See if you can get anyone who’s been dealing with the Syrian Refugee Crisis. If you think they would attend, extend invitations to Bruce Wayne and Diana Prince and anyone they want to bring along from their foundations. Also, anyone else you think it would be appropriate to invite.”

“Yes, Ms. Grant.”

“Oh, and Keira.”

“Yes?”

“Start looking for someone to fill your position,” Cat said.

“Ms. Grant?” Kara said, unable to hide the hurt and the panic in her voice.

“Well, I am going to need an assistant Keira. I can’t schedule my own travel and manage my own schedule while I’m running the company and I think it’s time we started looking at taking better advantage of your abilities.”

“Um... I’ll make some calls,” Kara said, feeling more than a little shocked. She’d expected some changes in her relationship with Cat, but nothing so drastic, and nothing so quick.
“Good. Now, get on with it, Keira. Chop Chop.”

Kara nodded and turned around, heading back to her desk to make the arrangements, before she headed off to the DEO for the meeting she had scheduled with J’onn.

“Are you out of your Kryptonian mind?” J’onn asked as he, Kara and Alex walked down the corridor to the command center. “What the hell were you thinking, giving an interview to Cat Grant?”

“It worked well the first time,” Kara said.

“Really? What’s next? A book deal? A reality show? Keeping up with the Kryptonians?” He shook his head, and stormed off, marking up on the dais to glare at the monitors as if they had personally offended him.

“He seems upset,” Kara said.

“Hard to tell with him,” Alex replied. “Seriously though, why give the interview?”

Kara looked at Alex, “It’s hard to explain when you haven’t seen the entire interview yet. The ‘I’m Superman’s cousin’, thing was mostly to draw out an enemy I need to deal with. The rest of the interview is more focused on my long-term agenda, which is getting the Alien Amnesty Act pushed through.”

“Enemy?” Alex asked

Kara nodded. She’d shown Alex, J’onn and Susan a few of the highlights from her time as Supergirl in the original timeline, but she hadn’t given them anywhere near all the details, and Reactron was a fairly minor footnote.

“Sir, ma’am’s, we have a Code Grey,” Susan announced. “Coming from the NCH. Looks like a multiple car collision.”

Kara didn’t wait to hear the rest. She already knew how this went. She turned and used a bit of super-speed to get to the surface, then shot into the air. Less than two minutes later, she was descending towards the pile up, trying to recall the details of the incident. A quick scan with her x-ray vision confirmed what she remembered. The bus driver was pinned, and there was a downed electrical line blocking the rescue. A quick blast of her heat vision severed the power line from the pole as she dropped down straight into the bus.

“I’m stuck,” the driver said.

“It’s okay. I’ve got you,” she said as she approached the driver. She x-rayed the woman’s pinned legs and spotted a minor tear in the femoral artery. It was a slow leak, but too much jostling might tear it wide open. She knelt down, and very carefully bent the steering column up, then lifted the driver and floated them both out of the bus and down next to a pair of paramedics with a waiting gurney.

“She’s got a tear in the right femoral,” Kara said. “Very minor bleed, but you need to tourniquet and get her into surgery to repair it before it widens.”

The paramedic nodded as the EMT started strapping the driver down. Kara turned and stepped away from them as Reactron dropped out of the sky.
“Don’t do this here,” she shouted. “These people are innocent.”

“I don’t care,” he said. “Not as long as Superman bleeds.” He raised his arm and fired off a blast of energy which shot towards her, and fizzled out against her anti-Kryptonite shield, which was currently running in a much broader spectrum than normal.

“If you were looking for a soft target,” Kara said, “you picked the wrong girl.” She shot across the distance between them, reaching under her cape as she moved, and pulling out the rolled-up sheet of lead she’d brought along with her that morning. When she reached him, she slapped the sheet over the Demon Core of the suit, and pulled it free, carefully wrapping the entire core in lead as she pulled it loose. Reactron stumbled back, looking down in shock.

Kara switched the core to her left hand and tapped her ear piece. “Hey, I need a nuclear containment team out here, ASAP.”

Kara reached out and grabbed Reactron before he could run away or do much of anything.

“What the hell is going on out there?” J’onn asked.

“I’ve got a subcritical mass of plutonium in my left hand, and a mentally disturbed victim of radiation poisoning in my right. Would you please just send a containment team?”

Kara ran from the elevator to Cat’s office as fast as she could without arousing suspicion. She was beyond annoyed because J’onn had taken his own sweet time getting the hazmat team out to collect the demon core. Then there had been a jurisdictional dispute between the ‘FBI’ and NCPD over who got custody of the suit. Kara hadn’t stuck around for that. Once she’d finished washing her hands and got a clean read off the Geiger counter, she’d left the DEO and NCPD arguing and rushed back to her apartment, grabbed the research Konex had put together for her on Reactron, including a face shot that had been culled from social media of his face after Kara had unmasked him, and a facial recognition software comparison between the social media shot and a picture of Ben Krull before the terrorist attack at Bakerline Nuclear Power Station. Then she’d flown back to CatCo.

Except, she was five minutes late getting to the content meeting.

“Nice of you to join us, Keira,” Cat said as she came through the door.

“Sorry,” she said, edging around Kelly and James. “Sorry. I was just... well... um...”

“Please, Keira, spit it out already. Why have you held up a very important meeting by showing up late?”

“Reactron,” Kara said. “Supergirl just fought him on the 935 near the Nation’s Bay exit.”

“Supergirl fought Reactron?” James asked.

“Oh, do keep up, Olsen,” Cat said, “we reported that thirty minutes ago.”

“Right,” Kara said. “anyway, Reactron... That’s a kind of a stupid name. Who came up with it?”

James cleared his throat.

Kara turned around to look at him. “Really?”

James nodded.
“I know a guy,” Kara said, reaching up and patting him lightly on the shoulder. “I’m pretty sure he can get you into his support group.” She turned back around and had to fight not to smile when she noticed the look of shocked pride on Cat’s face. “Anyway, someone got a shot of his face. I have a friend who’s good with facial recognition, so I emailed it over, and my friend got a hit.” She held out the stack of papers she’d been holding. “His name is Ben Krull. He was an engineer at Bakerline Nuclear Power Station. He went missing and was presumed dead after the terrorist attack five years ago. His wife died in the attack from radiation poisoning. I was just going to outline something, but once I got started, it seemed easier to just write out a full article. I included citations for how radiation exposure can lead to shifts in personality, neurological disorders, and other problems going all the way back to the ‘Demon Core’ accidents during the Manhattan Project.”

Cat reached out and took the papers from Kara, without ever looking away from her face. “You wrote an article?”

Kara nodded. “Yes.”

Cat looked down and scanned over the pages while everyone else in the room seemed to hold their collective breath. “This is excellent work, Kiera. In fact, I think it bought you five minutes,” she said, turning and handing the papers over to the lead Content Editor for CatCo online. “I want this online within two hours. Pull something from the archives on Bakerline, and get it updated and reposted, with a ‘since the attack’ section.”

Cat turned back to address the room as a whole. “Our girl just beat a villain Superman couldn’t take down, which makes this issue even more important, so it’s get started...”
Supergirl though, felt different. Right from the start, there had been something about her, something Cat couldn’t quite place, that made her feel connected. She tried to play it off in her own mind as her desire to save the Tribune, as the economic benefit the girl could bring to CatCo, but in her own, private thoughts, she’d known that was bullshit right from the start. There was something different about this girl. Something that spoke to Cat on a level Superman never had.

At first, she thought it was the costume, or rather, the lack of one. When Superman first appeared, he’d been decked out in full costume, ‘S’ blazing and cape flapping. Yes, the plane had been a crisis, but it was clearly something Superman had been planning. Not so with Supergirl. Her first save had been in street clothes, which suggested a certain lack of planning. She hadn’t saved the plane to make a statement or to announce her arrival. She hadn’t stepped out at a moment of her choosing. She’d seen a crisis and abandoned the safety and security of her own anonymity, risked exposure of her identity, to help. The costume came after, because now people were looking up, watching for her. There was an honesty about it that spoke to the girl’s nature and her need to help.

Now, Cat also wondered if she hadn’t recognized Kara in some way in the photo or video. Wondered if the connection she’d felt was the affection she hadn’t quite been able to keep at bay over the last year. Kara was one of the few people left in her life who challenged her, who provoked her. Oh, others tried. Professional rivals, board members who thought they were smarter than they actually were. Cat had them all cowed. Honestly, Lois and Kara were probably the only people left in Cat’s life who stood up to her.

What she couldn’t quite understand though, what honestly threw her for a loop with all of this, was the way Kara was basically handing her Supergirl on a silver platter. At first, she’d just thought Kara was being her usual extraordinary self. Until she’d seen the pictures. Oh, sure, most people wouldn’t be able to tell. She had to admit to herself, she’d been fooled by a similar disguise with Clark and Superman for thirteen years or so, but this was Kara, and Cat would know those eyes anywhere.

She hadn’t been sure, not at first. Oh, close to sure. Sure enough that if she pulled Kara’s employee ID photo and ran facial recognition against one of the Supergirl photos she’d get a match good enough to clear legal and publish, not that she would. Still, she’d sent Bunny Watson out to research it, to confirm it. She’d gotten the facial recognition match and the documentation and then she’d destroyed it, because this was Kara. Kara who’d given her the photos. Kara who’d recommended Bunny. Kara who’d agreed to do the interview.

Kara who’d been Carter’s age when she watched her family, her home, her culture and her entire world burn, right before her eyes. Kara who’d been thirteen years old and told she had to live, not for herself, but to protect her cousin, only to have even that taken from her. Kara who smiled every day and who texted her links to kitten videos she’d never admit to laughing at. Kara who brought her coffee and refilled her M&M’s and always remembered to make sure there was a cheeseburger on her salad when there was a board meeting.

Kara who was sunshine and light and happiness that was infectious, only sometimes it didn’t quite reach her eyes. Kara who fought to save people’s jobs when they’d made honest mistakes, but who would show up in the middle of the day with a copy of a harassment complaint and a prepared termination packet from legal for the offender. Kara who just smiled and said “Yes, Ms. Grant” every time Cat fired her and just showed up the next day anyway. Kara who was surrounded by people, who loved people and thrived on attention and was always lonely, even in the middle of a crowd.

The interview had broken Cat’s heart, right from the first question. The way Kara had talked about
the friend who’d introduced her to the rather excellent Scotch. Cat could see the pain there, the sense that it was a personal failure. She’d seen the look in the mirror often enough. But it just went on and on. Things beyond her control that she blamed herself for.

It wasn’t fair. Cat wanted to stomp her feet in shout in rage about how unfair it was that so much had been placed on Kara’s shoulders. No one should feel the way she did, no one should have to shoulder the weight Kara did. She wanted to tell the girl she was worthwhile, that anyone would be proud of the person she’d become, because it was true. Even before she’d caught that plane, before she’d put on the ‘S’, Kara Danvers was extraordinary.

But she couldn’t. Not without admitting what she knew, and that was a line she wasn’t ready to cross. Not yet. But that didn’t mean she was powerless. Kara had told Cat what she wanted, what her ultimate goal was. And Cat was Cat Grant, CEO of CatCo Worldwide Media. A woman who had been dubbed ‘The Queen of All Media’ for good reason. She had power at her fingertips. Power to shape the way people thought. Power to change the narrative.

Power to help.

Cat opened Word, and for the first time in the longest time, the constant buzzing of her anxiety was quiet. There were no imagined noises, no demands for extracts or juices to help her focus. Because for the first time in a very long time, the writing wasn’t about her, it was more important than that. It was about helping, about changing the world for the better. It was the kind of story she dreamed about writing when she was Perry White’s assistant.

It was a story about hope.

Planning a party on short notice was a skill Kara had mastered so long ago she could almost do it in her sleep. She picked a different venue, this time. One with more security. The Presidential Ballroom at the Rosewood was the venue Senators and Presidents chose when they came to National City, so she booked it, hoping the familiarity would inspire better attendance. Once she had that squared away, she went ahead and started working on hiring caterers who were already cleared for sensitive events where government officials might be making an appearance. That had been the easy part. The hard part was deciding on decorations, catering attire, and the menu.

When Cat had given her the assignment, she’d been more than a little relieved that she didn’t have to spend the evening watching waitresses parade around with her House Coat of Arms on their chest. She’d planned on having them in shirts, bow ties and vests. It was simple yet formal enough that they would blend into the background. But then she’d sat through the content meeting. She’d listened as Cat had handed out content assignments. There would be articles on the various aliens Superman had fought over the years, as well as a piece on Superman’s status as a citizen, comparing it to the legal limbo other aliens, including Supergirl, existed in. There would be articles on refugee crises, both human and alien. There would be articles on immigration, and the legal status of undocumented people. There would be feature focusing on President Marsdin’s push for immigration reform, and an analysis of whether or not the policy was worded in such a way that it included people of a non-terrestrial origin.

Which left Kara a bit indecisive. This was moving events up in the timeline by almost a year. Most of the discussion of this type had happened after Myriad, after J’onn J’onzz had revealed himself. She was okay with that, but she was afraid that without seeing J’onn out there, fighting beside her, just the articles might not be enough. Which left her wondering how far to push.

When she’d had Konex rebuilt, one of the things she’d done was have him go through human food stuffs and analyze them to see when foods could be used to recreate something resembling
Kryptonian Cuisine. There were certain flavors that couldn’t be recreated of course, but she had about three hundred recipes that Konex had modified to produce good approximations of Kryptonian food. It had been a private, guilty little pleasure. Something she enjoyed when she headed out to Sanctuary. But now she was wondering if she should share this part of her home. If she should select various finger food recipes and send them over to the caterers. She also wondered about sending over service guild robes.

Oddly enough, this didn’t feel like a decision she should make on her own, so she brought up her IM client, and double clicked on Clark’s contact.

Kara: Here there, baby cousin.

The three little dots indicating Clark was typing appeared. Then disappeared. Then appeared again. This happened three more times before Clark’s message finally came through.

Clark: You caught Reactron?

Kara smiled as she typed out her answer.

Kara: Guess it was a job for Supergirl.


Kara: Impressed enough to do me a favor?

Clark: Sure.

Kara: Never ever let James name another supervillain.

Clark: Oh, come on. Reactron isn’t that bad.


Clark: Okay, so, some of the names are a little odd.

Kara: Clark, the man is a menace. Seriously, no more names from James Olsen.

Clark: I feel like you and Lois are ganging up on me.

Kara: Well, tell me Lois has a younger, hotter sister, and maybe I’ll be too busy to gang up on you.

Clark: Well, she does have a sister, and Lucy is younger than Lois, but I wouldn’t say hotter.

Kara: That is because you are both very loyal, and completely smitten, but I just followed a link from Lois’s facebook. I’m looking at Lucy right now. You have been holding out on me, baby cousin.

Clark: Hey! If you want to talk about who’s been holding out on who, I had to find out from James that you like women. What is up with that?

Kara let out a laugh.

Kara: Maybe if you’d visit more often, you’d get more gossip.

Clark: Okay, guilty as charged.
Kara: Thanksgiving?

Clark: I’d like that. And Lois says “as long as she’s not expected to do dishes.”

Kara: Clark Kent, do you make that woman clean up after you?

Clark: Um... no?

Kara: Are you asking me, or telling me?

Clark: Okay, there may have been one or two incidents in the last month where supervillains attacked the city during dinner, and she had to do the dishes.

Kara: Uh huh.

Clark: I’m in trouble, aren’t I?

Kara: That depends...

Clark: I’m almost afraid to ask, but what does it depend on?

Kara: On whether or not Diana remembers to check her text messages today.

Clark: Diana always checks her messages.

Kara: Then, baby cousin, I’d say you should start running now.

Clark: *sigh*

Clark: I see how it is.

Kara: Darn right! Seriously though, I have a question, and I feel like this is a decision we both should make.

Clark: Okay. What’s up?

Kara: You know I gave an interview to Cat, right?

Clark: Yeah. BTW, Lois says “What’s the big idea, short stuff?”

Kara: Tell Lois I’m mad because she’s been hiding her insanely hot young sister from me.

Clark: Kara, Lucy was kind of seeing someone up until recently. A guy someone.

Kara: Probably for the best. Not sure I’d want Sam Lane as a father-in-law anyway.

Clark: Why do you think I haven’t proposed to Lois? ;)

Kara: Fear.

Kara: That woman scares you.

Clark: Okay, true, but Sam Lane isn’t exactly helpful.

Clark: Anyway, what’s the interview have to do with this decision you want help with?

Kara: Okay, this is a Cousin-to-Cousin and Cousin’s Girlfriend discussion.
Kara: No spreading this around the Daily Planet for corporate espionage purposes.

Clark: Right.

Kara: Cat’s doing a Supergirl issue of the monthly. The whole issue is focused on the interview and what I talked to her about.

Clark: That must have been quite the interview.

Clark: You sure it was a good idea?

Kara: Yeah. Look, I know you probably won’t understand this, but I trust Cat the way you trust Lois.

Clark: Um… Kara, is there something you want to tell me?

Kara reached up and pinched the bridge of her nose.

Kara: That’s not what I meant, Clark.

Kara: I mean, sure, Cat’s freaking Gorgeous, and sure, I’d like to think she considers me a bit more than an employee, but come on.

Kara: What would Cat freaking Grant want with me?

System Message: Lois has joined the chat.

Lois: Short stuff, have you looked in a mirror lately?

Kara: Hey, Lois. And yes, I have, but seriously, Cat can have anyone she wants. We’re friends. At least, I’d like to think we are. You know how Cat is.

Lois: Yeah, I do, kiddo. Being her friend is like trying to hug a porcupine. You can do it, but if you’re not careful, there will be bloodshed.

Kara: Just for that, I’m inviting her to Thanksgiving Dinner.

Lois: You wouldn’t dare!

Kara: I would. She’d just never take me up on it :P

Lois: True.

Kara: Anyway, back to the question at hand. She’s got me planning a launch party for the Supergirl issue.

Lois: I still say you should have given that interview to me.

Clark: Lois.

Lois: What?

Kara: What Clark is too polite to say is, you already have a Kryptonian. Let Cat have this one.

Lois: Maybe I want both of you.

Lois: Wait, that did not come out right.
Lois: Okay, I’m slightly embarrassed, but it was totally worth it for the look on Clark’s face.

Kara: We’re sorry, the party you are trying to reach is currently busy trying to find a telepath to scour her brain.

Kara: Seriously, not cool Lois.

Lois: I’m sorry. It sounded a lot less suggestive in my head.

Clark: She has that problem a lot.

Lois: Shut up, you.

Clark: Sorry, love. Journalists are supposed to tell the truth.

Lois: Yeah, well, I hope some journalists like sleeping on the couch.

Kara: GUYS!

Lois: Sorry, Short Stuff.

Clark: Sorry.

Kara: Anyone, Gala, next Friday night. Launching Supergirl issue.

Clark: Right.

Kara: I just feel like I should ask, because it’s your culture too, Clark. Would it be okay with you if I gave the caterers some Kryptonian Recipes that have been adapted to use Earth ingredients? Also, I was thinking of maybe having the wait staff dressed in Service Guild robes.

There was a long pause before Clark answered. So much so she was worried he’d be offended by the suggestion.

Clark: Kara, you’re probably a lot better qualified to determine what is an appropriate way to share our culture. You have actually lived it.

Clark: My concern would be that it might tip Cat off to who you are.

Clark: Cat Grant is probably one of the smartest people I know, and I say that with you fully aware of the company I keep on a regular basis.

Clark: You need to be extremely careful with her.

Kara: Clark, trust me when I say I know Cat better than you. I know how smart she is. I also know that she can help me, help all of us, make the world a better place.

Kara: No offense, Lois, but Cat is probably the single biggest force in media right now.

Lois: No offense taken, Short Stuff. I made my choices, and I’m happy with how they turned out. I know Perry White’s chair is about as far as I’ll ever go, and I’m good with that.

Kara: You could go further than that, Lois.

Kara: A lot further.

Kara: You’d just have to be willing to leave Metropolis to do it.
Lois: And that’s the issue. I’m not, because Clark’s not.

Clark: Besides, National City’s already got the Superhero thing covered.

Kara: Yeah, well, if you ever need help with Rubberbandotron or something, you know who to call.

Lois: Is it too late to adopt her?

Clark: A little.

Clark: Seriously, Kara, the decision is yours. If you can find a way to share our culture that you think is safe and respectful, I’d really love that.

Kara: Thanks, Clark.

Kara: Oh, BTW, tell Perry White you two both need to be in National City next Friday.

Clark: Okay...

Clark: Why?

Kara: Lois, you want to tell him?

Lois: She’s inviting us to her coming out party, Smallville.

Clark: OH!

Kara: Love you both. See you soon.

Clark: Love you too, Kara.

Lois: Love you, Short Stuff. Watch out for hairballs.
Outcomes Sensitive to Initial Conditions

Chapter Summary

The changes Kara has made to the timeline start to have an impact.

Chapter Notes

Just as a note, the version of Krypton which exists in this universe is *not* the version of Krypton with exists in my story "Something Just Like This." A lot of the Kryptonian culture in that story is taken from things I developed for this story, but given the tone of that story, I brightened it up and made that Krypton a bit more Utopian. The Krypton reflected in this story is closer to the comics, and draws a bit on Smallville, the Donniverse, and the version of the DC Animated Universe that includes Superman/Batman Apocalypse and Superman Unbound. In other words, while Krypton is very technologically advanced, culturally, the planet is a complete shit show, which is honestly more in line with TV Supergirl canon. I may also borrow a *bit* from the Krypton TV series here and there. I think the show is kind of a mess when it comes to fitting into Superman/Supergirl canon, but they do have some interesting ideas that actually fit into the comic canon.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Kara stepped through the door to Cat’s office slowly. “Ms. Grant?”

Cat looked up from the tumbler of scotch she was holding. “Yes?”

“No Champagne?” Kara asked. She’d put the bottle in the bar fridge herself, because Cat always had a glass or two after she finished an article.

Cat gave her a weak smile. “I’m not in the mood,” she said. “Is that the Supergirl article?”

“Yes,” Kara said, taking a seat on the couch opposite the one Cat was sitting on. “I’ve finished proofing it.”

Cat gave her a much wider smile, and if Kara hadn’t known her so well, she might not have been able to tell it was forced.

“Please begin my compliments,” Cat said.

Kara gave Cat a smile that was every bit as genuine as Cat’s was fake.

“This is beautiful, Ms. Grant. Lyrical.”

“You think so?”

Kara nodded. “I do. The title. ‘Some Work of Noble Note: The Genesis of a Hero.’ That’s from Tennyson, isn’t it?”
"Ulysses," Cat said with a nod. "One of Tennyson’s best."

"I think it captures her," Kara said. "There is this part, too. 'There she stood, a young woman, robbed of her home, her family, her language, her culture and every other thing imaginable, all in the span of a few moments. But this girl, instead of lashing out in rage and anger and allowing darkness to swallow her was nearly aflame with a warm inner light, proclaiming her desire to help, to prove that every sacrifice anyone had ever made for her meant something because she had made herself worthy of them.'"

"I thought that captured the moment rather well," Cat said.

Kara nodded. "I think so too, if what I heard on your recorder is any indication."

"What about the rest of it?"

Kara looked down at the article again. "I think this is the best part," Kara said. "'I would be remiss in my duty as a journalist if I didn’t express certain concerns. So far, Supergirl has enjoyed a string of unbroken successes. While there have been a few minor issues here and there, on the whole, she has done remarkably well. Better, certainly, than her cousin did when he began in Metropolis nearly a decade and a half ago. In fact, between the time we spoke and the time I began writing this article, she fought and defeated the villain Reactron, who had fought her cousin to a standstill on several occasions. And that is exactly my point of concern. I worry that she is taking on too much, too quickly. In all things, there is a learning curve and I fear that in her rush, in her urgent need to help, she might find that her reach exceeds her grasp. I fear that her very sense of responsibility, her desire, not to *show* her worth, but to *be* of worth, she might forget that there is no shame in asking for help. We live in a world of heroes. A world of super men and wondrous women. I hope that, should the need arise, Supergirl will recognize it and reach out for help. I hope that she will remember that we are stronger together. Because even after just our brief meeting, I believe that those who have sacrificed for her chose well. I believe that Supergirl is every bit the hero her cousin is. She simply needs the chance to prove it.'"

"You really see her that way, Ms. Grant?" Kara asked, and she could hear the wonder in her own voice, because she was surprised. She still remembered the original article Cat had written. It had been scathing. But this? This was touching, and wonderful. This article had captured everything Kara had wanted to say and reached beyond that. Cat had seen her, really seen her, in the way she had after Myriad in the original timeline and it made Kara happy, because it was almost like having her friend back.

"I do," Cat said, and it was almost a whisper, which made Kara look up from the article, to see Cat's face. "She reminds me a bit of you, actually. It was a little like sitting through your interview all over again. Her desire to help, to be worthwhile." Cat gave her a bit of a lopsided smirk. "The same blonde hair and lack of conditioner."

Kara laughed, because what else could she do? There was a small part of her screaming that Cat had to know. The hints weren’t exactly subtle. But Kara worried that that was wishful thinking. In the previous timeline, Cat had confronted Kara the moment she’d realized the connection and Kara wasn’t sure, if she did know, why she wasn’t doing the same. She supposed it could be because Cat was seeing her not in the way she’d seen Supergirl at first, but in the way she’d seen Supergirl after they’d built a real relationship.

"You know, Keira, you might consider a change in hair color," Cat said.

"What?" Kara asked.
“I imagine with our new hero running around, that shade is going to be quite popular,” Cat said. “If you want to stand out, you might want to switch it up. You’d look lovely as a redhead, I think.”

“I don’t know, Ms. Grant,” Kara said.

“Well, if you didn’t want to commit, I could recommend a good wig stylist. You could try the look out and if you wanted to go back to your regular hair, you just take it off.”

Oh, yeah. Cat knew. Cat absolutely knew. And oddly enough, was offering to help her hide. Which didn’t make sense, but Cat might have a point. Kara hadn’t exactly shunned the media in the original timeline, but in this one, she was deliberately calling a lot more focus to herself. It would almost have to be a wig. Her hair didn’t take dye at all. On the other hand, there were issues with the wig suggestion. Certain impracticalities.

“Let me think about it over the weekend?”

“Of course. Any ideas about a replacement assistant?”

“I’m working a couple of angles,” Kara said. “The person who’d be my first choice isn’t really practical. She’d do a wonderful job as your assistant, but she’s got too much personal baggage.” Not to mention a felony record that would fill three or four issues of the monthly. If it had *just* been the felony record, Kara would have pitched it anyway. She loved the idea of giving Cat an assistant/body guard who could go toe-to-toe with Lobo and win. But hiring Harley Quinn would attract the Joker’s attention, and the first time Poison Ivy showed up, Harley would drop everything to run off and add to her felony record with her girlfriend.

“Well, keep looking,” Cat said. “In the meantime, I want you to start thinking about what you want to do here at CatCo.”

Kara nodded and leaned forward, setting the proofed copy of Cat’s article on the table between them.

“Eventually, I’d like to be a reporter,” Kara said.

Cat smiled at her but tilted her head quizzically. “Eventually?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “I’ve been thinking about it for a while.”

“The article you turned in on Krull was a good start,” Cat said.

“Thank you, Ms. Grant,” she said. “But much as I appreciate it, I don’t think I’m ready to take that plunge just yet.”

“Why not?” Cat asked. “Kiera, you can’t be afraid to reach for what you want.”

Kara shook her head. “No, that’s not it. If all else was equal, I’d jump at the chance. It’s just, right now, I think I can do more good with a different project.”

“And what project would that be?” Cat asked.

“I was thinking maybe CatCo could offer Supergirl help managing her social media presence.”

Cat raised an eyebrow. “Intriguing. What kind of help?”

“Well, we could set up an official account for her on all the major platforms. Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube. Maybe establish a web presence as well. She seems a lot more
open to sharing details of Kryptonian culture than Superman has been and if she really wants to help bridge the gap between humans and aliens, maybe she could write some articles on her own world.”

“And you think you could run this project?” Cat asked.

“I’d need to hire a couple of people, put together a team and set up a studio. We’d want people to sort through anything tagged for Supergirl’s attention and point it out to her. We’d want to have any YouTube content professionally produced in house. We could also help with brand management in general. Set up a business unit to handle all her copyright issues.”

“You really think she would agree to that?” Cat asked.

“I think she might,” Kara said. “She trusts you. She wouldn’t have given that interview otherwise. And this could help with everything she’s trying to do. It could help her connect to National City in a way Superman has never connected to the people of Metropolis.”

Kara watched as the wheels turned in Cat’s mind, but she could tell by the smile tugging at Cat’s lips that she’d sold her on the idea.

“Okay. Speak with her. If she agrees, have legal draw up the paperwork. How big a team do you expect to need?”

“Five people, beside myself,” Kara said. “We’ll have to rely on keyword filters and search bots for content sorting, but there’s no way around that even if I hire a hundred people, but if I get the right techs, we should get really good coverage.”

“Do you want to hire internally, or externally?” Cat asked.

“I think most of the people will need to be external, but if I could have Winn, it would be a huge help. We already know each other and work well together and he’s amazing with computers. He should probably be running our entire IT division.”

“Why isn’t he?” Cat asked.

Kara frowned. “He’d have trouble passing the necessary background checks,” she said. “It’s not really his fault. He’s never done anything bad in his life. Just unfortunate family connections.”

“Well, then he’s all yours. Assuming Supergirl agrees.”

“Wait, you want three DEO agents to what?” J’onn asked.

Kara, J’onn, Alex and Susan were all crammed into J’onn’s tiny little office. J’onn was standing behind his desk, Kara was in front of it. Alex stood near the door, and Susan was leaning against a filing cabinet.

“Help manage Supergirl’s social media presence.”

“You do realize I was being sarcastic when I asked about the reality show, right?” J’onn reached up, rubbing his temples. “We’re supposed to keep aliens out of the public eye. This is the opposite of helpful.”

“No, this is actually perfect. She’s putting *me* in charge of it and letting me pick my own people. If I bring in DEO agents who are already cleared on my identity, then it keeps that secret in the
family, so to speak. But it also gives us a forward observation post in the middle of National City, at a location that is bound to become a flashpoint. After all, how often has the Daily Planet been attacked by people looking to draw out my cousin?"

"Which is why you went and painted a huge target on the side of the CatCo building?"

"J’onn," Kara said, "I had to give the interview and I have to do this. Taking Myriad off the table isn’t just about putting out a few ion blockers and calling it done. We still need to bring in the Fort Rozz prisoners. The only way to do that without a lot of people getting killed is to get them to surrender. That’s only going to happen if they see a future. No one is going to surrender if they think they’ll spend the rest of their life in a cage or wind up on a dissection table."

"Kara," Alex said, "what you’re talking about is a lot of exposure. It’s bad enough that your face is already plastered all over newspapers and TV screens and in another week, probably billboards and magazines. If you take a job so closely associated with Supergirl, someone might figure out who you are. And more than that, you’re going to attract the attention of a lot of former Fort Rozz inmates."

"I’m going to attract the attention of the Fort Rozz inmates either way. This way, I can talk to them before I end up face to face with them. If a Tumblr post or a YouTube vid keeps me from having to go toe-to-toe with someone my mother threw in that hellhole, then that’s a risk I should take. Not just for me, but for all the people who get hurt every time Kal or I start throwing monsters through buildings. And I don’t just mean physically hurt. How many thousands, or even millions of dollars in damage was done the last time Kal had a super-powered throw-down in the middle of Metropolis? How many people lost their jobs because he threw their car at some monster, and they didn’t have a way to work? How many people went bankrupt because their insurance doesn’t cover Superhero damage?"

"I don’t want to be the kind of hero my cousin is," Kara said. "I want to be better. I want to stop fights before they happen and I want make sure if I do have to fight someone, I only have to fight them once."

"Ms. Danvers-" J’onn started.

"She’s right," Susan said, cutting J’onn off.

"What?" Alex asked.

"Vasquez?" J’onn asked at the same time.

"She’s right," Susan said. "The things she showed us, they’re too big, too important, too dangerous to dismiss. The Green Lanterns are powerful enough to police entire Galaxies and the guys who gave them their powers are going to release a new weapon, one designed to replace the Green Lanterns, here. On Earth. They are going to try to use humans as raw material for their new army. You saw that, same as I did. We have to get Myriad out of the way so we can get Cadmus out of the way, so we can start preparing for threats that could very literally consume the entire Universe, or multiple universes. We can’t do that hiding in the dark, but until we get approval to come out into the light, Supergirl is the best chance we’ve got of turning this around before Earth is a smoking cinder."

Susan stood up. "The three of you agreed that I’d be the adult supervision here. Well, the adult in the room says give her three or four agents from the media team. They can work just as well in an office down at CatCo as they can at the downtown facility."
Kara sat on the edge of the cliff, staring down at National City, as she turned the spy beacon over in her hands. The wait was longer than she’d expected, and that made her worry. She knew the flight time from Fort Rozz to National City well enough. Had made the journey a couple of times since she arrived from the future. She’d had to be careful, but she wanted failsafes in place that didn’t involve her flying the ship into orbit while resigned to her own death. The fact that it was taking Astra longer than normal could be a very bad sign.

She was tempted to just fly out to Fort Rozz and find Astra, but however worried she was, she knew that idea was a no-go. She was good, better than anyone would expect, but she was also hideously out-numbered. There were thirty Kryptonians in Fort Rozz, plus a lot of other aliens who *could* do her damage and she had no idea what Astra had told them. So rushing in was out of the question.

She was about to give up for the night and go home, when she heard it. The faint rustle of wind that accompanied a body in flight. She looked up, and spotted Astra in the distance. She was flying more slowly than Kara would have expected, another cause for concern, but there was nothing Kara could see that indicated distress as Astra circled around and came to rest sitting on the cliff edge next to Kara.

“Good evening, Little One,” Astra said as they touched the spy beacons together.

“Hey,” Kara said. “I was starting to worry.”

“I’m sorry for the delay,” she said. “There is turmoil. Dissension amongst the ranks. Some of them believe that we could still implement Myriad if we remove you.”

“Non, you mean,” Kara said.

“You are very astute,” Astra replied.

“You should watch your back,” Kara said. “I’m not sure if he’s in contact with Indigo at the moment, but the two of them were thick as thieves, once.”

“I’m not familiar with the expression, but if I understand its meaning from context, this is not a fact of which I am unaware. However, the Coluan fears me. She will not approach while I draw breath.”

“Don’t underestimate her. She’s dangerous.”

“Your concern is appreciated,” Astra said. “I will be mindful.”

“I have a question, Aunt Astra.”

“What is it?”

“If I could arrange an opportunity for you to live among the humans for a while to get to know them, would you be willing to try?” Kara asked.

“To what end, Little One?”

Kara sighed. “You could have a life here. A good one. This is not Krypton, but in some ways, it’s a better world. You could be free here. Freer than you ever were on Krypton. You could help make this world a better place. Work within the confines of the law to bring about change.”

“Kara-“
“You said you would consider it,” Kara said.

“I did,” Astra said. “I still am. But your DEO still hunts us, still plans to cage us.”

“No,” Kara said. “There are rules in place. If you are not a danger, not a threat, you would be allowed to be free.”

“And do you really think they would ever not consider me a threat?”

“I’m working on that,” Kara said. “I’m working on a way for all the prisoners from Fort Rozz to be offered a chance at a peaceful life. No prisons, no dissection tables. As long as they committed no crimes, they would be free to live whatever life they chose.”

“And what of the sentences we already have, Little One?”

“Aunt Astra, I am the eldest living member of the House of El. Unless Kal specifically demands it, I hold the house seat on the Ruling Council. I also hold the seats of Dor and Ul. In fact, between us, Kal and I hold every seat on the Council by right of inheritance, except the seat of House Ze, and technically, I hold that by proxy, since you can’t sit on the Council while serving a life sentence. We could issue legal, binding pardons for everyone on Fort Rozz.”

“Do you really think your humans would simply allow all of us to walk free?” Astra asked.

“No,” Kara said. “Not all of you. Not everyone in Fort Rozz deserved to be there, and not everyone who did deserve to be there deserved a life sentence, but there were people who did. I would not let Indigo run free, or Vril Dox. I will not allow anyone to run free if I know they would cause harm.”

“And Non? What of him?”

Kara looked down at the beacon in her hand, turning it over slowly. “I do not trust him. He’s the reason you went to prison in the first place. He’s too quick to kill and call it necessity. I think he just likes it. I don’t quite hate him. I know what it is to hate someone and what I feel for him isn’t that. But I can’t be objective when it comes to him. I know that. I’d have to put that decision into someone else’s hands.”

“I did not think you knew him well enough to feel so strongly,” Astra said.

“I know him better than you think. He’s a coward, easily led, who covers his fear of his own inadequacies with false bravado.”

“That is an... unkind, if not entirely unfair assessment.”


“He would have me,” Astra replied. “I did not have the luxury your mother did. No great love affair, no one from one of the great houses beating down my door. I married Non because he was the only one who ever asked.”

Kara gives her a weak smile. “I think that’s definitely something I prefer about Earth. I would have been miserable in any marriage arranged for me.”

“You think your mother would have chosen so poorly for you?” Astra asked.

“I think she would have found me a wonderful young man, and our union would have started out hopeful and full of promise. Within a few months, he would be angry and resentful and I would be
hurt and confused. I would not understand why I found his company distasteful, but eventually, I would have ended up like Marin Gar-Zod.”

She saw the shock in Astra’s eyes. “I did not realize, Little One.”

“I didn’t, either, until Sara.” Kara felt the heat of a blush rising in her cheeks and looked away. “We were together for a long time.”

“What happened?”

“Time, responsibility, obligation. The same things that always kill a relationship like the one we had. It wasn’t any great romance, though I loved her dearly. She understood. She took one look in my eyes, and she knew, because she’d lost almost as much as I had. She reminded me of you. Funny, and kind, so desperate to hold on to her pain so it doesn’t hurt anyone else. Someone who’d had to do things that haunted her, just to survive. You would have liked her.”

“Perhaps I’ll meet her someday,” Astra said.

“I doubt that, very much,” Kara said. “She died.” It wasn’t exactly a lie, but it wasn’t exactly the truth. Sara’s plan had been simple. After she had dropped Kara off she was going to take the Waverider to Apokolips, bypass the safety cut outs and power regulators, and feed the entire output of the Waverider’s engines into the temporal displacement manifold. If it worked, Apokolips, and everyone on it, including Darkseid would have been ripped out of time entirely, lost in much the same way the Vanishing Point was. It Sara had been successful, she would have ended the war, just far too late to do any of the people either of them cared about any good. Even if she failed, Sara would make sure neither she or Thea were captured. Eleven years or so in the future, the Sara Kara had known was dead, but in the here and now, Kara had the chance to prevent her death from ever becoming a possibility.

“Oh, Little One, I am so sorry.”

Kara nodded and turned back to look out over the city. “You should be, Aunt Astra. She died because of Myriad. Because of the war you’re bringing to this world without even knowing it.” Kara glanced over at Astra, whose face showed her shock clearly. “Do you know who Darkseid is?”

“Yes,” Astra said. “We fought his Parademons on Malsonon Five. But—“

“What does that have to do with my dead girlfriend?” Kara asked. “Everything. She died fighting him. She lived through all her worst nightmares first, but in the end, she died trying to hold him back. Trying to seal Apokolips away from the multiverse.” Kara reached into one of the hidden pockets in her boot, and pulled out a Kryptonian data Crystal. “I know you invented it, but you don’t understand Myriad nearly so well as you think. The mathematical derivation at its heart is a piece of the anti-life equation that Darkseid has been seeking. If you deploy it, *you* will draw his attention to this world, and he will come for it, bringing armies that have burned worlds far more advanced than this one.” Kara held out the data crystal. “This is the proof you asked for. Proof that Krypton was murdered, that the Brainiacs held the knife, and that the murder was bought and paid for, by the Guardians of the Universe.”

Astra took the data crystal, and Kara could see the hesitancy. She handled it like it might bite her at any moment, and Kara understood that. She remembered when she found out. Remembered how much she’d hated knowing the truth about why her world had died. Her grief and her anger had been far easier to contain when she’d believed they did it to themselves.
“I was not sure I believed you,” Astra said. “Even now, I’m not sure.”

“You don’t want to believe me, Aunt Astra. I don’t blame you. I didn’t want to believe it when I found out either and I hadn’t made the mistakes you did. But you have a choice. Cling to your mistakes, and be responsible for bringing about the end of *this* world, or come out of the shadows, help me protect Earth and find justice for Krypton.”

Kara leaned over and hugged Astra. “/.ukiemodh w rraop , eh ,astruh,/*” she said.

“/.ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir/*” Astra replied.

Kara released Astra and gave her a serious look. “Don’t take too long to decide. War is coming, sooner than anyone expects. I can’t leave you out there while I fight it if I’m unsure of your loyalties.”

“An ultimatum, Little One?”

Kara shrugged. “A fact. Time is on no one’s side in this.”

“I will look over the evidence,” Astra said. “You will have my answer soon.”

Kara nodded. “I’d like to bring someone to meet you.”

“Who?”

“My sister,” Kara said.

“Are you sure that would be wise?”

“No,” Kara said. “But… Alex is a huge part of my life. She’s the one who took care of me when I first arrived. She’s taken care of me, even when it nearly destroyed her to do it. I want you to understand why I’m willing to fight an army of my own people.”

“Bring her when I call you,” Astra said. “I give you my word, she will be safe.”

Kara nodded, and without another word, she tipped forward, kicking off the cliff and shooting into the sky.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian

ukiemodh w rraop , eh ,astruh,
* I love you, Astra *

ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir
* I love you, Little One *
Chapter Summary

Kara's first meeting with Lucy goes a bit differently, Cat gives Kara some advice, and Kara asks Clark and Bruce for some help.

Chapter Notes

My version of Bruce is rather strongly influenced by Unpretty's work, but she bears no responsibility for anything he does in this story. Except for the Duck. That is totally Unpretty's fault, and used with permission. Oh, and the Forbes interview...

I'll shut up now.

Kara headed for James' office with a smile on her face and a bounce in her step. The weekend had gone by smoothly. She'd gotten the caterers set up with the Kryptonian recipes Konex had adapted to Earth ingredients and had found someone who could outfit the entire wait staff with Servant Guild robes by the party Friday night. Invitations had gone out, and almost the entire House Committee on Alien Activities, along with the Senate Committee on Extra-Normal Affairs, were going to be in attendance. Kal had even agreed to use Superman’s open invitation to the White House to personally deliver an invitation to President Marsdin. Everything was moving along well. Better even than she’d hoped.

Today, though, was going to be a good day. Today, she was going to meet Lucy Lane for the first time, again. A quick check with her X-Ray vision told her Lucy was in James’ office, and Kara smiled. The first time they’d met, it had been horribly awkward for her, but she and Lucy had eventually become great friends. This time, Kara was going to have a little fun with the introduction.

She pushed the door to James’ office open and stepped inside.

“Hey, James,” she said, “I was wondering if-” She stopped as she caught sight of Lucy. “Oh. Hello.”

“Hey, Kara. This is-”

“Lucy Lane,” Kara said. “I know.”

Lucy frowned slightly. “Have we met?”

“No,” Kara said, “but I was Facebook stalking you on Friday, which sounds a lot less creepy in my head, but I swear there was a good reason.”

Lucy’s eyebrow went up. “Really?”

“Well, Clark, um, Kent, who I was talking to, made a joke about Lois and I ganging up on him. I
said if he told me Lois had a younger, hotter sister, I’d be too busy to gang up on him. He said Lois
did have a sister and she was younger, but he totally lied and refused to admit you’re hotter. I checked
her friends list on Facebook and there you were, definitely younger and definitely hotter.”

Lucy smiled, and Kara thought she saw just a hint of a blush on her face.

“And now, I’ve got to beat up Lois, Clark, and apparently, James, because they’ve all been holding
out on me.”

“Um, Kara,” James said.

Kara looked away from Lucy for the first time since she came into the office. “Yeah?”

“Did you want something?”

Kara looked pointedly at Lucy, who was definitely blushing now. “Lucy’s phone number, maybe?”

James closed his eyes, and tilted his head slightly, and the look of pure frustration on his face
nearly made Kara burst out laughing. “I’m pretty sure you didn’t come to my office to pick up
girls, Kara.”

“I don’t know,” Lucy said. “She’s doing a really good job so far.”

Kara smiled, and bounced slightly on the balls of her feet.

Lucy smiled back.

“Really?” James said, looking down at Lucy.

Lucy looked up at James and shrugged slightly, then turned back to Kara. “I’m sort of taken at the
moment,” she said.

Kara sighed. “Story of my life,” she said. She turned to James. “When you get a minute, I could use
your help. I’m outfitting a photo studio for the new unit taking over the forty-second floor and
could use some advice.”

James nodded. “Okay. Just let me finish up here.”

Kara nodded. “See you soon,” she said, and turned back to Lucy. “Nice to meet you.”

“You too,” Lucy said.

Kara gave her a little wave as she turned around and walked out of the office, being sure to put a
little of her Supergirl swagger into it.

She tuned her hearing as she left, making sure she could still hear them as she walked back to her
desk.

“I can’t do this right now,” James said.

“Metropolis isn’t right around the corner, James,” Lucy said. “I came a long way to see you.”

“Yeah, I know. I just don’t get why.”

“I didn’t like the way we ended things. Could we just get dinner, and talk?”
“You sure you wouldn’t rather have dinner with Kara?”

“Are you kidding me?” Lucy asked. “After all the times you accused me of being jealous?”

“I’m sorry,” James said. “I just… I didn’t like seeing someone else…”

“Maybe now you understand a little about how I felt.”

“When did you want to get dinner?”

Kara rolled her eyes. Classic James. Avoid the issue. She walked back across the bullpen to her desk.

“Hey, Kara,” Winn said as he spotted her.

“Hey, Winn,” Kara replied. “You thought anymore about the offer?”

“To be Supergirl’s official IT guy?” Winn asked. “Yeah, I don’t know,” he said with a grin. Kara smiled. “Good,” she said. “Start speccing the hardware you’re going to want. I’ve still got to find Cat a new assistant.”

“Ms. Grant,” Kara said as she stepped into Cat’s office.

Cat looked up from the layout she was proofing and smiled at her. “Yes, Keira?”

“I had a small matter I wanted to discuss with you. I was hoping you had a moment.”

“Of course,” Cat said. “Have a seat,” she said, indicating the couch opposite where she was currently sitting. Kara smiled and walked in, sitting down across from Cat. “Is everything still on schedule?”

“Yes. I’ve got most of the details for the launch party arranged, and I’ve scheduled interviews for the staff for the Supergirl social media team. Facilities has already started relocating Actuarial to the empty offices on thirty-six, and the contractors will be here tomorrow to start demolition. HR will be a little hard-pressed to get the background checks and offer letters done in time, but I vetted the applicants myself, so I doubt there will be an issue. We’ve already been in contact with Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, Instagram, Google+, and Facebook about setting up official accounts, and Winn’s submitted all the paperwork. Legal is still pulling its hair out trying to draw up the contracts, because we don’t have Supergirl’s full name, but I mentioned it to Supergirl, and she has a lawyer setting up an LLC to hold copyright for anything related to Supergirl.”

“That will be helpful down the road. I suppose she’s still insisting that any profits be held in trust until she designates a specific charity for them?”

Kara nodded. “Yes.”

“Well, her heart is in the right place,” Cat said. “Now, what did you want to talk about?”

“When I spoke to her, she asked if you would like her to attend the party?” Kara said.

“She’d be willing to do that?” Cat asked.

“As long as it’s not announced in advance,” Kara said. “She also said she’d only attend if we placed this on the side of the venue.” Kara took out a printed picture of a Kryptonian Glyph and
handed it over to Cat.

Cat looked at the symbol, then back up to Kara. “Did she say what it is?”

“It’s a Concord Glyph,” Kara said. “A flag of truce. She said Kryptonians used them to denote meetings for the purposes of negotiation. It would be considered sacrilegious to attack a site flying the glyph. She said that while it originated on Krypton, it was used widely through this portion of the galaxy and even those who didn’t use it themselves wouldn’t violate it, because of the retribution it would call down on them.”

“She thinks this is necessary?” Cat asked.

“She said she would only attend if we flew the flag,” Kara said.

“Can you have one made up by Friday?” Cat asked.

“Of course,” Kara said.

“Then extend an invitation for her,” Cat said.

“Of course. That does bring up one small, tiny little problem though,” Kara said.

“What’s that?” Cat asked.

“I can’t make it to the party,” Kara said. “I’m sorry, Ms. Grant. It’s just that there wasn’t a lot of notice, and-”

“It’s fine, Keira,” Cat said. “I understand.”

Kara smiled, because she knew in the original timeline, Cat would never have accepted that. Of course, in the original timeline, Cat took a lot longer to figure out that Kara was Supergirl, and Kara was pretty sure this version of Cat already knew.

“Thank you, Ms. Grant. If you’ll excuse me, I need to go get ready for those interviews.”

__________________________________________________________

“Hey, Kara,” Kal said as he landed next to her. “What brings you to Metropolis?”

She was sitting on the roof of the Daily Planet building, her feet hanging over the side as she looked out at the skyline. “I figured you came to National City and pick up President Marsdin’s invitation, so I thought I could make the trip this time.” It was about two hours after sunset, though you’d hardly know it. The glow from the buildings was enough that it was hardly darker than it would be at sunset.

“You didn’t have to, Kara,” he said. “Coming to see you isn’t a burden.”

She smiled. “Then you should do it more often, baby cousin,” she said. “I wanted to thank you for delivering the invitation.”

“It wasn’t a problem,” he said.

“I also wanted to ask another favor,” she said.

“Oh?”

“I’m going to the party as Supergirl,” she said.
“Kara, are you sure that’s a good idea?”

“No,” Kara said, “But not for the reasons you’re worried about. I’m pretty sure Cat already figured out I’m Supergirl and she’s sitting on it, which I knew she would. In fact, she’s offering suggestions to help me hide my identity better.”

“Like what?”

“She suggested a wig when I’m not in costume. Said I’d look good as a red head.”

“That’s not actually a bad idea,” Kal said. “You should talk to Bruce.”

“About wigs?”

“No. He’s got an associate who uses a special hair treatment. She sprays herself with a gas, and her hair and clothes change color. She uses a different gas to change back.”

“I’ll give him a call when I get back home,” she said. “But back to the favor. I wanted to ask you to come to the party.”

“I was already planning on it,” Kal said. “Lois and I got our invitations today.”

“No, I mean, come as Kal-El.”

“Kara, I don’t-”

“I know, but you need to make an exception this time.”

“Why? What’s so important? Ever since you’ve come out as Supergirl, you’ve been playing it up for media attention. I didn’t want to say anything before, but-”

“I’m not playing debutante, Kal,” she snapped. “There are, maybe, forty or fifty Kryptonians left. You and I are the only ones who aren’t convicted criminals. There are thirty Kryptonians in hiding because the DEO is hunting them. Whatever they did to wind up in Fort Rozz, they served twenty-four years in prison, and they’ve spent another eleven here, in hiding. Our race is gone. Dead. There’s not enough of us for a viable gene pool. But I don’t want us to spend our last days being hunted down, treated as criminals. Not when I think of the good they could do. The Kryptonians in Fort Rozz were almost all followers of my Aunt Astra. They were imprisoned because of the things one of them did trying to save Krypton. I’m not saying they didn’t do bad things, but they were trying to help and I think if we give them the chance, they could help this world. Maybe not the way you and I do, but imagine if we had them as backup when it came to natural disasters, or if Darkseid attacked again.”

“Okay. But why do you need me for that? Why not just make your case to President Marsdin on your own?”

“Because they won’t listen to me. Not yet. All I’ve done is catch a plane, put out a few fires, and snag one bad guy. You’ve saved the world. I don’t have time to wait for them to listen to me.”

“I’ll go,” he said, “but please, don’t get your hopes too high. This is going to take longer than one night.”

“I know, Kal. Believe me. But right now, I need to give someone hope, because if I don’t, she’s going to make a terrible mistake.”
“Your Aunt Astra.”

“She’s your family, too, baby cousin,” Kara said.

“You think she’d meet with me?”

“She might,” Kara said. “I could ask.”

“Please,” he said.

“Okay. Oh, one other thing,” Kara said. “I met Lucy.”

“Really? How’d that happen.”

“She’s in National City, trying to patch things up with James,” Kara said. Then she reached over and slapped Kal in the ribs. “You didn’t tell me he was her ex.”

“I didn’t think it mattered?” he said.

“Well, I might not have hit on her in front of him, if I’d known.”

“You what?”

“No,” Kara said. “I’m lying. I still would have done it.”

Kal reached up and covered his face with both hands. “What did I get James into?” he asked.

Kara laughed. “Maybe next time, try checking to see if the person you’re trying to set up is even interested in people of the gender you’re trying to set them up with.”

Kal dropped his hands. “I’m gonna get in trouble if I say it never occurred to me, aren’t I?”

“Oh, I’ll just tell Diana,” Kara said.

“Please don’t,” Kal said.

“I could tell Lois instead,” Kara said.

Kara laughed again at the look of terror on Kal’s face.

Kara dropped down onto her couch and checked the time. It would be late in Gotham, but not terribly so, considering who she was calling. Normally, she’d put it off until she could call at a more reasonable hour, but Cat did kind of have a point about her appearance. She should have taken that into consideration before, because she knew she was going to be in the public view a lot more this time around, but she’d been considering that from the Supergirl side, and not the Kara side. It was a good reminder that her foreknowledge didn’t make her infallible.

“Konex,” she said as she picked up her phone. “Put me through to Wayne Manor, and be ready to engage encryption.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Konex said without dropping his stealth field.

The phone rang a couple of times before someone answered. “Wayne residence. Alfred speaking.”

“Hey, Alfred,” Kara said.
“Miss Kara!” Alfred replied, and Kara felt herself smiling at the joy she could here in his voice. “It’s good to hear your voice.”

“It’s good to talk to you, too,” she said. “How are things at stately Wayne Manor?”

“Oh, same as always, Miss Kara. I was thinking of taking my vacation time this year at Arkham Asylum. I thought I might find it a bit more restful.”

Kara laughed. “I could see how you would,” she said. “Dick visiting enough?”

“Master Dick’s visiting schedule is the same as it ever was. Too much to pretend like there aren’t issues and volumes to work out and not enough for Master Bruce and myself not to miss him terribly.”

Kara sighed. “I’m sorry, Alfred. If I thought it would do any good, I’d offer to smack both of them upside the head.”

“I’m afraid that even with your considerable strength, both of their heads are too hard to get through.”

“And I bet the little monster loves stirring the pot,” Kara said.

“Well, it is definitely among Master Damian’s more loved hobbies,” Alfred said. “Although, I am reminded of a promise I made to the young Master when I found him under the hood of my car.”

“He touched the Aston Martin?” Kara asked.

“Yes, he did. He said he was giving it a tune up. Master Dick put the damage right, but I felt it only appropriate to repay Damian’s… kindness by asking you to inform Supergirl that he has a poster of her up in his room.”

“Okay, first, there are posters? Already? Second, I don’t see why you felt the need to punish innocent Superheroes for the little skeeve’s misdeeds, and thirdly, I can assure you, she would be duly creeped out.”

“Ah, yes, an unfortunate side effect. However, any future threats will not hold any weight if there is no follow through on past ones.”

“I see your point. Do me a favor though?”

“I do feel I owe you one at this point,” Alfred said, and Kara could hear the faintest hint of teasing in his voice.

“Next time Tim is over, tell him to ‘Malcolm in the Middle’ Damian’s computer,” Kara said, a small hint of malicious glee in her voice.

“I am terrified to ask what that would entail, however, I will pass the message along,” Alfred replied with just a hint of amusement.

“It will be worth it, I promise,” Kara said. “I suppose I should ask after Jason, too, though I suspect I know the answer.”

“Things are still tense,” Alfred said.

Kara closed her eyes, reached up and pinched the bridge of her nose. “I swear, Tim is the only one of the lot who isn’t a complete basket case, and I think that’s pure luck.”
“I tend to give the credit to Stephanie, myself,” Alfred said. “But I would not judge them too harshly, Miss Kara. Not every broken child can be so lucky as you.”

Kara smiled again. “No,” she said. “The world has a depressingly small supply of Alex Danvers’s. Anyway, Alfred, is Bruce available?”

“He’s currently occupied in his… man cave, I believe you call it.”

Kara laughed. “I will have to run that one by Clark,” she said. “Can you tell him it’s related to our newly-shared hobby.”

“Ah. In that case, I will put the call through. Hold for a moment.”

Kara took a moment to super-speed her way out of her Supergirl costume and into a pair of sweatpants and a tank top, and to acquire a half gallon of strawberry ice cream.

“Hello, Kara,” Bruce said after a couple of minutes.

“Hey, Bruce. I needed to have a private conversation. Clark said his friend from up north had set up you for that.”

“Yes,” Bruce said.

“Starting now,” she said. A moment later, Kelex’ voice came over the line.

“Communication is now secure on both ends,” Kelex said.

“You’ve been doing good work, Kara.”

“Thanks, Bruce. That means a lot.”

“A bit public for my taste,” he said.

“Everyone’s a critic. Seriously, there’s a reason for that. Check the CatCo special when it drops on Friday. Things will make more sense.”

“Or you could tell me now,” he said.

“It drives you nuts not knowing everything, doesn’t it?” Kara asked.

“It’s a mild irritant at best,” Bruce replied.

Kara snickered. “Did you get the invitation?”

“Yes,” he said. “I couldn’t help but notice you sent invitations for everyone but Damian.”

“Really? I can’t imagine why,” Kara said.

“I’ve talked to him about it,” Bruce said.

“He’s got a poster up, Bruce,” Kara said.

“Alfred told you about that?” Bruce asked, and Kara could almost hear the wince in his voice.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “It’s actually kind of related to the reason I called.”

“Oh?”
“Clark said you knew someone who had some sort of hair dye that could change color when exposed to a gas.”

“I do, and it won’t work on Kryptonian hair,” Bruce said.

“You’ve tried it?” Kara asked.

“On a sample of Clark’s hair,” Bruce said.

“Why do you… No, you know what? What you and Clark do is none of my business.”

“We were trying to develop a defense against Kryptonite,” Bruce said.

“And you can use hair samples because unlike a human, Kryptonian hair follicles remain alive as long as the hair is exposed to sunlight on a regular basis. That actually makes a disturbing amount of sense.”

“It’s also the problem” Bruce said. “The binary compound coats the hair, like henna, and prevents light from reaching the follicle, so the follicle dies.”

“So, all my hair would fall out,” Kara said. “I liked Britney Spears as much as the next girl, but I’m not looking to re-create her bald period.”

“I would have gone with the Sinead O’Connor reference myself,” Bruce said.

“That’s because you’re forty,” Kara said. “I’m… well, technically ten years older than you, but there was stuff.”

“That’s very descriptive. Stuff. I’ll have to add that to the Bat Computer.”

“Rao’s light, you really call it that?”

“What else would I call it?”

“I was sure Tim was yanking my chain,” Kara said.

“Tim is too young to be yanking anything that belongs to you,” Bruce said, and Kara just stopped, and wondered why all her conversations this week were going this way.

“I am going to have to find a telepath whose abilities actually work on a Kryptonian, because that is another memory I really need to have bleached out of my brain.”

“Letting a telepath play around in your head isn’t a good idea,” Bruce said, completely deadpan, and Kara could not tell if he was serious or not.

“Anyway, back to my problem. Any ideas?”

“You could wear a wig,” he said.

“They’re expensive, and considering how many outfits I’ve ruined during a quick change, I’m not sure I could afford it,” Kara said.

“Right. Sorry. I forget about the money thing,” he said.

“I’m gonna pretend you didn’t say that, because otherwise, I might have to fly to Gotham and smack you. That, or tell Diana you’re raising a little stalker.”
“I’d like to register my vote for you flying to Gotham and smacking me, if it comes down to it,” Bruce said. “Diana would do something terrible.”

“That’s the point,” Kara said.

“I do have another idea,” Bruce said.

“Oh?”

“Yes. I suggested it to Clark once, but there were… complications.”

“Complications?”

“Lois vetoed it,” Bruce said.

“Why?”

“I’m pretty sure it was the fishnets,” Bruce said. “Lois is the jealous type when it comes to Clark.”

“And now I’m pretending you did not just cause me to picture my cousin in fishnet stockings,” Kara said.

“He looks good in them as long as he shaves his legs first,” Bruce said.

“You’re like this on purpose, aren’t you?” Kara asked.

“Like what?”

Kara took a deep breath and counted to ten, then repeated the process in Kryptonian, then French, Russian, Mandarin and Cantonese and finally Spanish.

“The idea about my hair, Bruce.”

“Zatanna,” Bruce said.

Kara just sat for a minute, staring down into her ice cream, before she said, “That’s actually a really good idea.”

“She’s doing a show in Vegas for the next three weeks,” Bruce said.

“Okay. How do I get her to not treat me like another fan begging for an autograph.”

“Tell her that Bruce sent you,” Bruce said.

“Thanks, Bruce,” Kara said. “You will be at the party though, right?”

“I hadn’t planned on it, honestly. National City is a bit out of my wheel house.”

“Make an exception,” Kara said. “Alfred does have an invitation for Damian. I just sent a note asking him to let the little twerp squirm a bit.”

“Is it that important?”

“Yes,” Kara said. “Important enough that I invited Kal-El, instead of Clark Kent.”

There was silence on the line, for a moment. Then Bruce said, “I’ll be there.”
“Good. Just… strip-search Damian and Jason first,” Kara said.

“I’ll take it under advisement,” Bruce said.

“The President might be there, Bruce.”

“Right. I’ll have Stephanie and Barbara strip-search Cassandra and Kate, just to be on the safe side.”

“Thanks, Bruce.”

“You’re welcome, Kara.”
Preparation

Chapter Summary

Kara, the DEO and the Superfriends make preparations for the CatCo Gala, and Kara hires Cat's new assistant.

Vegas was fun. She’d caught Zatanna’s act, courtesy of one Bruce Wayne, and then used the backstage pass he’d given her to talk to the woman who was one of the most famous stage magicians and most powerful sorceresses in the world. The conversation had ended with Zatanna inscribing a handful of mystical glyphs onto Kara’s soul, which was a rather weird process, but short of some sort of talisman, it was the only way the magics could be made permanent.

Most of the glyphs were simple yet powerful protection spells. A ward against lightning, a ward against sonic attacks, a specific ward against banshees, which had led to a couple of playful digs about Irish ex-girlfriends, which made Kara gag a little, which only made Zatanna laugh harder. Kara was pretty sure, from the speed with which Zatanna had performed the ritual, she’d done the protective glyph thing more than a few times before.

The glamour had taken a bit longer, and Zatanna has explained that it was entirely related to the need to make the glamour both dynamic, and permanent. Glamours were usually spells cast at need by the user. Zatanna had told her that normally, she would have simply taught the person asking to cast the glamour themselves since most humans were tuned in enough to mystical energies that they could manage simple glamour and charm work, even if they couldn’t sling anything like a real spell.

The problem, she said, was that Kara’s mystical connection was tapped into the Kryptonian magisphere. So, while it was a strong connection, strong enough that Kara could have slung some seriously heavy duty spell work, Zatanna didn’t know anything about how to teach Kryptonian magic. That’s why the full protection package had been necessary. Zatanna had branded the protection glyphs onto Kara’s soul as a way to forge a connection to Earth’s magisphere. That connection was weak, but it gave her enough power to trigger the glamour which Zatanna had imbedded within another glyph.

When Zatanna was done, Kara had marveled at the result. She could pick any color she wanted, just as long as she could picture it in her head and say the name backwards. Saying ‘normal’ backwards would cancel the glamour, returning her to her natural hair color. Then, Zatanna had dragged Kara out for a night on the town.

Kara was profoundly glad, when she arrived back in National City a little after 6:30 AM, that she didn’t need sleep. She was also profoundly grateful alcohol didn’t affect her, because if it had she was pretty sure she’d have done unspeakable things to Zatanna. The girl was beautiful and more than willing. Worse, Kara could see the kind of understanding in Zatanna’s eyes that had attracted her to Sara. The kind of understanding that only came from loss. Even sober, she’d been hard to resist, and if Kara hadn’t known her in the future and known the kind of relationship she might destroy before it could even start, she might have given in anyway. Instead, she’d spent the night playing the oblivious dork, a role which fit her rather well, and left Zatanna with a goodbye hug and a kiss on the cheek.
Then she’d flown home, taken a cold shower, and rushed out the door to Noonan’s with a lovely head of auburn hair. Sally, her usual waitress, had barely recognized her at first, which was a good sign. Three sticky buns and two breakfast burritos later, she’d picked up Cat’s latte and headed for the office.


Kara smiled as she sat down at her desk. “You like it?”

“Yeah, but, isn’t it a bit risky? I mean, Supergirl’s a blonde and you’re a blonde. You become a redhead, and suddenly, so does the Girl of Steel?” he asked in a whisper.

“I can switch back and forth,” she said.

“That’s a wig?” he asked.

“No,” Kara said. “I’ll explain later, but I will tell you, my stylist was hot.”

“Oh?” Winn said. “Like, ‘I spent the whole time drooling,’ hot, or ‘I took her home and I had to change the sheets before I left for work,’ hot?”

Kara sighed dramatically. “Sadly, the former more than that latter, but it was a close thing.”

“Kara, you have got to live a little,” Winn said. “Everyone should have a smoking hot hairdresser story.”

“Do you?” Kara asked.

Winn blushed a little.

“Oh, you do,” Kara said, smiling. She leaned forward a bit to whisper, “Him or her?”

“You’re just going to have to wonder,” Winn said. “I promised Raphael I would never speak of it.”

Kara laughed as she checked her tablet for the day’s schedule. “Are the servers for the website coming in today?” she asked.

Winn nodded. “Should be here around noon. Honestly, I can’t believe the contractors got everything done in two days. I figured they’d be under foot for weeks.”

“It’s all about connections,” Kara said. And it was. She hadn’t used the normal CatCo contractors to build out the forty-second floor. She’s used ones the DEO used for their ‘we need a new alien containment facility in under twelve hours’ type emergencies.

“Do I even want to ask?”

Kara shook her head. “I’d tell you, but then I’d have to throw you into space.”

“Yeah,” Winn said, grinning. “I’m okay with not knowing.”

“You have your tux for tomorrow night?” she asked.

“Yeah,” Winn said. “I picked it up from Konex last night.”

“Good, I…” Kara stopped at the familiar hum of machinery, grinning just a little bit as she heard
Cat mumbling to herself about having to listen to Angie Harmon’s long rant on how hard it was to be a Republican in the entertainment industry. “She’s here,” she said, as she picked up Cat’s latte, adjusted so that only Winn could see her zap it, then stood up and got into position.

The door to Cat’s elevator opened up and she stepped out, eyes still on her phone as she deleted emails.

“Keira,” she said as she watched towards her office, “call the florist and send Ellen a dozen red roses, and make sure to tell her I’m always willing to do her show, any time she asks.”

“Yes, Ms. Grant,” Kara said, as she held out the latte.

Cat took it and started to raise it to her lips, onto to stop half way there. She lifted her head and looked at Kara. “I see you took my advice on the hair,” she said. “Pity you weren’t so attentive on the wardrobe.”

If anyone else had said it, Kara would have been furious, but the slightly teasing hint of a grin on Cat’s face, the one she doubted anyone else would have spotted, took all the sting out of Cat’s words.

“One step at a time, Ms. Grant,” Kara said. “I wouldn’t want anyone to die of shock, after all.”

This time, Cat did smile, though she took a sip of her latte to cover it as she started walking again. Kara picked up her tablet and followed.

“Today is fairly clear. The issue goes to print at 2:00 PM. Everyone except fashion has been edited, approved and finalized.”

“What’s taking fashion so long?”

“Kelly managed to find a costume house who could make replicas of the Kryptonian outfits in the sketches Supergirl sent over. The photo shoot was yesterday, but when I left last night, she was still waiting for the pictures to come back from the photographer. She’s got a backup layout with just the sketches, plus some of the photos of Supergirl and an article about her costume in case the photographer doesn’t get her the prints in time. I’ve looked over it, and the backup is really good, but she’s hoping to go with live shots.”

“Who’s the photographer?”

“Alex DeWitt,” Kara said.

“Hmmm… Is that the girl from LA you convinced me to hire instead of Horton Spence?”

“Yes,” Kara said.

“Well, I hope she delivers,” Cat said as she picked up the remote, and turned on the TVs behind her desk. “I… Is that Maxwell Lord?”

Kara looked up and sure enough, there he was, sitting on the couch, getting interviewed by the host of ‘National City This Morning’. Kara took the remote out of Cat’s hand and selected the specific monitor, turning up the volume.

“Look, it’s not a matter of inexperience. I’ll be the first one to admit that so far, this ‘Supergirl’ as some people are calling her, has done a good job,” Max said.
“Then what *is* your concern?” the host asked.

“Look at what happened last Friday,” Max said. “She blabs to the media that she’s Superman’s cousin, and not even six hours after the news hits, Reactron attacks her in the middle of a crowded highway.”

“An attack that seemed completely ineffective,” the host pointed out.

“This time,” Max said. “But think about it. How much danger were the people on that highway in? Do you know how much Reactron’s fights with Superman have cost Metropolis?”

“No,” the host replied.

“Forty-nine million dollars in total damage,” Max said. “And sure, Supergirl was able to shut him down, although how she managed that is still a mystery when her cousin couldn’t do it for years, but what about next time? How many villains are going to go after Supergirl as a way to get back at her cousin? You seriously think she’s be able to take them all down as easily as she did Reactron? And even if she does turn out to be stronger than her cousin, that’s almost worse because all the aliens and monsters that used to go to Metropolis just to prove they were the biggest, baddest, monster on the block are going to start heading right for National City.”

“And if that’s not bad enough,” Max continued, “she seems to be some kind of glory hound. She’s been flying around what, two weeks and she’s already giving interviews. It’s no secret that CatCo is dedicating an entire issue to her.”

“Well, Superman gave his first interview just three days after he made his first appearance,” the host said.

“And we all know what that did,” Max replied. “How many times has the Daily Planet been attacked? Do we really want the same thing happening to CatCo plaza? Mark my words. National City does not need the kind of problems Supergirl is going to bring here.”

Kara jumped slightly as she felt Cat tug at the remote. She forced herself to loosen her grip and watched as Cat muted the audio.

“I wouldn’t worry too much about Maxwell Lord,” Cat said. “I’m pretty sure our girl is going to prove everything he said is wrong once we get her up and running.”

Kara took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “I really hate that man,” she said.

“I’ve noticed,” Cat said. “Someday, you’ll have to tell me why.”

“You mean aside from the fact that he looks at you like a piece of meat?” Cat laughed. “While I appreciate the sentiment, Keira, I’m a divorced mother who’s closer to fifty than forty. You’re a little late to defend my virtue.”

Kara could feel herself blush a little, but she tried to shake it off. “I don’t trust him,” she said. “He doesn’t care about anyone but himself. He uses people and throws them away, and never worries about how what he does hurts them.”

“The same could be said of me,” Cat pointed out.

Kara turned and looked at her, and she could make out the faint worry in Cat’s face, almost like she was looking for Kara’s approval. The whole idea was ridiculous, of course, but something in
Kara responded to it. “Ms. Grant, you give two weeks’ severance to assistants who don’t last out their first day. And yes, I’ve seen you fire half a department in one go, but I also read every single one of those termination packets, so I know every one of them deserved it. You’re hard to work for, but you’re nowhere near as capricious or cruel as you make everyone think you are. You care. You may work hard to make sure people think you don’t, which I don’t understand at all, but I know you well enough to know you care every bit as much as Supergirl does.”

Kara turned back to the screen, where Max Lord was still pontificating. “He doesn’t. The only thing Max Lord cares about is himself. He tells himself he’s some generous, benevolent nobleman taking care of the peasants because it makes him feel good about himself, but he doesn’t know what it means to really give or to sacrifice for someone else. Maxwell Lord is a narcissistic little sociopath who’s going to kill a lot of people someday. I just hope Supergirl is there to stop him.”

She started slightly when felt a hand rest on her shoulder and turned to find Cat giving her a concerned look.

“I’m sure if Supergirl is needed, she’ll be there,” Cat said.

The tension she’d felt from the moment she’d first spotted Maxwell Lord’s face seemed to melt right out of her and Kara wasn’t the least bit surprised. Alex’s faith in her had always been her source of strength, but Cat’s faith in her had always been a guiding light, a way to find the calm in the storm until that faith itself had become the calm. She reached up, covering Cat’s hand with her own, smiling at her, silently hoping Cat realized how much that faith meant to her.

They stayed there for a few moments, Kara knowing she must be smiling like an idiot, but too lost in the warm, caring smile Cat was giving her to care. Much as she regretted it, she was the one who had to pull away when she felt her phone vibrating in her pocket.

“Excuse me,” she said, taking the phone out. She sighed when she saw the call was from the DEO. “I’ve got to take this,” she said.

Cat nodded. “Go ahead.”

Fifteen minutes later, she was walking into J’onn’s office to find him, Alex and Susan waiting.

“You mind telling me what’s so urgent I have to walk out of work in the middle of a meeting with my boss?” Kara asked.

“You mind telling me why the President of the United States is attending your boss’s party tomorrow night?” J’onn replied.

Kara stopped and smiled. “She’s coming?” she asked excitedly.

“Apparently,” J’onn said.

“Kara, what were you thinking?” Alex asked.

“That it would be easier to convince her to go ahead with the Alien Amnesty act if I could actually talk to her,” Kara said.

“Kara,” Susan said, “that’s not at issue. The problem is, you invited her into a war zone.”

Kara turned to look at Susan. “She’ll be safe,” Kara said.
“How can you be sure?” J’onn asked.

“I’ve convinced Ms. Grant to hang a Kryptonian Concord Banner on the side of the venue,” Kara said. “No-one will attack, and if they did, even my Aunt’s forces would hunt them down.”

“Kara, I know you want to think the best of your Aunt,” Alex said, “but-“

“This isn’t about that,” Kara said. “A Concord Banner’s sacred. If it’s violated, every alien on this planet would hunt down the person who did it because they know what would happen if they didn’t.”

“What do you mean?” Susan asked.

“Krypton wasn’t alone out there. Why do you think so many aliens were housed in a Kryptonian prison? Krypton was part of a larger society. It was a power near the heart of a league of independent worlds that spanned a sphere almost ten thousand lightyears in diameter. If anyone violated that Concord Banner, every alien world within three thousand lightyears would send someone to hunt down the guilty party and see that they are brought to justice.”

J’onn closed his eyes and reached up to rub his temples slowly. “Ms. Danvers,” he said. “Did it even occur to you to consider what might happen if a human violated the banner?”

“It did, actually,” Kara said.

J’onn opened his eyes and looked at her. “Really? Because I don’t think you’ve thought through the possible consequences.”

Kara took a deep breath, and let it out slowly. “You mean you don’t think I’ve realized I might have to be the one to enforce judgement if someone violates the banner?” she asked. “That I might have to kill someone in order to protect this planet from the consequences of some ignorant, bigoted human’s actions.” She walked over and placed her hands down on J’onn’s desk. “Been there. Done that. Or did you forget already?”

“Kara!” Alex said.

J’onn held up his hand. “No, Alex, she’s right.” He looked at her. “I’m sorry.”

Kara stood up, taking a step back from his desk. “It’s okay,” she said. “It’s a risk and I probably should have told you about the invitation and the banner first. I’m starting to feel like I’ve spent too much time around Oliver Queen.”

“Um, Oliver Queen is dead, Kara,” Alex said.

“Unfortunately, only in this universe,” she said.

“Right,” Alex said. “Not gonna get used to that anytime soon.”

“Tequila helps,” Susan said. “Or it makes you forget about it. I don’t really remember which.”

Kara laughed and Susan smiled at her.

“Okay,” J’onn said. “There’s still a problem though.”

“What’s that?” Kara asked.

“We’ve been tasked to provide security,” J’onn said.
“Well, that’s not a problem,” Kara said. “I’m in charge of organizing the party, so, I can slot you into the security arrangements.”

“That will certainly make things easier,” J’onn said, “though I wish we had more time to prepare.”

Kara grinned. “Trust me,” she said. “In about ten minutes, you’re going to have the most accurate intel on a location you’ve ever seen. AND I know the perfect person in local law enforcement to serve as a liaison.”

“Who?” Alex said.

“Detective Maggie Sawyer,” Kara said.

“Your girlfriend?” J’onn asked.

“Really?” Kara said. “How many times do I have to tell you I’m not dating Maggie before it sinks in?”

“I don’t know,” Susan said. “Sounds like you might be protesting a bit much.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “Look, we all knew Maggie in the other timeline,” Kara said. “I ran into her at a bar after my date stood me up. She’d just got dumped by her ex-girlfriend, who happens to be a Roltikkon by the way, but I’m really *not* Maggie’s type.”

“Okay,” Susan said, holding up her hands. “Sorry.”

Kara nodded. “Look, Maggie’s amazing. I’ve seen her go toe-to-toe with an Infernian armed with nothing but a steel pipe and come out on top.”

“Sounds like we should be recruiting her,” J’onn said.

“That could be counterproductive,” Kara said. “One of the things that made her so valuable to the team in the other timeline was her position at the NCPD. She pulled us in on cases we would never have picked up on otherwise.”

Kara watched as J’onn turned that over in his head, then nodded.

“I see your point, but we should at least get her consultant credentials and go ahead and start fostering that relationship now instead of waiting for whatever kicked it off in the original timeline,” he said.

“I agree,” Kara replied. She looked over at Alex. “You should be her handler.”

“Why me?” Alex asked. “I mean, I’m already your handler.”

“The two of you were partners in the other timeline,” Kara said. “Once you started working together, both of you started closing a lot more cases.”

“There’s something else,” J’onn said.

“What?”

“General Lane wants an invitation,” J’onn said.

Kara’s first instinct was to say no, but then something occurred to her and a smile spread across her face.
“Kara,” Alex said. “What are you thinking?”

“Nothing,” Kara said.

“Kara, I know that smile,” Alex said. “That’s your ‘I found the cookie dough mom hid under the carrots’ smile.”

“Oh, relax,” Kara said. “It’s not like I’m going to debase the man’s eldest daughter in front of him.”

“Okay,” Susan said, “am I the only one who noticed that she felt the need to specify which daughter she wouldn’t be debaseing?”

“No,” J’onn and Alex said in unison.

“Just tell me where to send the invitation,” Kara said. “I have to interview Cat’s new assistant in an hour.”

The woman approaching the dock was pale. The kind of pale usually associated with someone who never went outside. Her hair was jet black, and her lips covered in a dark red lipstick that stood out. She was well dressed, in an expensive single breasted gray wool pant suit, covered with an even more expensive black pea coat. The boots were well-made flats, which would have seemed slightly out of character if it weren’t for the distinct limp the woman walked with and the heavy derby cane she leaned on. She moved quickly, but with every other step she shifted, leaning to the right as she swung an unbending left leg forward and planted it with obvious care, the cane coming down at the same time, providing support as she swung. Her eyes were hidden behind large wraparound sunglasses. If anyone had looked carefully, they would have noticed a slightly paler band around the ring finger on her left hand, indicating the absence of a ring that had once been worn.

Anyone on the docks who saw the woman would remember her, not just because she stood out, but because she so clearly didn’t belong there. Yet, she moved with purpose, confidence and determination as she approached a small fishing boat.

If anyone had been able to see her eyes, they would have noticed that she was scanning the area with the skill of a veteran, watching for threats and for anything out of the ordinary, but the only one on the docks who did notice, though not from her eyes, was the target. A tall, wiry young black man with blonde hair and tattoos running down his arms. He was wearing heavy navy canvas cargo pants and a red t-shirt, and she could feel him watching her even as he shifted empty plastic tubs off a pallet, getting them ready to be loaded onto the boat tied up at the dock.

An older man was standing nearby, looking at her more openly, and seeing less about her than the man she’d come to see. She dismissed him as a threat, but it was obvious he was her target’s boss.

She walked up to the target, stopping far enough away that they were out of arm’s reach, but close enough that he couldn’t ignore her without it being clearly deliberate. He sat down the stack of tubs he was moving, and looked at her.

“Yes?” he said.

“I need to talk to you,” she said.

“Lady, I don’t know you,” he said.

“If you’re looking to hire the boat, it’s mine,” the other man said.
She turned towards him. “Are you his boss?”

“Yeah,” the man said.

She slipped her hand into her pocket, and pulled out a wad of bills. She peeled off five one-hundred dollar bills, and held them out to the man. “I need two hours of his time,” she said.

He looked to the target for a moment and the target sighed and nodded. “It’s okay,” he said.

The man reached out and took the five hundred, then watched as she counted out another five.

“This never happened,” she said, holding out the second stack of bills, which disappeared without any hesitation this time. She turned back to the target. “Is there someplace around here we can get lunch?” she asked.

The target nodded. “Follow me,” he said.

She watched as he stepped by her, and even watching, she nearly missed him unbuttoning the pockets on his pants. She smiled, impressed. He was good. She’d known that ahead of time, but he was better than she’d expected him to be at this point. Of course, anyone who didn’t know him, didn’t understand, might have thought him letting her get behind him was a rookie mistake, but it wasn’t. Not with so much water around them. They were in his playground.

She followed along for nearly a block. He didn’t speak until they were out of earshot of everyone else. “Who sent you?” he asked. “Arthur, or David?”

“Neither,” she said. “And I apologize for the theatrics, but your friend in Metropolis had no idea what name you’d be using.”

“How’d my friend find me if he didn’t know what name to look for?”

“Long story,” she said. “But he didn’t. I found you. I just checked with your friend to see if I could find an easier way to make contact.”

“You could have gone with something lower profile,” he said.

“Trust me, this is a lot lower profile than I usually am,” she said. “Now, food. Please.”

He turned and lead her around a corner to a little shack with a faded sign that declared ‘Best Sushi in Kodiak!’.

She felt herself smile as he waved to the old Japanese man behind the counter and headed for a booth in the back corner. One that would leave him perfectly positioned to see anyone approaching. She slid in opposite him.

“So,” she said. “What do I call you?”

“Jack,” he said. “Jack Gray. And what do I call you?”

“Linda Lee,” she said.

“Sounds about as real as the limp,” he replied.

She frowned. “What gave it away?”

“The cane,” he said. “You did a good job adding wear to it, but you’re still thinking about how to
use it. The movement isn’t habitual yet.”

She grinned. “Good catch,” she said.

Before either of them could say anything else, a waitress appeared. The woman took a moment to scan her features. Eurasian. Based on phenotype, the granddaughter of the man ‘Jack’ had waved to as they entered. Based on the smile on her face and the scent of pheromones she was giving off, she had a bit of a crush. She was in for a bit of a disappointment and not just because ‘Jack’ would be leaving after today.

The woman watched as Jack ordered a Sashimi Platter, then turned to the waitress and ordered herself two ‘Kodiak’ rolls, two ‘Volcano’ rolls, and two ‘Godzilla’ rolls, along with a bowl of miso soup, an order of pickled garlic, a bowl of edamame and some fried oysters.

The waitress double checked the order, and looked like she watched to explain just how much food the woman was ordering, but she glanced at Jack and he gave her a slight nod, and she scrambled off to get them their drinks.

“I suppose that answers that question,” he said.

“I figured it would,” she said. “I’m actually here to ask for your help. The cloak and dagger stuff is less about you and more about me. If I were seen here, it would attract the wrong kind of attention.”

“The disguise must be really good,” he said.

“Better than the one I normally wear,” she replied.

“Well, I’m sorry to disappoint you, but helping people is how I wound up in the mess I’m already in,” he said. “I’m not in the business anymore.”

She didn’t respond immediately, because the waitress arrived with a platter loaded with their drinks, and the woman’s soup and edamame.

“Your oysters will be just another moment,” the waitress said.

“That’s fine,” the woman replied. She waited until the waitress stepped away before turning to her soup. “You mind?” she asked.

He shook his head, and she tucked in, devouring the soup in just a few moments, before turning to the bowl of steamed soy beans.

“Let me make my offer,” she said. “If you don’t want to take it, I’ll give you two thousand dollars. That should at least make up for me blowing your cover here.”

“Well, that’s more thoughtful than I expected you to be,” he said. “Go ahead.”

“I need someone to guard a Queen,” she said.

“Not interested,” he replied. “I’ve learned to keep away from royalty.”

She laughed. “I can understand why,” she said. “Arthur’s a bit full of himself.” She watched the slight tightening of his jaws. He’d taken offense. That was a good sign. It meant he still cared. Not that she’d ever really doubted. “But this Queen is unique,” she said. “Like any good ruler, information is her primary weapon, but her goal isn’t power. She wants to change the world, make
it a better place.”

“Don’t they all?” he asked.

“The difference is, she’s actually doing it,” the woman said. “Not with armies and bombs, but with words, newspapers, magazines, Twitter and tumblr, YouTube and Facebook, tv shows and radio. She pushes and pulls. Shapes conversations and narratives. She inspires, leads, and gives people hope.”

“You make her sound like a Saint,” he said.

The woman snorted, and then laughed, slapping the table so hard the bowl of edamame bounced a few inches. “Oh, Rao’s light, no,” she said, managing to keep her voice low enough that only he could hear her. “She’s vain, conceited, self-absorbed, a little narcissistic, mean, fickle, self-aggrandizing, more than a little petty and absolutely the most pig-headed, stubborn pain in the ass I’ve ever met.”

“You’re really selling this,” he said.

She reached up and took her sunglasses off, showing him the brightest blue eyes he’d ever seen. “I’m not interested in selling you anything, Jack. She’s not a perfect person. She’s hard to please, hard to get along with and some days, she’s hard to love.”

He stared at her for a moment, and nodded slightly. “You’re not looking for someone to protect a Queen, you’re looking for someone to protect a friend.”

The woman shook her head. “No,” she said. “Family. I’m looking for someone to protect family. I can’t do what I need to do if my attention is divided. I asked your friend for advice, to help me find someone I could trust. Someone who, if they took the job, would die before they failed. Someone who would protect their charge, even if it was from him. Or me.”

She saw the wheels turning behind his eyes, and saw the exact moment it clicked, and he leaned back, slightly shocked.

“You know who I am,” she said.

He nodded. “I do. You’re my friend’s cousin. And I have a pretty good idea who you’re asking me to protect. What I don’t understand is why. She can afford to hire protection if she needs it.”

“There’s no one she could hire that can protect her from people like me. You though, you could.”

Their conversation stopped for a few moments as the waitress arrived with their food. The woman smiled and thanked her, and began mixing Wasabi into her soy sauce.

“Your skill set can bypass our gifts,” she said.

“I know,” he said.

“They would underestimate you. It would give you an edge, a chance to strike from surprise.”

“Even so, those like you would be a difficult challenge.”

“And if it comes to it, I would be more difficult than most, because *I* am warded against your skills,” she said.

“Why go through such effort to protect someone if you believe you might one day be in conflict
“If you ever have to stop me from hurting her, it would be because I’m not myself. Because something had altered my brain. I don’t expect it to happen, but I’d be a fool not to plan for the contingency, since it *has* happened before. And if it does happen, don’t hesitate. Just put me down. For everyone’s sake.”

He picked up a piece of his sushi and dipped it in soy sauce before popping it in his mouth, chewing slowly. Once he’d swallowed, he asked, “If I did this, what would be my cover?”

“You’re be her assistant. You’d run errands, fetch coffee, manage her schedule.”

“I can’t guard her full time if I’m off running errands,” he said.

“Neither could I, but she would never accept a dedicated bodyguard. This is the best I can do,” she said.

He shook his head. “I’m sorry. If you found me, I’ve already lingered too long in one place. What you’re asking... I would be too visible, too rooted to the same spot. Arthur and David would both know where I am.”

She picked up her chopsticks and selected a piece of her Godzilla roll, dipping it in the mixture of soy sauce and Wasabi as she spoke. “You can’t keep running, Jack. I understand why you’re upset with Arthur. You trusted him, and he spent your whole life lying to you. I understand why you hate David. He’s a monster. But you are giving them all the control right now.” She placed the piece of sushi in her mouth and chewed slowly, letting her words sink in.

“I hid who I am for eleven years, not because I wanted to, but because other people were afraid. I let other people chart the course of my life and I nearly watched everything I love burn, again. In the end, I couldn’t do it. If I’m going to be damned either way, I’d rather be damned for being who I am and I’m going down fighting, with my head held high. This is your chance to make that same decision. The decision to be who you are. A better man than your father, and a braver man than your king.”

He stared at her for a long moment, then shook his head. “You and Metropolis, you’re both dangerous, you know that? You make people want to be better than they are.”

She smiled. “You’ll do it?”

“Yeah,” he said. “I’ll do it. You think you could give me a lift to National City?”

“After I finish my Sushi,” she said.

Kara sat in the conference room, rubbing her temples as she waited. Kaldur’ahm, Cat’s new assistant slash bodyguard was at her apartment getting fitted for the wardrobe Konex was making for him. The suits were all going to be designer. It had taken a little creative hacking to create Jackson Hyde, but Kaldur’ahm’s new cover identity would stand up to a standard DEO level security clearance.

The money issue had been a little bit trickier. Kara was trying to do as much as possible above board, which was why she’d gone through the DEO for so many things, even before coming out as Supergirl. But she wanted to keep Kaldur’ahm off the DEO’s radar, so there was a good bit of white collar crime involved as she transferred money pretty much no-one knew she had around, building a paper trail that didn’t lead back to her. Konex was helpful in that regard, since most
human cybersecurity was more of a suggestion to him, than anything else.

By the time CatCo’s HR department was finished digging, they were going to find that Jackson Hyde was a trust fund baby whose parents had died in a boating accident. There would be some stuff about him working his way up and down the coast after college, before settling down in National City and applying for a job at several places around town. It was all nice and pat, and Kara had no doubt Cat would see right through it if she ever bothered to look. Kara really hoped she didn’t.

Kara looked up as the door to the conference room opened, and her face split into a smile as she saw the pizza boxes and the brown paper bag James was carrying. She loved Sushi, but flying home had burned through those calories already, and she was starving.

“Pizza and pot stickers,” James said.

“That’s my favorite meal!” she said.

“I know that about you,” James replied, setting the food down on the table. “Winn should be here any minute with Maggie and your sister.”

Kara took one of the pizzas off the stack and flipped it open. “I love Hawaiian,” she said happily as she picked up a slice covered with ham, pineapple and bacon.

“Yeah, I noticed that the day you ate six of them,” James said.

Kara gave a slight pout. “Alex never lets me order Hawaiian,” she said.

“That’s because pineapple does not belong on pizza,” Alex shouted from the hallway. “It’s sick, and wrong and what the hell happened to your hair?” she asked as she walked through the door.

Kara smiled. “You like it?”

“I… how…” she turned and looked at the door, waiting impatiently as Winn closed it behind her and Maggie.

“Damn it, Kara,” Maggie said as she looked past Alex, “stealing all the attention with the ‘hot librarian’ thing wasn’t enough? You’ve gotta go and be a red head too?”

Kara gave Maggie a wicked grin, and said, “Elprup.”

Everyone else’s jaw dropped as her hair turned a deep, rich shade of purple.

“That… is SOOOOO cool!” Winn said. “Is that a Kryptonian thing? Can you change anything else? Are you a shape shifter?”

“No, no, and no,” Kara said. “Lamron,” she said, and her hair changed back to its normal blonde. “Nrubua,” she said, and her hair shifted again, returning to the same shade of Auburn it had been when everyone walked into the room. “I went and saw a friend of a friend last night. She worked a little magic, and voilà. Voice-activated color-changing hair.”

“Okay, wait a minute,” Winn said. “Magic? Like, literal magic? As in the hot, I spent the whole time drooling, hairdresser did actual magic on your hair?”

Kara sighed. “And yet, I’m the one who gets ragged on for not being able to keep a secret.” She took a bite of her pizza and started chewing furiously.
“It’s okay,” Maggie said. “I can wait until your sister is not around to get details.”

Kara glared.

“Not to be a spoilt sport,” James said, “but I still need to get back and review final proofs for the digital edition of the new issue, so…”

Kara swallowed her pizza, and looked at Alex. “Did you bring them?”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Though the director would have preferred to do this at HQ.”

Kara shrugged. “I would have preferred to leave Sam Lane off the guest list for tomorrow night. Sometimes you just have to roll with it.”

“Wait, Lucy’s dad is going to be at the party tomorrow?” James asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Lucy too, probably. But Lois will be there too, so maybe that will keep him occupied.” Kara did not miss the slightly raised eyebrow on Alex at the mention of Lucy, and decided distraction was the best way to keep Alex from figuring anything out. “But right now, Alex has some papers for you guys to sign.”

“What kind of papers?” Maggie asked.

“Security clearances and NDA’s,” Alex said as she sat her briefcase on the table and pulled out three large envelopes.

“For what?” Maggie asked.

“You have to sign the NDA before I can tell you,” Alex replied.

Kara could see the argument building, and much as she’d like to watch Maggie and Alex go ten rounds, right now wasn’t a good time. “Mags,” she said.

Maggie turned to her. “Yeah?”

“Go with me on this, okay?”

She could see the hesitation, and she understood it, but Maggie finally nodded and sat down, taking the form from Alex and reaching for a pen. Winn and James both sat down too, as Alex handed them their non-disclosure agreements. Once all three were signed, Alex lay packets down in front of each of them, and they all up ended them almost immediately. Each one dropped a leather ID folio on the table, along with a stack of paperwork with tabs indicating where signatures went.

“Welcome to the DEO,” Kara said. “Since you all know about Supergirl, I convinced Director Henshaw to run security clearances for all of you, and issue you credentials as consultants.”

“Really,” Winn said, picking up his ID folio and flipping it open. “This is so cool!”

“Winn,” Kara said, “You can’t show it off.”

“I know,” Winn said, curling his hands around it protectively. “It’s still cool though.”

Kara grinned. “Wait until Alex shows you the special features.”

“Special features?” Maggie asked.
Alex pulled out hers and held it up, showing them the DEO badge. “These wouldn’t be much good in public, since the DEO doesn’t officially exist. But,” she touched a spot on the side of the wallet, and the ID turned into an FBI ID, “we still get by.”

Maggie looked over at Winn, and both of them smiled at each other. “Psychic paper,” they said together.

“Oh, no,” Kara said, looking at Maggie. “He did not get you started on Doctor Who.”

“Seriously?” Maggie said. “I started watching Doctor who when I was five.”

Kara sighed as she felt Alex’s and come to rest on her shoulder, and turned to look up at Alex. “I take back everything nice I ever said about her.”

“What?” Maggie asked.

Alex smiled as she shook her head. “Please, don’t,” she said. “No one wants to hear her rant about how insulting Doctor Who is to aliens.”

“Wait,” Winn said, “what?”

James just looked up at Alex in desperation. “Where do I need to sign?”

“Heard the lecture?”

“From Clark,” he said, “And three of the Green Lanterns.”

“I’m not that bad,” Kara said, stomping her foot slightly, and making the whole table jump.

“Yes, you are,” Alex said.
Introductions and Resolutions

Chapter Summary

Kara introduced Cat to her new assistant, Alex and Maggie work together for the first time, and Cat comes to a decision.

There were just a few hours left until the launch gala started. She’d gotten confirmation earlier in the day that copies of the issue had been delivered by messenger to the White House, and dozens of Senators and Representatives’ offices, as well as to both Sam and Lucy Lane. She’d put copies in Lois’ hands personally when she’d greeted her at the airport the previous night and knew Lois had passed one on to her cousin and Diana. She’d arranged to have copies for Bruce and the rest of the Gotham contingent waiting in their hotel rooms when they checked in. Alex had taken the first few copies off the press back to the DEO with her so she, Susan, Hank, and the entire intelligence analysis team could review them.

All in all, she was enormously pleased with the issue itself. None of the articles could be called a puff piece, except maybe the sections on Kryptonian fashion which did end up using photos from the photo shoot and the collection of Earth-adapted Kryptonian recipes in the food section. The articles Cat had written, and in total she’d written four, were filled with a mixture of both praise and criticism for Kara herself, and for Superman on the rare occasion he was mentioned. There was the feature, there was an article which talked about the difficulties refugees often had in retaining their own culture, and the difficulties they faced in adapting to a new culture. There was a historical look at the hostility immigrants had faced in US history, and lastly, an interview with one of the passengers on National City Airlines Flight 237. Every article in the issue was well-written, well-researched, and related to Supergirl in some way. It was everything she’d hoped.

The problem was everything seemed to demand Kara’s attention. She’d finally been forced to hand off the autographing of the magazines to Winn, who was currently feeding copy after copy into the autopen while someone from the secretarial pool slipped the signed issues into the swag bags. The hotel was on the line every five minutes about some security issue or other until finally, she’d had to give them Alex and Maggie’s phone numbers and just let them handle it. She’d had an argument with the Commissioner of Police earlier when he’d called, wanting to replace Maggie as the NCPD liaison. She’d finally had to drop Supergirl’s name, telling the Commissioner that she’d gotten Maggie’s name from Supergirl and that Supergirl insisted that Maggie be the one to handle security. In fact, the Caterers were the only ones who weren’t giving her a headache because she’d been sure to do a sample tasting of all the dishes by Wednesday to make sure none of the recipes needed adjustment. That had gone surprisingly well, though by the time it was over she’d been incredibly homesick.

Having four DEO agents in the building had been a huge help though. Padme Panjabi was the head of the team Kara had recruited to handle Supergirl’s media presence, and so far, she couldn’t be happier with the decision. Panjabi had taken over the setup process for the forty-second floor without a moment’s hesitation. She hadn’t even flinched when she’d been introduced to Winn. Laura Nguyen, Wilma Manygoats, and Marcus Brown filled out the team, and between the four of them, they’d not only gotten the forty-second floor up and running, but they’d all dug in and been helping with various last-minute arrangements that had allowed Kara to take enough of a breath to slip out and Supergirl for long enough to catch a car that had been about to go over the side of Otto
Bender Bridge, clean up a pile-up on the Interstate, rescue a small craft that was taking on water about fifty miles off the coast, and catch a bear that had gotten out of its enclosure at the National City Zoo.

Which really left only one task.

Kara led Kaldur’ahm across the bullpen, and felt every eye in the room on them as she did. Part of it was curiosity and part of it was just Kaldur’ahm himself. He was magnetic. Tall, lean, handsome in a way that put James Olsen to shame. Part of that was the way he carried himself. He was calm and quiet, but you could see that he was attentive and aware. He carried himself like the royalty he was and even Kara knew there was a time she’d have been swooning. Now, though, she was older, more aware of herself, and while she found his presence reassuring, it didn’t make her weak in the knees.

He was dressed in a suit that could have come straight from the latest Georgio Armani collection. Charcoal gray virgin wool over a red cotton shirt with a red and gray silk tie. The suit was cut loosely enough that he was able to wear his water bearers in a carefully modified shoulder hostler set up. It was enough to make Kara feel more than a little inadequate in her white oxford, salmon pencil shirt, and gray sweater. Unfortunately, she didn’t have time to go change into something more impressive herself. Cat wanted her new assistant by the end of the day, so that Kara would be free to start as the head of the Supergirl Social Media Group, or S2MG as Cat had dubbed it.

She led Kaldur’ahm into Cat’s office, only to find Cat sitting on one of the couches, smiling as she read through the finished issue.

“Ms. Grant?” she said.

“Yes, Kiera?” Cat replied.

“I wanted to introduce you to your new assistant,” Kara said.

“Oh?” Cat said, as she looked up from the magazine. She gave Kaldur’ahm a quick inspection. “Another Millennial,” she said, with a heavy note of disappointment. “Well, at least he knows how to dress like an adult,” she said. “But I certainly hope he’d not expecting to earn enough to afford Armani.”

Kara smiled. “I’ve explained the salary, Ms. Grant.”

“Well, then, maybe you should get to the actual introductions,” Cat said.

Kara nodded. “Ms. Grant, this is Jackson Hyde. Jackson, this is Cat Grant.”

Kaldur’ahm stepped forward and held out his hand. “A pleasure, Ms. Grant. Kara speaks very highly of you,” he said.

“Of course she does. I’m amazing,” Cat replied as she reached out and shook his hand.

Kara noticed the slight uptick at the corners of Kaldur’ahm’s mouth and felt a small bit of relief.

“Now, I assume Kiera’s already verified your qualifications, but I do have a few questions.”

“Of course,” he said.

“I’m not sure if Kiera here has explained how I feel about Millennials and she’s no doubt coached you on the answers she gave to get her through the interview, but I don’t coddle my employees, and
especially in this position, I expect absolute devotion to the job.”

“Ms. Grant, I assure you, I have no desire to be coddled. Kara explained quite clearly the work load associated with the job. She told me that you were demanding, driven, and had no tolerance for anyone who gave less than their absolute best. She also said you were every bit as demanding of yourself as your employees. That you were harsh, but fair, and that while your accomplishments spoke for themselves, she felt the need to point out that you were worth every bit of the respect you demanded from those around you. I assure you, Ms. Grant, hard work does not frighten me. I simply want a place where I can serve someone I respect and where I can make a difference. Kara has assured me that the desk in front of your office is that place, so here I am.”

Cat looked him over again, much more slowly this time, taking in every detail about him, before she turned to Kara.

“Relative, Kiera?”

Kara shook her head. “No,” she said, having a pretty good idea what Cat was really asking. “When you told me to find you a new assistant, I placed a couple of calls and five different people all recommended Jack, so I got in touch with him and here he is.”

“I see,” Cat said. “Well, I just hope Jacob here is as good about keeping my Latte hot as you are.”

Kara had to bite her lip to keep from laughing as Cat continued.

“And since you’re skipping out on the gala tonight to do whatever it is you Millennials do on a Friday night, I expect him to be in attendance and fully up to speed.”

“Of course, Ms. Grant. I never expected anything less.”

“Oh, and Kiera,” Cat said.

“Yes?”

“I’ll expect a tour of your new space on the forty-second floor first thing Monday morning.”

“Of course, Ms. Grant.”

Alex stood inside the small meeting room that connected to the side of the main ballroom where the gala was going to be held, taking in the preparations. A dozen DEO agents, along with four Secret Service agents were going over every detail of the room, checking every nook and cranny, because in the event of an emergency, the President would be evacuated through this room, into the service tunnel that connected to the far wall, and down a carefully marked path to the private garage where the Presidential Limo would be waiting. It was a good plan. Well thought-out. The DEO was just adding some mission-specific hardware.

“What are those?” someone asked, making Alex jump slightly. She turned around, only to feel her mouth go dry as she found Maggie standing right there.

“Um…” She turned, following Maggie’s gaze over to one of the heavy-duty Kryptonite radiation lamps. The fact that the topic was related to her job put Alex a bit more at ease. “Those are Kryptonite Radiation Emitters,” she said. “They put out a wavelength of light that’s largely safe for humans, but is harmful to Kryptonians.”

“They’ll hurt Supergirl and Superman?” Maggie asked. Alex didn’t miss the edge in her voice and
it made her smile. She didn’t know a lot about Maggie, not yet, but one thing she had picked up on was that Maggie was protective of Kara.

“No,” Alex said. “We wouldn’t have installed them if they would. Supergirl and Superman both have shields that protect them from the radiation. The other Kryptonians, the ones from Fort Rozz, don’t. Kara was the one who actually suggested these.” She glanced over, and saw Maggie nod.

“That girl’s a little scary sometimes,” Maggie said. “If I didn’t know better, I’d think she was a soldier.”

“I know what you mean,” Alex said. “I keep thinking of her as my awkward little sister and then she starts laying out things like this.” She gestured to the Kryptonite emitters.

“I think anyone who’d been through the things she has would be bit weird. I’m just amazed that she’s such a good person, all things considered.”

“Me, too,” Alex said.

“I’m not sure why you’re surprised. The way she tells it, you’re the reason she’s not a complete basket case.”

Alex felt herself blushing a little. “She’s exaggerating,” she said. “Kara’s always been amazing. I just helped her along a little.”

“Modest, too,” Maggie said, a cute little smirk on her face. “Anyway, I just came in to let you know that we’re all set for the Motorcade. Your teams will be directly in front and behind the limo, then the Secret Service. We’re closing down the 112 and NCH in about an hour.”

Alex nodded. “Thanks. We should be done here in about thirty minutes.”

“Good,” Maggie said.

“Can I ask you something?” Alex said.

“Sure,” Maggie replied.

“How’d you meet Kara? I’ve heard her version of it, but…”

“But sometimes Kara’s perspective on things is a little weird,” Maggie finished for her. “I was dating a girl, and we’d been on and off for a while. I had it really bad, but she was sleeping around. I would break it off, she’d call, and I’d run right back to her, because I was lonely and miserable. I walked into a bar where some colossal idiot had stood Kara up, and just happened to sit down next to her and you know Kara.”

“Never met a stranger,” Alex said.

“Yeah. So, she starts talking to me, and at first, I’m annoyed, but she’s just got that smile that you can’t resist, and next thing I know I’m spilling my guts. She volunteered to keep me company any time I start missing my ex. She’s kind of been my Ex-girlfriend’s Anonymous sponsor. Any time Darla calls me, I tell her I’m busy, then call Kara. Any time I’m tempted to call Darla, I call Kara instead. After a while though, I realized I had a lot more fun with Kara than I ever did with Darla.”

“If you’re about to say something that would make me obligated as Kara’s older sister to shoot you, please don’t,” Alex said.
“No,” Maggie replied. “God no. Kara made it perfectly clear right up front she wasn’t interested. She said she really wasn’t over Sara. She was only trying to date to shut up her foster mom and big sister and she didn’t really want to be anyone’s rebound relationship. Honestly, it would be a bit like dating someone’s kid sister.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Mine.”

Maggie chuckled. “She’s a good friend. Bit of a meddler though.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “I know.”

“I should get back to it,” Maggie said.

“So should I,” Alex said.

Maggie turned, and started to walk away, but on impulse, Alex called after her. “Hey, Sawyer.”

“Yeah?” Maggie said, turning around.

“We should grab a beer sometime. I wouldn’t be a good older sister if I didn’t tell you at least some of the embarrassing stories I have about Kara.”

Maggie smiled. “Okay.”

Alex turned back to the work at hand, wondering if she’d done the right thing. Kara said they worked well together and J’onn thought it would be a good idea to foster the relationship early. Hopefully, getting to know a bit about Maggie would make things run a bit smoother.

Cat sat in front of the mirror at her vanity. Her makeup was already in place. All she had left to do was step into the dress she’d picked out, put on her shoes and be on her way. Except she was having a hard time moving and it was all Kara’s fault.

She didn’t understand what was going on. She didn’t understand why Kara was doing half of what she was doing. Oh, she got the big picture. The girl had been clear enough in the interview. She wanted to make a place for aliens on Earth. To get them established as refugees. What the girl said made a lot of sense, and Cat had found it moving enough to thaw even her frozen, bitter little heart. The heart which normally only showed any signs of defrosting when Carter was around.

Kara had been an exception to that rule almost from the beginning. This wasn’t new ground. What confused her though, was how far out of the way Kara was going for her. She had no idea who ‘Jackson Hyde’ was, but she had no doubt that he was an alien, or at the very least, a metahuman. Either way, Kara had, upon being told to find her own replacement, gone out and found her *another* super-powered assistant. It didn’t make any sense at all.

She could understand if Kara was using her and through her, CatCo to further Kara’s objectives. That made sense. She might even accept Kara’s statement that she enjoyed working at CatCo at face value, though God only knew why, given that Cat herself was a terrible person to work for. What she didn’t understand was why the girl was so focused on her. Most people, given the assignment to find their own replacement before starting their new position would have had HR pull some resumes, found the least terrible option, and thrown them at Cat as they fled to greener pastures. Not Kara. Of course the girl would do this the same way she did everything else. She’d go above and beyond the call of duty, find exactly what she thought Cat needed and make sure everything was just so before she moved on. She’s also pick someone who she was sure would know to come to her if there was any issue.
It was almost as if the girl cared for her, which, if it had been anyone other than Kara would have been a stupid thought. But this was Kara and Kara had never quite made sense to her. Oh, she’d seen potential, but Kara had never seemed to quell under Cat’s threats. She’d seemed to enjoy them. It had driven Cat mad at first, because the more dire the threat, the broader the smile on the girl’s face. The first time she’d fired the girl and the girl had just responded with ‘of course Ms. Grant,’ then cheerfully ignored that she’d been fired and kept right on working, it had honestly left Cat flabbergasted. It had almost come to the point where firing Kara was a little like some weird kind of flirting.

She looked herself in the eyes and took a deep breath, letting it out slowly. Kara Danvers was attractive. She knew that. She was nursing a little bit of a crush. She’d known that for months, because everyone who met the girl seemed to fall hopelessly in love with her. She didn’t pretend she was immune. The fact that Kara Danvers could take anything Cat could throw at her, and let it roll off like water off a duck’s back, just made her that much more intriguing. That fact that the few times Cat had crossed that invisible line that Kara seemed to consider too far, she hadn’t hesitated to put her foot down and let Cat know it was time to back off made Cat squirm with her own arousal.

She needed to get this out of her system. Maybe find some young blonde company some night when Carter was at his father’s. Play the fantasy out and be done with it. Because she needed to be able to think clearly. Kara and Supergirl. Both were important, for different reasons, and she would not get in the way of that. She would not be some cliché, chasing a young woman around the office and destroying the girl’s career to satisfy an itch. Because that’s all it could ever be. An itch. An impulse.

Kara had too much potential. She was too important. And Cat would keep her hands to her God-damned self.
Kara smiled as Kal touched down on the balcony of the hotel suite CatCo had rented for their use. She’d picked up the keys early that morning as Kara Danvers and gone to the room just long enough to unlock the balcony. She’d arrived a second time, carrying outfits for herself and Kal about two hours before Kal was set to arrive, and spent the time showering, fixing her hair and doing her makeup with the help of a DEO agent who was cross trained as a cosmetologist and aesthetician. She didn’t really ask why they had agents with that particular type of cross training any more than she asked why they had bullet proof evening gowns.

“Hey, Cous’,” Kal said as he landed. “Nice dress.”

Kara smiled. The dress was based on her mother’s robes. She’d taken the basic design, a blue ankle-length gown with a mantle that came down roughly to her elbows, and had Konex remove everything from the shoulder up, creating an off-the-shoulder gown that was still reflective of Kryptonian styling, even if it were far more daring than anything that would have ever been worn back in Argo City. She’d kept the gold belt, and instead of the simple embossing of the house crest her mother’s robes had carried, she’d added the raised red and gold from her normal costume. She’d also added a red drape which connected along a three-inch seam at the upper edge of the back of the dress, and at the wrists, giving the impression of both a cape, and of wings. With her arms down, the bottom edge of the drape hung even with the hem of her gown. She boots she wore under the dress were blue, instead of her customary red.

“Thanks,” she said. “Your outfit is hung in the bedroom.”

He frowned. “You don’t want me to wear the suit?”

Kara shook her head. “We’re here as the ambassadors of our people tonight. We’re not going down dressed for war.”

“I don’t really think of the suit that way,” he said.

“I know,” she said. “I don’t think of mine that way either. But we do wear them when we fight and tonight is about diplomacy.”
“Okay,” he said.

“Make sure you wear the kryptonite shield,” she said.

He gave her a sharp look, but finally just nodded and headed into the other room. He came out a moment later wearing the outfit she’d designed for him. It was based on her father’s Science Guild uniform. An asymmetrical jacket that opened down the right-hand side, with a smaller version of the House of El Coat of Arms Kal wore on his suit emblazoned on the chest. She’d topped it with a red cape, with round gold medallions fixed to the upper corners, and a braided gold cord running between them. She’d gotten the design for the cape from herself. At least, from Kara Zor-El of Earth 46, who’d been dubbed Powergirl by that world’s Cat Grant.

The effect was fantastic. It made him look like a prince out of some Earth fairytale. Dashing, handsome. She couldn’t help but smile, feeling the pride swell in her chest. Her baby cousin looked, for the first time in her memory, like the leader of his people he should have been, had their world not been murdered.

“Do I look okay?” he asked.

Kara nodded. “You look like your father,” she said. She stepped forward, and placed her hands on his shoulders. “I know I’ve never told you this before, Kal, but they would be so proud if they could see you.”

“You think so?” he asked, and she could hear the rare moment of hesitation and doubt in his voice.

“I know it,” she said, and there was no doubt in her voice. “They weren’t perfect people, your parents or mine, but they would have been so very, very proud of the man you’ve become. Whatever happens tonight, I want you to know that I’m proud of you as well.”

He smiled, and if it was a little watery, she pretended not to notice. “Thank you, Kara.”

She nodded. “I need you to follow my lead tonight Kal. I know that goes against the grain, but what’s happening here is important. It matters for so many reasons and I promise you, I’ll explain them all in time, but please, trust me tonight?”

“Of course,” he said. “Though I’ve got to admit, inviting Jason might not have been your best idea.”


“Are you trying to start an interplanetary incident?” Kal asked.

“Bruce promised to keep them in line,” Kara said.

An alarmed look spread over Kal’s face. “We should probably get downstairs, right now.”

Kara smiled as they entered the ballroom. The original launch gala for the Supergirl issue had been, all things considered, a tacky affair. No matter how much she’d tried, she hadn’t been able to plan around the inherent tackiness of the hostesses Supergirl outfits. This time was different. This time, she’d worked to make everything as elegant as possible. The servant’s guild robes did bring a minor twinge of guilt, simply because being older and wiser, she could look at Kryptonian culture without the rose-colored glasses she’d worn in the past and recognize that the servant’s guild were little better than slaves. It was momentary though, because she was too swept away in the décor, which would not have been out of place in Argo City, and the music, which was one of Lara’s
favorite pieces.

“Your mother loved this song,” she whispered to Kal as she noticed people start to turn to look at them.

“She did?” Kal asked.

Kara nodded slightly, her next words coming in Kryptonian, to avoid anyone listening in. “She would sing it to you, while she was pregnant. I used to sit next to her and she’d let me put my hand on her stomach so I could feel you kick. She’d sing this song and it would calm you down.”

“I had no idea,” Kal said.

She turned and looked at him and could see the watery look in his eyes again, so she reached down and gripped his hand. “/.uchahvia ,kahl,ehl,/” she said. He squeezed her hand tightly.

“/.Nahkluv/” he answered in his own, heavily accented Kryptonian.

She looked around the room and smiled when she saw Cat and Kaldur’ahm among the crowd, all of whom were looking at them, except for a handful of people she picked up as either DEO, Secret Service, or private bodyguards.

A small grin tugged at her lips at the way Alex and Maggie stood together. Winn was close to them and James and Lois were by his side. The three of them had obviously been talking.

“This is why I don’t do these,” Kal said.

“You’re the heir of nearly half of the great houses of Krypton, Kal, including the House of El. You need to get used to it,” she said. Before he could reply, she released his hand and stepped forward, giving a formal bow, in the Kryptonian style. When she spoke again, her voice was no longer a whisper. Instead, she pitched it to carry through the room.

“On behalf of the House of El, we thank you for your invitation here, tonight. We come in peace, under the banner of Concord, seeking the gift of hospitality and sanctuary, and offering our service as champions and protectors to your people and your world in return. May Father Rao light our way, guard our steps, and reveal that we are, as always, stronger together than we are apart and remind us that we are never whole when we are alone.”

The room was silent for a moment, but then the applause began, and Kara’s eyes followed the sound, spotting President Marsdin. She was standing next to Senator Miranda Crane and Senator Clancy Shoemaker. President Marsdin was the first one to clap, but Kara watched as Senator Shoemaker joined her. Her enthusiasm was clear, and she wasn’t surprised. He had offices in Metropolis and knew Kal fairly well, both as Superman and as Clark Kent. Crane was a lot slower to join in. She did, because when the President of the United State clapped, you did too, but she looked like she was sucking a lemon the whole time. Her and Sam Lane both. Pretty soon, the whole room was clapping, except for Maxwell Lord, and she wondered how the hell he even got here, because she knew he wasn’t on the approved guest list.

She waited until the applause died down before she started towards the President, moving slowly so the Secret Service agents shadowing President Marsdin had plenty of time to see her coming.

“Supergirl,” President Marsdin said, before turning and nodding to Kal, “Superman.”

Kara smiled, and held out her hand, “Madame President,” she said.
“Please,” President Marsdin said, “Call me Olivia.”

“I’m afraid I couldn’t” Kara said. “Not when I can’t extend you the same courtesy.”


Kara laughed. “Okay, Olivia.”

“For someone who’s only been in the public eye for three weeks, you’ve made quite a splash,” President Marsdin said.

“Yes she has,” Cat said from somewhere behind Kara. Kara turned around, a smile on her face.

“Ms. Grant,” she said. “No Kara this evening?”

“No,” Cat said. “This is Jacob,” she said, gesturing to Kaldur’ahm. “Kiera’s off doing… whatever it is Millennials do on a Friday night.” Cat stepped around Kara. “Hello, Olivia,” she said.

Kara watched the interaction closely. It was pleasant enough, on the surface, but she could tell there was an undercurrent she was missing.

“Oh?” President Marsdin asked. “That’s a shame. My assistant swore she’d book me interviews with every single reporter at Fox News if I didn’t tell Kara she said hello.”

Kara laughed. “Well, I wouldn’t be much of a Superhero if I let that happen,” she said. “I’m supposed to meet with her on Monday regarding a community outreach project. Perhaps I could pass the message along?”

“Thank you,” President Marsdin said.

“Of course,” Kara said.

“Now I’m being rude,” President Marsdin said. “This is Senator Shoemaker from New York, and Senator Crane from California.”

Kara turned and bowed. “Thank you for coming,” she said.

“I wouldn’t miss it,” Shoemaker said. “You cousin has been nothing but a blessing to Metropolis, and the whole world, really. I see you’re following in his footsteps.”

“I hope so, Senator” Kara said. “This world and its people have given me so much and I want nothing more than to give back.”

“Well,” Crane said, “perhaps you should have started by not arriving here illegally.”

“Miranda,” President Marsdin said in a warning tone.

“No, it’s okay,” Kara said, holding her hand up to forestall any further response from the President. “She has a valid point. After all, I did, technically, arrive as an undocumented immigrant. Of course, I was unconscious, and my ship’s navigation system were damaged at the time. But even if I had been awake, what could I have done? I knew nothing of Earth. If I’d walked into an Immigration and Naturalization Office and requested refugee status, what do you think would have happened? I can only see two possible outcomes. Either they thought I was crazy, and I ended up some place like Arkham, or they believed me, and I ended up in the custody of someone like Simon Tycho, or Mr. Lord over there. After a few days at their tender mercies, Senator Crane, you would have created the very thing you fear. A powerful alien with every reason to hate and fear
humans.”

“So, what you’re saying is, you are a threat?” Crane asked.

“I’m saying that the policies you espouse could have made me a threat, Senator. My cousin hid me away to protect me from people who would fear me or hurt me or try to use me to their own advantage. People who wouldn’t care that I was a little girl who’d just watched her mother, father, aunts and uncles, and everything she cared about die right in front of her eyes. And I’m not the only one who’s arrived here like that, Senator. Contrary to popular belief, Earth’s not so special that every alien in the Galaxy is rushing to get here. Most of us are refugees, stranded here with no way back home, or in my case, no home to go back to, or in Kal’s case, stranded here so early in life this is the only home they’ve ever known. A few were even born here.”

“The people who took my cousin in, as well as the people who helped my cousin hide me may have violated the letter of the law, Senator Crane, but they and people like them are the best examples of humanity. People who are willing to give succor and refuge to those who are lost, alone and most in need of kindness. The President’s Alien Amnesty Act, the one you so vehemently oppose, creates a framework in which they can do so legally. It provides a way that the aliens you fear can join society and become people who contribute to and protect it, instead of outsiders who violate your laws out of sheer necessity in order to survive.”

“Well put,” Senator Shoemaker said, cutting Crane off before she could speak again.

“Agreed,” President Marsdin said.

“You know,” Kal said, “sometimes I forget that your mother was one of the most highly ranked Adjudicators on Krypton. Then I hear you say something like that.”

Kara grinned. “Oh, you should have listened to me lay out an argument as to why there should be chocolate pecan pie for Thanksgiving,” she said. She turned back and directed a mock whisper towards President Marsdin. “One year there was a powerpoint presentation.”

President Marsdin laughed. “I’m more of a sweet potato pie woman myself, but I’ll keep that in mind for when you visit the White House, which I hope will be a bit more often than your cousin does.”

Kara nodded her head. “We’ll have to see. National City has been keeping me busy, and I hope that I’ll eventually be able to expand my contributions beyond the City in the same way my cousin has.”

“I’m sure you’ll do wonderfully,” President Marsdin said.

“I hope so,” Kara said. “Did you have a chance to read the new issue of CatCo Magazine?” she asked.

President Marsdin nodded. “I did. Another reason I wanted to thank Ms. Danvers. She had a copy couriered to the White House yesterday afternoon.”

“What did you think?” Kara asked.

“I thought Cat’s writing was brilliant, as always,” President Marsdin replied. “I also think you did your fellow aliens an enormous favor. Your words might be the very push we need to get the Alien Amnesty Act out of committee and onto the floor of both the House and the Senate.”

“That’s good to hear,” Kara said, before turning back to Senator Crane. “Perhaps, Senator, before
you pass judgement on us, you could allow me to introduce you to some of the aliens you rail against. Give us the chance to show that we’re not really so different.”

“I doubt you’ll have much luck with that,” Crane said. “But next time I’m in town, I’ll make some time in my schedule.”

“A fair hearing is all I’m asking Senator,” Kara said. She turned back to President Marsdin. “I hope you’ll excuse me, Olivia, but there are a number of people here I’d like to speak with before they decide that it’s safe to skip out.”

“Of course,” President Marsdin said, “but see me again before you vanish for the evening yourself.”

The next hour was a blur. Kara had never been especially good at schmoozing, though her time spent as Cat Grant’s assistant in both timelines had given her a lot of pointers and her time spent leading the defense of Earth in the wake of Clark and J’onn’s deaths had taught her a few lessons that applied on the field of politics as well as the field of battle. Even so, the night was hard. She had to measure every word, listen carefully to the information Konex was feeding her through the modified DEO ear piece she was wearing and at the same time, avoid anything that could link her back to Kara Danvers. It was a challenge to say the least, but by the end of the hour, she’d talked to most of the guests who she thought could be persuaded to help their cause, had Kal talk to the ones she thought would respond better to him than her, and avoided Maxwell Lord, Simon Tycho and General Lane like the plague.

She made a note to find out how Lord and Tycho had gotten invitations in the first place, because she had specifically excluded both of them from the guest list. Which meant someone had gone behind her back and added them, or they’d somehow gotten in without invitations. Either way, someone was going to get an earful. Maybe even lose their job.

But first, she needed food. Her metabolism was running high with all the stress and it had been at least two hours since she ate, so she was making her way towards the buffet line, smiling and shaking the odd hand here and there, all the while keeping an eye on the crowd, hoping to see the one person she’d added to the guest list who hadn’t shown up.

“Looking for someone?” a voice asked, making Kara jump slightly. She turned, smiling as she saw Lois.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I don’t think she’s coming though. It was a bit of a long shot.”

“I can’t imagine who’d turn down the girl of the hour,” Lois said.

Kara smiled and shrugged her shoulders. “You’d be surprised.”

“One superhero not enough for you Lois?” Cat said, and Kara turned, spotting her approaching. Kaldur’ahm was following closely behind, carrying a plate piled high with Pot Stickers, which was only one of two non-Kryptonian dishes on the menu. She winced, because her stomach growled at the smell, but getting away from Cat and Lois was going to take time.

Except Cat turned and took the plate from Kaldur’ahm and passed it over to Kara.

“I thought you might like some food,” Cat said. “Kiera told me you were fond of these.”

Which was a bald-faced lie, but not one she could call Cat on, so instead she took the plate, and the small stack of napkins Cat passed her with it and nodded.
“Thank you,” she said, as she used her heat vision to quickly rewarm the dumplings before taking one and popping it in her mouth. The moan she made was only slightly obscene, but when she looked up, she saw two indulgent smiles directed her way.

“It’s a little like watching a puppy eat a treat,” Lois said.

“Mmmm. I’d made the same connection myself,” Cat replied.

“Hey!” Kara said. “I’m standing right here.”

“I take it yours is the same way?” Cat asked, completely ignoring her.

“Not with Pot Stickers,” Lois said, “but Superman ate two entire trays of the Swedish meatballs about ten minutes ago. I’m pretty sure you could have used the sounds he was making to score a porn film.”

Kara grumbled as she popped another pot sticker in her mouth, then pointedly turned and walked towards the bar, where Winn was sitting, nursing a beer.

“Do you mind if I sit?” she asked.

Winn shook his head, his eyes never leaving something out in the middle of the room. Kara took the seat next to him, and smiled at the bar tender. “Could I get a Virgin Strawberry Daiquiri please?”

The bartender nodded and turned to fix her drink as Kara downed another pot sticker.

“Who’s that following Cat around?” Winn asked.

“That’s her new assistant,” Kara said. “She introduced him as Jacob, but I’m pretty sure his name is Jackson Hyde.”

Winn sighed and turned towards her. “With my luck, he’s probably got a girlfriend.”

Kara shrugged, then swallowed the pot sticker she was chewing on. “I’m Supergirl, by the way. But you probably knew that.”

Winn stared at her for a moment before it clicked that they’d never officially met before. “Yes,” he said. “I did. Sorry. I didn’t mean to… um.”

Kara laughed as she turned to accept her drink from the bar tender. “It’s okay. He is kind of cute, you know, if you’re into unreasonably handsome men who look like they’re cut from marble by the divine light of Rao itself.”

Winn smiled. “No, I can’t imagine anyone who’d be into that,” he said. “I’m Winn Schott, by the way. I’m Cat Grant’s computer nerd. At least until Monday. Then I’m Kara Danvers’ computer nerd.”

“A pleasure,” she said, turning back to her plate. She made short work of the rest of the pot stickers and went through two more Daiquiris before she turned back to Winn. “Mr. Schott, would you do me the pleasure of a dance?”

Winn smiled and stood up, offering his arm. “I would be delighted,” he said.

She took his arm, and allowed him to lead the way. He took her hand once they reached the dance floor and led her through a couple of songs. For the first time that night, she felt the stress start to
melt away. It felt good to be dancing with Winn again. He had always been good for her. He made her laugh and despite a bit of awkwardness after he’d kissed her in the original timeline, he’d been her best friend, right up until Indigo had killed him. Something she wasn’t going to let happen this time. The songs were all Kryptonian, the music structured, rhythmic and good for dancing. Some Kryptonian music did dabble in some odd timing, but she didn’t really think, when she’d selected the play list, that the political leaders of Earth were ready for the Kryptonian equivalent of German Death Metal.

“Excuse me,” a deep bass voice said. One Kara would recognize anywhere. She turned slightly, smiling at the solidly built man standing in front of her. Six foot two, two hundred and ten pounds of solid muscle, and a jaw line you could cut glass with. Bruce Wayne was hard to mistake. “Mind if I cut in?”

Winn, Rao love him, turned to her, the question written on his face. Kara smiled and nodded.

“Thank you for the dance,” she said.

“Any time,” Winn said, before stepping back.

Kara turned to Bruce. “Mr. Wayne,” she said.

“You know who I am?” he asked with a smile as he offered her his hand.

“I may not have been born on this planet Mr. Wayne, but I have read a few of its newspapers, and seen more than a handful of its news broadcasts.”

“Oh. I suppose my reputation precedes me then?”

Kara had to work to suppress a giggle at that. “Somewhat, but I prefer to make my own judgements about people.”

“And what judgements are you making about me?”

“That you’re a better dancer than I expected,” she said, then leaned up and whispered in his ear, “and that you have at least a dozen ceramic batarangs hidden on your person.”

He shrugged as she pulled back. “Better safe than sorry,” he said.

Kara grinned as he led them through a complicated turn. “What did you want to speak to me about?” she asked.

“Can’t a man simply want to dance with a lovely young lady?” he asked.

“Yes, though you’re rather notorious for keeping your hands off *young* ladies,” Kara said.

“Well, I may be a debauched billionaire playboy, but dating someone the same age as one of my children does seem a bit gauche.”

Kara laughed. “Considering the oldest of the boys you’ve adopted is only ten years younger than you, I imagine that limits the dating pool a bit.”

“Just a bit.”

“I could also point out that I’m technically fourteen years older than you, so your age restriction wouldn’t apply.”
“If I didn’t know better,” Bruce said, “I’d be inclined to think you were trying to seduce me.”

Kara smiled up at him. “I’m definitely not, but I am enjoying the horrified faces your youngest is making,” she said as she slipped a hand into the handkerchief pocket of his tuxedo and pulled out a small listening device. She crushed it between her thumb and forefinger, smiling as she saw Damien wince and claw at the ear piece with a pained look on his face. She turned back to Bruce. “Now, what did you want to say to me?”

Bruce turned and glared at Damian for a moment, then turned back to Kara. “I just wanted to assure you that the Alien Amnesty Act has the full support of both Wayne Enterprises, and the Wayne Foundations.”

“Thank you, Bruce. That means a lot to me. Now if you could just teach your son to respect boundaries,” she said.

“I’m trying,” Bruce said with a sigh, “it’s hard getting around the things his mother taught him.”

Kara winced. “Okay, not something I intended to bring up.”

Bruce shrugged as he led her through another turn. “Don’t worry about it.”

“How’s the cow?”

“Expensive,” Bruce said. “I preferred it when Dick, Jason and Tim were bringing home stray dogs, cats, turtles and the odd duck.”

Kara raised an eyebrow, knowing full well that Bruce was the one who brought home the duck. “How is Penelope?” she asked.

“Why does everyone know the duck’s name?” Bruce asked.

“I’m pretty sure it was the Forbes interview,” Kara replied.

“That was an excellent interview,” Bruce said.

“It was definitely memorable,” Kara replied. She tilted her head slightly as a voice caught her attention, and in an instant, she was focused on what it was saying as her eyes scanned the room, and spotted Maxwell Lord talking to Cat.

“Excuse me, Bruce,” she said. “Duty calls.”

Without waiting for his reply, she started across the room, moving as fast as she could without using her powers, her attention focused entirely on the conversation between Max and Cat.

“You look ravishing, as always,” he said.

“And you look like someone who crashed a party you weren’t invited to,” Cat replied.

Kara smiled.

“Oh, that,” Max said. “I just called the correspondence office at Catco and asked why my invitation hadn’t arrived. They assured me it was an oversight and had one printed and couriered over.”

“Mmmm… I’ll have to fire whoever fell for that trick,” Cat said.

“Cat, you wound me,” Max said.
“Oh, when I wound you, Max, you’ll know it,” Cat said. “Your stock will be hemorrhaging value.”

Max laughed. “You over estimate how much the public cares about my little indiscretions, as long as I keep giving them new electronic doodads and gizmos to keep them occupied.” He held out his hand. “Are we dancing?”

“I’m afraid not,” Kara said as she stepped through the last bit of the crowd separating her from Cat and Max. “Ms. Grant promised me the next dance.”

Max turned to her, smile still fixed on his face. “Did she now?”

Kara smiled back at him, a smile made all the brighter by imagining setting the product in his hair on fire with her heat vision. She held her hand out to Cat, and Cat took it firmly, drawing Kara after her as she started towards the dance floor.

“Sorry, Max, looks like I have a better offer,” Cat said.

Kara followed Cat as she led them out onto the dance floor, smiling as Cat took the lead and starting guiding her through a waltz.

“Coming to my rescue, Supergirl?” Cat asked.

“Always, Ms. Grant,” Kara replied.

“Oh,” Cat said. “Charming, but you shouldn’t make promises you can’t keep.”

Kara did her best not to react to the sting of those words, because she remembered very clearly the day she hadn’t been able to save Cat. Instead she took a deep breath, and forced herself to smile.

“The city needs you,” she said. “The whole world needs you. Probably more than they need me.”

“Now you’re just being ridiculous,” Cat said. “I mean, I know I’m magnificent, of course…”

“And so modest,” Kara replied.

“I prefer honesty to modesty,” Cat replied.

“Well, as it happens, I agree. You are magnificent,” Kara said. “You are also inspirational, Ms. Grant. You see the world as it is, but you also see it as it could be and not a lot of people can do that.”

Cat turned her head, looking away slightly. “I’ve already put your face on the cover of a Magazine. I think we’re a bit past flattery.”

“It’s not flattery, Ms. Grant. You’ve been one of my heroes for a long time. The way you…” Kara stopped dancing as a new song started. She hadn’t even remembered adding this particular song to the play list. But she wasn’t about to miss it. She looked at Cat and smiled.

“May I lead?” she asked.

Cat nodded, shifting her hands, letting Kara take the lead. She was surprised when Kara pulled her closer, her hand slipping around behind Cat’s back, and Kara started leading her through a much slower, and more intimate dance.

“It’s been years since I’ve heard this song,” she said as she led them through a turn.
“Old favorite?” Cat asked, gasping a moment later when Kara dipped her, before pulling her back up, and moving through a lifted turn.

“Very old,” Kara said. “This song was composed by Erok-El as a wedding gift to his wife Milia almost ten thousand years ago.” She led Cat through another turn, before pulling her close, and leading her through four back steps, then another turn. “Erok was the founder of our house,” she said, “and this is the first song all newlywed couples in my house dance to.” She closed her eyes, pulling Cat in close and dipping her again. She smiled as she lifted Cat out of the dip. She opened her eyes, and gasped slightly, as she found herself staring into Cat’s eyes, getting a look she didn’t quite understand, but one she found herself wanting to drown in.

She wasn’t sure how long it took her to realize they’d stopped dancing, or that the song had changed, but when she did, she felt the blush creeping up her neck, felt painfully aware of every place she was touching Cat, and of how close her lips were to Cat’s. She took a deep breath, forcing herself to let go, making sure Cat was steady on her feet before she backed up a step.

“I should… um…”

Cat nodded, “Yes,” she said, her voice a little shaky. “That’s probably a good idea.”

Kara didn’t say anything else, not to Cat, but she kicked herself the whole time as she walked away from her.

Kara seriously considered skipping out on the rest of the party and heading over to Darla’s for enough Aldebaran Rub to put her in a coma. She’d stayed away from the place for the past year, afraid of leading the DEO to the place at a time when their only response would have been to raid it and arrest all the aliens. Unfortunately, that meant she’d been cut off from the only place in the city that served Kryptonian-strength booze. The problem was, no matter how much she needed a good, stiff drink, she couldn’t really bail on the party, so instead, she headed for the bar, and ordered a glass of Ardbeg 10 Year. Something she’d made sure the bar company added to their usual stock in case Lena Luthor accepted the invitation that had been sent. She’s just accepted the drink from the bar tender when she heard one of the least welcome voices she could think of.

“I didn’t think alcohol affected your kind,” Sam Lane said.

Kara took a deep breath, steadying her nerves before she turned to face him. “It doesn’t,” she said. “Not the way you mean. But the taste has a pleasant association. One that helps calm my nerves.”

“Nervous about something?” he asked.

“Not a huge fan of playing politics,” Kara said.

He snorted and waved his left hand towards the room. “But all this is your doing,” he said.

“I said I wasn’t a fan, General and I’m not. I’m more comfortable out there, helping people, or protecting them. Politics was my mother’s arena. I was supposed to be a scientist.”

Lane made a dismissive noise. “What you are is a threat. Trying to convince people that aliens are perfectly safe. Tell me, how many more like you are out there hiding while you try to make it safe for them to reveal themselves?”

Kara raised her glass and downed the Scotch in one go, not taking time to relish the taste like she normally would have. She sat the glass down on the bar and focused her attention on Lane. “Maybe we should trade. I’ll tell you how many aliens are on Earth, and you tell me how many
butchers you’ve got working in hidden labs, dissecting people who are no threat to you or anyone else.”

She saw him flinch, and knew the accusation had hit home. She could have driven the point further with a few more words, but she didn’t want to give any clues that she knew anything more about Cadmus than she could have learned from Clark.

“A word of advice, General. It’s not too late for you to be a decent human being. I think Lois would even forgive you. You should take the chance while you still have it, because sooner or later you won’t. Now, if you’ll excuse me, I have a whole list of people I actually want to talk to.”

Before he could say anything else, Kara turned and walked away, already focused on what she was about to do.

She approached James and Lucy, where they were dancing, plastering a smile on her face that would convince anyone except Alex that she was having a wonderful time.

“Excuse me,” she said.

James and Lucy both stopped, and looked at her.

“Hey, Supergirl,” James said, the question obvious in her voice.

“Hey,” she said. “Mind if I cut in?”

James frowned a little. “Um, I…” He turned to Lucy, and Kara had to bite the inside of her lip to keep from laughing at the disgusted look on Lucy’s face.

Lucy shook her head slightly, “No,” she said, “it’s okay.” She stepped back away from James.

Kara smiled a little wider. “Thanks,” she said to James as she stepped between the two of them. Then she turned and took a surprised Lucy’s hand. “I’ve been wanting to dance with you all evening.”

Lucy, looking slightly dazed, placed a hand on Kara’s shoulder as Kara started to dance. They were a good minute into the first song before Lucy said anything, but when she did speak, there was a smile on her face.

“This isn’t what I thought you meant,” she said.

“I know,” Kara said.

Lucy raised an eyebrow. “Really?”

“Honestly?”

“Please,” Lucy said.

“I got enough of your and James’ break-up story from my cousin that I knew how you’d react, and I wanted to see the look on your face,” Kara said. “Though, I would give up my spare cape to have seen the look on James’ face.”

Lucy laughed. “Oh, that would have definitely been worth the trade,” she said. “Though I have to wonder why you cared enough about James to talk to your cousin about who he’s dating.”

Kara gave a small shrug as she led Lucy through a turn. “Just family chit-chat,” she said. “How’s
Metropolis? How are your friends doing? Seeing anyone? Has the dog fetched any cars lately?"

Lucy gave her a look. “Superman doesn’t have a dog.”

Kara just smiled.

“What about you?” Lucy asked.

“I love dogs, but I’m more of a cat person really,” she said. “Sadly, my apartment building has a very strict no pets policy.”

Lucy started laughing so hard for a moment Kara was worried about she’d broken the woman.

“I’m sorry, I just… The mental image…” By the time Lucy had stopped laughing more than a few people were staring at them, including Lucy’s dad. “You’re not what I expected, at all,” she said.

“Is that a good thing?” Kara asked.

Lucy nodded. “It is,” she said. “Your cousin is a little bit full of himself, to be honest.”

Kara glanced over at Kal, and had to fight not to giggle at the wounded look on his face. “I think he heard you,” she said.

Lucy shrugged. “Tell me I’m wrong.”

“I’d rather not lie to you,” Kara said. “I have a feeling you wouldn’t like that very much.”

“I… No. I wouldn’t like that at all,” Lucy said.

“It’s necessary sometimes,” Kara said. “Lying, I mean.”

“It’s never necessary,” Lucy replied, and Kara could feel the heat in her tone.

“I wish it wasn’t,” Kara said, “but sometime, when we’re somewhere more private, ask me why my foster sister had to grow up without a father.”

“What makes you think we’re ever going to be somewhere private?” Lucy asked, challenge in her voice.

Kara grinned. “Maybe I’m still hoping to get your phone number,” she said.

It took a second, but Kara saw the exact moment Lucy made the connection. Her eyes went wide and her jaw dropped. Kara had to physically carry her through the next turn in the dance before her feet started moving again.

“Why?” Lucy finally asked.

“Because I trust you,” Kara said.

“You don’t even know me,” Lucy replied.

“Trust is a choice,” Kara said. “We can make that choice based on hope or we can make it based on fear. Someone I care for a very great deal once told me that hope is stronger than fear. I chose to believe she’s right. So I’m trusting you. In part, because James is my friend and as much as I might get a kick out of flirting with you in front of him, I don’t want to be what comes between the two of you. Not the way my cousin did. But also because everyone I’ve talked to about you has told me
how amazing you are. How you’re smart and funny and fun to be around. How loyal you are, how kind. I want to be your friend. James or no James, I think you’re someone worthwhile.”

Lucy was giving her a look she couldn’t quite make out and Kara was about to ask what was wrong when she heard it. The sound of someone coming in for a landing. She looked up and saw that Kal had noticed as well.

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“Excuse me,” she said. She let go of Lucy and started towards the door, using her X-ray vision to peel away the walls and confirm what she already knew.

Non was outside.

“Let me handle this, Kal,” she said as she slipped a hand into the pocket of her dress and touched a button on the small remote she was carrying. Holographic Concord Glyphs appeared on every wall, with a giant one floating in the center of the room.

“Kara,” Kal said.

“/zha ,kahl,ehl, ;duahzu khuhp w voiehd,” she said, her tone unyielding. She reached up and touched her ear piece. “Alex, I need you near the President. Non’s here.” She didn’t check to see if Alex was moving. She didn’t have to. She knew her sister and her sister would do exactly what she needed her to.

The crowd had picked up on the fact that something was going on at the door and were starting to back away when Non walked in.

“Well, well, what do we have here?” he said.

“A parlay, protected by Concord Law,” Kara said. “You do remember the law, don’t you?”

“You dare to speak to me of the Law, you pretentious child?” Non asked. “You come here, wearing an imitation of your mother’s robes-“

“My mother’s been dead for thirty-seven years, Non,” Kara said.

“And the Galaxy’s a better place without her,” Non shot back. “If not for her interference, we might have saved Krypton.”

Kara shook her head. “Why don’t you ask your Coluan friend about that? While you’re at it, ask her what triggered the runaway reaction in the core.”

“I don’t need to ask,” Non said. “Arrogance. Greed. The hubris of the members of the Council. The same hubris I see in these small creatures that infest this planet.”

“That sounds an awful lot like the pot calling the kettle black,” President Marsdin said from somewhere behind Kara.

Kara turned around, only to find President Marsdin standing in front of the rest of the crowd, J’on, Alex, Maggie, Kal, and a pair of very annoyed-looking secret service agents beside her. Of course, Cat Grant wasn’t more than two steps behind President Marsdin, with Lois and Kaldur’ahm on either side of her. Diana, Bruce, and Bruce’s entire team were all positioned with clear lines of fire, and all of them looked perfectly ready to throw down. Even James, Winn, Lucy and General Lane were all there.

“Oh, this *is* amusing,” Non said. Kara turned back around to face him. “You’re their leader,
aren’t you? President Olivia Marsdin, isn’t it? Tell me, what’s it like, being an insect, watching as gods quibble over your fate?”

“I wouldn’t know. All I see is a small man posturing in a situation where he’s powerless,” President Marsdin said.

“Brave words,” Non said. “I wonder how brave-“

Kara picked it up a split second before Non, the sound of three people coming in for a landing, and smiled.

“You were saying something about ‘brave words’…” Kara said.

“I would rather hear an explanation as to why one of my Lieutenants has violated my orders,” Astra said as she stepped through the entry way, followed by Mur and Gor. "I came here-“ Non started to say, but Astra cut himself off.

“You came here because your pride is wounded,” Astra said. “You were bested before by Alura and your pride has never recovered from it. Now her daughter has thwarted your intentions and you seek to humiliate her and undermine what she is attempting to accomplish out of spite. Worse, you chose to do it here and now, after I gave specific orders that our people would not interfere with her parlay. Some might even interpret what you’ve done as an attack on a meeting conducted under the Glyph of Concord.” Astra took a step towards him. “I cannot allow this to go unanswered,” she said.

“What’s it to be, then, my dear wife?” Non asked. “Will you give me over to these savages, to be locked away in one of their cages?”

“No,” Astra said. “You are still Kryptonian, so you will receive a Kryptonian punishment. /chadi suzh zehtiaro vahsah rraop w dovrrosh vo/”

Kara shuddered. Much as she disliked Non, she had to stop herself from stepping in. Five days in absolute darkness was… She closed her eyes, trying to push down memories of the Phantom Zone. “You would condemn me to that for-“

“You disobeyed an order,” Astra snapped. Kara opened her eyes to watch her aunt. “You very nearly violated a Concord. Were we not standing under that very same Concord Glyph,” She took a step towards Non, “I would remind you how I earned the rank of General.”

Non stepped back, his whole body language changing, becoming submissive. If Kara didn’t know better, she would have sworn he actually got smaller, but there was fear in his eyes. “Take him,” Astra said, and Mur and Gor stepped forward, grabbing Non by the arms. Astra turned towards Kara. “I am sorry. One of my people was injured. While I attended to her, Non used the distraction to slip away. I hope it will not cause any undue difficulty.”

Kara knew she had to be careful with the crowd listening to every word and she really wanted to ask Alex, or maybe Cat, for advice on how to spin it, but that wasn’t possible and only one thing really came to mind. “I doubt this is the first time these people have seen a family squabble played out in public. Be well, General Astra. May Rao light your way.” Kara ignored the murmurs that went through the crowd behind her.

“And yours, Little One. We will speak again soon,” Astra said.
“A moment, please,” President Marsdin said.

Astra turned to look at her and before she could say anything, Kara spoke. “This is President Olivia Marsdin. She’s one of this world’s most powerful leaders and she has been a friend to our people.”

“Of course,” Astra said, giving Kara a small nod. “What do you ask of me, President Olivia?”

President Marsdin stepped forward. “I can see that you have matters to attend to, General, but if you could spare me perhaps five or ten minutes of your time for a word in private?”

Astra glanced over to Kara and Kara gave a small nod.

Astra turned to Mur and Gor. “Take him. Place him in one of the Shadow Cells. Five days. Tell Fendra to continue as we’d discussed. I will follow soon.”

Mur and Gor lead Non outside, as Astra turned back to President Marsdin. Marsdin turned to Cat. “Is there somewhere more private we can go?”

Alex answered. “We have another ballroom set up next door, Madam President. I think the space would work.”

President Marsdin nodded. “Please,” she said, indicating Alex should lead the way. “General, Supergirl, Superman, if you would.”

Alex turned and started towards the ballroom they’d set up earlier as part of the evacuation route. Supergirl took a moment to give Maggie a glance and motion for her to follow before heading towards the ballroom herself. She turned around as everyone else filed through the door, unsurprised at who was following. Cat Grant was right behind her, and Kaldur’ahm just a step behind Cat, but in front of Maxwell Lord, Sam Lane, and Simon Tycho.

“Not this time, Miss Grant,” Kara said.

“Are you telling me I have to miss the most interesting part of my own party?” Cat replied.

Kara smiled. “I’m afraid so,” she said. “But we’ll talk again soon.” She looked over to Kaldur’ahm. “Why don’t you take her over and introduce her to Mr. Wayne and Ms. Prince?” She saw the small nod of understanding from Kaldur’ahm at her implicit instructions to keep Cat close to Bruce and Diana.

“Well, Cat,” Max said as he started around her. “Better luck next-“

Max stopped talking when he walked right into Kara’s hand, which stopped him dead in his tracks, and unless Kara missed her guess, actually knocked the wind out of him.

“Not you,” she said. “/nim zhadif rraop w :bezhgam/” Kara turned to Simon Tycho. “You can turn right around as well.”

“Now just a minute,” General Lane said. “You don’t get to make those decisions.”

“General Lane,” President Marsdin said from behind Kara, “why don’t you take your friends and go get a drink. We won’t be needing you for this meeting.”

Kara smiled at General Lane, getting a glare in return, but Lord, Tycho and Lane all seemed to realize there was no point arguing the matter, and turned around to walk away. She did notice the smug grin Cat gave her before turning around and letting Kaldur’ahm lead her away.
“Now,” President Marsdin said, “Who’s this?”

Kara turned around to find President Marsdin staring at Maggie. “This is Detective Maggie Sawyer, NCPD. She’s one of the leading experts we have on alien refugees.”

“Really,” President Marsdin said. She motioned towards the doors of the ballroom where Astra, Alex, J’onn, and Kal had already disappeared. “By all means.”

Maggie went inside, and President Marsdin and her Secret Service detail followed, leaving Kara to bring up the rear. She closed the doors behind them, locked it, and tripped the anti-eavesdropping devices they’d attached earlier.

“We’re clear,” Kara said as she turned around to face the small crowd.

“Thank you, Supergirl,” President Marsdin said.

“No problem,” Kara replied.

President Marsdin turned to Astra. “You’re Supergirl’s aunt?”

“Yes,” Astra said.

“I’m guessing based on what I just saw, you’re the leader of the Fort Rozz prisoners.”

“Very astute,” Astra said. “I suppose I should not be surprised by that, but given your predecessor…”

President Marsdin let out a small laugh. “Not one of my country’s finest moments, admittedly.”

“He was very much like the leaders who governed Krypton at the end. Small, short sighted, unwilling to believe evidence of the disaster rushing towards us all.”

“She’s referring to Climate change and the resulting ecological collapse,” Kara said.

“Yes,” Astra said. “Your world faces an end less spectacular than Krypton’s, but no less real.”

“You’re an environmentalist?” President Marsdin asked.

“Yes,” Astra said.

“How did you end up in Fort Rozz?” President Marsdin asked.

“Our world was dying. Appeals to our leaders did nothing and time was running out. I devised a method I believed would allow us to save our world. It was horrible, but I believed it to be less horrible than watching thirty billion souls be immolated. Unfortunately, while we were working to implement my plan, someone was killed. There were fifty of us, in total. Kara’s mother captured me and my capture led to the capture of the twenty-nine others. The rest died trying to escape. We were sentenced to life in Fort Rozz for our crimes.”

“But now you’re here,” President Marsdin said.

“Now we’re here,” Astra said, calmly.

“I’ve been talking to Aunt Astra for weeks, Olivia,” Kara said. “Trying to get her to surrender to the DEO so we can integrate them.”
"They’re criminals," Olivia said.

"Yes," Kara said.

"Eco-terrorists is the term you would use," Astra said. "Our world was dying and we committed crimes trying to stop it. For those crimes, we were sentenced to life in prison."

“What crimes?” President Marsdin asked.

“Murder,” Astra said. “We killed a guard during a raid.”

“*Non* killed a guard,” Kara said.

“It doesn’t matter whose hand held the weapon, Little One,” Astra said. “I was the leader. Her death was my responsibility.” Astra turned back to President Marsden. “I will not apologize, nor ask forgiveness for what I did on Krypton. I thought we could have stopped the destruction of our world, prevent the deaths of thirty billion souls, including a girl I loved like a daughter. I swore an oath, much like the one you did. ‘All enemies, foreign or domestic’. Is that not how your oath goes?”

“It is,” President Marsdind said.

“Our own council was leading us down the path to destruction. I took the best of my people, the brightest, the ones who would follow me anywhere, and I tried to save my world.”

“What happened?” President Marsdin asked.

“She was betrayed,” Kara said. “I didn’t know what was going on. No one told me. All I knew was that everyone I loved was scared, speaking in whispers that stopped when I came into the room and my aunt, my best friend, was gone. When my mother suggested I send a signal to her, I…” Kara closed her eyes. “I didn’t know what my mother was planning. I didn’t find out for years afterwards what she’d done.” She took a deep breath and looked at Astra. “I would never have turned on the beacon.”

“It doesn’t matter, Little One,” Astra said. “In the end, you saved my life. If I hadn’t been on Fort Rozz, I would have died on Krypton.”

“You couldn’t have stopped the destruction of your planet?” President Marsdin asked.

“No,” Astra said. She turned to look at President Marsdin. “Kara showed me the proof, just recently. We always believed that we were responsible for our own end, but-“

“The Coluans conspired against us,” Kara said, cutting Astra off. President Marsdin turned towards her, missing the frown on Astra’s face. “They’re a race of what you would call artificial intelligences. Data constructs capable of taking a physical form when they wish. Immensely intelligent and incredibly strong. We hired the Brainiac Clan to administer our digital infrastructure. Brainiac One, the being Kal has fought several times, ran the Kandor network. He stole the entire city, along with its people. Suspended forever in time and compressed into a pocket dimension as some kind of sick museum. We caught Brainiac Eight. She tried to shut down our defensive network so Czarian mercenaries could kill us all. It was Brainiac Twelve that killed us. He altered the specifications for our mining machines, made small changes to surveys and proposed mining routes. Tricked us into causing, then accelerating the chain reaction in the core of our world.”

“Your people were murdered?” President Marsdin asked.
Kara frowned. “We’re not guiltless,” she said. “The Brainiacs just turned our greed against us, held the knife while we pushed it in. If the disaster had really been natural, Astra might have been able to stop it, or Kal’s father. But with the Brainiacs helping it along, our world was doomed long before anyone even realized it.”

President Marsdin turned back to Astra. “And you and your followers survived because you were in an off-world prison?”

“Yes,” Astra said.

“And what have you been doing on Earth the last eleven years?” President Marsdin asked.

“We’ve been planning to use the technology we were going to deploy on Krypton here,” Astra said. “I saw what you were doing to this world, the way you were destroying yourselves. I could not stand it.”

“Something’s changed, though,” President Marsdin said.

“My niece,” Astra said. “She’s convinced me to surrender to your DEO. There was a fight when I announced the decision. That’s how one of my other Lieutenants was injured, and why Non decided to seek out my niece.”

“And this technology?”

“I will destroy it,” Astra said. “My niece has convinced me it’s far too dangerous to ever allow it to be used.”

“What do you expect, when you surrender?” President Marsdin asked.

“My niece said she’d try to persuade your DEO to allow me to pay for my crimes with service to your world. She’s grown a great deal, but I suspect she over estimates the generosity of your people. I expect to stand for the crimes my people have committed on my orders. I expect to spend the rest of my life in a cage. As long as I am allowed to see my niece from time to time, I will be content with that fate. But I will not order my people to surrender to you if mean to cage them as well. Aside from my husband, most of them have committed no crime, save those carried out on my orders, and I will not allow them to pay for my sins a second time.”

The room was silent for a long time. Seconds stretched into one minute, then two as Astra and President Marsdin stared at each other. Finally, President Marsdin looked over at Kal.

“Superman, what’s your opinion?” she asked.

“Honestly, Madam President, I’m the wrong person to ask,” Kal said. “I only know Astra from the records my father sent along with me. I’m inclined to accept Supergirl’s judgement on this one.”

She turned to Hank. “Director Henshaw?”

“I’m with Kal on this one, Madam President. Ask Supergirl.”

She turned to Kara. “You understand the magnitude of the decision I’m making here,” she said. “One of you is so powerful it’s terrifying. There are thirty of them.”

Kara looked up at her Aunt for a moment. “I’m sorry, Aunt Astra,” she said, before turning back to President Marsdin. “Olivia, I can’t recommend allowing the release of all of them. Non is a murderer and more, I believe he may still be conspiring with Brainiac Eight. I don’t trust him. I
believe he belongs in a cell. But the rest of them… If Astra vouches for them, if she orders them to follow our laws, I believe it would be safe to allow them their freedom. The crimes they committed both here and on Krypton were meant to save lives, not take them. They are soldiers. Honorable men and women, who spent more than two decades paying for what they’ve done and who can never, ever go home again. Please, give them a chance.”

President Marsdin took a deep breath, and turned to Kara.

“You have a way to contact her?” she asked.

Kara nodded. “Yes.”

Marsdin turned to Astra “Give me few days. A week at most,” she said. “When Supergirl contacts you, surrender to Director Henshaw. You and your people will be treated fairly.”

“And Non?” she asked.

“He will be comfortable, and well treated.”

Astra nodded, and turned to Kara. “I understand,” she said. “And you’re right.”

Kara walked forward and wrapped her arms around Astra, hugging her tightly. “/.ukiemodh w rraop , eh ,astruh,”/ “/.ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir/” Astra said. “Your mother would be proud of you.”

Kara squeezed her tighter. “I’d rather you be proud of me,” she said.

“I am,” Astra replied. “I am so very, very proud of you, Little One.” She pulled back, breaking the hug. “I have to go. Things are still unstable.”

Kara nodded.

Astra turned to Kal. “Take care of her for me.”

“Of course,” Kal said.

“He’ll have to get in line for the job,” Kara said. “This is Alex,” she said, pointing to her sister.

A smile spread across Astra’s face, and before Alex could say anything, Astra stepped forward and wrapped her arms around Alex. “Thank you,” she said. “I owe you a debt I cannot repay.”

Kara laughed at the completely dumbstruck look on Alex’s face, but it didn’t last long. Astra let her go and stepped back.

“Maggie,” Kara said, “can you show her out?”

“Yeah, I’ve got it.” Maggie turned to Astra. “Come on.”

Kara watched as Maggie led them out the door, then turned back to President Marsdin, who was looking at Alex with curiosity.

“Someday you’ll have to tell me what that was about,” President Marsdin said.

“You haven’t read over my DEO file have you?” Kara asked.
“No,” President Marsdin replied. “I just got the National Security Briefing on you when I took office, and again when you caught the plane, but I haven’t had a chance to read the DEO file.”

Kara glanced at the two Secret Service Agents, then shrugged. After all, the agents at the DEO already knew. “Agent Danvers is my adoptive sister,” she said.

“Oh!” President Marsdin said. “I didn’t realize. The briefing didn’t mention you had family at the DEO.” She turned to Alex. “A pleasure, Agent Danvers.” Before Alex could really say anything, President Marsdin turned to J’onn. “Director Henshaw, I’d like a conference call with you, Supergirl, Agent Danvers, and anyone else you think it would be a good idea to include about an integration plan for the aliens who come in with Astra. My assistant will set up the time once we coordinate with Justice and Homeland Security.”

“Of course, Madam President,” J’onn replied.

She turned to Kal. “I’d appreciate it if you participated as well, Superman.”

“Yes, Ma’am,” Kal said. “Supergirl can get me the schedule.”

President Marsdin nodded. “Then, I suspect at this point, I’ve given my detail enough heart attacks for the night. I’ll leave out the front way so the crowd can see me, but otherwise, I think I’ve had enough excitement.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

uchahvia ,kahl,ehl,
Literal: *Synergy, Kal-El*
Semantic: *Stronger Together, Kal-El*

(“El Mayarah” is not, in fact, Kryptonian, but from old Kandoran, in much the same way Latin is still used commonly for mottos in present day).

Nahkluvian
*Thank You*

.zha ,kahl,ehl, ;duahzu khuhp w voiehd
*No Kal-El. I will deal with this.*

chadi suzh zehtiaro vahsah rraop w dovrrosh vo
*You will be given to shadow for five days*

nim zhadif rraop w :bezhgam
Literal: *You are never welcome*
Semantic: *You’re not welcome and you never will be*

ukiemodh w rraop , eh ,astruh,
*I love you, Astra*

ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir
*I love you, Little One*
Maggie is confused, Kara is busy, and Alex is taking a boat tour of a river in Egypt.

“I’m a little busy right now, Maggie,” Kara said as she answered the phone, hoping she put the right level of annoyance in her voice.

“You’re always busy these days, Kara,” Maggie replied. “It’s like you don’t have time for me and my existential lesbian crises anymore.”

Kara rolled her eyes as she shifted her grip on the keel of the cruise liner. “Have you turned on a TV at all today?” she asked.

“No, why? Where are you?”

“I’m trying to keep the Titanic from sinking.”

“Funny,” Maggie said. “Wait, are you serious?”

“Yeah. Some moron ran their yacht into the side of a cruise ship. I’m holding the bow of the ship out of the water while the Coast Guard welds a patch over the hole.”

“Sounds like you’re not going anywhere for a while,” Maggie said. “Which means you have time to help me with my problem.”

“I hate you,” Kara grumbled.

“No you don’t,” Maggie said. “Besides, this is your fault.”

“What do you mean?” Kara asked.

“Something weird happened last night,” Maggie said.

“You mean like my wanted alien war-criminal aunt hugging my alien-hunting sister in front of the president weird?”

“Worse. Your sister asked me out.”

“Seriously?” Kara asked.

“Yes. You know, normally, I’m a good little lesbian, and avoid straight girls like the plague of unending misery and heartache they are, but you put this idea into my head that she’d be into me.”

“Okay, listen. I know my sister well enough to be one hundred percent certain Alex is into you.”

“I sense a ‘but’ coming.”

“That’s because my sister isn’t just in the closet, she’s in Narnia, and the wardrobe is floating down a river in Egypt.”
“Damn it, Kara. Why are you doing this to me?” Maggie asked.

“Because I love you both, and I want both of you to be happy.”

“You have a funny way of showing it.”

“Do you want her to be into you?” Kara asked.

“I don’t know,” Maggie said. “Maybe a little. I mean, I haven’t dated since Darla and I split the last time.”

“But you don’t want to get involved with someone in the closet, and you don’t want to be someone’s coming out crush,” Kara said.

“Someday you’re going to have to tell me how someone six years younger than me ended up as the elder gay in this friendship.”

“The story will make a lot more sense if you ever meet Sara,” Kara said.

“Sara’s alive?” Maggie asked. “From the way you talked about her, I kind of thought she was dead.”

“You were also under the impression I was a human,” Kara said.

“That’s a little different,” Maggie replied.

“It’s complicated,” Kara said. “And like I said, you have to come to Thanksgiving Dinner to unlock my tragic backstory. Just… be gentle with my sister. And remember that if you break her heart, I can throw you into orbit.”

“Gee, thanks. I feel the love.”

“She’s got seniority. She’s also got the biggest heart of anyone I’ve known on any of the hundreds of planets I’ve visited.”

Maggie sighed. “You make her sound like she’s perfect.”

Kara laughed so hard she almost dropped the cruise liner. “God, no. She doesn’t even like pineapple on pizza, which I’m pretty sure makes her evil.”

“Oh, yes, that’s horrible.”

“She dragged me to a My Chemical Romance concert Maggie.”

“Kara-“

“She made me listen to Marylin Manson. Have you ever heard any of Marylin Manson’s music Maggie?”

Kara smiled when she heard Maggie laugh.

“You’re terrible, you know that?”

“You feel better, don’t you?”

“Yeah, but I still don’t know what to do.”
“Don’t do anything,” Kara said. “Take her to Darla’s. Get her a beer. Talk about work, shoot some pool. Hang out. Be her friend. God knows, even if I’m wrong about everything else, you could use more friends. If she does come out, decide what to do about it then.”

“That’s pretty good advice,” Maggie said. “Although I’m not sure about taking her to Darla’s.”

“Trust me,” Kara said. “It will solve three problems at once.”

“What problems?”

“First, if she sees you out with someone else, Darla might stop trying to get you to come over for a booty call.”

“That would be good.”

“Second, my sister could really use some exposure to aliens who aren’t me, my cousin, or a bunch of hardened criminals.”

“Darla’s would definitely cover that. What’s the third one?”

“You might actually learn how to shoot pool.”

“What? I can shoot pool!”

“Maggie, Winn beat you.”

“That’s not… I… okay. Fair point.”

“I’ve gotta go, Mags. Coast Guard’s done patching the hull, and I’ve got to put the ship back in the water.”

“Say hi to Nemo and Dory for me.”

“I hate you,” Kara said, before she hung up, and started lowering the cruise ship’s bow back into the water.

Maggie whistled as Alex took off her helmet. “Nice ride,” she said, looking over the Ducati Monster Alex had arrived on. “I’ve got a Bonneville Triumph t100 at home myself.”

“Nice,” Alex replied. “I looked at those before I settled on the Ducati.”

“What made you settle on the Ducati?” Maggie asked.

“My mom,” Alex said. “She would have never stopped gloating if I’d bought a Triumph.”

“There’s a story there,” Maggie said.

“Well,” Alex looked around the alleyway they were standing in, “if we ever get to this bar you mentioned, I might tell it.”

“So, soon then,” Maggie said, turning and heading towards a door at the end of the alley. She knocked a couple of times, then waited until someone peeked out through the slot in the door.

“Graceland,” Maggie said. The door swung open, and Maggie stepped inside, glancing back to make sure Alex followed. “Hey, Darla. Two Blue Moons.”
“Sure, Mags,” Darla called from behind the bar.

Maggie led them over to a booth and sat down. Alex slid in across from her, and Maggie could see the hesitation in the other woman’s face.

“You sure know how to charm a girl,” Alex said.

Maggie laughed. “I don’t normally bring dates here,” she said, “but I thought you might enjoy this place.”

Alex looked around. “You thought I might enjoy a dive bar full of people who’ve made bad life choices?”

Maggie leaned forward. “Not everything is what it seems, Danvers. Take a closer look.”

Alex frowned for a moment, but she did what Maggie suggested, and took another look around, and Maggie could see the exact moment it registered. Alex started towards her gun, but Maggie reached across the table and put a hand on Alex’s arm.

“Easy, Danvers. Easy.”

“What the hell is this place?” Alex asked, settling back into the booth and moving her hand away from her gun.

“It’s a safe haven,” Maggie said. “A place where off-worlders can hang out, have a drink, and not feel so alone.”

“Is this where you met-“

“No,” Maggie said. “I met Kara at Girlbar.”

Darla chose that moment to arrive with the beers, setting them down with a bit more force than was entirely necessary.

“You move on quick,” Darla snapped.

Maggie rolled her eyes, and Darla stormed off.

“Was she Roltikkon?” Alex asked.

Maggie picked up her beer and pushed the other one towards Alex. “Yes.”

“I’ve read that they can form telepathic bonds by making contact with the dorsum of the tongue.”

“How do you think she learned English?” Maggie said. Alex turned to look at her, and Maggie gave a smug grin as she took another drink.

“She’s your ex?”

Maggie nodded. “Yes.”

“The one Kara’s been keeping you away from.”

“The very same,” Maggie said. “I don’t strictly date aliens, for the record. I do like them more than most humans though.”
“Why?” Alex asked, finally picking up her beer and taking a drink.

“Growing up a non-white, non-straight girl in Blue Springs Nebraska, I might as well have been from Mars. I was an outcast, and I felt like it. The people in here, they’re no different. I mean, sure, the Infernian over in the corner can shoot fire out of her eyes, and the blonde sitting over by the pool table can zap you like an electric eel, but they’re still just people. Same as your sister.”

“She suggested this, didn’t she?” Alex asked.

“Yeah,” Maggie said with a shrug. “I might have checked with her to see if this was a date.”

“A date?” Alex squeaked.

It took every ounce of self-control Maggie had not to laugh. “Yeah,” she said.

“Why would you think it was a date?” Alex asked.

“Because I have terrible gaydar,” Maggie said. She grinned and leaned forward, whispering conspiratorially, “I could tell you about the time I accidently hit on the bride at a wedding rehearsal dinner.”

“You didn’t?” Alex said, sounding both amused and scandalized at the same time.

“I did,” Maggie said. “They were holding the rehearsal dinner in a private room in the back of the restaurant and the bride slipped out and went to the bar to get away from her mother and her future mother-in-law’s arguing. I was sitting at the bar waiting on a blind date.”

“You thought she was your date?” Alex asked.

“Nope,” Maggie said. “My date was an hour late, and I was pretty sure I’d been stood up, but when the bride sat down, she gave me this look, and I thought she was checking me out.”

“Oh, God,” Alex said, barely able to keep herself from laughing. “What did you do?”

“I panicked and just sat there, staring at her. She kind of turned to me, and asked, ‘Is something wrong?’, and I swear to God, I have no idea where it came from, but I said, ‘I’m sorry, it’s just, you look like my next girlfriend.’”

“No!” Alex said.

“I did,” Maggie said. “I really did.”

“That’s terrible,” Alex said.

“Not too terrible,” Maggie said. “I ended up dating one of the bridesmaids for six months.”

Alex laughed and shook her head. “That’s actually kind of impressive,” she said.

“Thank you!” Maggie replied. “So, tell me why your mom would have gloated if you bought a Triumph.”

Alex smiled. “She had a Triumph Speedmaster, and when I started to learn, she wanted me to learn on her bike, but I insisted on learning on my Dad’s Ducati Monster 800. We argued about it for ages, but I finally talked her into it. I know Monsters really aren’t city bikes, and I’d probably do better on something like a Scrambler, but I loved Dad’s bike so much that when I could afford my own I knew what I was getting before I even started looking.”
“You and your dad were close?” Maggie asked.

“Yeah,” Alex said.

“I’m sorry.” Maggie said. “Kara told me he died, but she was a bit vague on how. Just that he was on a work trip and never came home.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Director Henshaw was with him when it happened.”

“Oh,” Maggie said. “I didn’t know.”

“I didn’t until recently, either. I found out he’d been keeping an eye on us ever since. Dad saved his life.”

“He sounds like a good man,” Maggie said.

Alex nodded. “The best.” She picked up her drink and took a sip.

Maggie made a point of not noticing that Alex’s eyes had gotten a little watery. “Hey, you play pool?”

Alex set her beer down. “Yeah. Why do you ask?”

Maggie nodded at the table. “Table’s free. Loser buys for the rest of the night?”

“You sure you can afford that, Sawyer?”

“Oh. You think you got what it takes, Danvers?”

Alex smiled. “Kara told me you lost to Winn, and I’ve seen Winn play.”

Maggie glared. “Your sister is a dirty little snitch.”

“Oh, just for that, I definitely have to kick your ass.”

“Bring it,” Maggie said.
Building the Brand

Chapter Summary

Kara starts her new job at CatCo

Kara touched the button on the holoprojector and the green screens behind her disappeared, replaced by the interior of one of the guest lounges in Sanctuary. The backdrop was chosen carefully. The room could have been part of any structure anywhere on Earth. It was unusual only in the curved walls, circular floor plan, and the paintings hung on the walls. One of her and Kal’s fathers, Zor-El and Jor-El standing together in their science guild robes. There was one of Lara holding Kal, and one of Kal sleeping on the couch with Krypto curled around him, and another of Lara holding Kal, with Jor’s arm around them both, and Krypto at their feet. The painting of her mother and Astra, as well as the paintings of her with her mother and father, and her with Astra were carefully kept out of frame of the projection. She wanted to share as much as she could with the world, but there were limits, having Astra’s face plastered all over YouTube would make it impossible for her aunt to ever have a civilian identity.

“You ready?” Wilma asked.

Kara nodded. “As long as my cape is on straight,” she said.

“You look fine,” Marcus said. “After all, I did your makeup.”

Kara and Wilma both laughed and Wilma reached over and gave Marcus a bit of a shove, then hit the record button on the camera.

Kara fixed her gaze on the camera and smiled.

“Good morning YouTubers,” she said. “Supergirl here, bringing you the first of what I hope will be a number of videos. Now, I’m sure right now a lot of you are asking why I’m taking the time to do YouTube videos instead of flying around helping people, and that’s a great question. The thing is, I can do both. Even my cousin doesn’t spend all of his time flying around in his cape, and just like him, I’m able to use my super hearing to listen for trouble in the city while I take a minute to talk to you about things that are important. On top of that, the wonderful people at Catco have offered to edit the videos for me, and help me out by moderating the comments section, so I can devote more time to helping people.

“Some of you may also ask why I want to do these videos in the first place, or why Catco’s helping me set up a Facebook page, an Instagram account, and a Tumblr. After all, my cousin doesn’t have them. Neither does Batman or Wonder Woman. So, why me? Why am I taking the time?

“My cousin once said, when asked what he stands for, ‘Truth, Justice and the American way.’ I think that’s a wonderful sentiment. My mother was an Adjudicator. Truth and Justice were her purpose and goal in everything she did. To see my cousin take up that mantle warms my heart, and makes me feel like a bit of my mother lives on in him. And the American ideal is a good one. A place where everyone is free, where we come together, regardless of race, creed, or place of birth, and work together to build a better life and a better future.
"But that’s not why I put on this suit. I wasn’t sent here to carry on my mother’s fight. You don’t need me for that. You already have police officers, lawyers and judges working to ensure justice is done. You already have people like Cat Grant, Clark Kent, Lois Lane, Vicki Vale and Perry White working to find the truth. What I believe this world needs more of is compassion. Someone to lend a hand, to help when we’re in need, and to offer hope that that we can make it through today, and that tomorrow will be better.

“My cousin once told Lois Lane that this symbol means hope, and he’s right. In one of the languages of my homeworld, it is the glyph for the word hope. But more than that, it’s the Coat of Arms of the House of El, and it stands for our Motto. El Mayarah. It means Stronger Together. I believe that with all my heart. That we are stronger together than we are apart. That we can help each other and give each other hope. That hope is stronger than fear, and the only way we can move forward.

“That’s why I put on this suit. That’s why I’m out there. That’s what I believe in. Hope, help and compassion for all. Human, or alien. That’s what I want these videos to be about. A way to reach people I can’t just by flying around the city. A way to remind people that someone cares, and a way to remind people that all it takes for them to be a hero, is to care, to reach out and offer a helping hand, or a shoulder to lean on when someone needs it.

“Now, I’m sure there are those of you out there who are going to say that this is nothing but a publicity stunt. There are already people out there who are questioning my motives, asking why I’m doing the things I’m doing. To those people, I want to say this. If you don’t want me here, if you don’t want me in the skies above National City, or in the streets helping people, then do better. Make the world better. Make a world that doesn’t need me or my cousin. Make a world that doesn’t need Wonder Woman or Batman. We would all love to live in a world that doesn’t need us, where we don’t hear cries for help, or sirens in the distance.

“For the rest of you, that’s all for this video. I’m Supergirl Zor-El here on YouTube, Facebook, and Google+, SupergirlZorEl, no spaces or dashes, on Tumblr and Instagram, and @SupergirlZorEl on twitter. Also, if you’re interested in information about my homeworld of Krypton, check out my website at kryptonremembered.com. It’s got everything from a full Kryptonian encyclopedia, to an archive of Kryptonian music, recipes for how to make traditional Kryptonian food using Earth ingredients, a library of Kryptonian literature, and even courses that will teach you how to speak, read and write Kryptahniuo, which was our main language, and Kandorian, Vath, Twenx, Urikan, and Lurvanish, the five classical languages spoken on Krypton prior to the planetary unification. All the content is available for free, in fifty different languages.

“Until next time, may Rao light your way.”

“And we’re out,” Wilma said.

Kara smiled. “How was that?”

“Good,” Wilma said. “I want to do one more take, just to be safe.”

Kara nodded. “Okay.”

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 15 Nov 2015

Good morning to the people of National City, human and alien alike. #elmayarah
I know it’s cheating a bit, but for my first Instagram post, I wanted to share something really special. This is a picture of Argo City near sunset. According to the time stamp, it was taken about five Kryptonian days, or ten Earth months before I was born. The tall building in the middle of the image is the House of El’s Argo City Tower. You can actually see my childhood bedroom in this picture. And off to the left, you can see the Citadel, where my mother worked with other Adjudicators to bring justice to our world.

November 15, 2015

“I’m not sure whether to be proud or jealous,” Kara said as she leaned back in the chair, a smile on her face. “The YouTube video’s only been up for two hours, and Supergirl’s already topped half a million followers.”

“Did you really think our girl would do any less?” Cat asked, causing Kara to jump a bit. She turned around, looking away from the bank of displays she’d been looking at, and forcing herself not to smile as Winn scrambled to take his feet down off his desk.

“I wasn’t sure,” Kara said. “She’s got a good message, but she’s only been around a few weeks.”

“True,” Cat said, with a slight tip of her head in acknowledgement, “but in that time, she’s managed to save a plane from certain disaster, foil a bank robbery, prevent a disaster at the docks, took down a villain that her cousin couldn’t defeat on her first try and kept a cruise ship from going down in the middle of National City Harbor. Not to mention what she did at the Gala.” Cat raised her index finger and gave it a little wag. “No, our girl’s star is definitely on the rise. The public is hungry for Supergirl, and she’s using that so well, it’s almost like she learned it from me.”

Kara knew she was blushing and couldn’t quite meet Cat’s eyes. She could feel the pride radiating off Cat, and she could feel the butterflies in her stomach. She wanted to kick herself to make it stop, but she couldn’t help it. The other Cat, the Cat in the original timeline, had offered praise so rarely that when she did, it had always had a profound impact. In that timeline, Cat had left, and she’d come back only to die in the Battle of CatCo Plaza. She’d always wondered if things would have been different if she told Cat. Oh, there wasn’t any doubt in her mind that Cat had known in the other timeline, just like there was no doubt in Kara’s mind that Cat knew in this timeline.

The difference was, this time, when Cat finally confronted her with it, she wasn’t going to lie.

“Now,” Cat said. “I believe I was promised a tour.”

Kara looked up, and this time she did meet Cat’s eyes. “Of course, Ms. Grant.” She stood up and led Cat towards the studio. “We’ve got the studio for the YouTube videos set up in here. I just used CatCo’s standard rapid-deployment studio package…”

Kara sat down on the sofa opposite Cat in Cat’s office as Kaldur’ahm carried in a pair of trays. One of them held Cat’s usual sushi order, while the other held a small family-sized Chef’s sampler, and two orders of pot stickers.

“I hope you didn’t have plans for lunch,” Cat said as Kaldur’ahm set the trays down.
“No,” Kara said. “Nothing urgent. And if something comes up…” she held up her phone, “people know how to reach me.”

“Good,” Cat said, then waited as Kaldur’ahm finished setting the trays down, and left Cat’s office. “I have to say, you did a good job finding Jacob.”

“Jackson,” Kara said, “but you already know that.”

Cat just smirked as she reached for her chop sticks. “I’m impressed. You put together an entirely new department in the span of five days. I wouldn’t have bet you could get the construction permits cleared in under two weeks.”

Kara shrugged. “I know people,” she said. “Some of them are on board with what Supergirl is trying to do. A little bit of judicious name-dropping, a little bit of helpful arm-twisting here and there, and some careful horse-trading.”

“Hmmm… I’d be curious as to what kind of horses were being traded.”

Kara picked up a pot sticker. “One of my contacts may have traded the design for a meta-human containment system to the city in exchange for expediting the permitting process.” She tossed the pot sticker in her mouth, moaning softly as she bit into it.

“That’s quite a trade.”

Kara nodded. “A good one,” she said. “National City PD gets something it needs, and so do we. Everyone wins.”

Cat smiled at her. “You keep surprising me. I still don’t think I’ve figured out just how badly I’d underestimated you.”

Kara laughed as she started mixing wasabi into her soy sauce. “I’ll take that as a compliment,” she said.

“You should,” Cat replied. “I hope you don’t mind working over lunch. I have the initial proposals in from the first batch of licensed Supergirl merchandise, and I wanted to go over them.”

“Okay,” Kara said. “Any trouble with the requirements she put down on the clothing and toy makers?”

“The clothing companies were fine with it, though they wanted to get the standard sizes out right away and release the plus sizes after they had time to do a study on how high demand would be.”

“You shut that down, right away?”

Cat nodded. “I told them exactly what Supergirl said. Everything launches together, or not at all.”

“And the toy makers?” Kara asked.

“Confused,” Cat said. “They had no idea why she insisted on multiple ethnicities for the Supergirl dolls, and they balked when they saw the percentages she insisted on, but when I threatened to take the license elsewhere, they folded like a cheap suit.”

“Good,” Kara said. “We’ll probably get a lot more proposals from them once they work their way through the Encyclopedia. Especially when they get to the section on Garata.”

“What’s that?” Cat asked.
“Supergirl said it was like soccer, with dragons.”

Cat grinned. “Well, whatever charity she eventually designates, they are going to make an awful lot of money.”

“We might have an answer on that soon,” Kara said. “She’s apparently meeting with Bruce Wayne and Diana Prince while they are in town to discuss work with the Wayne Foundations and the Artemis Society.”

“Our girl is going to be awfully busy, between making videos, taking meetings, and rescuing kittens. I hope she isn’t taking on too much.”

Kara reached for another pot sticker, avoiding Cat’s eyes this time. “I worry about that too,” she said. “But I get the impression that she’s got good people backing her up, and she’s being careful to try and build a solid support network that can handle everything except the actual punching and flying.”

“What about the other aliens. The ones that showed up to the Gala? Supergirl’s Aunt and Uncle?”

Kara looked up from her food, staring at Cat for a moment, before looking down and picking up a piece of spicy tuna roll with her chopsticks. “She’s not ready to talk about that just yet.” She dipped the sushi in soy sauce and popped it into her mouth, chewing slowly, then swallowing. “I know a lot of the news outlets are buzzing about it, but I think she might be willing to address that in another interview soon. Maybe we could even talk her into letting us tape it for a joint release on her YouTube channel and on CatCo’s.”

“You think she’d do a live interview?” Cat asked.

Kara shook her head. “No. Definitely not.” She frowned when she saw the way Cat’s face fell. “Ms. Grant, I don’t think it’s a matter of trust. I think she’s afraid that it might provoke an attack on CatCo. Reactron attacked her while she was pulling people out of a wrecked bus. If someone knew where she was going to be for a long period of time, they might attack just to get at her. That’s why she brought in the hologram projector for her video. She doesn’t want anyone to know they’re being taped in this building.”

“I hadn’t thought about that,” Cat admitted.

“Considering how many times the Daily Planet has been attacked by someone looking for Superman, I’m sure it’s something she’s given a lot of thought,” Kara said. She looked into Cat’s eyes, making sure Cat understood the weight of her words. “She’d never forgive herself if something were to happen to you, or anyone else here, because of her.”

Cat stared back at her for a moment, and Kara could feel how thin the pretense that Cat didn’t know was wearing. Part of her wondered if she should just say it, but something was holding Cat back. In the other timeline, Cat had confronted her as soon as she realized. Here, Cat knew, and Kara knew she knew. Neither of them were being subtle about it, but for some reason, Cat hadn’t pushed, and Kara wasn’t quite ready to throw aside that decision.

“Well,” Cat said, “for now, we’ll just have to respect her judgement on that.”

Kara nodded. “Of course.”
A Distant Early Warning

Chapter Summary

When Maxwell Lord makes his presence felt, things don't go quite how Kara remembers them.

Chapter Notes

For those of you who don't follow me on Tumblr, I've gotten frequent requests to post more often, so for the rest of this story, I'll be posting Wednesday and Saturday. When I move to the sequel, I'll be going back to my normal posting schedule of one chapter a week.

Kara soared through the air over National City, soaking in the sunlight and enjoying being able to fly without having to work to stay unnoticed. Sometimes, when she was out as Supergirl, it struck her just how much she’d missed this. The freedom, the peace, the... sound of drone rotors. She turned and glanced at the source of the sound, and sure enough, it was one of Maxwell Lord’s drones.

She reached up and tapped her ear piece. “Alex,” she said as she did a lazy circle around the Wayne Enterprises tower, slowing her flight down a bit.

“Yes,” Alex replied.

“I’ve got a drone tailing me,” Kara said.

“A drone? What kind?”

“Black and gray quad copter. Built-in video camera.”

“You sure it’s following you, and not just out for a spin?” Alex asked.

“Yeah, I’m sure,” Kara said. “Get Susan, Winn and Maggie on the line with us.”

“On it,” Alex said.

“Ms. Danvers,” J’onn said as he came on the line. “Mind telling me what’s going on?”

“I’ve got a drone chasing me around the city. I’m flying in circles right now, and it’s zipping in and out, trying to taunt me into chasing it.”

“Hey, Kara,” Winn said.

“I’ve got Susan and Winn conferenced in now,” Alex said. “Maggie should… and here she is.”

“What’s up?” Maggie asked.
“One second Mags,” Kara said as she started climbing towards the roof tops. “Konex, tie Winn into the data feed from my phone, and give him access to the broadcast functions. Winn, I need you to hack this drone. Once you’re in, kill the camera and mic, then set it to hover, so I can grab it and pull the battery without damaging it. Everyone else, hold on.”

“Supergirl,” J’onn said, “do you mind telling me why this is so important?”

“Not until Winn kills the audio feed from the drone.”

“Got it, Kara. I’ve actually killed the drivers for the video and audio. Drone should come to a stop right about… now.”

Kara smiled as the drone went from climbing after her, to a dead stop.

“Okay, Maggie, I need you to evacuate building fourteen in the Winslow research pack. There might be a bomb in the lab on the third floor in the north west corner.”

“You could have led with that, Kara,” Maggie said.

“If it’s there, it’s not scheduled to go off until tomorrow morning,” Kara said. “It might not be in place yet.”

“How do you know this?” Maggie asked.

“I just do,” Kara said. “Trust me. I’ll explain as soon as I can.”

“I’m on it,” Maggie said.

“Alex,” Kara said as she dropped down and grabbed the drone. She flipped it over and yanked the battery pack. “I’m going to drop the drone at the downtown facility, then head over to the lab I just sent Maggie to. Take a team and meet us there. Once the bomb is disarmed, I want to bring it and the drone in for comparative analysis. Susan, I need you to find anything you can on a man named Ethan Knox. He worked at that lab up until six months ago. Konex will help with the search.”

“Kara,” J’onn snapped, “would you mind telling me what the blazes this is about?”

“A tip from the same source that told me about Astra. I wasn’t sure if the information was still good until I saw the drone.”

“I see,” J’onn said. “The downtown facility will be expecting you.”

Maggie was waiting for Kara when she touched down outside the lab with an unreadable expression on her face.

“Hey, Maggie,” Kara said as she touched down.

“Supergirl,” Maggie replied.

“Everyone out?” Kara asked.

Maggie nodded. “Working on it. The bomb squad’s looking for the device while the uniforms finish clearing the building. Care to tell me how you know there’s a bomb up there?”

Kara nodded. “Yeah, of course, but not here. I’ll bet my Buffy The Vampire Slayer Complete Series boxed set we’re being watched by the person responsible for all this right now. I’m gonna
Maggie nodded. “I’ll let the bomb squad know you’re on the way.”

Kara took off, using a burst of super-speed to make it up to the lab, and then using her X-Ray vision to find the bomb, which was inside an equipment locker. She did a quick check to make sure the door of the locker wasn’t wired, then ripped it off so she could see the bomb.

One of the bomb technicians came up next to her as she looked it over.

“That’s not good, ma’am,” the technician said as he looked at the bomb. “Completely sealed. Likely has anti-tamper triggers.”

“Not as many as you’d think,” Kara said. “I’ve seen these before. It’s got a timer and a remote detonation failsafe. The main access point is wired, but this secondary panel here can be pried open. It’s got a lithium ion battery. If we hit the interior with a blast of cold, and drop the battery below negative forty degrees Celsius—”

“The battery will be too cold to discharge. But what if the trigger circuit has a capacitor bank?”

“It does, but the capacitors are Electrolytic. Worse performance in cold than the batteries.”

“That’s brilliant, ma’am. I’ve got some liquid nitrogen down in the van.”

“No need,” Kara said. She knelt down next to the bomb, and pried the side panel off, then leaned down and gave the inside a good blast of her freeze breath. Once she was sure the interior was cold enough, she flipped the bomb up on its end, and ripped the main access panel free, so she could reach inside and disconnect the detonators from the explosive charge. “There. All safe.”

The technician nodded her head and reached up to activate her radio. “Sawyer, this is Griffon. I’m with Supergirl. We’ve located the device, and she’s disarmed it. We’re bringing it out now.”

Kara took a moment to scan the rest of the room and stopped dead when she spotted it. A second bomb.

“Get out,” she said. “Get out now.”

Then she was moving at super-speed. She tore across the lab, grabbing the second bomb, ripping the panel open and hitting it with her freeze breath. It took longer than she liked before she could tear off the main access panel, and disconnect the charge, but the moment she was done, she started scanning again as she yanked her phone out of her boot.

“Konex, jam all frequencies out to five hundred yards from my location for twenty minutes.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” came the reply, right before the connection went dead. Kara didn’t wait, she was moving and scanning before the line died.

“What the hell happened up there? Where’s Supergirl?” Alex asked as she approached Maggie. The signal from Kara had cut off abruptly, right after they’d received word the bomb had been disabled. What’s more, *no* radio traffic was coming out of the target zone. By the time Alex could get a feed from the DEO satellite, whatever happened had already happened, and the roof of the building was on fire. By the time she arrived, there were four hoses working it.

“She’s fine,” Maggie said. “A little shaken. I don’t have all the details. We got word that the bomb
was disabled, then everything went out. Radios, cell phones, everything. A minute later, the bomb disposal tech came running out of the building. He said Supergirl had finished disarming the bomb, then saw something and told him to run. The next thing I know, she shot through the roof of the building carrying a bomb. She made it about a hundred feet up before it exploded. The fireball was huge. It lit the tarpaper on the roof of the building on fire. She landed in the parking lot.”

“Where is she?” Alex asked again. She needed to see her sister.

“She’s in the ambulance,” Maggie said. She reached out and took Alex’s hand, leading her back towards where an ambulance was parked near one of the fire trucks. Kara sat on the bumper, covered in soot, holding a huge bottle of water in one hand, and her phone in the other. Alex was a little surprised when she didn’t look up, but Maggie tapped Kara on the shoulder, and Kara jumped slightly. She looked up at Alex.

“There were three bombs,” Kara said.

“Okay,” Alex said. “You got them all, right?”

Kara shook her head. “No, Alex, you don’t understand. Last time, there was only one bomb. There should have only been one bomb.”

“Last time?” Maggie asked. “What do you mean, last time?”

Kara held up her hand, waving Maggie off. “Something’s changed.”

“Okay,” Alex said, not quite sure what to make of Kara’s mental state. She hadn’t seen Kara like this in a long time. Not since Kara had found the Star Wars DVDs. “The drone. You reacted differently to the drone, right?”

Kara shook her head. “Not enough time,” she said. “The bombs were already in place.”

“Okay, can either of you explain what the hell you’re talking about?” Maggie asked.

Kara looked over at her, as if she’d just realized Maggie was there, which worried Alex a lot more than the fact that her sister had just been blown up, but seeing Maggie seemed to shake Kara out of whatever mental hole she was in.


“You were just blown up,” Alex said. “I think you might want to take the day off.”

Kara shook her head. “I can’t. If I don’t go in today, Ms. Grant won’t go to Metropolis tomorrow. And we need to tell Winn. And probably James.” She stood up, and started to take off, but stopped, and turned to Maggie.

“I’m sorry. I should have told you all of this weeks ago,” she said. She turned to Alex. “Have Susan meet us.”

She didn’t wait for a reply. She just kicked off into the air and headed home to shower.

Kara stepped out of the elevator and headed straight for Kaldur’ahm’s desk, trying not to smile at the deer in the headlights look on his face.

“How bad?” she asked.
“I’m beginning to reconsider spending time with David,” Kaldur’ahm said. “To say she’s agitated is an understatement. Her mother refused to baby-sit her son, so she can’t go to Metropolis to receive the Siegel Prize.”

Kara nodded. “Call and have the company jet prepped for tomorrow morning. She’ll want to leave after she drops Carter at school, then clear your calendar. I’m going to babysit, and you’re going to be my backup.”

Kaldur’ahm turned and looked at Cat, who sat at her desk, wearing a pair of reading glasses while a second pair sat up on top of her head. “Are you sure she’ll be okay with that?” he asked.

Kara nodded. “I got this. Just make sure the company jet is ready,” she said before walking into Cat’s office.

“Ms. Grant.”

Cat didn’t look up. “I know it’s been four whole days since you were my assistant, Keira, but surely you haven’t forgotten what it looks like when I’m busy.”

“No,” Kara said. “But I heard about the Siegel Prize, and I wanted to congratulate you.”

Cat held up a hand and gave a dismissive wave. “Come on, Ms. Grant. It’s huge.”

“I hope not,” Cat said. “They might make me pay for shipping. Not that I can’t afford it.”

“You’re not going to the ceremony?”

Cat finally looked up at Kara, then rolled her eyes. “Are we really going to pretend you didn’t already know that before you came into my office looking like a kicked puppy?”

Kara laughed. “Well, I *was*, but only because I didn’t want you to think Jackson called me in a panic.”

“So, why are you here?”

“Jackson called me in a panic,” Kara said. “But to be fair, it’s his second full day on the job, and I told him to call me if he didn’t know how to handle a situation. I figured avoiding another Chipotle incident was in everyone’s best interest.”

“Yes, well, no one has offered me any freshmex today.”

“That’s too bad, it was a really tasty burrito,” Kara said.

“My, you’re feeling cheeky today,” Cat said.

Kara grinned as she walked further into Cat’s office. “Rough morning. I needed something to pick me up.”

“I didn’t know you had rough mornings,” Cat said, reaching up to take her glasses off.

Kara shrugged as she sat on the arm of one of the sofas. “I think everyone does. I mean, Supergirl had a bomb go off in her face first thing this morning. Not a good way to start the day.”

Cat frowned. “Is she okay?”
“Yeah,” Kara said. “Feeling a little humbled, I think. From what I heard, she thought she had the bomb taken care of, but there turned out to be two more. She disarmed the second one, but the third one was tamper proof, so she had to just fly it up out of range of the city.”

“That must have been terrifying,” Cat said. “Did she manage to catch the bomber?”

“Not yet, but she said she’s got people working on it. They should have him in custody soon.”

“Well, that’s good.”

“Yeah,” she said, “but it just goes to show, everyone needs some help sometimes.”

Cat glared at Kara for a moment before asking, “And just what kind of help do you think I need?”

“I think you need a baby sitter for Carter,” Kara said.

“You have someone in mind?” Cat asked.

“I thought I could do it, Ms. Grant.”

Cat leaned back in her chair. “Are you sure? I know you have a lot of responsibilities with… your new job.”

“I also have a lot of backup. I checked with Jackson, and he’s willing to take over if I need to step out for a few minutes to deal with anything work-related. And Wilma has two kids. I’m sure Carter would love to see the studio. I’ll bet he’ll get along with Winn as well.”

“It’s a generous offer, Kiera.”

“Please, Ms. Grant. You’ve done so much for me. Let me do this for you.”

“I wasn’t going to say no,” Cat said. “I was just going to tell you about Carter. He’s not a normal child, thank God. He’s clever and curious, and like most gifted children, he can be shy… and reserved. He needs special attention.”

Kara smiles so widely it felt like it was splitting her face. “I promise you Ms. Grant, he couldn’t be safer with Supergirl herself.”

Cat laughed at that. “Of that, I have no doubt.”

“Jackson’s arranging the company jet to take you to Metropolis.”

“Oh, I can fly commercial, Keira.”

“Ms. Grant,” Kara said, “I insist. Take the company jet for this one.”

Cat stared at her for a moment, then nodded. “Okay.”

“And thank you.”

“For what? You’re the one doing me a favor.”

“For letting me come in here,” Kara said. “I might not be your assistant anymore, but…” she looked around the office, then back and Cat, “this office always calms me down, even in the worst storm.”
Cat looked back down at her laptop, not meeting Kara’s gaze, and Kara took that for the dismissal it probably was. She stood up and headed for the door, but Cat’s voice stopped her halfway there.

“You’re always welcome,” she said.

Kara turned around, but Cat’s gaze was still fixed on her computer screen, so Kara settled for smiling all the way up to the conference room, where she was scheduled to meet Alex, Susan, Maggie, Winn, and James.

Kara was seated at the head of the conference table, next to Susan. J’onn, who’d shown up with Susan, was seated on the other end of the table, letting Alex make the argument for him.

“Look,” Alex said, “I know that they’ve been cleared for DEO business, but this is a lot bigger than just keeping the fact that you’re Supergirl a secret.”

Kara pinched the bridge of her nose as she listened to Alex argue, again, against including Winn and James. A part of her was amused to note that after one night playing pool, Alex had already gotten over any reservations she had about Maggie.

Kara glanced out through the glass window to where Maggie was waiting impatiently alongside a very confused James and Winn.

“You know how many details I left out the story when I told you about the future? Because they didn’t seem relevant, or because I didn’t have time, or because they didn’t make it into the DEO records and after all these years, I just didn’t remember anymore.”

Alex looked at her. “I a lot, I’d guess.”

“About a year from now, Winn went to work for the DEO. He started out working in our IT division. He went into the field the first time in January of 2017. That was your first off-world mission. We all would have died without him.”

“What hap-“

“James will become a vigilante. He’ll call himself Guardian. Winn makes his suit. He saved six hundred lives the day the CatCo tower collapsed. That doesn’t even count the day he stood toe-to-toe with a man infected by an alien parasite and kept him from destroying half the city, buying me the time to get what I needed to end the threat.”

“That’s all very interesting Ms. Danvers,” J’onn said, “but you’re talking about a future that doesn’t exist anymore.”

“Right now, J’onn, I’m more aware than anybody in this room of how much has changed. There should have only been one bomb this morning. Something about what I did has made Maxwell Lord take a far more aggressive stance this time around. I don’t know what it was. Maybe last time through, me saving his life when Reactron kidnapped him made him take a softer approach. Maybe seeing Non and Astra at the Gala Friday made him more paranoid. I don’t know. I just know I need them in the game, all the way, because they can help. They may not be the people I remember from that other timeline, but the potential is there, just like it is with you.”

“Can I ask a question?” Susan said.

“Since you’re the one with the deciding vote, I’m pretty sure you can ask all the questions you want,” Kara said.
“Why didn’t you tell us about the bombs earlier?” Susan asked.

“I… forgot,” Kara said. “I’d only been Supergirl for a few weeks when it happened before, and last time, Reactron was a much tougher fight, and then Eliza came to town for Thanksgiving, and there was the whole Livewire thing, and then Red Tornado and the Earthquake.”


“Um, Livewire is Leslie Willis.”

“The shock jock?” Alex asked.

Kara nodded. “Cat demoted her to traffic. The Cat Copter got struck by lightning, and I caught it, but then I got struck by lightning, and the electricity and my Kryptonian DNA did something that triggered her Meta gene. She gained the ability to control electricity, and could even turn into pure electricity, travel through powerlines. It happened the day before Thanksgiving, but she and I fought a few times, but she ended up on the Waverider with us during the war.”

“Red Tornado?” Susan asked.

“Android currently in development by General Lane’s team. Anti-Kryptonian Weapon. I kicked its ass, but blew out my powers, and didn’t get them back until the earthquake the following Monday.”

“So, this Ethan Knox is behind the bombings?” Susan asked.

“No,” Kara said. “He’s being paid by Maxwell Lord. If you check his daughter’s hospital records, you’ll find that about two weeks ago, she was accepted into a treatment program run by a researcher who’s funded by a grant from Maxwell Lord.”

“Okay,” Susan said. “We read them in, but once that’s done and this bomber business is taken care of, Maggie and Alex are going to debrief you on everything. Be prepared to lose at least a weekend.”

Kara nodded. “Okay. But-“

“No buts,” Susan said. “This is not negotiable ma’am. You’re going to give us everything on the alternate timeline.”

“Fine,” Kara said. “But if you find out things you don’t want to know-“

“We’ll take that risk,” J’onn said. He turned to Alex. “Bring them in.”

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“Well, I guess that explains your unreasonable hatred of Doctor Who,” Winn said.

Kara rolled her eyes in a near perfect imitation of Cat Grant. “Really? I tell you the world might end in a couple of years, and that’s what you get out of it?”

“Easy, Kara,” James said. “It’s just… a lot to take in.”

Kara shook her head and looked over at Maggie. Winn and James had been fairly vocal throughout the entire explanation, but Maggie hadn’t said a single word since Kara had dropped the bomb and that worried her. A lot.

“Maggie,” she said.
“The whole thing with you running out of the bar, letting me get a glimpse of you using your powers. That was all a setup, wasn’t it?” Maggie asked.

Kara looked at her for a second, then nodded. “Yeah.”

“Why?” Maggie asked.

Kara glanced over at Alex for a moment, then looked back at Maggie. “For Alex,” Kara said. “In that other timeline, you were like a sister to me, but you and Alex… She was better around you. More alive. Happier than I’d ever seen her. But she didn’t meet you until next year, and the war with Cadmus had just broken out. Things got bad, fast, and I knew I was going after Cadmus sooner, this time. I’d originally planned to make contact with you after I became Supergirl, but when you sat down next to me in Girrlbar, I just rolled with it. I staged that little scene because I didn’t plan on telling anybody I was from the future until Astra and Non were dealt with, and ‘accidentally’ outing myself to you seemed like it was something easier to explain than deciding to tell you and Winn both.”

“But why tell Winn at all?” Maggie asked.

“Because I told him the first time through and because we need Winn. Alex is amazing with biology and biotech, but Winn is better with computers and general tech. He won two out of three hacking contests against an AI. He made my suit. He made James’ suit. And he’s saved all of our lives, more than once.

Kara took a deep breath, knowing what she was about to say wouldn’t be well received. “If I could have left anyone out, it would have been James.” She looked over at him. “You came here to get away from this and Clark found a way to keep you in the game. It got you killed, in the end.”

“Kara…,” Alex said.

Kara held her hand up. “Don’t.” She shook her head. “Just… I know it’s not my fault, I know I did the best I could, but everyone died. Again. It was like watching Krypton burn again, only it was worse, because it was slow, because I should have been able to stop it and I couldn’t. And now, it’s happening again.”

“No, it’s not,” Alex said. “We’re not going to let it happen again.”

Kara looked up at Alex. “Something has changed, Alex.”

“But that’s the plan,” Alex said. “To change things.”

“But I made them worse,” Kara said. “Before, there was one bomb. Before, Lord was trying to test me, to see what I could do. The parameters have changed. He was trying to kill me this morning.”

“Wait, Maxwell Lord?” Maggie asked. “He was behind the bombing?”

Kara nodded. “He’s blackmailing a former employee into planting the bombs. A man named Ethan Knox. Or he was. Before, in the other timeline. Now, I don’t know.”

“We’ll find out,” Alex said.

“The lab bombing wasn’t supposed to happen until tomorrow,” Kara said. “First thing in the morning. We found a bomb in Lord’s lab a little before noon. Then a bomb at the Lord Air Terminal. Knox was on the Supertrain with a suicide vest.”
“This is why you wanted me to put together a file on Maxwell Lord?” J’onn asked.

“This is just the start,” Kara said. “It gets worse. A lot worse.”

“What happens?” Winn asked.

“Aside from being responsible for Ethan Knox’s suicide, Max kidnapped seven girls and mutilated them in an attempt to map my DNA onto them so he could use them as a weapon against me. Six of them died as a result. The seventh never recovered. He also poisoned me with a type of synthetic kryptonite that stripped away my inhibitions and brought all my negative emotions to the surface.”

“Your negative emotions?” Winn asked. “What did you do? Spit in Ms. Grant’s coffee?”

James laughed at that, but he was the only one and Winn seemed to get that he’d said something he shouldn’t have when Kara looked at him.

“I let a criminal go on purpose, got your girlfriend fired, bruised a couple of James’ ribs, threw Cat off the fortieth floor of the CatCo building and only caught her right before she hit the ground, burned all my clothes, wrecked Noonan’s, punched a hole in the CatCo Jumbotron, torched half a dozen police cars and eight DEO vehicles, broke Alex’s arm, then tried to kill her. I would have killed her if J’onn hadn’t revealed himself as an alien and put me down long enough for Alex to reverse the effects. It’s one of the reasons I won’t go anywhere without my anti-kryptonite shield.”

“Uh…” Winn stammered.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “If you meet a girl named Siobhan Smythe, don’t… Just don’t. That won’t end well for anyone.”

“Kara,” Maggie said.

“Yeah, Mags?”

“Can I borrow Konex for a few minutes?”

Kara nodded, and watched as Maggie took out her phone and dialed.

“Hey, Konex. It’s Maggie. I need you to tap into all the traffic and security cameras in the city, and find a man named Ethan Knox. Agent Vasquez will send you the details. Once you find him, call me with a location, and keep it updated. Thanks.” Maggie hung up and looked at Vasquez. “Can you email Konex the file on Knox?”

Susan nodded and lifted her tablet, keying in a couple of commands.

Maggie turned back to Kara. “Getting Knox into custody should be easy enough. Getting him to flip on Lord is going to be hard, especially if Lord is paying for the kid’s medical care.”

Kara looked over at Susan. “What does she have? I remember that she’s sick, but…”

“It’s been a while,” Susan finished for her. “She’s got Non-Hodgkins lymphoma.”

Kara set her phone on the table and tapped the home button. “Konex.”

“Yes, Lady Kara?” Konex replied.

“Does the medical database include a cure for Non-Hodgkins lymphoma in humans that’s safe for a child?”
“Yes, Lady Kara. I can synthesize a self-regenerating bioactive that will remove all current diseased cells and prevent recurrence of any form of cancer within the host for a period of at least five hundred Kryptonians days.”

“That’s not a lot,” Winn said.

“Kryptonian days are about sixty Earth days long,” Kara said. “The inoculation would last about eighty-two years.”

“Oh,” Winn said. “That’s pretty good.”

“This could work,” Kara said. “Konex, get Bruce on the secure line. Let him know that Supergirl’s calling.”


“Supergirl, to what do I owe this pleasure?” Bruce Wayne’s voice asked from Kara’s phone.

“Hey, Mr. Wayne, you’re on speaker. I’m with some of the people I work with, and I need to ask a favor.”

“Anything for the hero of National City, I’m sure.”

“Did you hear about the bombing incident earlier this morning?” Kara asked.

“Yes.”

“We think the bomber is being blackmailed, Mr. Wayne.”

“That sounds terrible, Supergirl. I’m still confused as to the purpose of the call, however.”

“The person who’s blackmailing the bomber is paying for his daughter’s medical care. She has cancer, and he lost his job around the time she was diagnosed. Given the circumstances, the police are concerned they’ll be unable to get him to give up his blackmailer.”

“You want the Wayne foundation to extend an offer of care to the child in exchange for the bomber’s assistance?” Bruce asked, and there was a sharpness to the tone that indicated he didn’t like what he was suggesting.

“Mr. Wayne, I would never make an offer like that contingent on someone helping.”

“That’s good to hear. I was afraid I was about to be very disappointed in you.”

“You’d have good reason if I ever pulled something like that, and I’d hope you would call me out on it,” Kara said.

“You can be sure I would,” Bruce replied.

“I have access to a cancer vaccine, Mr. Wayne. One that’s good for roughly eighty-two years’ worth of immunity before a booster is required. It’s one of a number of technologies I was planning on offering Wayne Enterprises when we have the sit down we discussed.”

“I see,” Bruce said. “But I’m still not sure where you’re going with this.”

“Mr. Wayne, I can’t simply fly into a little girl’s hospital room, give her an injection, and fly away. First off, there’s an issue of parental consent to the treatment. Then there are also issues with FDA
approval, among other things. However, I might be able to get a fast track for human trials on certain types of urgently needed lifesaving medications, if I had a company willing to shoulder the responsibility of conducting and monitoring the trials.”

“And if the girl in question happens to be included in the clinical trials,” Bruce said.

“I was thinking of a slightly different approach,” Kara said. “We announce the details of the bombing, and the bomber’s motivation. And announce that when I heard why he’d done it, I contacted you seeking help bringing Kryptonian medicines to market for humans, on the condition that Wayne Pharmaceuticals distributes the drugs at a reasonable and affordable price and offers the drug at cost to programs which provide indigent care.”

“I think that’s a wonderful idea, Supergirl. Though I think you’ve managed to pick up some of your reporter friend’s talent for self-promotion.”

“I have a degree in marketing Mr. Wayne, so I come by it honestly. And I think we both know that you’re every bit as aware as I am of how useful a tool a public image can be.”

“Fair point. How quickly do you want to announce?” Bruce asked.

“Friday if you can clear it with your legal team that quickly. I can probably have the preliminary FDA approvals by Thursday, but invulnerable or not, I’m pretty sure Cat Grant would find a way to kill me if I made an announcement like this while she was out of town,” Kara said.

“Good,” Bruce said. “I would like to bring in the Artemis Foundation on this, if you wouldn’t mind. They do a lot of good work with low-cost health care.”

“I was going to make the same suggestion,” Kara replied. “I have a meeting with Ms. Prince scheduled as well, but things need to move more quickly than I expected for this to happen. If you could make the arrangements with her, I’ll worry about the FDA clearances on my end.”

“Done. I’ll expect your call.”

“As soon as I can Mr. Wayne.”

“Oh… I almost forgot. Who do you want to tap to cover the announcement? I know you’ll want CatCo involved in the announcement, and I imagine there will be a general press release, but do you want to do a press conference, or an interview with a specific reporter?”

“If you wouldn’t mind, Mr. Wayne, perhaps we could do a press conference at the Wayne Enterprises building here in National City, followed by an interview with Ms. Grant in the CatCo studios.”

“If Ms. Prince is agreeable, I think that will work.”

“Thank you, Mr. Wayne.”

“You’re welcome. And goodbye, Supergirl.”

Kara reached out and touched the end call button on her phone, but before she could tell Konex to place the next call, he spoke up.

“Detective Sawyer, I have a location on Mr. Knox.”

“Thank you, Konex. Send it to my phone.” She looked over at Alex. “You want to come along?”
Alex looked at Kara, and Kara gave her a nod and a wave, and Alex got up and followed Maggie out.

“Are you sure that’s wise,” J’onn asked, “giving out Kryptonian technology to someone like Bruce Wayne?”

“Bruce, Diana and Kal are friends,” Kara said.

“I see,” J’onn said.

Kara glanced over at Susan, and Susan shook her head.

“Don’t look at me,” she said. “I’m not gonna argue with you curing cancer. I don’t care how it happens. That’s a win.”

“Okay. Then I need to call President Marsdin.”
The Back and Forth

Chapter Summary

Supergirl talks to the press, Maggie interviews a suspect, Kara babysits Carter, Lucy seeks some advice, and Cat offers someone a job at CatCo.

Chapter Notes

For those of you who might have missed it, I’ve started posting twice a week until this story is finished. If you only read the chapter last Saturday, you might have missed Wednesday’s post of Chapter 21 - A Distant Early Warning. The events of this chapter won’t make a lot of sense without that chapter, so make sure you’re up to date first.

“And in late-breaking news this morning, an arrest has been made in connection with yesterday’s bombing of a research lab in building fourteen of the Winslow Research Park. Sources close to the NCPD have indicated that the suspect in custody is a former employee at the lab. While details are still sketchy, what is known is that Supergirl was on the scene yesterday and managed to disarm two bombs, before flying a third one out of the building just moments before it exploded, and while the Girl of Steel was seen flying away from the scene of the bombing shortly after the explosion, she hasn’t been seen since, leaving some to speculate that the superhero was injured during the explosion. Reporting live from Police Headquarters in downtown National City, this is Tawny Young for CatCo News.”

Kara rolled her eyes as the report wrapped up and the story switched to a segment on the National City Valkyries getting trounced by the Gateway City Amazons. Much as she might like to take the time to watch the report and ogle the unreasonably attractive goalie for Gateway City’s women’s soccer team, it looked like it was time to do a little spin control, so she pulled up the Supergirl twitter account.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 17 Nov 2015
@TawnyYoung Not hurt, just doing laundry. Anyone know how to get out bomb stains?

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 17 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Cold Club Soda for Semtex, Hand Wash in warm water and Woolite for C4. Gasoline or dynamite, throw it out

Lois Lane @LoisLane 17 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Listen to @VickiVale young Padawan. She speaks much wisdom.
Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 17 Nov 2015

@LoisLane @VickiVale What about mad scientist grade super explosives?

Lois Lane @LoisLane 17 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl unless @VickiVale has some wisdom I don’t, ask your cousin, because I don’t think Perry White will let you expense the super suit.

Perry White @PerryWhite 17 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl @VickiVale I would not. Try @CatGrant. @LoisLane, meet me in my office. We need to discuss your expense account.

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 17 Nov 2015

@LoisLane BUSTED! @SupergirlZorEl

Cat Grant @CatGrant 17 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl No. @PerryWhite I can loan you some thumb screws for @LoisLane @VickiVale Drinks tonight?

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 17 Nov 2015

@CatGrant I don’t know. Will @SupergirlZorEl get jealous?

Cat Grant @CatGrant 17 Nov 2015

@VickiVale what @SupergirlZorEl doesn’t know won’t hurt us.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 17 Nov 2015

@VickiVale I trust you. @CatGrant twitter is less private than you seem to think.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 17 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl shouldn’t you be out saving kittens while @VickiVale and I chat?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 17 Nov 2015

@CatGrant check @CatCoNews Feed. Dealt with a fire, a bank robbery, and 2 wrecks while you were scheduling Martinis. Can @VickiVale do that?

CatCo News @CatCoNews 17 Nov 2015

@CatCo @VickiVale @SupergirlZorEl A fire, a bank robbery, 2 wrecks and carried an old lady’s
groceries to the car.

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 17 Nov 2015
@CatGrant @SupergirlZorEl I cannot. Except for the groceries. I could do that.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 17 Nov 2015
@CatGrant @VickiVale I win!

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 17 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl If you say so. I’m still the one having drinks with @CatGrant in Metropolis tonight.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 17 Nov 2015
@CatGrant I take back what I said. @VickiVale seems kind of shady. Best not risk it.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 17 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl of course @VickiVale is shady. She’s from Gotham. I’ll take my chances.

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 17 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl I feel like I should be insulted, but @CatGrant is right. Everyone from Gotham is shady.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 17 Nov 2015
I don’t know @VickiVale @BruceWayne seemed nice. Didn’t he @CatGrant ?

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 17 Nov 2015
Okay @SupergirlZorEl that’s a fair point. @BruceWayne is the one non-shady person in Gotham. Right @CatGrant ?

Cat Grant @CatGrant 17 Nov 2015
@VickiVale I am not sure if @BruceWayne is a saint, or a mad man, or both, but @SupergirlZorEl is right, he’s always unfailingly nice.

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 17 Nov 2015
@CatGrant leaving aside @SupergirlZorEl ‘s opinion, the Forbes interview points to the mad man theory.
Maggie walked through the door of the interrogation room where Ethan Knox had been waiting for them for the past hour and took the seat opposite him, laying a thin folder on the table. He didn’t look up, just kept staring down at the table looking slouched and defeated. She understood. They’d been going round and round since eight o’clock the night before.

This time was different though. Alex had gotten back from the DEO office about forty-five minutes ago, with an impressive amount of documentation of the money trail for the Knox girl’s medical bills. It was nowhere near enough to arrest Maxwell Lord, but it was enough to get the ADA to offer a plea deal if Knox fingered Lord. The paper trail, plus Knox’s testimony, would be enough to get warrants, which would be enough to put Lord behind bars for a very, very long time.

“How you doing, Ethan?” Maggie asked. Start easy. They’d been at this for sixteen hours, on and off, and Maggie had been soft balling it the whole time, but it was time for hard ball.
“I’m tired,” he said. “I don’t know what you want from me.”

“The truth,” Maggie said.

He looked up, and she almost felt sorry for him, because the man looked absolutely broken.

“I told you the truth,” he said.

Maggie nodded. “Part of the truth. I need all of it.”

“I haven’t got anything else to tell you.”

Maggie leaned back in the chair. “Ethan, do you want to know where I was for the last hour?”

“I don’t care,” he said. “I just want to go to sleep.”

“You should care,” Maggie said. “Because I’ve been out there talking to the DA. I’ve been out there, pleading your case. Ask… begging her, to let me cut you a deal. Took me an hour to get her to say yes.”

“I don’t want a deal.”

“Yes you do, Ethan. And I’ll tell you why. You got a little girl—“

“You leave my daughter out of this!” he said, leaning forward suddenly.

Maggie didn’t flinch. “I can’t do that, Ethan,” she said, as she reached out, and flipped open the folder, showing him a picture of his daughter she’d printed from his facebook page. “I can’t leave her out of this, because she’s what this is all about.”

He shook his head, looking down at the picture. “She’s got nothing to do with this.”

“Yes, she does,” Maggie said. “I’m going tell you what I think happened, Ethan. And I want you to think really, really hard. I can’t stop you from going to jail. You walking out of here a free man isn’t on the table. You planted bombs. But, what I can do, is tell the judge that six months ago, your little girl, the light of your life, was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. I can tell the judge that you were refused family leave and fired after you missed work taking your baby girl to get treated. I can tell the judge how your insurance was cancelled, and how you were afraid your baby girl was going to die. Then, I can tell the judge about the man who came to you, who offered to help your little girl. I can tell him that this man offered to pay for your daughter’s medical care, and all you had to do was plant a couple of bombs. No one was supposed to get hurt.

“If I tell the judge that, Ethan, you’ll go to prison right here in National City. Your little girl can come visit you, and if you don’t get in trouble inside, in five years, you’ll be home, taking care of your family.”

Maggie leaned forward, looking Ethan in the eye. “Now, ask me what happens if you don’t tell the truth?”

Ethan’s eyes lifted from the picture.

“If you don’t tell me the truth, Ethan, I can’t help you. If you don’t tell me the truth, that DA is going to charge you with terrorism. You’re going to go to a federal prison. A Super-Max federal prison in Colorado called ADX Florence. As a terrorist. You will have no human contact. You will receive no letters. You will spend the rest of your natural life in an eight-foot-by-nine-foot room.
You will only leave that room for one hour a day. You will never see your wife or your daughter again."

“But she’ll be alive,” Ethan said.

“You know, you have a guardian angel,” Maggie said. This was it. The moment she lobbed the fast ball.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

“Your daughter is gonna be home in a few days. She’s gonna be home, and she’s going to be completely healthy.”

“What? How?”

“Supergirl,” Maggie said. “She found out why you did this, and she made a couple of calls. Sometime in the next few days, your daughter, along with every other kid in that cancer ward, is going to get a Kryptonian drug that cures cancer.” Maggie leaned forward. “She’s going to get that drug whether you talk or not, and she isn’t gonna have to worry about cancer ever again, because Supergirl is not going to hold the life of a little girl hostage. Not like the man you’re lying to protect. The question is, Ethan, do you ever want to see your daughter again?”

“What do you want to know?” Ethan asked.

“Everything,” Maggie said, “but start with his name.”

Kara glanced down at her phone and smiled when she saw Alex’s name on it. She picked it up and leaned back in her chair, watching as Winn sat typing away on his computer, doing Rao only knew what. She hit the accept button and raised the phone to her ear.

“Hey Alex,” she said.

“He cracked,” Alex replied.

“Finally,” Kara said. “That only took what, fourteen hours?”

“Sixteen,” Alex said. “But you should have seen Maggie. Once we had the deal cut with the DA, she broke him in about ten minutes. It was beautiful.”

“I’ll bet,” Kara said. “So, you going to arrest Max?”

“Not yet,” Alex said. “We’re waiting for the warrants to come through. Once we have the warrants, we’ll be able to tear Lord Tech, and Maxwell Lord’s entire life, apart. The TSA and the Mayor have already agreed to shut down the Train tonight. If we find even a tenth of what I think we will, Max is going to jail for a very long time.”

“That’s terrific!” Kara said. “I’d offer to come help with the arrest, but I’ve got to babysit.”

“Have fun with that,” Alex said.

“I will,” Kara said.

Kara smiled as she watched Carter and the other students come out of the school. Parents walked up and spoke with the woman who was checking students out. Some students headed for the
waiting busses, but Kara took her time, waiting at the back of the line. She wasn’t surprised at all when the phone rang. She just hit the answer button and lifted the phone to her ear.

“How’s Carter? Does he miss his mom?” Cat asked.

“I’ll ask him in a minute Ms. Grant. I’m at the back of the line.”

“Why? Did you get there late?” Cat asked.

“No. I was talking to my sister when the bell rang.”

“Well, as long as you didn’t forget.”

“Of course not, Ms. Grant,” Kara said, smiling as she remembered how the day went in the original timeline where she’d done just that. “I’ll have Carter call you from the car.”

“Okay. Take care of my boy.”

“I will,” Kara said, and hung up. She waited patiently until the last of the parents were gone, and it was just her, the attendant from the school, and Carter.

“Hi,” she said. “Ms. Grant put me on the list. I’m Kara Danvers.”

“Hello, Ms. Danvers,” she said, holding out a clip board. “I just need a signature.”

“Of course,” Kara said. She sighed the form quickly and handed it back.

“There,” the attendant said. “He’s all yours. Have fun, Carter.”

Kara turned to Carter, smiling at him. “Hey, I’m Kara,” she said. “You remember me from your mom’s office?”

Carter nodded.

“You’ve grown since the last time I saw you,” she said. Carter didn’t respond. “How was school?” Carter shrugged, and Kara grinned. “This is a really good school. I’m surprised they haven’t taught you guys to speak out loud yet.”

That got the same laugh in this timeline as it had in the other, and Kara felt a small weight lift. It seemed like things would be okay.

“You know, I really liked school. Learning all sorts of things.” She leaned down, and said in a conspiratorial whisper, “Don’t tell your mom, but me and my sister were both huge nerds.”

Carter laughed at that and smiled up.

“Mom says it’s okay to be a nerd. She says if you can face your fears and come out of your shell… nerds can win, in the end.”

Kara nodded. “That does sound like something your mom, who slips Star Wars jokes into article titles, and has the Imperial March and the theme from The Terminator as ring tones, might say about nerds.” Carter’s face split into a huge grin, and Kara straightened up and nodded back towards the parking area. “Come on. We’ve got to go into the office for a bit longer today, but I don’t think you’ll mind too much.”
From TMZ.com

Vicki Vale and Supergirl Fight a Twitter War over Cat Grant!

11/17/2015 1:45 PM PST

Gotham’s most famous reporter and National City’s own Girl of Steel got into a heated twitter exchange this morning over who would get to spend time with Cat Grant.

By the end of the exchange, it looked like a solid victory for the Gotham reporter. No word yet on what this will mean for Superhero/Press relations in National City, or for the future of Gotham’s favorite reporter and the National City Media Mogul.

The real surprise here, however, is Vicki Vale. While Cat’s long and sordid dating history has fluttered back and forth between both ends of the Kinsey Scale, and Supergirl was seen filling her dance card with the likes of Bruce Wayne, Lois Lane’s younger sister, and Cat Grant herself at a media event last Friday, Vale, has never shown any signs of enjoying the fairer sex’s company before. In fact, Vale’s only previous high-profile love interest was none other than Billionaire Playboy Bruce Wayne himself.

Seems like Vale and the Maid of Might could be picking through each other’s sloppy seconds.

Kara led Carter off the elevator on the forty-second floor, and gave a quick wave to Padme, Laura, Wilma, Marcus and Winn. “Hey, guys. This is Carter Grant.”

Winn, and the DEO agents all gave a quick wave from their desks, and there was a brief chorus of “Hi’s” and “Hello’s” as they all greeted him.

“Carter, I’d like you to meet the Supergirl Social Media Team,” Kara said.

Carter looked up at her, excitement written all over his face. “Supergirl? Really?”

Kara nodded. “Yes. Padme over here is responsible for tracking any social media traffic that mentions Supergirl, so we know if there are any trends we need to respond to.” Kara didn’t mention that Padme’s job largely consisted of reviewing prescreened material from Konex, before deciding if she needed to pass it on to Kara for a response, and working with Konex to make sure no one could track Kara’s movements back to her apartment, the DEO, or CatCo. “Laura is our business liaison. She actually talks to Facebook, Google, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr about Supergirl’s accounts, and handles media requests. And Wilma and Marcus take the raw footage Supergirl sends over and edit together her YouTube videos, and Winn over there is our IT guy. He runs the Krypton Remembered website.”

Carter looked around at all of them like Christmas had come early. “You guys all know Supergirl?” he asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “She doesn’t spend a lot of time here, but she drops by from time to time. Come on. Let’s get you settled.” She led him over to a spare desk she’d had set up just for this purpose when she’d had the contractors build out the floor. It was tucked back in a small alcove, close enough to Kara’s office, which set in the same spot as Cat’s two floors down, that Kara could keep an eye on him, but hidden from the rest of the floor, and with a clear shot to Cat’s private elevator, just in case.

“I got your Steam and Origin Passwords from your mom and had Winn download and install your
entire Library in your user profile,” she said. “I’m pretty sure Winn’s down for some Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare or some Star Wars Battlefront, if you want.”

Carter sat down at the desk and looked up at her shyly. “That’s cool, but… do you think Supergirl will be here today?”

Kara smiled at him. “Yeah,” Kara said. “I’ve got a meeting in a little bit, so Wilma and Winn are going to keep an eye on you, but Supergirl’s supposed to drop off some stuff for us today. I’m sure she’d have a minute to say hello.”

“Really?” Carter asked.

Kara nodded. “Really.”

“Kara?” another voice said.

Kara turned around, surprised to find Lucy standing there, a slightly flustered look on her face. She frowned, because she’d remembered running into Lucy the first time she lived this day, but she was sure it had been in Noonan’s. She held up a finger, indicating to Lucy that she needed a moment, then she turned back to Carter. “I’ll be back in a couple of minutes.”

“Okay,” Carter said.

Kara gave Lucy a wave, indicating that she should follow as Kara headed into her office. She stopped at the glass doors, waiting until Lucy was inside then swinging the doors closed.

Kara’s office, in the same spot at Cat’s was two floors down, was laid out on the same model, but Kara disliked the fishbowl design of Cat’s, so while the front wall and door did have windows in them, the windows were covered with vertical blinds, which she drew. Then she turned around and dropped down on one of the comfortable sofas on either side of the coffee table, choosing to sit next to Lucy, instead of across from her. Unlike Cat’s office, Kara had opted for a warm color scheme. The walls were a warm orange shade that the contractor had called Terracotta. The carpet was a reddish tan, and the sofas were an off white with gold brocade pattern. It was the same color scheme as her room on Krypton, and just walking into the room usually set her nerves at ease, but it wasn’t having the same effect on Lucy. She was clearly upset about something.

“Is everything okay?” Kara asked.

“Yeah. Yeah, I’m just…” Lucy stopped and took a deep breath, finally looking Kara in the eye. “Is it okay if I say no?”

“Of course,” Kara said. She reached out, offering Lucy her hand. Lucy looked down at it for a moment, and Kara could see the confusion on Lucy’s face turn into surprise, and then gratitude as she reached out and took the offered hand. “How can I help.”

Lucy looked up at Kara’s face again and smiled for the first time since she’d gotten Kara’s attention. “You have no idea how long it’s been since someone has asked me that.”

“Well, then, people aren’t treating you the way they should,” Kara said. “Do I need to bust some heads? I’m really good at that.”

Lucy laughed, which brought a smile to Kara’s face. “No,” she said. “I appreciate the offer, but no one is really to blame. I just… I wanted to thank you, for what you tried to do.”

Kara shook her head. “I’m not sure what you mean.”
“I mean telling me who you are. Going out of your way to respect my feelings for James. Your cousin never did that.”

“James is being an idiot, isn’t he?” Kara asked.

“No,” Lucy said. “You just made me realize that it isn’t going to work out.”

Kara frowned and tilted her head slightly in confusion. “I don’t understand. I was trying to help, Lucy. I know you love James. I can see it every time you look at him.”

“Yeah,” Lucy said, nodding as tears started welling up in her eyes. “Yeah, I do. But he doesn’t love me. He likes me. He maybe loves the idea of me. But even now, even when I know about you, he still won’t let me in.” She reached up and wiped a tear off her face. “I tried. To talk to him about all of this, to get to understand, but he doesn’t want to share. Not with me. And it made me realize that it would never work, because no matter how much I want to be a part of his life, he just doesn’t want me there.”

“Oh, Lucy,” Kara said, letting go of her hand and reached up, pulling her into a hug. “I am so, so sorry.” She held onto Lucy for a moment, but a sinking feeling settled into her gut, and she pulled back.

“Lucy, when did you talk to James?” she asked.

“Last night,” Lucy said. “I’m supposed to go back to Metropolis… Kara, what is it?”

Kara reached up and pushed her glasses up so she could pinch the bridge of her nose. “I’m sorry. God, I am so sorry.” She let out a sigh as she looked up at Lucy again. “I did exactly what I was trying *not* to do.”

“Kara, what are you talking about?”

“There are things I can’t tell you,” Kara said as she took Lucy’s hand again. “It’s not because I don’t trust you. I do. I know that sounds weird. We’ve only known each other a few days, but honestly, I would trust you with my life. But… You’re a soldier. You understand that sometimes information has to be compartmentalized.”

“Yeah,” Lucy said. “Yeah, of course.”

“I read James and a couple of other people into a big piece of information yesterday, Lucy. Well, more than one. I can’t tell you what it is, because you’d have a duty to report it to your superiors, at which point, any hope of containment is out the window. This is the kind of information that people would kill for.”

“I’d ask what could be that bad, but after working with my father for so long, I don’t want to know,” Lucy said.

“If you talked to James last night, and he was reluctant to talk, it’s probably just because he’s processing new information. Look, Lucy, maybe you can give it another try.”

Lucy shook her head. “I don’t know. I’ve tried so many times, and I appreciate what you’re doing, even if it is for James, but-“

“It’s not,” Kara said. “It’s not for James. This is for you. I like James. He’s wonderful and supportive, and brave, but Lucy, you’re every bit as amazing as James is. I don’t want you to spend the rest of your life with regrets. If you and James can have a life together and be happy, *you*
deserve that. And if you can’t, you deserve to know that too.”

“You know, you’re pretty amazing yourself,” Lucy said.

Kara shrugged and lifted her face towards the ceiling in a dramatic gesture. “It’s my burden,” she said. “Go on. Go talk to James.”

“Okay,” Lucy said. “But, first, give me your phone.”

“Why?”

Lucy laughed and rolled her eyes. “For someone so charming, you sure have a hard time recognizing when a girl is trying to give you her digits.”

Kara landed on the public balcony on the forty-second floor of the CatCo building carrying a large binder, and immediately pulled open the door to let her into the floor. All six people immediately looked up at the sound, but there was one slightly strangled gasp from over by her office, and she had to fight not to smile.

“Ms. Danvers?” she called out.

“She’s not here,” Wilma replied. “She should be back in a few minutes, unless her meeting runs long.”

“Oh. Well, I brought back the list of proposed merchandise marked with the approvals.”

“Just leave it on her desk,” Wilma replied.

Kara nodded. “Okay,” she said backing towards her office. She turned around to find Carter standing next to his desk. “Oh… Hello.”

“Uh… Hi,” Carter said. A moment later, he started to blush furiously, and Kara could tell he was kicking himself.

She stepped forward and held out her hand. “I’m Supergirl… but you probably already know that,” she said, looking up and bouncing her head from side to side. She looked back down at him. “I mean, this makes it hard not to guess,” she said, gesturing to the El coat of arms. “And coming in through the balcony is a bit of a giveaway too.”

Carter laughed, and the blush faded, replaced by a smile. “The cape is a dead giveaway,” he said.

Kara looked back over her right shoulder, then over her left, before turning and bending down, asking Carter in a conspiratorial voice, “Do you think it’s too much?” she asked. “I wonder sometimes. I had an alien grab me by it and throw me through a wall during one of my first fights.”

“Really?” Carter asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said, nodding. “She said, ‘You might wanna rethink the cape’.” Kara had dropped her voice a bit when imitating Astra. “Then she grabbed it and flung me through a concrete wall.”

Carter’s eyes got wide. “Did it hurt?” he asked.

Kara waved her hand. “Nah. Concrete walls are really soft. Concrete floors though, those hurt.”

“Because the concrete won’t compress if there’s dirt under it?”
Kara smiled. “Exactly! Wow. You’re smart. I guess that explains why you’re working here when you’re so young.”

“Oh, I don’t work here. I’m just here with Kara until she gets off work.”

“Are you a friend of hers?”

“No. I mean… Well, I don’t really know her that well, but she’s really nice. But she’s taking care of me while my mom’s in Metropolis.”

“Oh! You’re Ms. Grant’s son.”

“She told you about me?”

“No, we didn’t really talk much about her,” Kara said. “But I saw a picture of you and her on her wall. I didn’t recognize you because you’ve grown a bit.”

“Yeah,” he said. “That picture was taken two years ago. I’m Carter, by the way.”

“Well, it’s a pleasure to meet you, Carter Grant,” she said. “But I have to get going.”

“Okay.”

Kara grinned and winked at Carter, then used a bit of her super-speed to zip into her office, and set the binder on her desk, before zipping back out again. She was just kicking off the balcony when his “Wow!” hit her ears.

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KPJT Channel 3 Evening News

Richard Gardener Reporting

"And in late-breaking news this evening, another arrest has been made in connection with yesterday's bombing of a research lab in building fourteen of the Winslow Research Park. While no one at the NCPD is speaking about the matter on the record, CatCo News has exclusive footage of Maxwell Lord being led out of his lab in handcuffs by Detective Maggie Sawyer, the same Detective who was scene commander at yesterday's bombing. Detective Sawyer was later seen escorting Lord into Police headquarters, and sources say the DA's office is currently working with federal prosecutors to bring charges against Lord, not just for this incident, but for a number of others based on evidence obtained in a search of Lord's home and office earlier today. For KPJT Evening News, I'm Richard Gardener."

Cat shook her head and turned back to Vicki as the waiter set down a fresh round of drinks.

“What do you think?” Cat asked.

Vicki picked up her Manhattan and took a sip. “It’s a tempting offer, Cat. Head up a new investigative journalism division. I just don’t know about leaving Gotham.”

Cat took a sip of her own Martini. “Come on, Vale. Don’t play coy with me. You’re not twenty-five anymore and after what happened, I’d think you’d be itching to get out of Gotham.”

Vicki shrugged. “I’ve lived there a long time, Cat.”

“I’d lived in Metropolis a long time before I bought a run-down television station in National
City,” Cat said. She sat down her drink and looked at Vicki. “You know John’s never going to put you back in the field again.”


“He’s right, too,” Cat said. “After what Falcone did, it’s not safe.”

“I didn’t know you cared,” Vicki said.

“I don’t,” Cat replied. “I’d planned to offer the job to Snapper Carr.”

Vicki laughed. “Then why are we here, Cat?”

“Because every time I ask her to get me Snapper Carr’s number, my normally meek and obedient assistant suddenly develops selective amnesia, and the next morning, I find your, Lana Lang and Chloe Sullivan’s resumes on my desk, and I’d rather *not* hire someone who’s slept with Clark Kent.”

Vicki rolled her eyes. “I don’t think Chloe ever bagged that particular white whale. Though I admit, I came close a time or two. Grade A, corn fed, Kansas farm boy is good for the soul.”

“If wanting to sleep with Clark Kent were a crime, ninety percent of the women who’ve laid eyes on him would be locked up right now.”

“Not to mention at least ten percent of the men,” Vicki said. “I think Bruce might have tried to tap that at one point.”

Cat picked up her Martini and downed the entire thing in one go, before setting the glass down with a bit more force than necessary. “I did not need that mental image.”

“Oh, but it’s soooo pretty,” Vicki said, finishing her Manhattan, and waving for another round.

“Yes, well, once upon a time, I would have enjoyed it with you. Sadly, when Clark’s insanely perky cousin works as your assistant, it kind of spoils the fun. I can feel her judging me, all the way from National City.”

“Since when do you let anyone judge you, Cat?” Vicki said as the waiter came over, carrying more alcohol. “Wait… Oh, no. No! Not Cat Grant!”

Cat glared as Vicki’s face lit up in absolute delight. “I take it back. You can’t have the job,” she said.

“Oh, no. It’s too late. I am definitely taking the job. I’ve got to see this girl.”

“It’s not what you’re thinking, Vicki,” Cat said.

“Uh huh,” Vicki said, picking up her Manhattan.

“She’s barely twenty-five years old,” Cat growled.

“Well, now I definitely have to see her.”

“I hate you,” Cat said.

Vicki just shook her head. “If that were true, you would have slept with Bruce that night.”
Cat shrugged. “If you hadn’t had your head so far up your ass you can see your own teeth, you would know Bruce wasn’t the one I wanted to take back to my room.”

“Yeah, well, jealousy makes us all stupid sometimes, Cat.”

“And here I thought it was the heterosexuality,” Cat said.

“That too,” Vicki laughed.

“Considering the job I’m offering you, I hope you’ve gotten over that,” Cat said.

“What, the stupidity, or the heterosexuality?” Vicki asked.

“Preferably both, but I’ll settle for the stupidity,” Cat said.

“Well, I’ve definitely gotten over Bruce,” Vicki said.

“Everyone does eventually,” Cat said.

“Not Selina,” Vicki said.

“That’s got to hurt,” Cat said.

“Not as much as you’d think. If someone else wants to spend their life wondering when one of his stupid stunts is going to get him killed, they’re more than welcome to it. I’m not going to pretend that I won’t be a wreck when it finally happens, but I’ve managed to get enough distance that I don’t stay awake nights worrying about it anymore. Let Selina have that.”

“You’re going to take the job,” Cat said.

“Yeah,” Vicki said. “Of course, you knew that before you asked.”

“I don’t like to brag,” Cat said.

“Oh, come on, Cat. We both know that’s a lie.”

“True.”

“How soon do you want me to start?” Vicki asked.

“A month ago,” Cat said, “but until someone invents a time machine, I suppose I’ll have to settle for as soon as possible.”

“Monday then?” Vicki ask.

“That will do,” Cat replied. “Will John really let you go that fast?”

“John will help me pack,” Vicki said. “And honestly, the sooner I get out of Gotham, the happier everyone will be.”
Responses

Chapter Summary

Cat returns to National City, Max gives a press conference, and Maggie has some questions for Kara

Chapter Notes

A couple of quick notes. First, this chapter does touch a bit on Kara's relationships in the previous timeline, including Kara/Lena, Kara/Sara and Kara/Cat. For those of you who might be a bit worried, this is not a harem fic, Supercat's still end game and Supercorp is not really a big thing in this story or the sequels, even though Lena is going to be a major player in Devils in the Dark and A Plague of Righteousness. I make no such promises about Supercanary and the sequel, because Sara is a *huge* part of Kara's past, and that relationship is going to be relevant to what happens.

“Mom!” Carter yelled as Cat stepped into her office. He jumped up off the sofa where he’d been curled up against Kara and ran over to her.

“Honey,” Cat send, dropping her purse and bending down to enfold Carter in a hug. “I missed you so much!”

Carter pulled back from the hug, and Kara didn’t have to be able to see his face to know he was smiling when he announced, “I met Supergirl!”

Cat looked at him with a mixture of surprise and amusement on her face. “You did?”

“Yeah,” Carter enthused. “She stopped by to drop some stuff off for Kara, but Kara was in a meeting, and she recognized me from a picture in your office. I got to see her use her super-speed and got to see her fly. She was amazing, and she was so much prettier in person.”

Kara noticed Cat’s eyes lift up to look at her for just a moment, before looking down at Carter, and she noticed a slight blush in Cat’s cheeks.

“Did you notice anything else about her?”

“Um, she’s really fast,” he said.

“And strong and brave and kind,” Cat said, “and she saves people all the time. Tell me, what do you think makes her a hero?”

“Her legs,” Carter said. “Definitely her legs.”

Kara had to bite her lip to keep from laughing at the absolutely poleaxed look on Cat’s face.

“Her heart, Mom,” Carter said after a moment.
“Oh! That was a joke. Carter, you never make jokes.” Cat pulled him in for another hug, before pulling back. “Are you ready for school?” she asked.

Carter nodded. “Yeah. Just a minute.”

Kara stood up, picking up his bookbag as he turned around. “Bye, buddy. It was fun hanging out with you.”

Carter closed the distance between them and wrapped his arms around her, hugging her tightly. “Bye, Kara,” he said, before taking his bag, and turning back to Cat.

“Mom, Kara and I had an epic nerf battle, and she can play Settlers of Catan almost as well as you can. Can she watch me again?”

“We’ll see, sweetheart, but you need to run along.”

“Okay,” he said, and headed for the elevator.

Kara and Cat both watched him go until he disappeared from sight. “You’ve got a really wonderful kid there, Ms. Grant.”

“I do,” Cat said, turning around. “And he seems to have taken quite a shine to you.”

Kara shrugged. “I think getting to meet Supergirl was a point in my favor, but it was nice. It reminded me of the time I spent as a part-time nanny.”

“You never cease to amaze me,” Cat said.

“What do you mean?”

“Just, everything you can do, how amazing you are, it’s hard for me to picture you taking care of someone’s kids or being a waitress at Noonan’s.”

Kara smiled at Cat. “I know you don’t see the appeal, Ms. Grant, but sometimes it’s nice to be normal and just fit in. I didn’t have a lot of that growing up, and being different… Well, you see how it is for Carter.”

“I do,” Cat said. “I’m sorry you had to go through that.”

“It’s okay,” Kara said. “I had Alex.”

Cat frowned slightly for a moment before Kara saw the lightbulb go on. “Alex is your sister?” she asked.

“Yes.” Kara said. “Eliza and Jeremiah, my adoptive parents, were both wonderful, but I don’t think I would have made it without Alex. She protected me, fought all the fights I couldn’t. After Jeremiah died, Alex stepped up helped take care of me. Eliza did her best, but she was grieving.”

“I’m sorry,” Cat said. “That must have been hard for both of you.”

“I survived,” Kara said. “I’m good at that.” Cat started to reply, but stopped, and the silence stretched out until Kara couldn’t stand it anymore. She was about to stammer out an apology and make a run for it when Kaldur’ahm appeared at the door.

“Ms. Grant, Ms. Danvers, there’s something you should see,” he said.
“What is it, Jacob?” Cat asked.

Kaldur’ahm walked past them and went to Cat’s desk, where he picked up the remote and turned on the monitors, switching them to the live news feed from Channel 3 news, and turning up the volume.

“We now take you over to Leyna Nguyen at the National City courthouse for more,” the reporter on screen said. A moment later, the screen switched to a Vietnamese woman standing behind a group of reporters.

“Thank you, Rick. We’ve just gotten word that Maxwell Lord, billionaire tech genius and CEO of Lord Technologies has been released on bond after being charged in a series of bombings and attempted bombings around National City.”

Kara watched as the camera swung away from the reporter to focus on Max as he descended the stairs of the court house. He stopped, a few steps from the bottom, where the reporters were waiting, and held up his hands to quiet them all down.

“As you all are no doubt aware, yesterday I was arrested in connection with a bombing and several attempted bombings here in National City. I want to start by saying these charges are ridiculous, and I have no doubt that I’ll be vindicated by a jury if these trumped-up charges aren’t dismissed out of hand. As for where these charges come from, I’d say look at the timing. Two weeks ago, I came out in opposition to National City’s new so called ‘hero’ and now, here I am, charged with a bombing she failed to stop, arrested when I’m the target of the attack, and held in jail while Supergirl’s friends in the government rifle through my personal papers and through Lord Technologies files and servers. This is persecution, plain and simple, because I refuse to bow down to one of the aliens who claims they’re here to protect us. If you want to know what really happened, I say, look at Supergirl.”

The crowd of reporters started shouting questions at Lord. Some were even intelligent. Things Kara, or Cat, or Lois, or Clark would have asked. Lord didn’t answer any of them. Just strutted towards the waiting limo.

The camera swung back to the reporter. “There you have it. Maxwell Lord is claiming he’s innocent of all charges and that this is an attack by Supergirl and her supporters meant to discredit him.”

“Turn it off,” Cat said, and Kara looked over at her, because that was Cat’s furious voice, and that was usually reserved for use after board meetings.

Kaldur’ahm switched the screens off and turned around to look at Cat.

“Jacob,” Cat said, “call Bunny Watson down in research. Tell her I want *everything* on Maxwell Lord. Then call StratoJet and book a Cessna Citation X or Gulfstream G-650 from Wayne Field Executive Airport in Gotham to Nations Bay Executive Airport here in National City. Tell them I expect wheels up within an hour. If they argue, tell them CatCo is perfectly willing to find someone else to run all of our charters with. Then get Vicki Vale the line for me, set up a conference call with Perry White and Lois Lane, and find me a personal concierge service that has branches in Gotham and National City that can handle packing up and moving someone from there to here in less than four days.”

“Ms. Grant?” Kara asked.

Cat turned to her. “He’s coming after Supergirl in order to save his own ass. I won’t have it. She
deserves better than that. Vicki Vale’s the new head of our investigative reporting team. I’d planned to hire Snapper Carr, but something made me reconsider."

“But Perry and Lois?” Kara asked.

“If he takes down Supergirl, that will drag Superman down with her, and it will drag down CatCo and The Daily Planet. We’re going to drag every single skeleton in that man’s closet out into the light of day, and let the world see who Maxwell Lord really is.”

Kara felt herself start grinning. “Give me a couple of hours,” she said. “I might have something for you.”

Kara sat down at her desk in her office on the forty-second floor and touched her ear piece to call the DEO. Susan answered immediately.

“Hello, ma’am.”

“Hey, Susan. Is Hank around?” Kara asked.

“Here, Supergirl. What can I do for you?” J’onn asked.

“Do you have a version of the dossier on Maxwell Lord that’s been scrubbed for release?” Kara asked.

“No,” J’onn said. “I can prepare one, but it will take a couple of days.”

“Send the full one over Konex,” Kara said. “He can scrub it.”

“What’s this about, Ms Danvers?” J’onn asked.

“Did you see Max’s little press conference?” she asked.

“No,” J’onn said.

“Hold on, I’m sending you a link.” She tapped the home button on her phone. “Konex, find a video of the interview Maxwell Lord did on the steps of the court house this morning and send the link to Susan and Hank.”

“Oh course, Lady Kara,” Konex replied.

“Got it,” Susan said. There were a couple of minutes of silence.

“Well, that could be a problem” Hank said.

“I know,” Kara said. “But I’m working it from my end. Send the dossier. Supergirl needs to be out and about today.”

Cat looked up from her desk at Jackson’s gentle knock on the door of her office. She stared at him for a moment, wondering again at Kara’s choice in replacements. Certainly, his suit was expertly tailored, but it did little to hide the man’s muscular build, and the scars on his neck kept peeking above his collar, and the snake head tattoos on the backs of his hands, though those almost blended into his dark skin. Even the blonde hair was unusual for a black man working in an office. So far, he was competent, even if not quite up to Kara’s level, but it was clear the man was not used to office work and it made her wonder what, exactly, Kara thought she needed protection from.
“Yes, Jacob?” she asked, and the way he smiled at her told her he knew she was using the wrong name intentionally, which just irritated her.

“Ms. Danvers sent down some files for you,” he said, holding up a stack of papers the size of a phonebook in one hand, and a thumb drive in the other. “She said to tell you she’d sent a copy to legal for clearances, and a copy down to Bunny for double checking, but that everything in here should be printable.”

She waved him forward, and he walked over to her desk, and handed her the files and the thumb drive. She sat the drive aside, opened the first of the files and nearly dropped it in shock. She started thumbing through it, just skimming the highlights.

“Where’s Kiera now?” she asked.

“Ms. Danvers said she’d be reachable by phone if you need her but would be away from her desk for the day. Something about it being a really busy day for Supergirl.”

“Hmmmm,” Cat said. She reached over to her computer and pulled up the ‘#supergirlsightings’ hashtag on twitter. “Well, our girl has been busy, hasn’t she?”

“Yes, Ms. Grant.”

“Well, Jacob. Thank you for bringing this down. Be a dear and fetch me a lettuce wrap.”

“Of course, Ms. Grant. Before I go, however, Ms. Danvers asked me to let you know that Supergirl has asked if you’d like to do a joint interview with her, Bruce Wayne, and Diana Prince tomorrow following a press conference they’re holding at the Wayne Enterprises building.”

Cat looked up from the file. “Did she say what the press conference was in relation to?”

“She said that Supergirl was partnering with Wayne Medical and the Artemis Society to release some Kryptonian medications.”

“Now, that is definitely news worthy,” Cat said. “Set up the interview for studio seventeen. Coordinate with Kiera on the time and ask her if she could prep a pre-interview briefing for me.”

He nodded and left without another word. Cat watched him go, wondering for a moment what Kara could be up to with this latest move, but she supposed she’d find out when she got the pre-interview packet. That, however, was a worry for another day.

She looked down and started re-reading the file. The one with clear evidence to indicate that Max Lord had been engaged in experiments conducted on inmates in a private prison up state. The one that was just the first in a stack.

She checked the clock. Vicki had gotten on the charter roughly an hour ago. It was a five-hour flight from Gotham to National City on a G650 running full tilt. She sat the file down and picked up the thumb drive, plugged it into her computer, and opened her email client.

She’d never especially liked Maxwell Lord, but he’d never really seemed worth her attention. Not until now. But he’d taken a shot at Kara, and that was not acceptable. No one touched her Kara, not unless they wanted to face her wrath, and she was going to enjoy crushing Max like the little cockroach he was.

“Hey, Kara,” Maggie said, startling Kara a little. She looked up a bit surprised to see Maggie
standing in the door to her office. In the old timeline, Alex, Winn, J’onn and Sara were the only ones who’d ever been able to sneak up on her because they were the only ones she’d ever gotten so comfortable with that they had faded into the background soundtrack of her life. Lena might have gotten there, had she lived long enough, and Kara was always too hyperaware of Cat for that to ever happen, but as close as she was with Maggie in that timeline, Maggie had never slipped over that line. Kara couldn’t stop herself from realizing that this was something she’d done better, this time around.

“Hey, Mags,” she said, giving Maggie a smile. “Come on in.”

“Mind if I close the door?” Maggie asked.

“No,” Kara said. Cat might prefer an always open door to her office, but Kara had too many secrets for that sort of thing to really work for her. She watched as Maggie shut the door, then walked over and took one of the seats in front of her desk.

“What’s up?” Kara asked.

“I wanted to talk to you about what you told us the other day,” Maggie said.

“Oh,” Kara said, a little surprised with herself for not expecting this. Maggie was never stupid, and Kara knew she had to have pieced things together. “What do you want to know?”

“Do you even have to ask?” Maggie asked.

“Not really,” Kara said. “But as you sure you want to know?”

“I think I already do,” Maggie said. “You never stopped trying to talk me into meeting Alex, and you were so sure that we’d like each other, and then I met her, and she’s just as incredible as you said. I didn’t even think about it at first, but Alex and I are hanging out almost every night unless one of us is on duty, and even then, we’re texting. I didn’t want to admit it at first, but I’m falling for her, hard, and I don’t think you would set me up like that unless you knew how it would turn out. You’re many things, Kara Zor-El, but cruel isn’t one of them.”

“I can be,” Kara said. “The kindness is a choice people like us make every day. You, me. That, we always had in common. The universe has not been kind to us, so we chose to be kind to others to make up for it. But I can be cruel. I went out and hired one of the few people in the world that would even stand a chance against me and gave him instructions to kill me before I hurt Cat, because I *have* seen the day I stop making that choice. That’s the future I saw. One that made kind people fear how cruel the universe can make them. So, are you sure you want me to tell you what that future was like?”

“Jesus, Kara. You give speeches like that, and you have the nerve to call J’onn a drama queen,” Maggie said.

Kara narrowed her eyes. “Okay, fine. See if I give you the tickets for the private Nine Inch Nails concert I got this morning.”

"Nine Inch Nails?" Maggie asked, coming half way out of her chair before she stopped herself and sat back down.

"Yep," Kara said. "Winn's a fan. I'm sure he'd love the tickets."

"You are an evil woman, Kara Danvers," Maggie said, the amusement in her voice taking out any sting the words might have had.
Kara just gave her a beatific smile.

"How do you even have those?" Maggie asked.

"Trent Reznor sent them over for Supergirl," Kara said.

"And you're just giving them away?" Maggie asked.

"Yes," Kara said. "I'd give them to Alex, but she always ends up getting involved at work and forgetting. The tickets get wasted."

"I might do that if it wasn't Nine Inch Nails," Maggie said. "I can't believe you don't like them."

Kara shrugged. "It's not that I don't like them," she said. "I think they are brilliant. A lot of the stuff you and Alex like is. I just don't like what the music makes me feel. The stuff I listen to, it helps keep me in a better frame of mind."

Maggie leaned forward, reaching across the desk and squeezing Kara's hand.

"Are you okay?" Maggie asked.

Kara nodded as she realized how watery the room had gotten.

"I'm sorry," she said. "I don't think I've ever had that conversation with anyone but Sara."

"She an NSync fan too?" Maggie asked.

"Eighties hair bands and Disney soundtracks," Kara said. "Lena was the one who liked NSync."

"You really liked Lena, didn't you?" Maggie asked.

Kara smiled. "Does it show?"

"Yeah," Maggie said. "I'm surprised though. I looked her up, and she's not blonde."

Kara laughed, but she felt her cheeks heating slightly. "I think it was the whole Luthor thing," she said. "The whole forbidden love angle was enough to make me forgive her the black hair."

"She and you were a thing?"

"No," Kara laughed. "Sara was my first, and only, girlfriend in the other timeline. When I met Lena, I was nowhere near that self-aware. I was still trying to date James, which was awful."

"You dated James?" Maggie said.

"Yes, and if you tell him that, I swear to God, I will make you do the L-Word rewatch when Alex comes out."

"Oh, FUCK NO! I am not throwing myself on that grenade," Maggie said.

"You say that now, but just wait until Alex gives you those sad puppy dog eyes," Kara said with a small laugh. "Anyway, Lena is straight."

"You sure?" Maggie asked.

"The part where I managed to get her boyfriend killed was pretty compelling evidence," Kara said as she frowned at the memory. "I don’t know. I think I had a bit of a crush on her. Didn’t realize it
until after I realized what I felt for Sara was love, but then I didn’t realize that I had a great big crush on Cat either."

"Oh, honey, I am so sorry," Maggie said.

Kara shrugged. "I've spent most of my life watching people I love die," she said. "But Cat and Lena, they were hard."

Maggie squeezed her hand again. "I'm sorry. I came in here to satisfy my curiosity and ended up dragging up all your bad memories."

"It's not your fault," Kara said, reaching up with her free hand to wipe away tears that were threatening to spill. "It's just the nature of the subject. But yes, you and Alex were together. Married, in fact."

Maggie let go of her hand and set back, looking slightly shocked. "Wow," she said. "Married?"

"You asked," Kara said.

"We're we happy?"

"Mostly," Kara said. "I only ever saw you fight about two things."

"What?"

“Well, when she first came out, you told her you didn’t want to date someone fresh off the boat,” Kara said.

“Ouch,” Maggie said. “Really? Future me sounds like a bitch.”

“Don’t be too hard on future you. Remember, she didn’t have your Darla Anonymous sponsor to look out for her.”

“Okay, fair point. I’m just surprised Alex would have me after that.”

“I’m not,” Kara said. “Alex had it bad. Really bad. She’d know you all of three weeks before she came out to me.”


Kara sputtered. “Please,” she said. “The ‘I don’t want to date someone fresh off the boat’ thing didn’t last a month. You got a tiny little scratch in the middle of a fight, and later that night, you were standing outside Alex’s door with pizza and beer and some cheesy speech about how life is short.”

“God, that sounds terrible.”

“Yeah, well, Alex must have really loved you, because she bought the whole thing, hook, line and sinker. I think you guys had known each other three months when you moved into her apartment.”

“Oh, God. Talk about living the cliché,” Maggie said, laughing. “So, what was the other thing?”

"Kids," Kara said. "Alex really wants kids."

"Oh," Maggie said, laughter suddenly gone. Kara could see the wheels turning. "How did that end?"
"I am not going to tell you," Kara said. "That future was a nightmare. That Maggie and that Alex made those decisions in a world falling down around them. You and this Alex have to live in *this* world, and whatever compromises they worked out in that world might not work here in this one. You have to find the answer for yourself. Just be honest about what you want. Both of you deserve that."

Maggie nodded and gave Kara one of those dimpled smiles that always turned women into stammering puddles.

"I swear you are some kind of lesbian Yoda," Maggie said.

Kara narrowed her eyes and leaned forward. "Call me that again, and I will melt your face."

"Okay!" Maggie said, holding her hands up in surrender. "Okay. Maybe not my best choice of phrase."

Kara laughed and leaned back in her chair, opening her desk drawer and taking out an envelope. She tossed it across the desk when it landed in Maggie’s lap.

"Go on," Kara said. "Take Winn with you and try to talk him into growing a spine and asking out Cat's new assistant. The mooning drives me nuts."

"I was thinking of asking Alex," Maggie said.

"If you do, be sure. Alex is tough, but her heart isn't, and you have more power to break it than anyone."

Maggie nodded. "I'll be careful. I promise."
Kara moves forward with the release of Kryptonian medicine.

Kara stood next to Diana on a raised stage in the lobby of the relatively modest Wayne Enterprises National City branch office building, watching as Bruce spoke with Lucius Fox. She wasn’t tempted to eavesdrop. Mostly because she trusted Bruce, but also because Cat Grant was standing in the audience, Glaring at her. She was pretty sure it was because she’d dropped a pre-interview packet on Cat’s desk last night that just happened to include the fact that Supergirl was about to cure cancer, and she’d only given Cat about sixteen hours’ warning, right after dropping a stack of bombshells on her desk about Maxwell Lord. That, or she was just pissed that they were holding the press conference *first* instead of letting Cat have an exclusive on the announcement.

Kara could go into all the reasons she couldn’t give Cat an exclusive like that, not the least of which was the fact that this was a partnership with Wayne Medical and the Artemis Society. Somehow, she didn’t think any of those would hold water with one Cat Grant.

The Glare™ was almost comforting though. It reminded Kara a bit of their relationship in the original timeline, though that brought its own baggage. She was beginning to like this version of Cat better than the Cat of the other timeline. It felt vaguely like a betrayal, but on the other hand, this Cat wasn’t that different from the Cat Kara had lost. It was just that she’d started growing and changing sooner, while it was still just Cat and Kara, and not Cat, Kara and Supergirl. Something that made Kara unreasonably happy.

She took a deep breath, and slowly let it out, hoping to calm her nerves. She knew what was happening, and she kicked herself for not expecting it. She knew she and Cat had always had an intense relationship, but now that she was more fully aware of her own preferences, developing a serious thing for Cat was an obvious risk. One she really needed to short circuit.

The challenge there was, she couldn’t think of anyone she could use to get Cat out of her system. She wouldn’t meet Sara in this timeline for just over a year, and Lucy, Susan and M’gann were all off limits for any number of reasons. She knew Diana was an option. Diana had made her interest clear in both timelines. The problem there was that in both timelines Diana reminded her uncomfortably of Alex.

Bruce walked over to stand next to Diana, while Lucius Fox stepped up to the mic. The motion shook Kara out of the rambling in her own head and made her pay attention to what was being said.

“Good morning,” Lucius said. “Welcome to Wayne Enterprises, and thank you for coming out today. A select handful of you are here because you know the purpose of today’s event. Others are here on the strength of the Wayne name. Still others are simply here to see Supergirl. But whatever brought you here today, I’m pleased to say, you’ll have the chance to witness history. Today, Wayne Enterprises and Themyscira Enterprises are pleased to announce a joint venture, made possible by a generous offer from a woman who is truly out of this world. National City’s very own Supergirl.”

Lucius stepped away from the podium, and Kara stepped forward, taking his place. She looked out
over the crowd, and for a moment, couldn’t remember anything. Not until she found Cat’s face, and saw the pride there. It made her remember how to breathe, and how to smile.

“A few days ago, National City was rocked by a bombing in the early morning hours. During the course of the investigation, it came to light that the man who planted the bombs was not a terrorist, nor someone out for revenge. He was a father in desperate straits. His little girl had cancer, and someone had come to him, and offered to pay for her medical treatment, in exchange for planting the bombs.

“I cannot condone what this man did, but his story touched my heart. I know what it’s like to stand by, helpless, as you watch someone you love die. I wanted to help, and while I sat there, thinking about it, it occurred to me that I could. That I had the resources of thousands of years of medical knowledge, collected from dozens of worlds at my disposal.

“I began going through all the medical information I had from Krypton, and I found every drug in our database that I could be sure would work on humans and be safe. Then, I called Mr. Wayne, because I knew his father was a doctor and he would understand what I was offering. Mr. Wayne then suggested bringing Ms. Prince into the venture. And that’s how the three of us have come to stand before you today, to announce the creation of the Kryptonian Medical Foundation.

“This new Foundation, a partnership between the Thomas Wayne Foundation, The Wayne Medical division of Wayne Enterprises, Themyscira Enterprises, and the Artemis Society, will work to gain regulatory approval for drugs derived from Kryptonian Medical Science for use in treating a number of illnesses, life threatening or otherwise. Several of these drugs are ready to use, as is, and we’ve already received preliminary approval from the FDA to administer these drugs in cases where patients face a life-threatening illness. As we speak, one-hundred and thirty patients in the pediatric oncology ward at National City Memorial Hospital are receiving injections that will not only cure the cancer they are currently suffering from, but which will inoculate them against all forms of cancer for a period of at least eighty years. At the same time, small supplies of this life-saving medicine are being delivered to hospitals across the nation for those whose cases are critical. Over the next few weeks, as Wayne Medical’s production ramps up, the drug will become more widely available, with nationwide distribution expected by the end of the month, and worldwide distribution coming as quickly as we can negotiate approvals from local governments. Additional drugs will follow for treatment of other life-threatening illnesses.

“Furthermore, Wayne Medical has agreed to provide these drugs to the Kryptonian Medical Foundation at cost, and the Artemis society has agreed to distribute the drugs, both domestically, and internationally, free of charge to those less fortunate.

“Ladies and gentlemen, what that means is, no one will have to do without these lifesaving and life changing medicines because they are unable to pay.

“Hope, help, and compassion for all. Thank you for coming and may Rao light your way.”

The segment director gave a small signal to Cat that the camera was live, and she smiled at it the way Kara would smile at a box of cupcakes from Cat’s favorite bakery.

“This is Cat Grant coming to you from Number One, CatCo plaza. Joining me here in the studio today, we have Bruce Wayne, Chairman and CEO of Wayne Enterprises, and the head of both the Thomas and Martha Wayne foundations, Diana Prince, Chairman, CEO, and Sole Owner of Themyscira Enterprises, as well as the head of the Artemis Society, and lastly, we have National City’s resident Superhero, Supergirl.”
Cat turned to face the three guests who were seating in chairs across the table from her. “Earlier today, the three of you announced the creation of the Kryptonian Medical Foundation, a venture which will manufacture and distribute medicines developed based on medical science from Supergirl’s home world of Krypton. Alongside that, you also announced that the first drug is a cure for cancer. Both of these announcements have people talking, and I’d like to thank all three of you for coming here today to answer some additional questions.”

Diana was the one to reply, her voice warm and soft as she spoke. “I think I can say we’re all happy to be here, Miss Grant. Both Bruce and I have worked hard over the years to do everything we can to see that modern medicine reaches as many people as possible, regardless of economic need. Bruce, of course, is also continuing the work begun by his father with Wayne Medical, doing everything they can to develop new drugs which can address even the deadliest of illnesses, and he has been uncommonly generous in allowing the Artemis Society to purchase those drugs at, or in many cases, below cost, to distribute to those unable to afford them at market price. When Supergirl approached us with this opportunity, we were both shocked by the possibility, and amazed by the generosity of what she was offering.”

Cat smiled at the response. It had so obviously been rehearsed. But the journalist in her knew the follow up question would be the real meat of the interview. She glanced at Kara, wondering if the girl knew that Cat wasn’t going to just sit there and throw softballs the whole time. To her surprise, she saw both a bit of challenge, and some amusement in Kara’s expression. She shifted in her seat, barely able to keep herself from licking her lips in anticipation.

“I don’t think anyone will dispute the generosity on display here, however, Supergirl’s offer does raise an important question which I’d like to address directly to her.” Cat turned and focused on Kara. “Why now? You told me in our interview that you’ve been on Earth just over eleven years, and your cousin was here for twenty-four years before that. So, why are the two of you only now sharing these medicines with us?”

“That’s a good question, Miss Grant, and one I’m afraid doesn’t have an answer that’s going to satisfy people who have loved ones who might have been saved had these medicines been shared sooner. But I will answer the question honestly.

“As I mentioned in our interview, my cousin arrived here as an infant. That’s hardly a secret. I believe he shared that with Miss Lane in their first interview. What most people don’t know, what Kal-El didn’t even know at the time, was that I was sent here to be his guardian and his teacher. It was my job to see to it that he was properly educated. I failed in that task, due to circumstances beyond my control. Unfortunately, my cousin didn’t learn the full truth about his heritage until a short time before he made his public debut as Superman and until I arrived, the vast majority of his knowledge about our world and our history were things he learned from computer records, and recordings left by his father. One of the things he learned in those recordings is that it was our own technology that destroyed our world, and my cousin very reasonably made the decision to withhold that technology for fear that it would do the same to humanity.

“When I arrived here, I was still a child. Still thirteen years old, by your standards. My cousin was an adult. He had access to all of our records on Krypton. I didn’t. I only gained access to those records a year or so ago. At the time, I was still anonymous. Still hidden. I wasn’t ready to come out in the light of day and wear the coat of arms. I had no scientific credentials, no way to prove the information I had was anything of value. Stepping into the public eye as Supergirl gave me the creditability to present what was in the Kryptonian archives to the public, and from the time I stepped into public view, it was always my intention to revisit my cousin’s decision not to share Kryptonian technology with the people of Earth. The situation with Mr. Knox’s daughter simply made me realize that there is more urgency to sharing some aspects of that technology than
“So, you’re saying we will be seeing more Kryptonian technology aside from the additional drugs you’ll be introducing?” Cat asked.

“I think you can count on that, though it may be some time before my cousin and I are ready to take that step. His original reason for withholding the technology is still an important consideration. Krypton died due to a manmade ecological crisis and my cousin and I both agree that we want to take every precaution to make sure we don’t share any technologies that could lead to a similar disaster here on Earth.”

“You’re much better at giving interviews than your cousin,” Diana said.

Kara snorted. “That’s because Clark never had Cat Grant to teach him how to deal with the media,” she said.

“I’m fairly sure that’s not what Cat Grant wanted to teach Clark,” Bruce said.

Kara winced, then turned and glared at Bruce. “Okay, first, I’m eating,” she said, gesturing to the plate in front of her. “Second, I have heat vision, and I’m pretty sure the private dining room will stop anyone noticing me setting you on fire.”

Bruce looked at Kara for a moment, then turned to Diana and asked, “What did I say?”

Diana just shook her head and gave Kara an apologetic smile. “Don’t mind Bruce. He’s always like this.”

“I’ve noticed.” Kara picked up her fork and knife and cut herself a slice of the insanely expensive steak, which had cost just slightly more than she paid for rent each month. She put it in her mouth, moaning as it practically melted on her tongue. “He does have good taste in restaurants though.”

“Well, considering what today’s announcement is likely to do to Wayne Enterprises stock prices, I figured I could afford to treat you to something special.”

Diana shook her head. “You spend more on Batarangs in a week than this is costing.”

“Titanium is expensive,” Bruce said.

“Barbara and Kate both make theirs out of 4130 chromoly steel, and they work just fine,” Diana said. “You just like showing off.”

“It’s not showing off. Titanium is lighter, so I can carry more for the same weight,” Bruce said.

Diana turned to Kara. “He likes showing off.”

“I figured that out right around the time I saw the jet.” She glanced over at Bruce, who was actually pouting, and had to cover her mouth to keep from laughing.

“Clark never makes fun of me,” Bruce said in a grumpy tone of voice.

Kara and Diana looked at each other, and promptly burst out laughing.

“What?” Bruce asked.

Kara shook her head as she got her laughing under control. “We uh… We really should talk about
phase two of the tech sharing,” she said.

Diana nodded, smiling. “Go on.”

“I have designs for clean power supplies. Omegahedrons and betahedrons. An Omegahedron could supply a city the size of Gotham with enough power for about two thousand years, given current usage, and is about the size of a baseball. Betahedrons are what powered the pods that brought Kal and I to Earth.”

“You’re sure the technologies are safe?” Bruce asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “I mean, obviously, there’s some risk because of the sheer quantity of energy involved, but what killed Krypton was over mining to get the materials to make Omegahedrons and betahedrons. I’ve run the numbers a dozen times, and it would take at least a thousand years to burn through the resources in Earth’s crust, even assuming levels of power consumption on par with Krypton’s. That will give us plenty of time to introduce other ways to acquire those materials in an environmentally sound fashion.”

“You have something in mind?” Diana asked.

“Asteroid extraction,” Kara said. “Krypton and Daxam had long since depleted the asteroid belt in the Rao system. That’s why they turned to core mining in the first place. But that took almost fifteen thousand years of high industry, and the Rao system had a much lower density of celestial bodies. Plus, Krypton’s core was almost sixty percent uranium, and geologically dead. Your sun will swallow Earth long before the core has cooled to the point where you could even begin core mining.”

She looked back and forth between Diana and Bruce. “I promise you both, Earth will not suffer Krypton’s fate.”

“Okay,” Bruce said. “How do you want to start?

“With security,” Kara said. “Wayne Tech is probably in a better position to develop the technology, but I’m concerned about leaks, or even a hostile takeover. Since Diana is the sole stock holder for her company, I’d prefer to place Themyscira Enterprises in the lead position, and house all the patents there.”

Diana looked over at Bruce and shook her head. “I don’t think that would be workable. Themyscira’s a technology company, but our focus is a lot narrower than WayneTech.”

“Maybe another joint venture than?” Bruce said.

“Do you know anyone you could trust to run it?” Diana asked.

“Irons maybe,” Bruce said. “We’d have to base it out of Metropolis though. I don’t see him being willing to relocate.”

“What about Lena Luthor?” Kara asked.

Both Bruce and Diana turned to her with expressions of shock on their face.

“You’re not serious?” Bruce said.

“I am,” Kara said. “Lena’s a genius. Smarter by far than Lex ever was, without the pesky megalomania and general insanity that Lex, Lionel and Lillian all seem to have in spades. Right
now, she’s in the middle of a nasty fight for control of Luthor Corp, but I think if we step up as Angel Investors, we could lure her away. Not counting her Luthor Corp stock, she’s worth about seven billion in her own right. If we value the hedron designs at, say, one billion each, and you both put up two billion, we could let her buy into the new company for a billion-dollar stake, while valuing her leadership at an equivalent dollar value. A twenty-five percent stake in a company with five billion in starting capital, with her in the CEO’s seat. Plus, if Luthor Corp folds, which is pretty much a guarantee without her at the helm, she’d be in a good position to absorb them.”

“Kara, that’s not a bad plan on paper…” Bruce said.

“But she’s a Luthor,” Kara said.

“Yes,” Bruce said.

Kara turned to Diana. “You agree with him?” she asked.

“I do,” Diana said.

Kara shook her head. “You know, I expected this from him. I’d expect it from Clark. But I would have thought you, of all people, would understand.”

“What do you mean?” Diana asked.

Kara looked right into her eyes. “Don’t kill if you can wound. Don’t wound if you can subdue. Don’t subdue if you can pacify, and don’t raise your hand until you’ve extended it first.”

Diana sat back in her chair, a blank expression on her face.

Kara looked down at her plate with a regretful sigh, and picked the napkin up out of her lap, tossing it on the table, before pushing her seat back, and standing up.

“Lena Luthor is not her brother. She’s not her mother, or her father. She’s a brilliant woman, in an impossible situation. If she can be convinced to work with us, she could be a far greater force for good than her brother ever was a force for evil. But if we treat her like she’s already a criminal, like she’s every bit as guilty as the rest of her family when she’s done nothing wrong, at the end of the day, we will make her our enemy and she will be a far more dangerous enemy than her brother or her parents ever were.”

“Kara, wait,” Diana said as Kara started towards the door. Kara stopped, and turned to look at her. “Please,” Diana said, gesturing towards the seat. “Stay.”

Kara stared at Diana for a moment, before lowering herself back into her chair.

“You shame me with my own words,” Diana said. “I admit, I was ready to judge her based on her name alone and that’s wrong of me.”

Kara gave a small nod.

“Do you know her?” Bruce asked.

“We haven’t met,” Kara said. “Not yet. But I do know about her. I know that she spent years working out of a garage, trying to develop a cure for cancer. I know that she’s generous, and kind. I know there are at least thirty hospitals that have a Lena Luthor Pediatric Center attached to them, and almost as many with Oncology Wards named for her. And I also know she’s visited every single one of them, multiple times. That the charity foundations she’s involved with aren’t just for
I know that she’s brilliant, and that she cares deeply about making the world a better place.”

Diana nodded. “Give us time to consider it,” she said. “The roll-out of the Medical Foundation will take several weeks. Perhaps we can schedule an interview after the new year?”

“Don’t take too long,” Kara said. “Right now, it will be tempting to walk away, because there’s a great deal of resistance in the Luthor Corp board to her taking control. That won’t last.”

“We’ll move as quickly as prudence will allow,” Diana said.

Kara nodded, and reached for her napkin.

Kara floated down out of the sky, landing quietly in the familiar alleyway. She wasn’t in full Supergirl costume, but the dark blue leather pants, and red leather jacket over the blue shirt told a story. And if it hadn’t, the fact that the House of El coat of arms was embossed on the front of the jacket, cut in half by the zipper, removed all doubt.

She crossed the alley slowly, taking her time, trying to make the stroll seem casual when it was anything but. She knocked on the door, and a moment later, the slot in the steel opened.

“Graceland,” she said.

The slot slid closed, and a moment later, the door swung open. The bouncer started to look her over, but his eyes went wide at what he saw on her jacket. She stepped inside, easing around him, only to find every eye in the bar on her. More attention than she’d really wanted, but about what she’d expect. Still, she was there with a purpose.

She walked over to the bar and sat down, unzipping her jacket, and dropping it on the stool next to her.

M’gann walked up to her, smile plastered on her face.

“What can I get for you?” she asked.

“Just a beer,” Kara said. “Blue Moon if you’ve got it.”

“Coming right up,” M’gann said. She stepped away long enough to grab the beer and open it, then came back and set it in front of Kara. “You know that’s not going to do you any good, right?”

“I know, but tonight’s not an Aldebaran rum kind of night,” Kara said.

“Well,” M’gann said, “you know your cocktails.”

“I also know everyone in the room is as nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs, but I’m not here looking for anyone. If I was, I’d been in the cape.”

“What you’re wearing makes a pretty bold statement, even without the cape.”

Kara shrugged and took a sip of her beer. “I never said I wasn’t here on business. Just a different kind.”

“What kind?”

“I’m looking for someone who deals in off-world goods,” Kara said. “I’m looking to buy.”
“This isn’t a market,” M’gann said.

“I know,” Kara said. She raised her voice, pitching it so everyone in the room could hear. “But the House of El needs Thanagarian Nth Metal, and the House is willing to pay handsomely for it. No questions asked.” She stood up, and pulled on her jacket, then tossed a twenty on the counter, before making a show of holding up a business card with the House coat of arms on one side and dropping it on top of the twenty. “Keep the change,” she said as she turned and started towards the door.
Kara looked out over the desert, waiting. The call had come from J’onn while she, Diana and Bruce were having drinks at Diana’s hotel, so in addition to half the agents in the DEO, Supergirl, Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman were standing outside the bunkers that marked the entrance to the underground base, and the air was so thick, you could cut the tension with a knife.

President Marsdin had been true to her word. The Alien Amnesty Act had been pushed through Congress in a special joint session that afternoon. Kara had no idea how much political capital Olivia had burned through getting the bill rushed through, but she’d already decided that Supergirl was going to be making however many Campaign appearances the woman asked for during the election the following year.

She jumped a little when she felt a hand slip into hers and turned to find Alex next to her.

“It’s going to be okay,” Alex said.

Kara couldn’t bring herself to answer, so she just nodded and squeezed Alex’s hand gently, giving her sister a watery smile.

“Here they come,” Clark said.

Kara turned and spotted them immediately. Three cargo shuttles, and some forty-two individuals flying alongside them, with Astra out in front. Alex let go of Kara’s hand and stepped away, preparing for a fight Kara dearly hoped wasn’t coming.

“I hope you know what you’re doing,” J’onn said.

“So do I,” Kara replied, and that was the last thing anyone said as they watched Astra and her followers approach. It took a little less than five minutes for the shuttles to touch down, and all the fliers to land. Astra was the last one on the ground, and Kara waited until she touched down to step forward, approaching carefully, relaxing when she saw the smile on her Aunt’s face.

She held out the spy beacon, and Astra held hers out as well, the light in both dying as they touched. Then Astra threw her arms around Kara in a hug, and Kara squeezed her Aunt tightly, hugging her back with all her strength.

“Thank you, Aunt Astra,” Kara said.
Astra gave a small laugh. “I should be thanking you, Little One,” she said as she stepped back. “You are giving my people their lives back.”

“You, as well,” Kara said.

“Oh, my precious Kara,” Astra said. “I think you have too much faith in how willing these people are to forgive, but we shall see.”

“You brought more than I expected,” Kara said, looking over Astra’s shoulder as the shuttles began to unload.

“I brought my entire army,” Astra said. “Those who would come willingly, as well as those who would not.”

Kara’s eyebrows rose as she saw Non being led off one of the shuttles in chains. That wasn’t entirely unexpected. However, seeing Indigo being dragged along as well in a restraining collar made Kara want to shout for joy. Instead, she reached up and tapped her comms.

“Director Henshaw, we have a Coluan prisoner inbound. Suggest Dark Age Protocol,” she said.

“Acknowledged,” J’onn replied. “All units, dark age. Say again, dark age.”

Kara heard the scramble among the agents, and Bruce, to shut down all their electronics, but she just looked back to Astra.

“How did you lure her out?” Kara asked.

“After five days in Shadow, Non was… cooperative,” Astra said, and Kara decided not to ask anything else, because based on the look on her face, Kara didn’t want to know what that meant. She loved Astra dearly, but she’d also fought a war, and knew better than most the kinds of decisions that forced you to make.

“Come on,” Kara said. “Let me show you where you’ll be staying.”

“I admit,” Astra said, as she looked around, “This is better than I expected.”

“It’s not great,” Kara said, “but it’s temporary.”

Astra shook her head. “Do not get your hopes up for me, Little One.”

“That’s not what I mean,” Kara said. “I mean, this is literally a temporary facility. Each unit is what the humans call a manufactured home. They’re prefab housing units. We had shipped in earlier in the week. I dug the tunnels myself. We didn’t want to house you in the prison.”

“Is that where Non is?” Astra asked.

“For now,” Kara said. “Once we’ve finished with the interviews, we’ll have a better idea of housing needs, and can begin working on more long-term accommodations. There will be other considerations as well. Financial support, employment. Integration into the general population.”

Astra sat down on the couch in the living room of her temporary home. “I’ve noticed our powers are gone,” she said.

“Yes,” Kara said. “The red sunlamps in the ceiling. They’re developed from a technology found on a captured Kryptonian shuttle. As long as you’re in the cave, you won’t have your powers.”
“Another temporary measure?” Astra asked.

“Yes,” Kara said. “It was this, or Kryptonite emitters, and trust me when I say, this is the more pleasant option.”

“Little One, I trust you with my life,” Astra said. “After all, that is why I am here.”

Kara sat down next Astra. “I know this will be hard for you, but please believe me when I say this is for the best.”

“I believe you believe that,” Astra said. “I’ve also been watching you, these last few weeks. I am impressed. You demonstrate far more political skill than I would have expected.”

“I’m not sure if I should take that as a compliment or not,” Kara said.

“You should,” Astra said. “If Krypton’s leaders had been like you, more of us might still be alive.”

“I don’t know about that,” Kara said. “The Guardians fear us, and I think if they realized we planned to evacuate, they would have taken a more active hand in our destruction. Even if it meant going to war with their own Green Lanterns.”

“You plan to go after them, don’t you?” Astra said.

“Yes,” Kara replied. “Once I’ve got things settled here, and I’m sure I can do it without endangering Earth, I’m going to Oa, to make them answer for their crimes.”

“My brave little one. If it is as you say, and your President releases me, I will stand by your side on that day.”

Kara smiled at her. “I would like that, Aunt Astra. I would like that very much.”

Astra returned the smile, and lifted an arm, laying it across Kara’s shoulders, pulling Kara against her side. “Sit and talk with me a while?” Astra asked.

“Any time you like,” Kara said, resting her head on Astra’s shoulder. “What would you like to talk about?”

“Tell me about your sister?” Astra asked.

“That’s a long story.”

“I have the time to hear it.”
Chapter Summary

Kara gets interrupted during a negotiation, Maggie considers whether or not she wants to try to start a relationship with Alex, and Cat finds someone on her balcony.

Chapter Notes

I promised you a longer chapter today, and here it is.

It was just past nine when Kara dropped out of the sky at a hanger near the long-closed Otto Bender International Airport. She wasn’t wearing the suit that day. Instead, she was dressed in her off-duty outfit again. Blue Leather pants worn over red boots, a blue sleeveless silk shirt, and a red leather jacket, with the House of El Coat of Arms embossed on it. This suit hadn’t made it out to the media. Not yet. It would happen eventually, she knew that. But there was a reason she’d worn that outfit, and not the suit. She wasn’t there as Supergirl, champion of National City and Earth. She was at the warehouse as Kara Zor-El, and the distinction was important, if she was going to do the things she needed to do.

She spotted the man waiting for her as she touched down. He was Bedoreeni, unless she missed her guess. Easy enough for them to pass for human as long as they wore dark sunglasses.

“My Lady,” he said.

“Marcosus?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said. “I was told you were seeking certain goods, and that your House would pay well for them. Is this true?”

“Very well,” Kara said. “The House of El has always been known for our generosity towards our allies.”

“I am pleased to hear this,” he said. “I apologize that I am unable to offer proper courtesies before we begin, but on this world, it would attract undue notice.”

“My friend, there is no apology necessary,” she said. “If you have what I need, that is courtesy enough to gain the thanks of my House.”

He nodded and headed towards one of the small doors of the hanger, and Kara followed. When she stepped inside, she stopped and gasped.

“Is that what I think it is?” she asked.

“Yes,” he said. “A Thanagarian Frigate, my Lady.”

It was in pieces, and had obviously been picked clean for salvage, but the hull lines were
unmistakable.

“How much Nth Metal?” she asked.

“A thousand metric tons, My Lady,” he said. “The whole vessel weighs close to forty-two thousand tons, but much of that is lesser metals. The Nth metal I sell for ten dollars a gram.”

It was more than she ever expected to find. Probably more than she would need. But the surplus would open up possibilities. She did a bit of quick math in her head. Ten billion dollars for the lot. The money wouldn’t be a problem. The AI they’d dropped in the past before traveling to Krypton meant that she’d arrived a year ago with almost fifteen billion waiting for her. Once she’d got Konex up and running, that amount had grown by a factor of a hundred. Most of it was tied up in her long-term plans but shaking loose ten billion would be easy enough. The problem was moving ten billion dollars without attracting attention.

“How much for the whole thing?” she asked.

She couldn’t see his eyes behind the sunglasses, but she could tell she’d surprised him.

“I did not realize you needed that much, My Lady,” he said.

“I’m not sure even this is enough my friend, but I would like to purchase the entire wreck, if it’s within my means. Even the lesser metals will have some value.”

She could tell he was worried, and with reason. It was possible he could take her in a fight, but it would take more luck than he could reasonably count on. If she decided to take what she wanted without paying, he would be in trouble.

“Be at ease, friend. The House of El trades fairly, and I swear to you, I will only take what I can pay for and what you are willing to sell.”

He relaxed, visibly, then turned to the wreck. “Your words please me, My Lady. I will remember your generosity and speak honestly with you.”

She nodded.

“The Nth Metal is worth the price I gave, in small amounts, but the truth is, I cannot move the wreck myself and there is no one I trust to move it for me. I brought you here only because of who you are. The name of the House of El is still remembered and your cousin has proven it is still a name associated with honor. Even you, daughter of Alura, have shown yourself to be a friend to those like me. As much as I would like to pretend otherwise, the wreck will be discovered by your DEO sooner, rather than later. The demolition of this airport is exacted to begin in the middle of next year. At that time, I would lose anything I haven’t already sold, and there are not a lot of buyers for Nth Metal. If I tried to approach the government here, they would simply take it for themselves and pay nothing. The same for the few human companies that would understand what I offer.”

He looked at the ship, then at her. “Five Hundred Million, and the whole wreck is yours,” he said.

Kara could see that he was expecting her to talk him down. In Bedoreeni custom, it was traditional to begin negotiations with the highest you could imagine someone paying, and for the buyer to begin by low bailing.

“The House of El is generous, Marcosus. We will pay your price and add this, as well. The House of El owes you a favor. I will pass word to my cousin. You may come to either of us, and we will
honor the debt.”

“You are too kind, My Lady,” he said.

“I’ve been told that more than once, my friend. Now, do you have an account I can transfer the money into?”

“I do most of my business in cash, My Lady.”

“I understand. Konex,” Kara said, taking out her phone, and pressing the home button. “Konex, I need you here.”

Konex appeared in a flash of light. “Yes, Lady Kara?”

“This is Marcosus. He is owed a favor by the House. Make note of it.”

“Of course, Lady Kara.”

“He is selling us goods necessary to the future of the house. The price agreed on is half a billion US Dollars. However, Marcosus does not have suitable banking arrangements. Remedy this to his satisfaction, and arrange to have the contents of this building collected and stored securely, and then-”

She was cut off by the sound of the text alert she’d set for Lucy. She quickly unlocked her phone and pulled up the message.

‘Dad headed to work to collect new guests,’ was all the text said.

“Konex, suit, now,” she said, then turned to Marcosus. “Please, forgive me-“

“Go, My Lady,” he said. “I understand.”

When Kara turned back around, Konex was holding one of her suits. A burst of super-speed and she was suited up, and out the door. Her lift off shattered the pavement, and the sonic booms echoed through National City for miles.

At three times the speed of sound, the thirty-mile trip from where she’d been to the DEO base outside of the city took less than a minute, but by the time she arrived, things were already starting to get ugly. Hank and Alex, along with thirty DEO agents were on the surface, facing down General Lane’s men over the barrels of assault rifles and pistols.

Kara didn’t want to see anyone on either side hurt, except maybe Lane himself, so she came in hot, pouring on the deceleration, but not stopping. Using a move she’d learned from Barry, she zipped through the ranks of Lane’s men at super-speed, dropping magazines, ejecting cartridges, popping takedown pins and stripping uppers off lowers, before coming to a stop next to J’onn and dropping out of superspeed.

Lane’s men all collectively flinched as they realized that their weapons had been field stripped in between one breath and the other. Even Lane’s eyes widened as he realized how drastically the situation had shifted.

“Sorry I’m late, Director Henshaw,” Kara said.

“Not a problem, Supergirl,” J’onn said. “In fact, I’d say you’re right on time.”
“And I’d say she has no business here,” Lane said.

“Well, fortunately, General Lane, you don’t make that decision,” J’onn said.

“As a matter of fact, I do. I’m here to take possession of the Fort Rozz prisoners who surrendered last night, and Supergirl is interfering with that.”

“On whose authority?” J’onn asked.

“By the authority of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the United States Military, and the Secretary of Defense,” Lane replied.

“Really,” Kara said. She reached down and pulled her phone out of her boot. “You won’t mind if I give the Joint Chiefs a call then? Or, you know what, let’s take this right to the top.” Kara pressed the home button on her phone. “Call Olivia,” she said. The command, which she’d set up with Konex over a year ago, initiated a series of protocols the AI had set up, which first accessed any number of secure systems and got the President’s exact location, which at that moment happened to be the oval office, and routed the call to the nearest phone, which in this particular case happened to be the red one sitting on President Marsdin’s desk.

“President Marsdin,” came a voice which echoed across the field in the desert, making Lane’s eyes go even wider.

“Hey, Madam President. This is Supergirl. You’re on Speaker. I’ve got Director Henshaw, Agent Danvers, and General Sam Lane here with me.”

“Interesting crowd,” came the response in a carefully neutral tone. “Any chance you’re going to tell me how you got this particular number?”

“Oh, dear… Did the call come through on the Red Phone?” Kara asked.

“Yes, it did.”

“Sorry about that,” Kara said. “ Didn’t mean to scare you. When I set up the protocol, I figured I’d only be using it in an emergency and designed it to route to whatever phone was physically closest to you.”

“Maybe you should call my secretary sometime, and we can see about setting up something a bit more official.”

“That’s probably a good idea for next time, but I’m afraid this isn’t a social call, ma’am.”

“I gathered that when you described who was with you. How can I help?”

“Well, ma’am, per your instructions, last night, I contacted General In-Ze, and as agreed, she surrendered to Director Henshaw and the DEO. Altogether, she brought in ninety-five former prisoners from Fort Rozz, including the Coluan Indigo and Astra’s husband Non. At the General’s recommendation, Non and Indigo are being held as Enemy Combatants, but the rest are settling in the temporary residences we built in preparation for the surrender.”

“That’s good news,” Marsdin said.

“Yes, I thought so, until General Lane showed up this morning with the intention of taking them into military custody.”
“I’m sorry, what did you just say?” Marsdin asked.

“When I arrived at the DEO this morning, General Lane’s men were here, with guns pointed at the DEO agents on scene, and the stated intention of taking all the Fort Rozz prisoners into military, rather than DEO custody. I disarmed General Lane’s men in order to prevent any unfortunate accidents, and then called you. General Lane did mention that he’s here acting on orders from the Joint Chiefs and the Secretary of Defense and I have to admit, President Marsdin, that left me a little upset. I thought we had reached an understanding last week as to how the prisoners would be handled.”

“Supergirl,” Marsdin said.

“Yes, Madam President?”

“Please take me off speaker and pass the phone to General Lane.”

“Of course, Madam President.” Kara touched the screen, switching the call from speaker to normal, and held the phone out to General Lane, who’d gone white as a sheet. He reached out, and took the phone, raising it to his ear.

“Yes, Madam President?” he said, and those were the last words he spoke for the next twenty-three minutes, after which he passed the phone back to Kara with a simple, “She wants to speak to you.”

Kara raised the phone to her ear. “Supergirl speaking,” she said.

“Kara,” Marsdin said, “you have my apologies.”

“I’d like to say it’s okay, but you know I can’t.”

“I know, but I promise you, this will never happen again.”

“I will hold you to that,” Kara said before hanging up the phone. She looked at General Lane. “I think you’re done here.”

Maggie dropped down on one of the bar stools at Darla’s and waved at M’gann, getting a smile in return. Without asking, M’gann reached into the beer cooler and took out a bottle of Blue Moon. She turned slightly and Carl, the other bartender, blew on the bottle for a second, chilling it an extra few degrees before M’gann carried it over.

“Perks of having a Glacian on staff,” M’gann said as she used her thumb to pop the cap of the beer.

“You know that’s kind of invasive, right?” Maggie said as she reached for the bottle.

“I am what I am,” M’gann said. “I can’t help it if you’re broadcasting right now.”

“If that’s your way of telling me to shut up, I’d love to, but I don’t know how,” Maggie said.

“You should get Kara to give you lessons,” M’gann said. “She’s got the quietest mind I’ve ever seen.”

“You know Kara?” Maggie said.

“She’s been in,” M’gann said. “Good tipper. Bit showy for my taste.”

“I thought Martians couldn’t read Kryptonians.”
“We can’t read them, but normally, we get a sense of presence, a hint of emotion. It’s like static on a radio. Not from her though. Silent as a corpse. She’s definitely had training.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Maggie said.

“So, what’s got you all wound up,” M’gann asked. “You’re not usually a screamer.”

“No, but I could make you one,” Maggie replied.

M’gann laughed and shook her head. “God, it’s a wonder anyone puts up with you.”

“You know you love me,” Maggie said.

“I wouldn’t go that far,” M’gann said. “I mean, you’re cute, but you’re a little young for me.”

“You’re three hundred and change. Everyone is young for you.”

“You begin to see my problem. So, my young Padawan, what troubles you?”

“It’s a long story,” Maggie said, “but like any good one, it’s about a girl.”

“Tall, auburn haired and gorgeous?” M’gann asked with a knowing smile.

“Yeah,” Maggie said.

“Closet cases are always trouble,” M’gann said.

“That’s not the issue,” Maggie said. “I mean, it’s an issue, but… Ah, crap. It’s complicated, and you’re gonna think I’m nuts.”

M’gann stared at her for a moment, then turned towards Carl. “Hold things down for a few?” Carl nodded, and M’gann walked through the bar. “Come on Sawyer. Let’s grab a booth.”

Maggie picked up her beer and followed M’gann over to a booth in the corner that was both empty, and away from everyone else. She dropped down opposite her friend and took another sip from her beer.

“So, spill it,” M’gann said.

“Okay, this is going to sound crazy,” Maggie said. “But let’s say you met someone, and you really, really liked them.”

“Oh, the horror,” M’gann said.

“Shut up and listen,” Maggie said. “So, you meet this person. You hit it off. Things are going really, really well. And then, someone who can see the future… Not someone who claims they can see the future, but someone who you know for absolute certain can *actually* see the future tells you that if you choose to pursue things, you and this person you like are going to fall in love and get married.”

“In that unlikely event, I think I’d probably be pretty happy. I mean, love is a good thing, right?”

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “Now, suppose that this person who can tell the future tells you there’s this one thing you and this person you like are going to fight about. And it’s not a little issue. In fact, it’s kind of huge. Like, say, she wants kids, and you have never even considered having kids. But this person won’t tell you how the argument turns out.”
M’gann stared at her for a long time, and Maggie concentrated on making her mind as blank as possible, which for Maggie basically meant playing ‘One Week’ by the Barenaked Ladies over and over again in her head. She could see M’gann’s face flicker in annoyance.

“Well, at least it’s not a Katie Perry song,” M’gann said, making Maggie smile. M’gann sighed. “Look, Maggie, species that can actually see the future are few and far between. Those that can, don’t advertise, and generally don’t share information unless there’s something in it for them. So, even if, in this ‘hypothetical’, we were to take what you were told at face value, you have to understand that these people only see *probable* futures.”

Maggie nodded. “Okay, assume that in this hypothetical, all of that has been taken into account, and the information is absolutely legit. What do you do?”

“Well,” M’gann said, clearly still unhappy, “I suppose I would step back and consider *why* I never wanted kids. I’d also have to consider what exactly does ‘she wants kids’ mean. Does she want to carry the kids? Does she want you to carry them? Would adoption be enough? If she’s willing to adopt, does she want a baby, or would she adopt an older kid? Does she want one kid, or a bunch? Then, once you’ve worked all that out, you need to figure out how you feel about each of those options.

“Look, Maggie, the last time I went on a date, Louis the XIV was King of France, so I’m a little short on firsthand experience, but what I do know is that relationships only work when you are willing to compromise. Figure out what it is you can live with, and when she brings the subject up, lay it out for her, and figure out where she’s willing to compromise. Then, go from there.”

Maggie nodded, giving M’gann a big smile, because she’d given Maggie a way to tackle what felt like an overwhelming problem. “Thanks,” she said. “I think that’s just what I needed to hear.”

“Good,” M’gann said. “But remember what I said about people who can see the future. That sort of thing *always* ends up costing somebody something. People get shot over things like that. Usually in the head.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.”

Maggie watched M’gann get up and walk away, admiring the view the tight jeans the Martian was wearing gave her. She blushed and looked away when M’gann gave a little wiggle that proved she knew Maggie had been looking.

She took another sip of her beer and thought about what M’gann had said. She'd never wanted kids. It just wasn't something on her radar. She could see the argument though. Getting into a relationship and getting the kids thing sprung on her.

An argument over kids with Emily that just would not end. The more Emily pressed, the more Maggie had dug in. It had gone on for weeks, until one night there was a screaming match. Emily had told her to leave. Maggie had taken it as a breakup, because ‘I can’t even look at you anymore. Just get the fuck out,’ sounded pretty fucking final, and she'd done something stupid. She’d gone out and gotten plastered, and when Emily had let herself into Maggie’s apartment the next morning, Maggie had been curled up around Toby, which had been horribly enough, without the screaming match with Emily that had followed, which ended with her telling Maggie to go fuck herself. The phone call with Toby later, where her former best friend expressed a similar sentiment.

Since then, Maggie had avoided thinking about the topic all together, because it brought up a lot of painful memories. Emily’s ‘you don’t deserve to be happy’ and Toby’s ‘you poison everything you
touch’ and her father’s ‘you shamed me’.

It wasn’t hard to figure out what Kara was doing, either. The way she refused to tell Maggie how the argument ended was enough of a hint. Besides, she couldn’t imagine any version of herself that would consent to bringing a kid into the world in the middle of a war that was being lost. Of course, there was the possibility that she and Alex had picked up some stray. A little war orphan. Maggie had no trouble at all imagining that after all the stories she’d heard from Kara about the way Alex used to take care of her.

Had that been what the fight was about? Has she wanted to turn away some kid that Alex wanted to take in? She couldn’t see it. Not in the middle of a war zone, not with the world coming to an end. She looked around the bar and took in the people there. People she helped all the time. She liked helping people. Liked taking care of people.

So, what was it? Why did the idea of having kids bother her so much?

She thought back to the arguments with Emily. She’d been young and scared, because who wants to have kids when they are twenty-two? But she’d been frustrated more than anything. She’d just kept wondering over and over again why she wasn’t enough for anyone.

Maggie stopped dead, her hand suspended half way to her beer as the realization rolled over her of exactly what it was that had made her hate the idea so much. The feeling that she should be enough. Not that she didn’t like kids, not that she didn’t want to have to take care of someone, but the idea that someone would only want kids because she wasn’t enough for them.

Which, well, if not wanting kids was a deal breaker, was sort of true. Kind of. But Jesus, how fucked up was she to be jealous of the idea of kids?

Maggie picked up her beer and took a drink, deciding this particular bit of fucked up was something else she should thank her papá for. The problem was, knowing where to assign blame didn’t help her with the question at hand. She could safely assume that, in the other timeline, there were no kids. She could safely assume that, because in the other timeline, this had been a source of friction in an otherwise happy relationship. She wasn’t sure she bought that this was the only issue she and Alex ever fought about, but she suspected it was possible that it was the only thing that was a major, recurring issue. But she knew herself well enough to know that if she ever had a kid, no matter how that happened, she wouldn’t be resentful after the fact.

If she knew that though, knew that she’d love a kid if she had one, then what, really, was the issue? Was it the feeling that she would never be enough for someone? Was it all the other compromises she’d have to make? She loved being a cop, but that came with so many risks. Would she have to give that up? She’d fought so hard to be who she was, and she couldn’t help but wonder how much of that she’d have to give up for kids.

Maybe Kara was more right than she knew. She said what worked in that world might not work in this one. Maybe that was her and Alex. Maybe she was so broken that she could only be happy in an equally broken world. But she didn’t want that to be true. She wanted to be happy. She wanted to fall in love and get married and wake up next to Alex every morning.

“Shit,” she muttered to herself, as she realized how easily Alex’s name rolled through her head, and how true it was. Because it was Alex when she pictured it now. Alex had replaced the poorly-defined day dream she’d had for years. Maggie wanted to blame Kara for that, and probably should at least a little bit with the way Kara had spent months talking Alex up before they’d actually met, but if she believed what Kara told her about the other timeline, it wasn’t much different there.
She wanted Alex. She’d gone to see Kara because she wanted to make sure that Alex would want her too, because she already knew Alex rejecting her would hurt. Picturing a life, a future without Alex in it made her feel like she was choking.

She needed to talk to someone about this, and aside from M’gann, she could only think of one other person who might be able to give her the perspective she needed, so she took out her phone, pulled up her contacts, and found the one she wanted, hitting the call button.

“¡Hola, mija!”

Maggie smiled at the sound of the cheerful voice of her aunt Juanita on the other end of the line. “Hola, Tía. You have time to talk?”

“For you, cariña, always. What do you need?” Juanita asked.

“I need some advice,” Maggie said.

“Oh, advice. That sounds serious,” Juanita replied. “What’s wrong, mija?”

“I met a girl,” Maggie said.

“Oh, I can see how that must be so horrible for you. However will you survive?”


“So am I, mi amor. A young, attractive lesbian, meeting a beautiful, captivating woman. I know the torture will last for decades. You’ll be sitting there, in the house you’ve finished paying off, surrounded by your grandchildren, and she, your wife of thirty-five years, will be laying with her head in your lap, telling you how beautiful she thinks you are, and you’ll still be wondering if she means in a romantically, or if the dating and the marriage and the children and the finger banging and the comiendo la papaya were all just as friends.”

Maggie sighed. “You’ve been on Tumblr again haven’t you, Tía?”

“You say that like it’s a bad thing. I’m forty-five, not dead. And there’s talk about rebooting Xena. I want to read all the fic when that happens.”

“I kind of hate that you know what fanfiction is,” Maggie said.

“Ay, cariña, be glad I do. If it wasn’t for Xena and Gabrielle, you might not have had an embarrassing lesbiana Tía to take you in.”

“I’ll be sure to send Lucy Lawless a thank you note any day now.”

“Just don’t send her a toaster oven. I’m sure she has enough by now.”

“I’ll keep that in mind,” Maggie said.

“My point is, your generation did not invent Lesbian Sheeping. Gay chicas were standing around trying to figure out if they were into each other before either of us were born.”

“I don’t doubt it,” Maggie said, doing her best to keep from laughing.

“Now, Marguerita, tell me what’s troubling you,” Juanita said.

“I really, really like this girl, Tía,” Maggie said. “The rent the U-Haul on the second date kind of
kind of like.”

“Oh, mija. No wonder you are calling me. Is it your Kara, this girl you are talking about?”

“No, Tía, it’s Kara’s hermana,” Maggie said. “Her name is Alex, and she’s... um... she’s... she’s amazing. Just so beautiful it hurts to look at her, and my heart starts pounding the moment she walks into the room, and all I can think of is how much I want to kiss her.”

“Oh, Marguerita, you have enfermo de amor.”

“Yeah,” Maggie said, a little wistfully. “I think I do.”

“Then what’s the problem, cariña? Does she not like you back?”

“I think she does,” Maggie said. “Or at least, I think she’s starting too. It’s just... she wants kids, Tía, and I don’t know if I can do that.”

“Oh, pobrecita, you never have it easy, do you?” Juanita asked, sympathy pouring from every word.

“I think I got myself into this one,” Maggie said. “But I don’t know what to do, Tía.”

“We’ve been here before, cariña. But, if you want a better ending this time, I think you need to ask yourself a question. Why does it bother you, the idea of children? Be truthful.”

Maggie took a deep breath, bracing herself for the answer she was afraid to give. “I always wondered why I wasn’t enough,” she said. “Why couldn’t I ever be enough for anyone?”

“Oh, mi corazón, it’s moments like this I dearly wish I could cut your papi’s heart out with a spoon,” Juanita said. “Listen to me, Marguerita. I never, in my life before you, dreamed that I would be a mother. Never wanted to be. And then, one day, my pendejo brother calls me, screaming at me that it’s my fault somehow that his daughter is gay. And I knew, as soon as he said it, what I had to do. I said to him, ‘if you cannot love your hija for who she is and be proud of her, you bring her to me, and I will be her madre.’ That’s why he brought you to me, mija. And when my novia found out that I had taken you in, she left me.”

Maggie had to swallow a lump in her throat before she could speak. “Oh, Tía,” she said. “I didn’t know.”

“No, no, mija. I’m not telling you this because I want you to feel guilty. I’m telling you this, because I want you to understand, that in the sixteen years since I spoke those words, I have not regretted for a single moment. Not when your mami spit in my face. Not when your papi called me a marimacha. Not when your abuela called me, screaming, telling me I deserved to burn in hell. You have been the most wonderful part of my life, Marguerita. You are not just mi sobrina, you are mi hija, have always been enough for me. I love you so much, and I never want to see you in pain.

“Now, this Alex… if you want to be with her, then you need to ask yourself a difficult question. Is it that you don’t want children? Or is it that you are afraid that she won’t have enough love for you, and the children? If it’s the first, then however wonderful she is, she’s not the right woman for you. But if it’s the second, then ask yourself if that’s a reasonable fear? Do you really believe that she doesn’t have enough love to go around? If you do, then again, she is not the woman for you. You are easy to love, mi corazón, but I will not deny that you need a very great deal of it. All beautiful things do.”
“Gracias, Tía,” Maggie said as she wiped tears from her face.

“Do you know what you are going to do, mija?” Juanita asked.

“Yes,” Maggie said. “I think I’m going to stop crying, and then I’m going to text the girl.”

“Good for you, mija! ¡Buena suerte con la chica!”

“Well, this is getting to be a habit,” Cat said.

Kara looked up from the glass of Scotch she’d been staring into, and smiled, just a bit. “Good evening, Miss Grant,” she said.

“You know, considering all the things we’re doing together, I think I can let you call me Cat,” she said.

The small smile on Kara’s face turned into a full-blown grin. “I’m still not telling you my name, Cat.”

“I had to try,” Cat said, no hint of apology on her face or in her voice. “Mind if I join you?”

“It’s your balcony,” Kara said, “but I would definitely enjoy the company.”

“Good to know,” Cat said as she sat down. “You have another glass?”

Kara nodded and reached down, picking up a second tumbler and setting it on the table. Then she used the same mold from the interview, and a puff of her freeze breath to make an ice ball for Cat’s glass, before pouring her a couple of fingers of the Ardbeg.

“That’s a handy trick,” Cat said, taking the glass.

“Yeah. I’m a big hit at parties,” Kara replied before taking a sip of her Scotch.

“Rough day?” Cat asked.

“Does it show?”

“Well, day drinking is usually a sign. Want to talk about it?”

Kara looked up at her for a moment, considering the questions and her own mixed emotions, and gave a tiny shrug. “If I didn’t, I probably would have remembered to check to see if you were still here before I borrowed your balcony.”

“That’s… probably a bit more self-awareness than I was expecting.”

“Well,” Kara said. “Someone I admire… Someone who’s spent a lot of time teaching me how to be better, once told me that the key is never lying to yourself about who you are, what you want, and what you can and cannot do.” Kara watched Cat’s face as she said it, and if she hadn’t known Cat as well as she did, she would have missed the shock on Cat’s face, because Cat had said those exact words to her, not long after she’d hired Kara.

“That sounds like good advice,” Cat said.

“Oh, she always gives good advice,” Kara said. “She’s a bit nosey though.”
“We all have our faults.”

Kara turned and looked out over the city, taking another sip of her scotch before she spoke again. “I locked one of the people I love most in the universe in a cage last night,” she said. She turned back to Cat. “It’s a very nice cage. It’s got a TV, a jacuzzi tub, meal service.”

“But it’s still a cage,” Cat said.

“And I locked her in it,” Kara said. “Because she’s a criminal. Because my mother, and my father, and my aunt and my uncle, and all the leaders of Krypton made her a criminal.”

“What happened?”

“Our world was dying… No, that’s not right. We were killing it. Oh, we had help. There were people out there, more than willing to push the knife in, but our arrogance, or hubris… We ignored the warning signs. Abused the gift Rao had given us. In our greed and avarice, we drove mines deep in to the core of our world. We did it without hesitation, without thought for the future. Jor-El realized what was happening, but Aunt Astra was the only one who would listen, and when Uncle Jor was too weak, too cowed by the word of the council to act, Astra gathered a group of followers. People she’d worked with over the years. Some of them believed her. Most of them, probably. I think a few just hated the Houses and the Council, not that I can blame them.”

“What they planned to do… It was horrible, and in the end, Krypton was already too far gone for it to make a difference. But they tried. They defied the council, they broke the law, and in the end, someone died. But at least they tried.”

Kara closed her eyes. She could feel the tears running down her face, the lump in her throat, and when she spoke, the way her lip quivered. “My mother, my father, my aunt and uncle… They did nothing. They stood back and let it happen. And I lost everything, Cat. My family, my home, my culture, my entire world. It was just wiped from the stars, and I saw it happen. I watched it. Thirty billion people died, and it was just me and Kal-El, and then, when I got here, he didn’t need me. He… He just abandoned me.”

She felt Cat’s arms slip around her, and pull her close, and she rested her head on Cat’s shoulder.

“Shhh…” Cat whispered.

Kara slipped her arms around Cat, holding her as tightly as she dared. “I’m sorry,” she said.

“It’s okay,” she said. “I’m here. Just let it out.”

“I talked her into surrendering. I begged her. I promised her she’d be safe.”

“Something happened?” Cat asked.

“General Lane tried to take them,” Kara said. “I stopped it, but if someone hadn’t warned me… I can’t lose Astra again,” Kara said. “I can’t.”

Cat reached up, stroking Kara’s hair. “We won’t let it happen,” she said. “I promise.”

Kara closed her eyes, leaning into Cat’s touch. She knew the promise was empty, that as powerful as Cat was, the forces aligned against them were nearly unstoppable, but it didn’t matter. Hearing Cat say it, she believed it, and she felt just a bit of the weight of fifty-three universes lift off her shoulders.
Kinda I Want To

Chapter Summary

Maggie asks Alex to meet her somewhere and Kara gets a visitor in the early hours of the morning.

Alex frowned as she approached the address Maggie had given her. The text hadn’t been especially clear. It had just given the address, a time, and said “dress is casual, steel-toed boots required.” Alex hadn’t been sure how to interpret that, so she’d pulled on a pair of cargo pants, a t-shirt, and a dark red leather jacket and a pair of combat boots and headed out. She’d only brought two guns. But this was not what she’d been expecting at all. Instead of some rundown hideout, or warehouse, or something else that screamed “crime scene”, the address was a night club called Reptile.

There was a line outside, which was just bizarre for a Sunday night, but Alex walked past it, looking for Maggie. She spotted her near the door, standing out of the way, chatting with one of the bouncers. As soon as she saw her, Alex felt the tension melt out of her. Before Alex could call out to her, Maggie turned, spotted her, and when she did, she smiled, and Alex couldn’t help but smile back. The bouncer said something that made Maggie laugh and shake her head, and Alex was too far away to hear the reply over the noise of the crowd and the club, but Maggie never looked away from her. She just gave the bouncer a little wave and started towards Alex.

“Hey,” she said. “I’m glad you made it.”

“Wouldn’t miss it,” Alex said. “Of course, I don’t know what it is, so aiming might be a problem.”

Maggie’s smile got even wider as she laughed. “It’s a concert, Danvers,” Maggie said. “No aiming required. Unless Marylin Manson is opening.”

“Hey, I like Marylin Manson!” Alex said.

“Yeah,” Maggie said, “Kara warned me about your questionable taste in music.”

“*My* questionable taste? From the girl who has every track NSync, Britney Spears, and Justin Timberlake ever recorded on her phone?”

“Why do you think I didn’t listen to her?” Maggie asked. “Come on,” she said. “I think you’ll like this.” Maggie slipped her hand into Alex’s, giving it a little squeeze and leaving Alex a little too flustered to ask questions as Maggie started leading them towards the door.

They walked right past the line, and Maggie held out to VIP passes to the bouncer she’d been talking too. He waved then through, and Maggie shoved the passes back in her pocket, but not before Alex noticed the CatCo logo on the bottom.

“Kara give you those?” Alex asked.

“Maybe,” Maggie said.

Alex raised an eyebrow.
“Okay, yes. The band sent passes over to CatCo for Supergirl. Kara thought I’d enjoy them more.”

“You going to tell me who we’re seeing?” Alex asked.

“And spoil the surprise?” Maggie said as she led them to table.

“Never been a huge fan of surprises,” Alex said.

“Well, you’re just going to have to suffer,” Maggie said, turning towards the approaching waiter. “A Blue Moon,” Maggie said.

“Same,” Alex said.

“Chips and salsa?” Maggie asked.

“Sure,” Alex said.

The waiter nodded and headed for the bar.

“How you holding up?” Maggie asked as she picked up a menu.

“Pretty good,” Alex said, grabbing a menu of her own. “Busy weekend.”

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “Kara told me what happened. Lane’s always been an asshole.”

“You know him?” Alex asked.

“You aren’t qualified to handle these types of prisoners, little lady,” Maggie said, in a scarily accurate imitation of Lane’s voice.

Alex’s jaw dropped. “He actually called you ‘little lady’?”

“Yeah,” Maggie said.

“And you let him live?”

“It may have taken three people to keep me from breaking his jaw,” Maggie said. “I did feel bad about giving my Captain a black eye afterwards.”

“You didn’t!” Alex said.

Maggie gave a small, sheepish shrug. “We kept the prisoner though. Guy named Brian. Idiot keeps getting in trouble with bookies.”

“An alien named Brian?”

“That was my first reaction too,” Maggie said. “Guy does freelance graphic design. Gets all his clients online, so he never has to meet anyone in person. Pays his bills and loves his ponies.”

“You know, I hate to turn this into a conversation about work,” Alex said.

“Yeah, because I didn’t already do that,” Maggie shot back.

“Fair point,” Alex said. “But how are the aliens reacting to Supergirl?”

“Cautiously,” Maggie said. “I think a lot of them want to believe she’s on the level, but…”
“But?”

“But Superman puts a lot of them in lock up.” Maggie said. “It’s kind of split. The ones who can pass aren’t as resentful. The ones that can’t kind of hate the hell out of him. If Brian walked into a bank in Metropolis, Superman would be punching out his teeth before he could finish filling out his deposit slip.”

“See, now you’re making me feel bad,” Alex said. “I always hate realizing I have something in common with Clark.”

The waiter chose that moment to arrive with the beers, chips and salsa.

“I’d like the chicken Empanada platter,” Maggie said.

“Hot Pastrami Double cheese burger with onion rings, and an order of Mozarella sticks.” Alex said.

The waiter disappeared again, and Maggie turned back to Alex.

“So, not a fan of the cousin?”

“I get along with him for Kara’s sake and I’m sure he means well, but it’s kind of hard to forget the part where he abandoned Kara with a group of people who were basically work friends. Don’t get me wrong. I’m glad he did because I love Kara. She’s-“

“Kind of your whole life,” Maggie said.

“Yeah,” Alex agreed. “Sounds kind of pathetic when you put it that way.”

“I don’t think so,” Maggie said. “She talks about you a lot, you know. About how fantastic you are, about how much she looks up to you, about how much you inspire her.”

Alex took a sip of her beer. “I don’t know,” she said. “After everything I heard, I kind of feel like I let her down.”

“I don’t think so, and she sure as hell doesn’t. She talks about you like you’re her hero. Honestly, that’s why I put off meeting you for so long.”

“What?” Alex asked.

“Kara is… amazing. Completely not my type, but it’s hard to be around her for more than a few minutes without realizing she’s incredible. You get that.”

“Yeah,” Alex said. “Hard to miss.”

“But the way she talked about you… I was afraid I wouldn’t measure up,” Maggie said.

“That’s crazy! You’re amazing. You’re smart and you’re tough and you’re beautiful,” Alex said, stopping herself when she realized she was gushing.

Maggie looked down at the table, her cheeks turning bright red as she blushed. “Way to put a girl on the spot, Danvers,” she said, but she was smiling so wide she couldn’t put any sting into the words.

“I… uh… I just…”
“It’s okay,” Maggie said as she reached out and took Alex’s and, squeezing it. “You’re not so bad yourself.”

Alex glanced down at their joined hands, trying to figure out why her heart was suddenly pounding inside her chest and her stomach was doing all sorts of weird things.

“I’m sorry,” Maggie said, starting to pull her hand away. “I think I got my wires crossed.”

Alex caught Maggie’s hand before she pulled away. “I… Um…” She looked up at Maggie. “I don’t know what’s going on here,” she said.

Maggie laughed softly and shook her head. “Then I’m seriously off my game,” she said. She lifted their hands, turning them over so Alex’s was on top, and brought her lips down, brushing them over Alex’s knuckles, and the heart that had been pounding before slammed against her sternum so hard it felt like she’d been punched in the chest. “Is that okay?” Maggie asked.

It was all Alex could do to nod, because her entire world was suddenly tilting on its axis. There was a voice in the back of her head telling her to pull away, to run, that this wasn't right and would only lead to disaster. She wasn't gay. She wasn't.

Except if she wasn't, why was the thought of leaving so much worse? Why was the thought of disappointing Maggie so much worse? Why did Kara’s words, that she was better with Maggie around, more alive, happier, keep ringing in her ears?

She'd felt this before. This swirling, twisting knot of terror and confusion. She'd felt it the morning she'd woken up in Vicki's bed with her top hiked up and Vicki's hand resting on her bare stomach. She'd felt it in college when she'd walked in on Karen changing. She'd felt it in med school when she saw Lauren making out with some girl in the back of the bar they hung out at.

Every one of those moments had been the end of a friendship, and the loss of someone Alex had cared about, and the last one had been the start of Alex's downward spiral.

The thought of losing Maggie was worse than the reality of losing Vicki and Karen and Lauren. She didn't know how that had happened, but somewhere between the night they met, and putting together security for the gala and the nights spent playing pool and the text messages at all hours and working the bombing, Maggie had stopping just being Kara's friend or a coworker. She'd become Maggie and sitting there Alex realized that she couldn't lose Maggie anymore than she could lose Kara.

"Hey," Maggie said, "are you okay?"

"No," Alex said, looking up at Maggie's face. "I'm scared."

Maggie's face fell a little. "You don't need to be," she said. "I'm not trying to force anything here. I just-"

"No!" Alex said, cutting Maggie off in a near panic. "No. I don't think that. I'm not scared of you." She reached out and took Maggie's free hand. "I'm scared of myself."

Maggie have her a smile full of sympathy. "Why are you afraid?" she asked softly.

"I don't know," Alex said. "I've just... I've felt like this before, and I didn't understand it and it ended badly and I always lost the person I had the feeling about, and maybe it doesn't make sense because we hardly know each other, but the thought of losing you terrifies me."
"Well, I'm not going anywhere," Maggie said. "I like you, Alex. I like you a lot. More than I expected, because as nervous as I was about meeting you, I was half sure Kara was overselling it. But if anything, she was underselling you."

"I want you in my life. You and your crazy alien sister and Winn and Susan and your grumpy boss, and Kara's power crushes and the wacky supervillain relatives. But if you just want to be friends, I can back off."

Alex looked down at their hands, and the faint hint of lipstick on her knuckles. Just the sight of it made her heart jump in her chest and made her body reach in a way she'd only ever reacted to her own touch before. She thought about it. Thought about a future where she and Maggie were just friends. Though about what it would be like to watch Maggie date and fall in love and get married, and of course her mind put Vasquez in the part of the other woman, because Susan was the only lesbian besides Kara in their little circle.

Alex was pretty sure the sudden and overwhelming urges to vomit and to punch Vasquez in the face was all the answer she needed. She looked back up at Maggie.

"I don't want you to back off," Alex said. "But I may be regretting ordering the onion rings."

Maggie laughed. "Somebody's sure of herself."

"Am I wrong?" Alex asked.

"No," Maggie said, smiling fondly.

"Just, be patient with me," Alex said.

"As patient as you need," Maggie said.

"Just a minute!" Kara yelled as she stumbled towards the door, still half asleep, and wondering who the hell was waking her up at three o’clock in the morning.

"Open up, Kara!"

Right. Alex. Kara turned the lock and stepped back as Alex shoved the door open and stormed into her apartment. “Alex, it is way too early for you to be freaking out about breakfast with Eliza,” Kara said. “She won’t be hear for at least eight more hours.”

“This isn’t about that!” Alex snapped as she marched over to the kitchen and started jerking open cabinets. “I’ll freak out about that later. This is about you setting me up!”

“Alex, what are you talking about?” Kara asked as she closed and locked the door.

“What am I talking about? I’ll tell you what I’m talking about. Maggie! And where the hell is my Scotch?"

“Maggie? What does Maggie have to…” Kara stopped as it dawned on her what Alex was talking about. “She took you to the concert, didn’t she?"

“Yeah! She took me to see Nine Inch Nails, Kara. Nine Inch Nails! And not just Nine Inch Nails. They played an entire unreleased album. And it was amazing. And Maggie was amazing, and sweet, and funny, and beautiful, and… and… and you did this to me!” She turned around to face Kara for the first time since she’d walked into the apartment.
“What did I do, Alex?” Kara asked.

“Did I feel like this, before?” she asked, and the tremble in her voice nearly broke Kara’s heart.

Kara walked over and took Alex’s hand. “Come talk with me,” she said, leading Alex over to the couch. They sat down, and Kara slipped an arm around her.

“I don’t know what to do,” Alex said as tears started rolling down her face.

“The first time you met Maggie, the two of you were arguing over a crime scene,” Kara said as she rubbed Alex’s shoulder. “An Infernian had tried to kill President Marsdin at National City Airport. Two days later, the Infernian kidnapped Maggie, and you nearly tore Darla’s apart with your bare hands until you found someone who knew where she was, and then you beat it out of him.”

Alex laughed through the small sobs she was making. “That sounds like something I’d do,” she said.

“I think you’d known her all of three weeks before you came to me and told me you had feelings for her.”

“It was that fast?” Alex asked.

“Faster,” Kara said. “She had a girlfriend when you met her, but the way Maggie told the story, she told you she’d gotten dumped, and you pulled an engagement ring out of your pocket and asked her to marry you. You always claimed she was exaggerating, but M’gann saw the whole thing, and she said you were the most useless gay mess she’d ever seen, ever before you realized you were gay.”

“M’gann? A Martian?” Alex asked.

“Yeah. She tends bar at Darla’s,” Kara said. “Alex, I have visited forty-seven different universes, and there are only two constants in all of them.”

“What’s that?” Alex asked.

Kara reached up and brushed a strand of hair behind Alex’s ear. “In every universe out there, you fall in love with Maggie Sawyer the moment you lay eyes on her. That, and Big Belly Burger.”

Alex covered her face with both hands, but Kara could hear and feel the laughter she was trying to smother, until she dropped one hand and shoved Kara. “Only you could make this about food,” she said.

“I’m not. Seriously. There’s a world out there that looks like something out of a Mad Max film, but they still have Big Belly Burger. Just, if you ever go there, don’t ask what kind of meat it is.”

“Why didn’t you tell me?” Alex asked.

“Because,” Kara said, “this is something you needed to figure out for yourself.” She gave Alex a little squeeze. “What was the giveaway though?”

“I think it was the part where she said she was nervous about meeting me because you’d talked me up so much, and I blurted out how I thought she was amazing and smart and tough and beautiful.”

“God, you *are* just a big gay mess, aren’t you?”

“Takes one to know one,” Alex said.
“Yeah.”

“We might also have gotten a little drunk and spent forty-five minutes making out on her couch.”

Kara let out a squeal that make Alex wince and the windows tremble. “You did not!”

Alex nodded.

Kara pulled her into a hug. “I am *so* happy for you,” she said.

“Just tell me it doesn’t end in disaster,” Alex said.

“Well, you did get married in your DEO uniform,” Kara said.

“What?” Alex squeaked.

“Which I’m sure Cat would say was a fashion disaster, but no, Alex. You two loved each other so much that sometimes it hurt to look at it.”

“Really?” Alex asked.

“Really,” Kara said. “Alex, please, don’t doubt this. Ever since I got here, your whole life has been about me. Protecting me, taking care of me. It’s time for that to change. I will always love you, and I will always be here for you, and I am always going to need you in my life, but I want you to have a life too. I want you to be happy, get married, have kids. Do all the things you dreamed of.”

“What about you?” Alex asked.

Kara sighed and shook her head. “One of the sad things about knowing the future is knowing all the people you can’t date, because you don’t want to fuck with really wonderful relationships.”

“What about Lucy? You seemed pretty flirty with her.”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “I’m kind of hoping James will get his head out of his ass and do right by her, because she *really* loves him.”

“Sounds like there’s a story there?”

Kara gave a small shake of her head, not because there wasn’t a story, but because the Lucy she’d known in the other timeline didn’t deserve to be remembered for putting a bullet in her father’s head after she found out about he had ordered James’s murder.

“Of course, it would probably help if James could admit to himself that he’s got a crush on Kal.”

“Okay, I did not need to know that,” Alex said.

Kara laughed. “James might, but one of the things Sara taught me was that it’s rude to out people to themselves.”

“What about Sara?” Alex asked. “You seemed to care about her a lot.”

“I did,” Kara said, “but that’s a whole can of worms I don’t want to open. And before you suggest Vasquez, no. I mean, she’s smoking hot, and I’d totally hit that, but—”

“You know who she ends up with in the other timeline.”
“Yeah,” Kara said. “And you’re doing it again.”

“What?”

“Making this about me,” Kara said. “Which reminds me! Coming out at Thanksgiving dinner is going to become a Danvers family tradition!”

“What? Wait. NO! OH HELL NO!”

Kara laughed. “Will it help if I promise you it goes really, really well?”

“It does?”

Kara nodded and pulled Alex into a hug. “She loves you, Alex. She might not be the best at expressing it, and you two really need to have a talk about a lot of things, but she loves you so much.”

“I know,” Alex said, “but sometimes it doesn’t feel that way.”

Kara kissed her on the temple. “We’ll all talk,” she said. “I promise.”
The First Law of Rao

Chapter Summary

Leslie airs her annual 'Things I’m Not Grateful For' segment.

Chapter Notes

Early Chapter today, because I have an 8:30 AM appointment. Also, I don't usually specifically ask for comments, but in this case, I'm going to make an exception. I am super excited to finally post this chapter. A *lot* went into this chapter, and it's really close to my heart. I would really love to know what you guys think, so even if you don't normally, please consider leaving a comment.

“I wish I could stay longer,” Kara said as she hugged Astra tightly.

“I understand, Little One,” Astra said. “I am happy for you. It’s good that you have family here.”

Kara let her go, so she could step back and look her in the eye. “You are a part of that family, Astra.” She said. “And soon, you’ll be able to join us.”

“I keep warning you not to get your hopes up,” Astra said. “If your President honors her word about my followers, I will be content.”

“I won’t be,” Kara said. “/ukiemodh w rraop , eh ,astruh,/”

“/ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir./ Now, go, be with your family.”

Kara gave Astra one last hug, before she headed back into the main DEO facility.

“How’s your Aunt?” J’onn asked as Kara walked into the conference room.

“Still expecting to spend the rest of her life in a cage,” Kara said as she took a seat across from J’onn at the table.

“We’re working as fast as we can, Miss Danvers,” J’onn said.

“I know,” Kara said. “I just wish she could come home with me for the Holiday. For that matter, I wish you’d consider coming to Thanksgiving Dinner too.”

“Someone’s got to mind the store while you and Alex are gone,” J’onn said. “Besides, I don’t think Eliza would be happy to see me.”

“She would be once she knows the truth,” Kara said.
“You’re going to tell her everything” J’onn asked.

“No,” Kara said. “For the same reasons I’m not going to tell Kal.”

J’onn nodded, but before he could say anything, the video screen on the wall turned on, and President Marsdin appeared.

“Good morning,” she said.

“Madam President,” J’onn and Kara both replied.

Marsdin shifted her gaze to Supergirl. “I have to tell you, Supergirl. You are making a *lot* of waves on Capitol Hill right now. Half of Congress loves you, and the other half wants to shoot you back into space.”

“Well, Cat always says, if you don’t make at least one politician a day hate you, it’s not worth getting out of bed.” Kara said.

Marsdin laughed. “Anything you want to tell me about what I should be expecting next?”

“The Maxwell Lord situation is probably going to get really ugly once people have had a chance to read the Planet and the Tribune,” Kara said.

“Wonderful,” Marsdin deadpanned. “You do know he has something like forty billion dollars in government contracts right now?”

Kara shrugged. “Next time, maybe make sure you’re not hiring a sociopathic murderer?”

“I’ll take it under advisement.” She turned to J’onn. “Director Henshaw, how are our guests doing?”

“They’ve settled into the temporary accommodations fairly well, though most of them had to double up, since we got a lot more than we expected. We’re working on trying to find a more permanent housing solution, but until we have official word on how we’re going to handle their status, we can’t put anything solid into effect.”

“Understandable,” Marsdin said. “That’s actually what this call is about. I’d like you to put together a list for me of all the DEO’s current prisoners who you would consider to be safe for integration into the general population. Anyone whose only real crime is being an alien, or who only committed crimes necessary to survive as an alien on Earth. Also, any prisoners whose original sentence in Fort Rozz has been served, and hasn’t committed any serious crimes on Earth. Add to that list General In-Ze and anyone she vouches for. Supergirl, you’ll need to countersign for anyone on General In-Ze’s list.”

“So, we’re really going to put them out on the streets?” J’onn asked.

“The ones who aren’t a threat,” Marsdin said. “As for the rest, we’re going to start trying to integrate them into the legal system. I’ll be assigning a federal prosecutor to review their cases. We’ll be setting up a special court to try them for their crimes, and sentences will include time already served.”

“If you do that, the DEO will have to go public,” J’onn said.

“I think it’s past time for that, don’t you, Director Henshaw?”
J’onn looked over at Kara, then back at the screen. “It would make our jobs a lot easier,” he said.

“Can I make a suggestion?” Kara said.

“I’d be surprised if you didn’t” Marsdin said.

“Assign Lucy Lane to the DEO to help us get the evidence in order for the Federal Prosecutors,” Kara said.

“General Lane’s daughter?” Marsdin asked.

“Yes,” Kara said.

“That seems an odd choice,” Marsdin said.

“Not really. First, she already knows my civilian identity,” Kara said. “Considering that she’s Lois Lane’s sister, and is involved with James Olsen, it seemed reasonable that she could keep that a secret. Secondly, she’s an amazing lawyer, with an impeccable record. Third, the fact that she *is* Sam Lane’s daughter will help deflect any criticism that you’re going soft on the aliens.”

“You know, Supergirl, sometimes it’s a little scary how comfortable you are with political maneuvering.”

“I spent the last year working for Cat Grant. What did you expect?”

“Based on her previous assistants, ulcers, premature gray hair, and severe anxiety.”

Kara laughed. “There are benefits to a Kryptonian physiology,” she said.

“I’m sure.”

“How quickly do you want the list, Madam President?” J’onn asked.

“I’ll be signing the Alien Amnesty Act first thing Monday morning. I’d like the first stack of Pardons ready for signature at that time. But I do want to be clear. Many of the pardons will be contingent on a period of public service.”

“Understood,” J’onn said.

“Are you okay with that, Supergirl?” Marsdin asked.

“As long as it’s service and not slavery, Madam President. They have to be free to have real lives.”

“That’s a fair concern,” Marsdin said. “As much as I wish it wasn’t. But I promise you, we’ll make sure it’s not too burdensome.”

“Thank you. I-“

The rest of Kara’s statement was cut off by the containment breach alarm. Kara didn’t wait for J’onn or Marsdin to say anything, she just went.

“Hey,” Kara said as she flew in through the window of her apartment.

“Finally!” Alex said.

“Sorry I’m late. One of the prisoners got loose. Butchest woman I’ve ever seen,” Kara said.
“That’s your excuse?” Alex asked.

“Um, that and I was talking to the President,” Kara said.

Alex sighed and looked over at the Cabinet where her Johnny Walker usually lived. “Why did you get rid of my Scotch?”

Kara laughed. “Because you should not come out to Eliza while you’re drunk,” she said.

“You know, maybe I should wait. I mean-“

“Alex,” Kara said, taking her by the shoulders, “you don’t have to do anything you don’t want to, you know that, right?”

Alex nodded.

“Good,” Kara said. “But think about what kissing Maggie felt like, and tell me, do you have any doubts?”

Alex watched the smile spread across her face, watched as her whole body shifted, like a weight had been taken off her shoulders.

“Okay,” Kara said, “That’s what I’m talking about when I said sometimes it hurt to look at the two of you.”

“I’m sorry,” Alex said.

“No,” Kara said as she pulled Alex into a hug. “Don’t ever be sorry. Just make sure you don’t even let Maggie go.”

There was a knock at the door, and Kara took a deep breath, remembering how poorly this visit went the first time around, and determined to not let this particular piece of history repeat itself. She let go of Alex and walked over, doing a quick x-ray check to make sure no one else could see the door before she opened it.

“Eliza!” Kara sound.

“My girls!” Eliza said. “Oh, my best, favorite wonderful girls!” She pulled Kara into a hug, and Kara hugged her back carefully. “Alex, come here,” Eliza said, pulling Alex into the hug as well, before she let them go and stepped back.

“It’s so good to be here. And you both look so great.” Eliza gave her a once over and Kara had to fight not to roll her eyes a little bit. “You always looked great in blue,” Eliza said before turning to Alex. “And you look a little tired sweetie. Is the lab keeping you busy?”

“No,” Kara said, bouncing on her feet. “She looks tired because she woke me up at three am and spent hours going on about how great her date last night was.”

“Kara!” Alex yelled.

“You had a date?” Eliza asked in an excited tone.

“She totally had a date,” Kara said, smiling at the increasingly red color of Alex’s face.

“You… You, rat!”
“Alex,” Eliza said.

“You’re totally getting rice pudding instead of cake for your next birthday!”


“Girls!” Eliza yelled.

“Lady Kara,” Konex said, making Alex and Eliza both jump as he decloaked.

“Yes, Konex?” Kara said.

“I think you’ll want to hear this,” the robot said. A moment later, Leslie Willis’s voice sounded through the apartment.

“It is time for my annual list of Things I Am Not Grateful For, and this year’s list only has one item. Supergirl. The blue and red abscessed tooth in the otherwise gleaming smile that is National City.

“How much do I despise, I mean loathe, her whole, ‘Look at me, I’m adorkable’ thing. It’s such an act, and anybody can see through it, because the moment it’s convenient for her, she switched to that whole ‘I’m alien Jesus, come to cure cancer and save kittens!’ thing. And all that religious crap. ‘Rao light your way’. Please, like she’s going to church on Sunday. She’s nothing but a media whore, just desperate for attention.

“And that hideous, like, rejected from the Olympics figure skating outfit she wears.

“I mean, a skirt and tights? Puh-lease. Seems like overkill, especially since no one is trying to get in there. And who would that be? You know, who’s Hombre enough to puncture the Chastity Belt of Steel? Or is it a softer touch that’s required? I mean, she does give of kind of a Sapphic Vibe, with that big ol’ butch ‘S’ on her chest plate. I mean, how would that even work with an alien? I mean, is everything the same down there, or are we talking tentacles? Maybe it’s time for a break, or a makeover.”

Kara signed and reached up, pinching the bridge of her nose. “How long ago, Konex?”

“I was playing it on a thirty second delay from live, Lady Kara,” Konex said.

Kara looked up at Eliza. “I’m sorry, I’ve got to go to work.”

“What?” Alex said, a look of pure panic on her face.

“I shouldn’t be long,” Kara said walking over to the window and lifting off.

A small, tiny part of Kara had hoped Leslie wouldn’t mouth off about her this time around, because she’d been much less of a hot mess as a hero her first few weeks, because of the charity efforts, and the public support of the Alien Amnesty Act. Except it has only seemed to make the attack worse by giving Leslie more ammunition. On the other hand, she’d already decided how she was going to deal with this, if the time came, so Supergirl landed on the same Balcony on the forty-second floor she used when she was making a public showing of visiting the social media team and walked through the office wearing what she thought of as her ‘Pissed off Aunt Astra’ face as she walked over towards the elevator.

She had a brief moment to notice Winn’s eyes get big, but she ignored him as she walked towards
the elevators. She did see him reach for his phone as the doors started to close, but she just ignored it. She had bigger fish to fry. Or keep from getting fried by a freak lightning accident, as the case may be. She just punched the button for the thirty-second floor. The whole way down, she worked on making sure she had her game face on.

The elevator dinged, and the doors opened. For the first few steps, no one noticed Kara, but then someone did, and the “oh shit!” almost made her break character and smile, but she just took another step forward, remembering her purpose.

She could hear Leslie, even though the ostensibly sound-proofed booth. The woman had moved on to making jokes about the fact that Johnny Depp had apparently put on some weight. She kept up the string of fat jokes, uninterrupted, right up until the moment Kara opened the door, and walked into her studio.

“I mean, it’s no wonder there are rumors-” Whatever Leslie was going to was lost as she looked up to see Kara standing in the door. There was a long moment of silence, before Leslie started to speak again. “Now this is interesting,” She said. “You guys are never going to believe this, but the so-called ‘Girl of Steel’ herself just walked into my studio, and oh, gosh, by the look on her face, I think I might have made her mad.”

Kara shook her head as she walked over and picked up a headset, dropping into the chair across from Leslie.

“You really aren’t afraid of anything, are you,” she asked.

“I’m afraid the bar on the corner will stop carrying my favorite beer,” she said. “I’m afraid of getting a traumatic brain injury so bad I develop your sense of fashion. Though I will say, as hideous as that outfit is, it’s not as bad as the ‘underwear on the outside’ thing your cousin used to do.” Leslie leaned forward. “So, why you here, Supergirl? Come to ask for an apology?”

“Yes,” Kara said, “I have.”

“Oh? Did I hurt your widdle feelings?”

Kara caught a bit of movement out of the corner of her eye, and turned to see Cat standing outside the studio, a look of pure terror on her face. She ignored her and turned back to Leslie.

“No, Miss Willis. I’m here to tell you to apologize to all the people you did hurt this morning.”

“Who would-“

Kara slapped her hand down on the table so hard it sounded like a gunshot went off in the studio, and both Leslie and Cat flinched.

“I am talking now, Miss Willis.”

“I have stood toe-to-toe with one of the most feared assassins in the galaxy, faced down a General who once commanded armies capable of conquering entire worlds, negotiated with Presidents and Captains of Industry. I’ve walked the halls of governments that existed when the height of human technology was mud huts and chipped stone knives. I’ve stood on more worlds than I can count. I’ve passed through the Tannhäuser Gate, drifted in the Phantom Zone, and been to the Vanishing Point, Miss Willis. You want to insult me? Go ahead. I’m a big girl. I can take it.

“But this morning, you implied that my being gay was something to be ashamed of and that hurt people. It hurt little girls who are just starting to figure out that maybe they’re never going to like
boys the way their friends do. It hurt little boys whose hearts start to race when they see that one special boy at school. It hurt young women in college who’ve just started dating their roommate, or men who are picking out their wedding cake.”

“You mocked my faith, like it’s a joke, and that hurt all the people out there who do go to church on Sunday, or Synagogue on Friday evening, or to the Mosque, or a temple, or a shrine. I don’t go to church, Miss Willis, because all the Temples of Rao are ash, scattered across a star system two thousand light years away, but how many people are going to hear what you said and feel embarrassed or ashamed of the fact that they find comfort in the Bible, the Torah, the Quran, the Vedas, the teaching of Buddha, or the Tao De Ching.”

“You make your living on insults, cynicism and casual cruelty. So go ahead. Insult me. Mock me. You aren’t the first, and you certainly won’t be the last. But don’t you ever turn me into an instrument to bludgeon people with your bigotry, just to score cheap laughs.” Kara turned and looked at Cat through the window. “I think we’re done here,” she said. Then she took off the headset, stood up, and walked out of the studio.

Cat took a step towards her, but Kara held up her hand.

“I expected better,” Kara said. Then she turned and walked towards a door that led to a public balcony. She leapt into the sky, without saying another word.

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From TMZ.com

National City’s Superhero Is Supergay!

11/23/2015 9:23 AM PST

Supergirl, the National City Superhero who’s been making so many headlines the past few weeks outed herself this morning on National Radio. In a tense on air confrontation with CatCo Shock-Jock Leslie Willis, the Superhero confirmed the radio host’s speculation that she’s gay.

The confrontation began when Willis’s ‘Things I’m Not Grateful For’ segment, a Thanksgiving staple for the show, focused entirely on Supergirl. The noted Shock-Jock, and long-time host on the CatCo family of Radio Stations insulted everything from the Girl of Steel’s public demeanor to her costume, but what prompted the Girl of Steel to walk into Willis’s studio to confront the radio personality were insinuations made about Supergirl’s sexuality.

The Maid of Might showed a bit of temper when Willis tried to interrupt her, shutting up the radio personality before going on to lecture her about how her remarks were hurtful to the gay community, and demanding an apology.

After the shocking incident, two questions remain. One, is National City, or the nation at large ready for a gay superhero, and two, does this spell the end of the cozy media deal between Supergirl and Cat Grant?

Only time will tell.

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Kara did a few laps around the city, burning off some of the excess energy she felt before heading back to the apartment. Venting a bit at Leslie hadn’t taken nearly as much out of her as the three words she’d thrown in Cat’s face. The declaration had surprised her. It had slipped out, a bit of resentment she didn’t even realize was there and even though her first impulse was to find Cat and apologize, it would be doing both of them a disservice because the anger was justified. She did
expect this Cat to be better than her Cat, because she’d worked so hard to make it so, and she was angry that it had taken this for Cat to realize how toxic something like Leslie’s show was.

At the same time, she felt guilty because she wasn’t the same beacon of innocence and hope that she’d been in the original timeline. She was doing everything she could to inspire people, to show them how to be better, but there was a lot of play acting involved. A lot of cynical manipulation of the media and politics. There were back room deals and underhanded moves, and a whole lot of ‘The Ends Justify the Means,’ and the one person she would normally go do with this sort of dilemma, her moral compass, was Cat Grant. One of the people she couldn’t go to.

So, instead, she headed back to the apartment, to Eliza and Alex, hoping that a day with her family would soothe away the tension and stress the confrontation with Cat hand brought on.

Alex was up off the couch before Kara’s feet hit the ground, and Eliza was barely a step behind her.

“Are you okay?” she asked.

Kara pulled her into a hug. “I’m fine,” she said. “But Maggie might not ever speak to me again.”

“What?” Alex asked as she stepped back.

“She loves Leslie’s show and I think I might have just gotten her fired.”

“I don’t know about that,” Alex said. “Leslie just handed CatCo a huge scoop. Supergirl comes out on air. That’s gotta be a ratings boost, right?”

“What?” Kara asked.

“Sweetie, you did realize what you said, right?” Eliza asked.

Kara thought about it for a moment, then groaned. “./,rao, i dovrrosh/ Konex?”

“Yes, Lady Kara?”

“What do the Social Media Feeds look like?”

“I believe the best description would be ‘like a bomb went off’,” Konex said.

Kara reached into the pocket in her boot and pulled out her phone. Sure enough, there were at least a dozen texts from Winn, one from Cat, and 23 missed calls.

“Who has it?” she asked the robot, only for the robot to rattle off a list of every major celebrity gossip sight on the planet, including CatCo and the Daily Planet’s people section.

“I’m sorry,” she said to Alex and Eliza. “I made a mess. I’m gonna have to go fix it.”

Alex, for a moment, looked ready to rebel, but then she took a deep breath, and nodded. “Go,” she said.

“Are you sure?” Kara asked.

Alex nodded. “Go be Kara Danvers for a bit.”

“I love you,” Kara said, hugging Alex. She turned and hugged Eliza. “You too.”
“Take care, sweetheart.”

Kara did a fast change into her work clothes, then headed for the door.

Alex took a deep breath as she watched the door close behind Kara, then turned around to face Eliza.

“Go ahead and say it,” she said. “I can hear you thinking it.”

“How could you let all this happen?” Eliza said. “How could you let her put on that cape? Let her put herself out there?”

“You mean let her save lives? Let her help push through the Alien Amnesty Act? Let her help thirty of her people, including her Aunt, one of her only two living relatives, get back on the right side of the law? How could I do that?”

“Alex—"

“No, Mom. Kara has done amazing things the last few weeks. Things I didn’t even know she was capable of.”

“I know, and I’m proud of her, but she’s put herself in danger.”

“Don’t you think I know that?” Alex asked, feeling a knot in her gut. “Every time she puts on that suit, every time she goes out there, I am afraid for her. I’m afraid somebody who can hurt her is going to come after her. And I have to watch it, every day. But, Mom, she went out there, she put herself out there, to save me. If it hadn’t been for her, I would have died.”

“Alex—"

“There was a bomb. On the plane, there was a bomb. The engine didn’t just fail. And if Kara hadn’t shown up when she did, everyone on that plane would have died.”

“Sweetie, I never would have wanted her to let that happen, but after—"

“She’d been planning this,” Alex said. “For a long time, she’d been planning this. And she wants this. It makes her happy. It makes her feel like she’s living up to who she was supposed to be. You haven’t been here. You haven’t seen what she’s like when she wears that suit. Haven’t watched her talk with her Aunt or seen her argue with the President of the United States like it was nothing.”

“I love you, mom. I do, but you’re wrong. This is who Kara was meant to be. What Kara was meant to be. And the world needs her, which is great, but I don’t even care about that. All I care about, is that Kara needs to be Supergirl. She needs to help people. Humans, aliens. She needs to help all of them. It’s the only way she’s ever going to feel whole.”

“You don’t understand how much danger she’s in,” Eliza said.

Alex opened her mouth to answer but stopped and held up her hand. “No. We’re not going to have the rest of this conversation right now. When Kara gets back, we’ll finish talking, because there are things you need to know.”

“What do you think Kara can tell me that will make me feel any different?” Eliza asked.

“A lot,” Alex said.
The elevator opened on the forty-second floor of CatCo and Kara walked out into a storm of activity. Padme looked up at the sound of the doors, and Kara could hear her sigh of relief across the room.

“Oh, thank God,” she said. “How do you want to handle this?”

“Have Konex run the responses and pull anything I need to see, then send it to my wall. Keep an eye on the comments, and make sure the auto-moderation is keeping everything clean. I need to go through my texts and voice mail, then I’ll start composing an official statement.”

“Right,” Padme said. “Um… Miss Grant asked us to let her know if we could reach you.”

“I’ll call her once I’ve finished checking my messages,” she said.

“Right.”

“Winn?” Kara called.

“Yes?” Winn said.

“Comfort food?”

“Pizza and potstickers already ordered. There are four pints of Ben and Jerry’s chocolate chip cookie dough in the freezer with your name on it.”

“You’re the best,” she said. A quick burst of super-speed and she was at her desk, Ben & Jerry’s in hand, and going through her messages. The texts from Winn were all of the ‘Cat Grant is on the war path, please come save us’ variety. She deleted them. The voice mails were all people trying to reach Supergirl for an official comment. She deleted them. Then she looked at the message from Cat.

‘Please let Supergirl know I’m sorry about what happened this morning and tell her she was right. She has every reason to expect me to do better than this. Also, let her know I’d like to speak with her in person when she feels like she can, but I will understand if she needs some time.’

Kara typed out a quick response. ‘I spoke with her. She said to let you know that she’s sorry for her behavior. She was angry at what Leslie had done. She’ll be by to see you as soon as she can get free.’ She hit send, then picked up the remote and turned around, turning on her media wall.

There were a string of supportive statements from GLAAD, The Human Rights Campaign, NOH8, The Trevor Project, and a long list of others. Out and The Advocate seemed to be competing for the ‘playing it cool’ award, while Curve looked to be having a complete meltdown. The number of marriage proposals in the comments sections on Curve, AfterEllen and Autostraddle were both flattering and slightly disturbing.

A number of religious organizations had also responded. Some thanking her for calling out Leslie’s behavior. Some condemning her for “condoning sexual deviance.” Some doing both in the same breath.

The political sites weren’t a lot better about making up their minds.

Reddit and 4chan were the same old cess pools. The Supergirl and Superman forums on both had degenerated into flame wars between people who supported her, and people who hated her. There were demands on both for Superman to condemn her behavior, along with other, less savory things.
Leslie Willis’ fans all wanted to crucify her or toss her back into space.

In short, the internet was the internet, and parts of it made her question her faith in humanity. By the time she was done, someone had deposited two large Hawaiian Pizzas and four family sized orders of pot stickers on her desk. She reached for her keyboard, determined to get this out of the way so she could get back to Alex and Eliza.

From Facebook

Supergirl Zor-El

Monday, November 23rd, 2015

I will admit, I’m not entirely sure where to begin. If you’re reading this, you are probably already aware of what occurred this morning on the Leslie Willis show. I suppose the first thing I should do is apologize for making a fool of myself. Those who know me well will tell you that I am slow to anger, which is a good thing when you can do the sorts of things that Kryptonians are capable of. They will also tell you that, on the rare occasions I do lose my temper, I can make rash decisions. Entering Miss Willis’s studio without invitation this morning was one of those decisions and I feel I should apologize to Cat Grant for abusing the trust she placed in me when she granted me access to the CatCo building.

The people who took me in, who taught me human manners and customs, would also say I owe Miss Willis an apology for interrupting her show. I suspect I might get an earful when I see them next, because I will not apologize to her. What Leslie Willis did today was wrong, on multiple levels.

There will be those who read what I am about to say and decry me as a “Social Justice Warrior” or other such titles which are meant to shut up or dismiss those who call out the poor behavior of the privileged members of society. This is not addressed to them. They have made up their minds, and no amount of arguing will change it, or make them understand what it’s like to be a member of a marginalized community.

I am a refugee. I am an alien. I am a lesbian.

I am one of the lucky ones. I can walk among you, the blonde-haired, blue-eyed American Ideal. Camouflaged by my species’ similarity to your own and by an accident of genetics. I can speak your language, whatever that may be, due to the technological gifts of my people which allowed the computer on my ship to load them directly into my brain on my long journey from the ashes of my home to the safety of yours. I can stand alone, and hide my sexuality with simple silence, because you will see my feminine appearance, and assume my heterosexuality unless I correct you.

I am one of the lucky ones, because I can hide all the things about myself that would make people hate me without even knowing me.

I am one of the lucky ones, because I can pass, if I choose too.

There are others who aren’t so lucky. Aliens with horns, silver gray skin, gills, three fingered hands. Butch lesbians. Femme gay men. Transgender people who are still mid-transition, or who simply don’t pass and never will. Those who can’t hide what they are.

I don’t want to condemn those who choose to pass. I know the safety to be found in the closet. I stayed there for twelve years after I arrived here, because I stepped out once and someone I loved died because of it. Died protecting me, because there are those out there who hated me for an
accident of birth. I have a friend who was outed as a lesbian to her parents at fifteen. They tossed her aside like garbage and haven’t spoken a word to her in over a decade and a half.

There is safety in hiding. Safety in anonymity.

But I am not hiding anymore. I chose to put on my family’s coat of arms. To stand up, because it is the responsibility of the strong to protect the weak.

Among those of Jewish faith, there is a concept, referred to as “Tikkun Olam”. The phrase translates into English roughly as Repairing the World. It is the idea that each person has a responsibility to leave the world a better place than they found it. On Krypton, we call this idea “/.kaopahdh rraop w tiv aorghahs ni waila/” The closest translation in English is “You must make the universe whole.” It is commonly referred to as “The First Law of Rao” and is one of the core tenets taught by the Church of Rao. It exists at the heart of who Kryptonians are as a people.

This is why I chose to become Supergirl. This is why I acted as I did this morning. This is why I will not apologize to Leslie Willis.

Her words, chosen to demean me, to humiliate me, to reduce me, did none of those things. I long to be of worth, to prove my value, but Leslie Willis has never sacrificed for me, never suffered deprivation so that I would not. Leslie Willis may judge me all she wants, but she has not earned the right to have me care what her opinion is.

But there are those out there who were damaged by her words. Children and adults who would hear them, and feel shame for who they are, for who they love, for the god they worship, or that they worship at all. Children and adults who will be exposed to others who will take her words to heart, and believe that being gay, or having faith is something to mock a person for or hate a person for.

Words have power. They divide us, separate us, break the bonds of love, fellowship and family. Words turn blood against blood, friend against friend, nation against nation, and species against species.

I could not and would not let her use me to be the instrument to drive those words into the hearts and minds of the people listening.

I have a responsibility, to myself, to my family, to the people of Earth, and to Father Rao to leave this world a better place than I found it, which is why I walked into that studio today and why I will never apologize for interrupting Leslie Willis. Because she needed to be interrupted. Because this city, this nation, and everyone within the sound of her voice needed to hear someone stand up and say, “this is wrong.”

Some will ask if I meant to come out today. If I meant to reveal my sexuality, or if I let it slip in the heat of the moment. To my everlasting shame, the answer is the latter.

The reason I did not intend to reveal my sexuality is not because I am ashamed of it, but because it invites questions I did not want to answer. When I sat down with Cat Grant a few weeks ago, one of the questions she asked was if I had anyone in my life. I agreed to answer her only if she would not publish my response. Several years ago, I began a relationship with a woman who became as dear to me as any family I’ve ever had. Like so many people I’ve cared about, her life was cut short. I lost her in September of last year. I did not want to talk about it, because it was personal. Because it seemed disrespectful to the memory of what we shared during those years for her to be rolled into the bottomless font of tragedy that is the loss of my birth world.
But one thing I know about my beautiful, wonderful Captain is that if she were here today, she would have walked into that studio, punched Leslie Willis in the face, and spent the rest of the show telling everyone who listened to be proud of who they are. To love the people they want to love. And that all the hot girls should call in and give her their phone numbers.

Because it would make me laugh and love her all the more.

She would also kick my ass so hard for keeping silent that I wouldn’t be able to sit for a week.

So, yes.

I am a refugee.

I am an alien.

And I am a lesbian.

To everyone who needs to hear it, you are not alone.

May Rao Light Your Way.

Kara landed on Cat’s balcony after using a bit of X-ray vision to confirm Cat was actually in her office. She was still a little nervous about this. Not quite sure how she wanted the conversation to go. But she’d spent almost two hours working on the facebook post, typing at normal speed, considering her thoughts, crying a bit over Sara near the end. She’d cross posted to Google+, Tumblr and to Instagram with a picture of a White Canary, though no one would ever get the reference, and tweeted a link to the Facebook post. Konex would handle the comment moderation, which was for the best, because the mood she was in she might kill anyone who said anything bad about Sara. Then she’d sat and fidgeted for half an hour, before finally getting up the nerve to talk to Cat.

She gently tapped on the door, almost hoping Cat wouldn’t hear her, but Cat turned immediately, and was on her feet before Kara could lose her nerve.

Kara backed away from the door and took a seat on one of the couches. Cat followed her, dropping down on the other couch.

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

“No,” Cat said. “You were right. I should have done better. By you and by Leslie. I should have pushed her, held her to a higher standard. Instead, the more awful she was, the more I rewarded her. I turned her into a monster, because the monster got better ratings. Made more money. I forgot who I wanted to be. I forgot what I wanted CatCo to be. You reminded me of that today, and I should thank you.”

Kara smiled, feeling light for the first time since Konex started playing Leslie’s broadcast. “Thank you, Cat.”

“I read what you wrote,” she said. “Your Captain… She was a lucky woman.”

Kara shook her head. “She wouldn’t say so.” She closed her eyes, picturing Sara in her suit, all white leather, snap batons ready for battle. “She was like me. Someone who’d lost everything. Her home, her family, her whole world.” She opened her eyes, looking at Cat and trying to hold back the tears. “We’d known each other on and off for years. I was sitting in a bar, doing tequila shots,
drinking guy after guy under the table. Miserable, lonely, wanting nothing more than to curl up and wallow in my grief. And Sara walked right up to me, took the shot out of my hand, and threw it back like it was water. Then she looked at the glass and said, ‘Looks like you need a drink.’ I laughed. It was so ridiculous, and I just laughed, and she looked at me, and said, ‘There’s the girl I know.’ I don’t even know why I kissed her. I just… needed to feel something, and when I kissed her, I didn’t feel alone anymore.

“It was a rough time, but when we were together, I didn’t hurt as much. She would let me grieve when I needed too, but she would never let me wallow.”

“She sounds like she was special,” Cat said.

“Losing her… It was hard.”

“What happened to her?” Cat asked.

“She was a soldier,” Kara said. “She went on a mission. I knew… We both knew before she left, she wasn’t coming back. And I couldn’t tell anyone about it. Not for the longest time, until I’d just held it inside so long, talking about it seemed wrong.”

She took a deep breath to steady herself, then stood up. “I should go,” she said.

Cat caught her wrist before she could lift off. “I bought out Leslie’s contract,” she said. “I can’t stop anyone else from hiring her, but I promise you, there won’t ever be anything like her show on CatCo’s radio stations again.”

Kara smiled down at Cat, and turned her wrist in Cat’s grip, forcing her hand open. Kara caught it in her own, and bent down as she lifted up Cat’s hand, brushing her lips over the knuckles.

“Thank you,” she said, “for doing better.”

She let go of Cat’s hand and took to the sky.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

.ukiemodh w rraop , eh ,astruh,
_I love you, Astra_

.ukiem w rrip , eh shed kir
_I love you, Little One_

,.rao, i dovrrosh
Literal: “Rao’s Shadow”
Semantic: “Oh, hell”

.kaopahdh rraop w tiv aorghahs ni waila
_You must make the universe whole._
Kara had barely finished closing the door before she found herself wrapped in a hug.

“Are you okay, sweetheart?” Eliza asked.

“It was just a convenience store robbery,” Kara said, giving Alex a confused look over Eliza’s shoulder. Alex rolled her eyes and turned around, walking back over towards the couch, leaving a very confused Kara at the mercy of Eliza, who stepped back, resting her hands on Kara’s shoulders.


“Oh,” Kara said, taking a deep breath. “Yeah.”

“Why didn’t you ever tell us you had a girlfriend?” Eliza asked.

“Well,” Kara said, looking desperately toward Alex, who was sitting on the couch, eating popcorn, and watching some reality tv show. Kara looked back at Eliza and told the truth. “She wasn’t from this planet.”

“Honey, you know that wouldn’t have mattered,” Eliza said.

Alex snorted.

“Yeah,” Kara said, “I kinda think it would have. Besides, she was a little older, and her crew wasn’t the most reputable bunch.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means, I don’t wanna talk about Sara,” Kara snapped, making Eliza take a step back. “It means that if I tell you about her, you’re going to get mad, because you don’t agree with my choices, but instead of talking to me about it like an adult you’re going to wait until I’m at work tomorrow and take it out on Alex. Which isn’t fair because Alex didn’t know anything about Sara until a couple of weeks ago. But if she told you that you’d get on her for not being involved enough in my life."
And I’ve already had to go through this twice today, and... it hurts and I just want to sit on the couch and eat ice cream and pretend today hasn’t been a complete disaster.”

She walked past Eliza, who was looking at her like she’d grown a second head, and went to the fridge, being careful not to jerk the freezer door off the hinges as she opened it.

“Alex, tell me you did not eat all the Slow Churned Double Fudge Brownie,” Kara said.

“Behind the Slow Churned Peanut Butter Cup,” Alex said without turning around.

“That’s Cookie Dough!”

“Next one back,” Alex said.

Kara pushed the Half Gallon of Cookie Dough aside, and found a suspiciously unopened Half Gallon of Slow Churned Double Fudge Brownie.

“You finished it last night and went and got another tub this morning, didn’t you?” Kara asked as she turned around and grabbed a spoon.

“If I say yes, will you bring me the Strawberry?”

“Regular or slow churned?”

“How is that even a question?” Alex asked.

Kara shrugged and grabbed the Slow Churned Strawberry, and a second spoon, then went over and sat on the couch, handing the ice cream to her sister.

“Undercover boss?”

“Yes,” Alex said.

They sat together, hips touching, as they ate ice cream and watched the CEO of Yankee Candle try to fool his employees into thinking he was one of them. After a few minutes, Eliza sat next to them, and Kara noticed that she was working her way through the Mint Chocolate Chip.

When they reached the end of the episode, not that any of them really cared what was going on, Kara picked up the remote and turned the TV off.

“I’m sorry I yelled,” Kara said.

“I know,” Eliza said. “I’m sorry I pushed.”

“You pushed because you care,” Kara said. “I love that about you. But I can’t talk to you about Sara.”

“I don’t want you to feel like there’s ever anything you can’t tell me,” Eliza said.

“It’s not that,” Kara said. “I want to tell you everything, but there are a *lot* of other conversations we need to have first. Like the one about the DEO.”

Kara felt both Alex and Eliza move, and when she looked up from her ice cream, both of them were looking at her. Well, more glaring on Alex’s case, but still.

“What do you know about the DEO?” Eliza asked.
Kara stuck her spoon in the ice cream and started digging for a chunk of brownie. “I know Hank Henshaw came to the house that night you and Jeremiah caught me and Alex out flying. I know what Jeremiah went to work for them to keep me safe. I know he disappeared on a mission, and you think Hank Henshaw murdered him, which isn’t far from the truth.”

“Kara,” Alex said, warning in her tone.

“It’s okay, Alex,” Kara said as she took a bite of ice cream. “I talked to President Marsdin this morning. She’s signing the Amnesty Act and the Pardons next Monday, along with an order declassifying the DEO.” She turned back to Eliza. “I’ve been in touch with them for almost a year. Passing them names and information to help them capture dangerous criminals that escaped from a Kryptonian prison.”

“Kara-“

“Alex didn’t know,” Kara said. “I kept it from her. Made it one of the conditions of working with them that she not find out.”

“Why would you do that?” Eliza asked.

“Because I work for them,” Alex said. “I’ve worked for them for almost two years.”

“You two went to work for them knowing what they did you your father?”

Kara shook her head. “Alex didn’t know about Jeremiah. Not until after I came out as Supergirl. I knew, but it’s complicated. Hank Henshaw isn’t in charge of the DEO anymore. The man running the DEO, the man everyone thinks is Hank Henshaw, is actually a shape shifter. A Green Martian named J’onn J’onzz. Jeremiah saved his life in Peru, kept the real Henshaw from murdering him. J’onn has spent the last ten years trying to turn the DEO into something good, and he’s spent that time watching us, protecting us, covering for me anytime I slipped and someone caught me using my powers. Right up until last September when I contacted him.”

“Why not tell your sister?” Eliza asked.

“Because what I was doing was dangerous, and because there were people out there who were watching the DEO. My aunt, and her people. All the stuff I’ve done the last few weeks, the interviews, the media blitz, the websites and social media campaign. I’ve been planning this for over a year, Eliza. I knew my Aunt was out there. I knew she was planning something terrible. I knew I had to stop it. I knew Marsdin was sympathetic to alien refugees, and has been pushing quietly for the amnesty act. I might have preferred to make my debut as Supergirl in a bit less dramatic a fashion, but I didn’t have a choice. I couldn’t let those people die. And once I was out, it just made sense to work with the DEO. They can house supervillains and metahumans, though we’re working on transferring metas over to NCPD.”

“How did you find all this out?” Eliza asked.

Kara shook her head. “I’m sorry. That’s not something I can tell you. Not yet. It’s not that I don’t trust you, it’s just… It’s complicated. There are things I haven’t even told Clark, and he’s been working with me on some of this. Just, we need you to trust us… Just a few more weeks. If everything goes as planned, we can tell you everything by Christmas.”

“Okay,” Eliza said.

Kar stood up and looked at Alex. “Scoot over,” she said.
“What?” Alex asked.

“It’s your turn in the middle.”

“What?”

Kara rolled her eyes. “You know I can just pick you up and move you.”

“Fine,” Alex said. “But no chocolate pecan pie for you.” She grumpily scooted over towards Eliza, and Kara dropped down on her other side.

“You two really need to talk,” Kara said.

Eliza gives her a puzzled look before shifting her gaze to Alex, who is still glaring daggers at Kara.

“Look, I can’t have this conversation for you, but all three of us know that things between you two have been strained for a while” Kara said. “And part of that is my fault. I just waltzed into your lives, and took up all of Eliza’s time and energy, and even before Jeremiah disappeared, Alex had this kind of co-parent caretaker role pushed on her with no warning and she lost all of her friends because of me. And even after we worked out our differences, all the time Alex and I spent together was about me. It was about my secrets, my needs, my grief, my trouble understanding humans and life on Earth. Alex buried entire parts of herself, so she could be there for me, and you, Eliza, you came down on her so hard, but not me. I understand why. You thought I was fragile, and maybe I was. I was a girl who just wanted her mother, and who’d seen everything burned out of the stars. But it wasn’t fair to her and whether you meant to or not, you hurt her.”

“You two are my family here on Earth, more so than anyone. Even Kal-El and Astra. And I need my family, but I also need you two to be okay with each other, because things are going to get hard. What Alex and I are doing is hard. And we both need our mother. Now, I can stay, if you want, or I can give you both some space, but please talk to each other.”

Kara watched them both, pretty sure based on the look Alex was giving her that she was contemplating force feeding her kryptonite ice cream.

“Maybe you could give us half an hour,” Eliza said, “If that’s okay with you, Alex?”

Alex looked at Eliza for a moment, before she reluctantly nodded.

“Okay,” Kara said. “I’ll go get us some dinner.”

“No Hawaiian!” Alex and Eliza both said at the same time.

“You both suck.”

“Okay,” Eliza said once the door was closed.

“Yeah,” Alex said. “She’s ah… She’s been through a lot.”

“I know,” Eliza said as she turned back to Alex.

“No,” Alex said. “It’s not just Krypton, and Dad, and Kenny, and even Sara. There’s more, and I want to tell you, but we can’t.”

“Okay,” Eliza said. “Okay. I’ll accept that.” She reached out and took Alex’s hand. “Tell me what I can do?”
Alex took a deep breath, stealing herself. “Just tell me why I’m not enough? I… I do everything you ask. I took care of Kara. I made my whole life about her. I worked so hard to be perfect, so you wouldn’t have to worry about me, and I did all the things Dad used to do. I learned to fix things, and change the oil in the cars and I helped Kara with her application essay for college and I just… It’s never felt like enough. I joined the DEO, I went out there to fight aliens and protect the planet so Kara wouldn’t have to, but I’ve known, ever since the plane, you’d be mad, and I don’t know what I need to do to make you love me again.” She wasn’t sure when the tears had started, didn’t even realize she was crying until Eliza reached up and wiped the tears off her face.

“Oh, no. Alex, no. I never meant to make you think I didn’t love you. I was hard on you because I wanted you to be better than me. I always needed something to push me, to drive me, and I just, I thought if I could be that for you, if I could push you, it would make things easier, until you learned to find a way to drive yourself. But I always loved you. You were my star, Alex, my Supergirl, long before Kara came along. And she’s right. I thought she was fragile. Broken. I didn’t know how to do anything but accept her, and give her time to heal. But I never wanted you to feel like less.”

Eliza reached for her, pulling her into a hug, and Alex hugged her back, not able to put a name to the mix of emotions running through her in that moment.

“Now,” Eliza said. “Tell me about this date.”

Murder, Alex decided. The mix of emotions was definitely murder. And Kara was going to be the victim.
Offers, Accusations and Concerns

Chapter Summary


Kara stepped out of the elevator on the forty-second floor the next morning with her eyes firmly fixed on her phone as she headed towards her office, wishing she could use the holographic interface Konex had included instead of just the touch screen. The good news was, the emails were easier to deal with than all the feelings stirred up by the previous day’s events. She hated to admit it, but a tiny little part of her was actually going to miss Livewire. They’d never exactly been Besties, but Leslie had, eventually, become her friend.

“Kara Danvers?”

Kara looked up from her phone, realizing she hadn’t been watching where she was going, and wanted to kick herself for being so distracted she didn’t notice someone in her office before she walked in. She was more than a little surprised to see who that person was. She recognized Vicki Vale immediately, of course, though photos did not do the redhead standing in her doorway justice. She picked up her glasses and slipped them on, then stood up.

“Hello,” she said.

“Hey. Sorry, I didn’t mean to intrude. I’m Vicki Vale.”

Kara nodded. “Of course. I’ve seen your picture before.”

Vicki smiled. “One of the unfortunate side effects of recent events, I’m sure,” she said, holding out her hand.

Kara took it, giving it a firm shake. “No,” she said. “Clark Kent’s my cousin. He’s got a shot of you, Bruce Wayne, Him, and Lois at some event or other.”

“Oh, God,” Vicki said. “I know just the picture you’re talking about, and you must be horribly disappointed. I was a good ten years younger in that picture.”

“Disappointed wouldn’t be the word I’d use. The picture doesn’t do you justice at all.”

Vicki’s face lit up with an almost impish grin. “Cat told me you were talented, but she didn’t tell me what a charmer you are.”

Kara laughed and gestured to one of the chairs in front of her desk as she walked around it to sit down. “Just being honest, Miss Vale.”

“Please, call me Vicki,” she said. “And tell me, does that line work on a lot of women?”

“If I ever try it, I’ll let you know,” Kara said. “Contrary to what you might have heard from Miss Grant, I don’t date much.”
“Honestly, neither do I,” Vicki said. “I’m normally too busy figuring out which of Gotham’s politicians is taking bribes from which mobster this week.”

“Something you’re pretty good at, if the list of awards you’ve won is anything to go by.”

“A little too good, if you ask the mobsters.”

Kara noticed her reaching up to rub her side as she said it. “How’s that healing?” she asked.

Vicki looked down in surprise, as if she hadn’t realized what she was doing, and blushed slightly as she looked back up. “It’s mostly just scar tissue now, though it still aches a bit when the weather changes. Which, in Gotham, is all the time.”

“Then you’ll like National City. We might get a storm every so often, but most days, it’s nothing but sun.”

“I hear southern California’s good about that.”

“It is. So, what can I do for you?”

“Join my team,” she said, without a moment’s hesitation. “Anyone who can put together a file like that on Maxwell Lord should be in the field, as a reporter. Not sitting behind a desk, managing a twitter account.”

Kara smiled, feeling a bit of a blush in her own cheeks. “Well, I’d love to take credit for that, but I didn’t put together the file myself. I got a friend to do it.”

“Which changes my opinion not at all,” Vicki said. “If you put it together yourself, you’re a hell of a researcher. If you managed to get it from someone else, you have sources. Both of those are vital to a reporter. Plus, I saw your byline on the Reactron background piece.”

Kara blinked and shook her head. “I’d forgotten about that,” she said.

“You forgot writing an article as amazing as that?” Vicki asked.

Kara shrugged. “It’s been a busy few weeks. First, Supergirl showing up out of the blue, then arranging the interview with her for Miss Grant, then organizing the gala, and starting the S2MG. On top of all of that, I’ve been arranging the officially licensed Supergirl merchandise, getting the legal sign-off on the trust fund for the profits, helping organize the press conference for the Kryptonian Medical Foundation. Remembering something that took me twenty minutes with a google search… I’m sure you can understand.”

“You arranged the Supergirl interview, too?” Vicki asked.

“I did,” Kara said. “Took a bit of arm-twisting, but I managed to get a phone number. Once she knew who I worked for, she couldn’t agree fast enough.”

“And whose arm did you twist?” Vicki asked, which made Kara laugh so loud most of her staff turned to look at her office.

“You’re almost as bad as Cat,” Kara said, not able to keep the smile off her face or the amusement out of her voice.

“Oh, sweetie, I’m so much worse than Cat,” she said. “Cat was able to walk away from it.”

“So did you,” Kara said. “Or you wouldn’t be in an Editor’s Chair.”

“Give me six months,” Kara said. “Nine, tops. Once this department is up and running, and I’ve found someone who can manage it on a long-term basis, I’d love to get out there. But right now, what we’re going here is probably the most important thing happening at CatCo.”

“Seriously? Managing Supergirl’s twitter account?” Vicki asked.

“You’ll see,” Kara said with absolute confidence. “Supergirl’s been on the scene for less than two months, and she’s already changing the world.”

“You’re really that impressed with her?” Vicki asked.

“I believe in her. Enough to stake my career on all of this,” she said, gesturing to the area outside of her office.

“Well,” Vicki said. “You are every bit as impressive as Cat made you sound.”

“I will take that as a compliment,” Kara replied.

“You should,” Vicki said. “And when you’re ready to be a reporter, Kara, you come see me.”

“I look forward to it.”

“It looks like more trouble for CEO Maxwell Lord today, as rumors of further indictments spread. As viewers may recall, both the National City Tribune and the Daily Planet published new allegations of wrongdoing in an extensive series of articles yesterday. The Tribune revealed a long history of ethics violations and criminal behavior by Lord, ranging from falsifying termination papers to avoid paying unemployment, up to and including industrial espionage and human trafficking, and illegal experimentation on human test subjects.”

“Meanwhile, The Daily Planet published an exposé detailing massive irregularities in Lord Technologies’ Public Disclosures, evidence of insider trading on the part of Lord, and several board members, as well as a possible price fixing agreement with TychoTech, run by noted tech mogul Simon Tycho.”

“Sources close to federal prosecutors report that Maxwell Lord, charged last week with terrorism, conspiracy to commit terrorism, blackmail and attempted murder, along with a number of lesser charges in connection to a bombing at a lab owned by Lord Technologies, now faces a second round of indictments stemming from evidence uncovered by the Tribune and the Daily Planet.

“While no formal statement has been released by law enforcement, industry insiders are already suggesting this latest news could lead to charges against members of the Lord Technologies and TychoTech boards, as well as charges against Simon Tycho. Stock prices of both companies have already dropped drastically in the hours since the stories were published, and Lord Technologies investors are calling for Maxwell Lord’s removal from the company.”

“No word yet on a response to these comments from the Girl of Steel, but CatCo has reached out to
her for comment.”

“Reporting Live from Studio One here at Number One CatCo Plaza, this is Tawny Young, signing off.”

From Facebook

Supergirl Zor-El

Tuesday, November 24th, 2015

Maxwell Lord and Simon Tycho have both accused me and those who support me of organizing a smear campaign to discredit them. While I could issue a denial, and we could spend weeks playing a very public game of He Said, She Said, I will choose instead to let my actions speak for me. I did not step into the public eye seeking praise or attention. Instead, I stepped into the public eye because the people of National City Airlines Flight 237 needed help, and I was the only one who could provide it. Since then, I have sought the attention of the media, and of those with wealth or influence, not as a way to aggrandize myself, but as a way to help other refugees who find themselves stranded on a world not their own, and to share the knowledge and gifts of my people with the world as a whole.

If Mr. Lord and Mr. Tycho question why I chose the partners I did, they need only look at the histories of the companies and leaders in question, then compare them to the histories of their own companies, and their own behavior, both towards aliens who find themselves stranded on Earth’s shores, and humans who are less fortunate than themselves.

Finally, I will close by saying this. One of the stipulations I have made in all of the business dealings I have had since my first appearance as Supergirl is that I will take no profit from them. Unlike my cousin, I have chosen to issue official licenses for my likeness and merchandise which bears my name, but all profits from such merchandise go into a trust fund, where they will be held until such time as I designate a charity to receive those funds. Similarly, my share of any profits from the production and sale of any medicines and technologies derived from Kryptonian science goes into the same trust. All records are available for public review. In the time I have been Supergirl, I have accepted not one single cent for anything I have done.

I will admit that I have, on occasion, accepted food. To date, 10 large pizzas from Rosa’s Pizzeria on 6th Street (six of them Hawaiian, because pineapple on pizza is delicious) after I stopped a robbery there, Four family-sized orders of buffalo wings (Nuclear) from Benny’s Wing Shack on the corner of Lexington and 29th when I stopped a drunk driver from running through their front window, two jumbo hotdogs with extra sauerkraut and brown mustard from the cart in the Northeast Corner of CatCo plaza after I helped the owner lift the cart out of a pot hole, a dozen Churros from La Familia Market on Ponce De Leon Blvd after I stopped a robbery there, and six orders of Fried Pickles (which are surprisingly delicious) from Bubby-Lou’s Bar-B-Que on the Nation’s Bay Pier after I put out a trash fire that threatened to engulf the entire building.

I also freely admit that if someone offers me free food in the future, I will almost certainly accept it.

Perhaps, in the interest of fairness and transparency, Mr. Lord and Mr. Tycho can let the world know, in similar detail, what expressions of material gratitude they have received from those they have helped, and whether those expressions of gratitude arrived before, or after they provided the aid in question. I think their answers would be quite telling.
As are the words I have chosen to live by. Hope, help and compassion for all.

May Rao light your way.

---

Gordon Ramsay @GordonRamsay 24 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl Pineapple does not go on top of Pizza…

---

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 24 Nov 2015

@GordonRamsay I am a great fan of your work, sir. However this is one of two points on which you are completely and unequivocally wrong. The other being Rice Pudding, which is disgusting and not food.

---

Gordon Ramsay @GordonRamsay 24 Nov 2015

@ SupergirlZorEl I bet I could change your mind.

---

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 24 Nov 2015

@GordonRamsay Are you offering to cook for me?

---

Gordon Ramsay @GordonRamsay 24 Nov 2015

@ SupergirlZorEl That was the general idea.

---

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 24 Nov 2015

@GordonRamsay Direct Message me. We’ll set something up. Now, excuse me while I go do some loops around the city while shouting with joy.

---

Clark frowned at his phone as he saw the name listed on the caller ID. He liked Bruce, but the man almost never called with good news, and Clark had two pans of chicken enchiladas in sour cream sauce in the oven, and enchiladas did not keep well at all.

With a sigh, and images of a missed dinner in his head, Clark hit the accept call button, and lifted his phone to his ear. “Hey, Bruce,” He said.

“Have you seen the news today?” Bruce answered.

“You do remember what I do for a living, right?” Clark asked.

“You’re a reporter at The Daily Planet,” Bruce said.

Clark closed his eyes and counted to ten in Kryptonian before answering. “Yes, Bruce, I have seen the news today. Is there a specific item of news I should be looking at more closely?”

“Tawny Young’s report on Maxwell Lord and Simon Tycho’s response to the articles published today by the National City Tribune and The Daily Planet,” Bruce said.
“I haven’t seen that segment,” Clark said as he walked over into the home office and sat at his desk. “Let me see if I can find it.”

“Don’t bother,” Bruce said. “Just check Supergirl’s facebook.”

“Oookayyy,” Clark said, pulling up Supergirl’s facebook page. It took longer for the page to load than for him to read her post. “That’s quite a response.”

“Yes,” Bruce said. “That’s what I’m worried about.”

“Bruce, can you please explain what you’re talking about? I’ve told you before, mind-reading isn’t a part of my power set.”

“Your cousin seems remarkably adept at manipulating the media in her favor,” Bruce said. “In fact, based on the way she handles her public persona, if I didn’t already know who she was, and didn’t know for a fact that Cat Grant is human, I would actually suspect Cat Grant was Supergirl.”

“That’s ridiculous,” Clark said. “Unless Georgio Armani started designing super suits.”

“I’m not saying I think Cat Grant *is* Supergirl. I know it’s Kara. Or, at least, I know it’s Kara in the suit. What I’m worried about is Cat Grant’s influence on Supergirl.”

“Kara has idolized Cat Grant for years and has been working for her for almost a year. It’s only natural that she would pick up some of Cat’s style. Besides, this is a good thing.”

“Are you sure,” Bruce said. “A Superhero with a facebook page?”

“Bruce, I’m a reporter, and you remember how much of a disaster my first few interviews as Superman were. Kara’s always been a quick study, and she had a lot of examples to draw from. Me, Diana, Ted, Hal.”

“It worries me,” Bruce said.

“Clearly,” Clark replied. “But she’s been managing the media like a champ since she gave that first interview. Why is it bothering you now?”

“Did Diana tell you about the conversation she, Kara and I had Friday about developing Kryptonian power supplies for use on Earth?” Bruce asked.

Clark frowned. “No,” he said. “Kara hasn’t really been looping me in on a lot of things. I mean, she talked to me about the Krypton Remembered website, but that was more of a ‘Hey, I’m doing this, and didn’t want it to surprise you’ conversation than asking if I thought it was a good idea. About the only thing she did ask me was if it would be okay with me if she used Kryptonian food and clothing for the CatCo release Gala. The only reason I knew about the Kryptonian Medical Foundation ahead of time is she emailed me the press packet that morning.”

“That doesn’t bother you?” Bruce asked.

“It does, but technically, Kara is the head of the House of El.”

“I thought you were,” Bruce said.

“It’s complicated,” Clark said. “My father was the head of the House, so normally, I would inherit that position, but he died before I came of age. Since Kara was of age when my father died, the title passed to her, until I actually claim it. And even then, she has the right to challenge my claim.”
“I thought she was thirteen when your father died.”

“Kryptonians come of age around twelve Earth years.”

“Do you think she would challenge you if you tried to claim head of house status?” Bruce asked.

“I honestly don’t know,” Clark said. “I don’t think so. Kryptonian tradition means a lot to Kara, and a challenge is pretty much a formal statement that she doesn’t think I’m fit to lead the House. That’s pretty serious. Especially since, if she challenged me and lost, she’d lose all standing as a member of the House.”

“What does that mean, in practical terms?” Bruce asked.

“Well, first, she couldn’t wear the coat of arms anymore, and second, she’d be required to surrender all house property. She’d lose Konex, Kolex, and her Fortress of Sanctuary. She’d lose all access to the data archives we brought with us. She’d be locked out of her travel pod. I think all that would be left to her would be her necklace.”

“If she challenged you, could you win?” Bruce asked.

“Probably,” Clark said. “As the challenged, I have the right to choose the type of contest. It would almost have to be combat though. If I picked anything else, she’d wipe the floor with me.”

“What other kind of challenge is there?” Bruce asked.

“There are three challenges. The Challenge of Intelligence, The Challenge of Wisdom, and The Challenge of Strength.”

“You’re saying she’s smarter than you?”

“I don’t know if she’s got more raw intelligence. By human standards, she and I are both more than three standard deviations above the mean, but she’s the one with a Kryptonian education, and the equivalent of about ten PhD’s. All I’ve got is a journalism degree from Metropolis University, and what Jor-El could cram on a Kryptonian thumb drive. Same with the Challenge of Wisdom. It’s all tied up in Kryptonian culture and philosophy. On the other hand, I’m a master of Torquasm Rao, and she’s only trained to the first level in Klurkor, and as far as I know, hasn’t practiced seriously since she left Krypton. I know Alex has been teaching her Krav Maga since she went public as Supergirl, but that’s just a few weeks’ training.”

“What happens to you if she wins the challenge?” Bruce asked.

“I lose any right to claim status as the head of House. Essentially, my line would become the cadet branch of the family. In theory, if she chose to, she could expel me from the House at that point, but that’s almost never done. Bruce, what is all this about?”

“She suggested hiring Lena Luthor to help develop Kryptonian power supplies for sale on Earth.”

“SHE WHAT?” Clark yelled.

“She suggested hiring Lena Luthor to help develop Kryptonian power supplies for sale on Earth,” Bruce repeated, in the exact same tone he’d said it before.

Clark took off his glasses and pinched the bridge of his nose. “Lois and I are going to National City tomorrow morning for Thanksgiving. I’ll talk to her then and find out what the hell she’s thinking.”
“Be prepared for an argument,” Bruce said.

“Right,” Clark said. “I’m hanging up now.”

“Okay,” Bruce said.

Clark cut the connection to Bruce and pulled up Diana’s number to find out what the hell had actually happened.

Kara looked up at the sound of approaching footsteps and smiled at the sight of Cat Grant making her way towards her office door.

“Hello, Miss Grant,” she said.

“Hello, Kiera,” Cat said as she sat down in one of the chairs in front of Kara’s desk.

“You’re here late,” Kara said.

“So are you. I thought you were taking off early because your family is in town for Thanksgiving.”

“That was the plan, but every time Supergirl makes a Facebook post, it’s like someone sets my entire calendar on fire.”

“Yes, well, our girl does seem to be making quite the splash, doesn’t she?”

“I’m pretty sure that incident in the bay this afternoon was just a misunderstanding,” Kara said, grinning.

“Oh, I’m sure. I mean, it was purely a coincidence that Supergirl splashed Simon Tycho, and only Simon Tycho when she did a flyby of his yacht.”

“She was on her way to a warehouse fire in Nation’s Bay,” she said, trying not to laugh, despite the amused twinkle in Cat’s eyes.

“I’m sure,” Cat said. “I heard someone had a visit from Vicki this morning.”

“I did,” Kara said. “She tried to convince me to give up all of this,” Kara said, waving to their surroundings, “to go be a reporter.”

“You would make a hell of a reporter, Kara,” Cat said.

Kara nodded. “I would,” she said. “And someday, I will. But if I’m honest, there’s a part of me that wishes I was still fetching your latte’s and organizing your schedule.”

Cat smiled at her. “I wish you were, too,” she said.

“Is there a problem with Jackson?” Kara asked, frowning.

“Just that he isn’t you,” Cat said. “I’ll never admit it to anyone, but my day feels a little emptier without someone sending me some inane cat video.”

“Oh, well, if it’s just the cat videos, I’m sure I can add that to his list of duties,” Kara said.

“He also can’t keep a latte hot,” Cat said.

Kara just grinned, deciding not to push any further, even though she knew exactly what Cat was
“How’s our girl handling her new status as a gay icon?” Cat asked.

“It’s a little overwhelming,” Kara said. “Out, the Advocate, Curve, Autostraddle and AfterEllen all keep begging for interviews, which makes me wish we had the lesbian-focused magazine and website already spun up, and some of the negative comments are enough to make anyone want to shoot lasers out of their eyes. Maybe a bit shocked that the President actually issued a statement about it.”

“I thought Oliva was very supportive,” Cat said.

“Yeah, it’s just… You know, having your private life on display like that isn’t easy.”

“No, it isn’t,” Cat said. “I remember the first time a paparazzi got pictures of me on a date. I didn’t want to leave the house for a week.”

“That’s hard to imagine,” Kara said.

“It was right after I started my first talk show,” Cat said. “Naturally, I adapted, but it was hard, at the time. People say things, cruel things, about public figures. I just hope Supergirl knows that the people who care about her won’t believe them, and the people that believe them aren’t worth caring about.”

“Well, I will pass along the message, Miss Grant. But I think, given her little speech on Leslie’s show, she knows whose opinions should be given weight.”

“I hope so,” Cat said.

“How about you, Miss Grant? You and Carter have your Thanksgiving plans all settled?”

“Oh, no. I don’t do Thanksgiving,” Cat said. “Carter spends it with his father, so I just come in and work.”

“I’m sorry,” Kara said.

“It’s okay. I get him for Christmas.”

“You should come to my place!” Kara said.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” Cat said.

“I’m not,” Kara said. “It’ll be fun. Besides, James will be there, and Clark.”

“Which means Lois,” Cat said. “I’ll pass.”

“Oh, come on, Cat,” Kara said, bouncing a little in her seat. “You can spend the whole time rubbing it in her face that *your* Superhero let you sponsor her entire social media presence, and you’ve got inside access to the first out lesbian superhero.”

“Well, that does make it sound tempting,” Cat said.

“Come on!” Kara said, putting just a little bit of wheedling into her voice. “I bet I could even talk Supergirl into doing a cover shoot for the next issue of the magazine. It could be another feature. ‘The Out Girl From Outer Space.’”
“Well, we know who won’t be writing any headlines any time soon.”

“It sounded better in my head,” Kara said, not able to stop from giggling just a little.

“I should let you get going,” Cat said, standing up.

“I’ll text you my address,” Kara said, “In case you change your mind.”

Cat smiled at her. “Good night, Kara,” she said, then turned and headed for the elevator.

Kara didn’t stop smiling the whole way home.
Chapter Summary

Clark arrives in town for Thanksgiving, and he and Kara have a little chat.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The Metropolis Star Morning Edition
Wednesday November 25th, 2015
Is Supergirl a Supercensor?

By Toby Raynes

Following an on-air confrontation between long time CatCo radio personality Leslie Willis, and new National City Superhero Supergirl Monday, CatCo Worldwide Media announced late yesterday that Willis’ contract has been terminated, effective immediately. In a press release, CatCo CEO Cat Grant stated that the decision to terminate Willis reflected a desire to set a higher standard and raise the tone in both broadcast and print media.

The verbal altercation was sparked when Willis implied on air that Supergirl was a lesbian and made disparaging remarks about her religion. Supergirl turned up at the radio personality’s studio a few minutes later, demanding Willis apologize to the LGBT and religious communities for the harm her words may have caused. During the argument, Supergirl revealed that she is, in fact, a lesbian, though she later admitted in what some are calling a poignant and heartfelt post on social media that the disclosure had been unintentional.

Reaction to the announcement has been decidedly mixed. Many in the LGBT community are praising the decision, while the religious community is split, with some praising both Supergirl and Cat Grant for calling Willis out on her negative comments toward religion, while others are claiming that firing Willis for criticizing someone for what they are calling ‘deviant sexuality’ and ‘pagan religion’ are a violation of Willis’ religious freedom. Others, including Willis’ fans, are calling the move blatant censorship.

Embattled Lord Technologies CEO Maxwell Lord, facing a number of indictments relation to an attempted bombing foiled by Supergirl, claim that this, along with the allegations against him and fellow Tech CEO Simon Tycho demonstrate a disturbing pattern where anyone who speaks out against Supergirl finds their livelihood and even their freedom threatened. Lord also went on to ask why Cat Grant, long known as an unbiased and impartial voice in media, is so enamored of the Girl of Steel, saying it’s almost as if Supergirl has some sort of undue influence over the Media Mogul. California Senator and noted Anti-Alien activist Miranda Crane cited this as another example of undue alien influence on the lives of Americans and called for President Marsdin to Veto the Alien Amnesty Act which was passed by Congress on Friday.

President Marsdin, who issued a statement in support of Supergirl’s open declaration, could not be reached for comment, however White House Press Secretary Erica Lean said when asked, “The President of the United States has bigger things to worry about than some two-bit Shock-Jock getting fired for on-air bigotry, and the chances of the President vetoing a bill she worked so hard
to get passed in the first place are about the same as the chances of Miranda Crane kissing a Martian.”

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@TobyRaynes Re: “Miranda Crane kissing a Martian.” It’s more likely than you think ;)

Toby Raynes @TobyRaynes 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Sounds like a story? Care to share?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@TobyRaynes Nope! The Martian in question would kill me.

Toby Raynes @TobyRaynes 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Wait, there are actual Martians?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@TobyRaynes Sorry, Toby, I can’t answer that. @CatGrant is the jealous type.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl @TobyRaynes Damn right I am!

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@CatGrant @TobyRaynes It’s one of the things I love about you.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl @TobyRaynes Really, darling? What are the other ones?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@CatGrant @TobyRaynes It’s a long list, and twitter only gives me 280 characters.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl @TobyRaynes I see your dilemma

Toby Raynes @TobyRaynes 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl @CatGrant Is being stuck between two people flirting always this
uncomfortable?

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@CatGrant @TobyRaynes Yes! *glares at @VickiVale *

Vicki Vale @VickiVale 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl @CatGrant Hey, leave me out of this. Unless you want a better job
@TobyRaynes (If so, call me)

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl How dare you! I’ve never kissed an alien.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@MirandaCrane I never said you had, but I saw you check out at least three at the CatCo Gala.
#appearancescanbedeceiving

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl You’re a liar, just like the rest of your kind

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@MirandaCrane Most of my kind are dead because of closed minded politicians

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 25 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Watch who you call closed minded

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@MirandaCrane I didn’t call anyone closed minded, but if you feel the shoe fits…

Cat Grant @CatGrant 25 Nov 2015
@MirandaCrane, perhaps you should stop before swallowing your other foot. @SupergirlZorEl, puppies, now

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 25 Nov 2015
@CatGrant 4 medevacs (ambulance included), 1 car crash, 3 fires, 1 robbery, all before breakfast
#superheroesneedbreakstoo
It was a little past noon, but the forty-second floor was already empty. Once the Thanksgiving Video had been shot, edited, and posted to YouTube, she’d sent the rest of the team home for the holiday. She really wanted to head out early herself, but she’d spent so much of the day out and about as Supergirl, she felt a bit guilty about how much time she wasn’t putting in at CatCo. Konex could handle running the entire department on his own if necessary, but she wasn’t really expecting any Facebook emergencies. Though she did plan on getting a couple of pictures of her and Kal for Instagram over the Holidays, which might break the internet.

The chime of the elevator drew her attention, and she looked up from the monitor where she was looking at website traffic from Krypton Remembered. Kaldur’ahm and Kal both stepped out of the elevator. Poor Kaldur’ahm looking unhappy and was giving Kal the side eye as they both came towards her office.

“Hey, guys,” she said as they entered.

“Kara,” Kal said.

“Ms. Danvers,” Kaldur’ahm said. He stepped in front of Kal, and handed her a wrinkled sheet of paper that had been folded in half to conceal its content.

Kara sighed as she took it, and reached down, pulling open a drawer in her desk so she could take out a binder. “Thank you, Jackson,” she said.

“You’re welcome,” he replied. “Anything else you need?”

“No,” she said. “See you tomorrow?”

“I’ll be there.” He turned and headed back towards the elevator without ever speaking to Kal.

“So,” Kara asked as she opened the binder and turned to the back, “what was that about?”

“I tried to convince him to talk to Arthur,” Kal said.

“You shouldn’t meddle.” She unfolded the sheet of paper and smoothed it carefully, using a gentle application of her freeze breath, followed by a burst of heat vision to steam the paper flat, before
inserting it into a plastic sleeve in the binder.

“It’s been almost two years,” Kal said.

“Remind me how long it took before Jason and Bruce could be in the same room together,” Kara said.

“That’s different.”

“Yeah. Bruce just got Jason killed. He didn’t actually lie to him for eighteen years.”

Kal frowned and gestured to the binder. “What’s that about?”

“Meddling,” Kara said, closing the binder and dropping it back into her desk drawer.

“Do I need to point out the irony?” Kal said.

“It’s hypocrisy, not irony, baby cousin. I’d think a journalist would be more careful with his word choices.” Kara gestured to one of the chairs in front of her desk. “Go on and have a seat.”

Kal sat down, and Kara had a feeling from the look on his face, and the fact that he’d come here instead of waiting until they were at her apartment with Alex and Eliza around, that things were about to get unpleasant. “Where’s Lois?” she asked.

“Visiting Cat,” Kal said.

Kara sighed. “Why am I sitting here missing that?”

“I wanted to talk to you,” Kal said.

“You know, it might be time for a name change. Instead of Superman, we could go with Captain Obvious.”

“Kara,” he said, and she almost laughed at the put upon tone in his voice, “I’m serious.”

Kara had to fight the urge to go straight for the dad joke, and just nodded instead. “Okay. What’s up?”

“Bruce called me,” Kal said.

Kara didn’t bother to hide the eye roll. “Of course he did.”

“He’s worried, and after what he told me, I called Diana, because, well, you know what Bruce is like.”

“In need of more therapy that he can afford, which is saying something, but yes, I know what Bruce is like.”

“Don’t make a joke of this, Kara. Diana confirmed it. You’re seriously considering giving Kryptonian technology to a Luthor.”

“To *Lena* Luthor, Kal. Who, by all evidence, is a brilliant, hard working woman who wants more than anything to do good in the world.”

“Kara, that entire family is poison.”
Kara sighed. “You know, I expected this, but I had hoped you’d surprise me.”

“What?” Kal asked.

“I had this same argument with Diana. You’ve never met Lena Luthor. You’re judging her based entirely on the actions of her family.”

“Have you met her?” Kal asked.

“No,” Kara said. “But I have looked into her.”

“And, what, you think a google search is enough when you’re talking about handing over Kryptonian technology?” Kal asked.

“Okay, I’m going to ask you to rephrase that in a way that makes you sound less like a condescending asshole.” Kal flinched, but Kara didn’t give him a chance to say anything. “You know what, this was a mistake. I thought maybe this time we could actually be a family, but you are just like your father. Just as convinced that you are always right, just arrogant enough to make decisions for other people without bothering to ask what they want.”

“Kara-“

“No,” she snapped. “You have had thirty-six years to help this planet and all you’ve done is spend your time getting cats out of trees.”

“Getting cats out of trees? Is that really what you think I’ve been doing?”

“Yeah, it is. I know it is, because that’s what I do when I put on the suit. The suit is a symbol, a way to remind people of who we are. It’s a way to inspire them, to make them look beyond themselves, and that’s a great thing. It is. But we can do more, Kal. We can help them, give them the tools they need to do better, to be better. It’s been what, fifteen, sixteen years since you brought the fortress on line. With the technology in those archives, you could have changed the world. Eliminated poverty, homelessness, disease. All of it, Kal. And instead, you’ve sat there, hoarding it, while these people suffer and die by the millions.”

“That technology is dangerous!” Kal said.

“Give them Omegahedrons, give them annihilation cannons, give them defense fields and war suits and power armor and plasma rifles and displacement warheads. Give them boom tubes, and mother boxes and compression fields. Because one day, Darkseid, or Braniac, or Mongul, or Sinestro, or Atrocitus, or Agent Orange, or Nekron, or someone else is going to come… And… And they are going to have to defend themselves. Someday, you and me, and Diana, and J’onn and all the rest are going to be gone, but the rest of the universe isn’t gonna forget. And on that day, the people who come after us, our children, and the children of the people we love, are going to have to stand up and fight.

“So, we start with the cure for cancer, then we give them hedrons, and then we give them cyber constructs, then we give them sub-light drives and asteroid extraction. We teach them how to solve poverty and want. We inspire them to be better than they are. And when we can trust them not to misuse them, then we give them the tools to defend themselves.

“So, yeah, you’ve been getting cats out of trees while I’m trying to figure out how to train a fire department. But you go ahead and keep acting like you’re the grown up here.”

“Damn, short stuff,” Lois said, “how long you been holding that in?”
Kara looked past Kal, spotting Lois standing in the doorway to her office and felt herself blushing. “I’m sorry, Lois.”

“It’s okay,” she said. “He told me he was coming up here to say hi. I’m guessing the conversation was a little more involved than that.”

“I just wanted to ask her about her meeting with Bruce and Diana last week.”

Kara watched as Lois snorted and shook her head. “You’re a shit liar Smallville.”

“Runs in the family,” Kara said. “I thought you and Cat would be still be insulting each other.”

“Normally, yeah, but she wasn’t in her office,” Lois said as she dropped into the seat next to Kal. “It’s a shame, I had a few really good ones.”

Kara laughed. “No offense, but I’d put my money on Cat.”

“You wound me, Short Stuff.”

“You know I’m taller than you, right?”

“What’s your point?”

“She still calls me Smallville,” Kal pointed out.

“I noticed,” Kara said. “Lois, you did an interview with Lena Luthor once, right?”

“Yeah, when Southside General dedicated the new Pediatric Oncology Center to her. Why, looking for a date?”

Kara shook her head. “Not into straight girls,” she said.

“Oh, sweetie, that girl’s about as straight as you are. At least, if the way she stared at my chest is anything to go by.”

Kara frowned for a moment, then kicked herself. In the time she’d known Lena, Jack was the only ex Lena had ever mentioned, and a much younger and less aware Kara had taken that as confirmation that Lena was straight. An assumption she’d never had reason to revisit, given that Lena had died at Hank Henshaw’s hands a few weeks before the Battle of CatCo plaza. Not that it really mattered. Kara filed the information away for a later date.

“Well, other than her admiration for your chest, what did you think of her?” Kara asked.

Lois shrugged. “Nice girl. Sweet. Kind. Humble. Really loved kids. Maybe a little lonely. She had a friend with her. Um… Sam, something… Arias. Sam Arias. Honestly, that was part of what makes me think Lena’s batting for your team. Rumor was, Sam was a huge bone of contention between Lena and Lillian, even before Lex went batshit.”

“Oh, and Lena was adopted. Word is, Lionel did it without consulting Lillian. Her name is on the forms, but he’s the only one who signed them. The will was a bit weird too. Lex got controlling interest in Luthor Corp, Lena got a significant minority share, and the money was split fifty-fifty between them. Lillian didn’t get a dime.”

“That doesn’t make sense,” Kara said. “Lillian is rich.”

“Lillian was rich before she married Lionel and has control of any of Lex’s assets that weren’t
“seized,” Kal added.

“Not that there was a lot of that,” Lois put in.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “The Luthor Corp stock was sold at auction to cover Lex’s fines. I know Lillian tried to buy it, but Lena out bid her.”

Kara watched as Kal took a deep, steadying breath. “Okay, Kara, you’re right. I was being condescending, and it’s clear you’ve given this all a lot of thought. But why Lena Luthor? Why not just give the Hedron designs to Bruce, and let Lucius Fox work it out?

“See, that’s a fair question, baby cousin,” Kara said. “Lucius runs Wayne Enterprises. Not WayneTech. Wayne Enterprises. His focus is divided. Worse, Wayne Enterprises leaks like a screen door on an airlock. If we gave them the Hedron designs, every major tech firm in the country would have them inside of a month.”

“You’re not wrong,” Lois said.

“I know. It’s amazing all the industrial espionage hasn’t blown Bruce’s cover, although sometimes I think he encourages it, because it diverts suspicion. The whole ‘Bruce Wayne can’t be Batman, because no one at Wayne Enterprises could keep the secret’ thing.”

Kal frowned. “You know, I never thought of that. I’ll have to ask him sometime.”

“I considered a few people,” Kara said. “The ones who could actually understand the tech. Harrison Wells did some promising work, but he’s been on a bender for ten years since his wife died in a car accident. Maxwell Lord and Simon Tycho I dismissed out of hand. They’re as bad as Lex Luthor. Meena Dwahan was another possibility, but when I started digging into her background… She’s either working for the government, or the mob. Either way, not going there. Silas Stone’s out for obvious reasons. If the man would do that to his own son, he’s not the kind of person I would turn this level of power over to. Natasha Irons was a candidate, but I don’t think she’d ever leave her uncle, and John Henry Irons is… Arrogant when he thinks he’s right. I can’t trust him to stay within the bounds we set.”

“Of the thirty-seven people Konex identified with the scientific knowledge necessary, Lena is the only one I didn’t dismiss for some reason.”

“You didn’t think her being Lex’s sister was reason enough?” Kal asked.

“Obviously not,” Kara said. “You didn’t think being the daughter of one of the worst bigots I’ve ever had the misfortune to run across was reason enough not to trust Lois.”

“Kara!” Kal snapped.

“No,” Lois said, putting her hand on Kal’s arm. “That’s fair.”

“Look, Kal, I’m not blind to the fact that there are risks involved here. But Lena is the best option here. It solves two problems. First, she’s smart enough to understand the Hedron designs, and get them into production here on Earth. Second, making her our ally will stop the whole Super versus Luthor thing from turning into a Generational feud the way the conflict between the House of El and the House of Zod did.”

Kara could see that Kal wasn’t happy at all with the way the conversation had gone, but to his credit, he seemed to be thinking about what she was saying.
“Diana said you guys agreed to an interview with her after the first of the year.”

“Yes,” Kara said. “Though I’m beginning to wonder if they were just humoring me.”

“Would you mind if I sat in?” he asked.

“As Superman, or as Clark Kent?” Kara asked.

“Superman,” he said.

“Honestly, I’d rather you didn’t,” Kara said. “Having Supergirl in the room is going to put her on edge, and that’s if she even agrees to an interview in the first place. Having Superman there is going to make that worse. On the other hand, it’s probably the only way I’ll ever get Bruce on board.”

Kara turned to Lois. “What do you think?”

“About letting a Luthor have a bunch of Kryptonian toys to play with?” Lois asked. “I think you’re fucking nuts to even consider it, but then, I thought you giving Cat Grant an in-person interview was nine kinds of crazy. When I heard about it, I was sure she’d figure out who you were, and splash your real name all over every news outlet she owns. Instead, you’re the freaking Golden Girl, and you probably cut a year off the time it would have taken to get the Alien Amnesty Act passed with that little stunt.”

Kara shrugged. “It wouldn’t matter if she did figure it out. Cat would never expose me.”

“Don’t be too sure of that,” Lois said. “Cat’s ambition—“

“Lois,” Kara said, cutting her off, “are you really going to sit there and warn me about *Cat’s* ambition?”

All the blood drained from Lois’ face. “I… Um, yeah. You…” Lois stopped and took a deep breath, getting some of the color back in her face. “Jesus Christ, Short Stuff, you fight dirty.”

Kara shrugged. “I protect the people I care about.”

The frown that had been lingering on Kal’s face deepened a bit, and Kara knew it was time to end the conversation before it turned into another argument.

“Are you guys checked into your hotel?” she asked.

“Yeah,” Lois said.

“Airport Marriott, right?”

Lois rolled her eyes. “Like I could get him to stay anywhere else.”

“Hey, it’s not my fault no other hotels in town have a steak buffet,” Kal said in an offended tone.

“The man makes a valid point,” Kara said.

“You two are terrible,” Lois said, the smile on her face taking the sting out of her words.

“Alex, Eliza and I will meet you for dinner,” Kara said.

“Sounds good,” Lois said, thankfully taking the hint Kal was ignoring. She stood up, and tugged
Kal’s hand. “Come on, Smallville. Short Stuff has real work to do.”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

,rao, i dovrrosh
Literal: “Rao's Shadow”
Semantic: “Oh, hell”

:zhaolodh w tov dovrros ho ,kahl,ehl,
Literal: Fuck the shadows, Kal-El
Semantic: Fucking Hell, Kal-El
Kara did her best to keep from smiling as Alex glared at her. She’d just sat down the fourth chocolate pecan pie on the side table, and the daggers had started with the third one. Eliza always made two pies for Thanksgiving, but they were always the same because she made the filling in one big batch. Of course, this year, Eliza hadn’t done the cooking. She’d just supplied the recipes to Konex, who’d sent them to Sanctuary, where Kolex had done the actual meal prep.

“You couldn’t have had one of your robot butlers make one sweet potato pie?” Alex grumped as she sat the table.

“Well, I could have,” Kara said, giving Alex her best smile. “But that would have taken up room in the oven, and we’d have less chocolate pecan.”

“You know I’m going to murder you in your sleep, right?” Alex asked.

“You can try,” Kara replied.

“Girls,” Eliza said as she sat a huge bowl of mashed potatoes in the middle of the table.

“Excuse me, Lady Kara, the next batch of food is ready for transmission,” Konex said.

“Go ahead,” Kara said. The faint hum of the matter transit system filled the room, as Kara walked over to the island in the kitchen. “You’re welcome, by the way.” Kara said to Alex as she picked up the two sweet potato pies that where on the island.

Alex turned around, and the glare immediately vanished off her face, replaced by a smile. “Really?”

“You’d think I never made you a sweet potato pie,” Eliza said.

“No fighting,” Kara said as she carried pies to the side table. “There’s sweet potato for Alex and Susan, two dishes of Banana Pudding for Clark, pumpkin for Lois and Lucy, apple for James, Key lime for Jackson, cherry for Winn, tiramisu for Maggie, and Carrot Cake for Eliza.”

“But four for you,” Alex said.

“If you want extra pie, get your own robot,” Kara said smugly as she picked up the last two desserts.

“Who are those for?” Eliza asked.

“The Oreo pie is for our boss at the DEO, if he stops by. Otherwise, I’ll fly it out to him later,”
“And who’s the Strawberry Cheesecake for?” Alex asked.

“James and Lucy are here,” Kara said, setting down the desserts and heading for the door without answering the question. She opened it just before James knocked.

“Hey,” she said, smiling at them both.

“Hey,” James said, holding up a casserole dish carrier. “You said not to bring any wine, so I brought bread pudding.”

“Oh,” Kara said as Alex broke out laughing behind her. “Well, more’s the merrier when it comes to dessert, right. Come on in.” Stepped back and giving them a small wave. James walked in past her, but Lucy hesitated.

“It’s still okay, me being here, right?” Lucy asked.

“Are you kidding?” Kara asked. She stepped forward, pulling Lucy into a hug. “If you hadn’t sent me that text, I never would have gotten there in time.”

Lucy returned the hug. “I’m sorry it even came to that,” she said.

“It’s not your fault, Lucy.” Kara let go of her and stepped back. “Now get in here, before James thinks I’m putting the moves on his girl.”

“Again, you mean?” Lucy said, smiling as she stepped into the apartment.

Kara laughed as she closed the door, only to spot a dumb-struck James standing by the side table already crowded with desserts. She grinned as she followed Lucy into the apartment.

“Lucy, this is my foster mother, Eliza, and my sister Alex.”

“Nice to meet you both,” Lucy said.

“You too,” Alex said.

“Nice to meet you, Lucy,” Eliza said.

“Lucy is Lois’s younger, hotter sister,” Kara, making Lucy blush just a bit.

“Kara!” Eliza said.

Alex smiled. “I don’t know, mom. I’m gonna have to go with Kara on this one.”

“Hey, I saw her first,” Kara said.

“You do remember I’m standing right here?” James asked.

“I’m just letting the girl know she has options,” Kara said, giving James a beautific smile.

“Kara,” Eliza said in a warning tone.

Kara sighed, and made a show of stepping away from Lucy. “I’ll be good,” she said, before turning and winking at Lucy, who laughed out loud in response.

There was a knock at the door, and Kara turned around and went to answer it, finding Kaldur’ahn
standing there with his usual stoic expression, Winn, who was trying and failing to not look at Kaldur’ahm the way a starving man would look at an all you can eat buffet, and Susan, who was looking at Winn, and clearly about to hurt her herself from not laughing.

“Hey, guys, Susan,” Kara said. “Come on in.”

She waited until everyone was inside and the door closed. “Lucy, Eliza, this is Winn, he works with me in the Supergirl Social Media Group at CatCo, Susan, who works with Alex, and Jackson, who replaced me as Miss Grant’s assistant. Susan, Winn, Jackson, this is Lucy Lane and my foster mother, Eliza Danvers.”

Greetings were exchanged all around, and there was a funny moment when then next batch of food materialized on the island, making Lucy jump a little in surprise, since she was the only one who hadn’t seen the transmat in action before. Then a slightly awkward moment when she had to explain to Lucy that she’d hired ‘Jackson’ because he came recommended by her cousin, but the next few minutes were filled mostly with idle chitchat before the whole thing started again when Kal and Lois arrived.

“Hey,” she said as she pulled them both into a hug, just inside the door.

“Good to see you, Short Stuff,” Lois said, hugging her back. Lois let her go. “I’m gonna go talk to my baby sister.”

“Go ahead,” Kara said. “Just avoid the island in the kitchen.”

Kal gave her an awkward look, and shuffled a little, before speaking. “I wanted to apologize for yesterday,” he said. “I was out of line. I still have my concerns about Lena, but it’s been clear, right from the start, you have a good idea of how you want to do this. I should have more faith in you.”

Kara nodded. “Apology accepted,” she said. “I don’t want to fight about any of this. In fact, I really want your help with it. I’m just not sure you’re ready to do all this with me.”

“Well, I don’t think I’ll be flirting with Cat on twitter anytime soon,” he said, grinning.

“You better not be,” Kara said, giving him a mock glare. “You may have seen her first, pal, but you missed your chance.”

He raises his hands in defense. “She’s all yours.”

“And don’t you forget it. Go on. We’re just waiting on one more person before we sit down.”

Kal nodded and headed into the apartment, while Kara went back to helping get all the food set out on the table she’d had Kolex beam in that morning.

“Hey, Alex,” she said as she sat the last of the four turkeys on the table, “text Maggie and see where she is?”

“Good idea,” Alex said. “She should have been here fifteen minutes ago.”

“Kara,” Kal said, in a tone that immediately made her, Alex, Susan, Lucy and Kaldur’ahm all straighten up and start checking the room for threats. She looked across the room, and saw where Kal was, and the realization of what he was looking at settled in her gut like a lump of kryptonite.

“What is it?” Alex asked as Kara started walking over towards the corner where she kept the finished paintings she hadn’t sent to Sanctuary yet. She felt everyone watching as she stepped up
next to Kal and looked down at the painting in the middle of the stack he was looking at.

“Is this who I think it is?” he asked.

“Yeah,” Kara said. She heard Alex take a step towards them and used a burst of super-speed to reach down and swap the painting for a different one in the stack, so the face staring up from the canvas didn’t belong to Harley. Kal glanced over at her, a little surprised, both by what she’d done, and by whose face graced this canvas. Kara just picked up the painting she’d selected and lifted it out of the stack, setting it on her easel. While her back was to the rest of the room, she whispered, “We’ll talk about it when we’re alone,” low enough that only Kal could possibly hear her, then stepped out of the way, so everyone in the room could see the painting she’d selected.

“Who’s that?” Eliza asked.

“My mother,” Kal said. He looked at Kara. “It’s beautiful.”

“Thank you,” she said, genuinely pleased that he liked it. “That was about six Kryptonian days before you were born. There was an outbreak of Bolovaxian flu. Your father and both my parents were so sick they couldn’t get out of bed, so Lara came to take me to the Mass of Rao Transitioning. There was a moment during the Hymn of Transition when Rao’s light fell on her, and the silver gown she was wearing seemed to catch fire. That’s how I remember her, standing there like the avatar of Flamebird, holding my hand as we sang.”

“It’s beautiful, Kara,” Kal said.

“You can have it, if you like,” Kara said.

“I couldn’t,” Kal said.

“You can,” Kara said. “I think giving you a picture of your mother is the perfect way to thank her for that memory. It would make her happy.”

“Thank you,” Kal said, giving her a look she was sure meant that he hadn’t dropped the original topic.

The sound of a text alert filled the room, and everyone in the room but Eliza reached for their phones.

“It’s mine,” Kaldur’ahm said.

Kara frowned. “Is it from Cat?”

He nodded. “I’m sorry. She says it’s an emergency.”

“With Cat, that could mean anything from ‘my coffee is too cold’ to dinosaurs are rampaging through the city,” Kara said. “I’ll go.”

“But-“

Kara held up her hand. “I can get there faster,” she said, completely ignoring the panicked death glare she was getting from Alex. “Stay and enjoy dinner.” Kara looked at her sister. “Say hi to Maggie for me.”

She felt Alex glaring at her all the way to CatCo.
Kara landed on the balcony outside her office, and slipped inside, using a bit of super-speed to switch back into her regular clothes before dropping into the chair behind her desk and pulling up the security feeds for the entire building, including the ones she’d added over the last year that weren’t part of the building’s official security system. She threw the feed from Cat’s office up on one screen so she could keep an eye on her while she made sure everything was clear.

Something about this felt off, because in the original timeline, Livewire had been the reason for Cat’s text, and by the time Kara had arrived, she’d cut all outside communications. This time, there was no Livewire, and everything on the security feeds read green. Kara glanced at the feed of Cat’s office again, and saw Cat sitting on the couch, with a glass of scotch in hand. She checked the clock. Fastest travel time from her apartment would still take another ten minutes. Kara used her super-speed to head for Cat’s office. Damn the consequences.

“Miss Grant?” Kara asked.

Cat jumped slightly and looked up. “Kara?” she asked. “I thought I texted Jackson.”

Kara had to step on her sense of panic. Something was very, very wrong. Cat had used her name. Worse, Cat wasn’t sure who she’d texted.

“You did, Miss Grant. He was at my place for Thanksgiving. I told him I’d come.”

“Oh,” Cat said. She looked down at her glass. “I shouldn’t be drinking.”

Kara walked over, and carefully took the tumbler away from Cat, sitting it on the coffee table, before she sat down beside Cat.

“What’s wrong?” she asked.

“Did you know that I’m listed on all her paperwork as Leslie’s next of kin?” Cat asked.

“Something happened?”

“I got the call about ten minutes ago,” Cat said. “She’s at Plastino Memorial. They’re not sure she’s going to make it.”

It should have taken them twenty minutes to get to the hospital, but Kara drove Cat’s Porsche 911 Turbo S convertible the same way she flew when she was in a fight. Fast and reckless. They made it there less than six minutes from the time Kara turned the key. Cat hardly seemed to notice the trip at all, and once they were there, she followed as Kara lead them through the doors of the hospital, and up to the check in desk in the ER.

“Excuse me,” she said. “Can you tell me where to find Leslie Willis?”

“Are you family?” the nurse asked.

“I’m her healthcare proxy,” Cat said. “She doesn’t have any family.”

“I’ll need to see some ID, and a copy of the form.”

Cat reached into her purse, and pulled out her wallet, passing over her driver’s license. “I have a copy of the form on my phone. I assume there’s an email I can send it to?”

Kara watched the exchange, and if she hadn’t known better, she would have thought Cat was her
usual, grouchy self, but the way she’d let Kara lead her into the hospital told a much different story.

“Miss Willis is still in surgery,” the nurse said after she’d confirmed Cat’s identity. “It may be a while.”

“Where’s the waiting room?” Cat asked.

“I’ll have an orderly show you.”

Kara looked up as Kal and Lois walked into the waiting room. Kal raised an eyebrow as he spotted Cat leaning into Kara, her head resting on Kara’s shoulder, but he didn’t say anything. Instead, Lois sat down on Cat’s other side and took her hand, squeezing it while Clark sat beside her. The look Lois gave her was enough for Kara to catch the implicit question, and Kara gave a small shake of her head, indicating that there hadn’t been any word. She started to turn her attention back to Cat, but Maggie walked into the room.

“Kara, can I have a word?” Maggie asked.

Kara nodded and started to turn to Cat.

“It’s okay,” Cat said, sitting up. Kara couldn’t help but notice she didn’t let go of Lois’ hand.

She stood up, and followed Maggie, who lead her down two different hallways before they went into a small office where two uniformed police officers sat. Maggie flashed her badge.

“Give us the room,” she said. The two cops looked like they wanted to argue, but they got up and shuffled out the door.

“What’s going on?” Kara asked.

“Nothing good,” Maggie said. “Kara, is there anyone who can go on the record as to Supergirl’s whereabouts around noon today?”

Kara frowned. “Why am I guessing Superman isn’t going to be a good enough alibi?” she asked.

“Probably because you’re not stupid,” Maggie said. “Look, the only reason Leslie is alive at all is someone heard the screams and called nine one one. She was beaten and left for dead, her apartment was locked from the inside, and whoever did this entered the apartment through a window forty stories off the ground just three days after Leslie had a very public confrontation with Supergirl. You see how this looks?”

“Yeah,” Kara said. “Tell me about the scene.”

“Honestly, if I didn’t know you, I’d think you did it,” Maggie said. “The window was broken with so much force we found pieces of glass embedded in the walls and there were heat vision scorch marks all over the place.”

“Heat vision?” Kara asked.

“Yeah,” Maggie said.

“Did Leslie have any burns?”

“No,” Maggie said. “Why?”
“There’s an Infernian. Pyrokinetic, with heat vision. Calls herself Scorcher but her ID reads Claire Selton. Red hair, bad attitude. Frequent Darla’s. She’s anti-amnesty. In the other timeline, she tried to assassinate the President. But framing me for murder would turn signing the amnesty bill into political suicide.”

“But Infernians can’t fly,” Maggie said.

“Yeah, and I’ve never seen an Infernian attack someone without leaving them covered in burns.”

“Well, heat vision isn’t very common,” Maggie said. “As far as I know, it’s just you, your cousin, the Kryptonians in Astra’s crew, and this Scorcher, so if it’s not her, who could it be?”

“[..]rao, i dovrrosh/” Kara said.

“What is it?” Maggie asked.

“I know exactly who did this,” Kara said. “Hank Henshaw.”

“Alex’s boss?” Maggie asked.

“No, not J’onn. The *real* Hank Henshaw.”

“Right,” Maggie said. “Fuck, I can’t keep the other timeline straight.”

Kara let out a small dry laugh. “I’ll avoid the obvious joke.”

Maggie grinned. “Thanks.”

“I don’t want to leave Cat, but I’ve got to get out there,” Kara said.

“No!” Maggie said. “Look, Kara, Supergirl can’t go *anywhere* near this. This is a deliberate set up. If you are anywhere near the investigation, there will always be some doubt.”

“[..]shisirodh w ,lyliahn,luthr, ath dovrrosho vav/” Kara snapped.

“Easy, there, sunshine,” Maggie said.

Kara shook her head and forced herself to unclench her fists. “Sorry. Sorry. I hate feeling helpless.”

“Yeah,” Maggie said. “I get that. But-“

Kara’s phone pinged, and she reached for it. There was a text from Kal that simple read, ‘Doctor coming.’

“I’ve got to go,” Kara said, and took off, using her super-speed to get back to the waiting room.

Kara dropped out of super-speed the moment she stepped into the waiting room, and in two steps, she was back at Cat’s side. She sat down, and wrapped her arm around Cat, giving a slight squeeze.

“I’m sorry I had to leave,” she said.

Cat nodded. “I understand. What did Maggie say?”

“The police have a good idea of who did it, and why,” Kara said.
“Excuse me,” a voice said. Kara turned around to see an Indian woman in a set of scrubs standing in the doorway. “I’m looking for Cat Grant,” the woman said.

“That’s me,” Cat said, standing up. Kara stood with her, placing her hand in the small of Cat’s back.

“I’m Doctor Chandra.”

“How’s Leslie?” Cat asked.

“I’m sorry, Miss Grant. We’ve done everything we could. If it weren’t for the head injuries, she would, with time and a few more surgeries, make a full recovery. Unfortunately, she’s bleeding in places we just can’t reach. We’ve given her clotting agents, but…” Doctor Chandra shook her head, “she’s not responding to them. Right now, short of a miracle, I think you should prepare yourself for the likelihood that Miss Willis will not live out the night.”

“Thank you,” Cat said.

“If there’s any other family…” Doctor Chandra said.

“No,” Kara said. “Just us. Will you excuse us?”

“Of course.”

Kara watched her go, but her attention was on Cat. She could feel the grief radiating off the woman and turned to face her.

“Cat,” Kara said. Cat looked up to meet her eyes, and Kara saw exactly what she expected. A depth of guilt as deep and black as the Phantom Zone.

“This was not your fault,” Kara said.

“Then whose fault is it?” Cat asked. For anyone who didn’t know her, and know her extremely well, the question would have sounded cold and snappish, but Kara had known Cat better than just about anyone else alive, including her own children. She could hear the pleading in Cat’s voice. The desperate need for absolution.

“This is on me,” Kara said. She heard the sharp intakes of breath from both Clark and Lois, and could see the protest forming on Cat’s lips, but she was tired of the game. “I’m not pretending today. If you want to go back to it tomorrow, we can, but not right now. I did this. I walked into that studio, and I put that target on Leslie’s back. This is my fault. But I will make it right. I swear to you, on all the blood of Erok-El, past, present and future, Leslie Willis will not die tonight. And I hope that someday, you can forgive me.”

Kara looked past Cat, at Lois. “Take care of her,” she said, then turned to Kal. “I’ll be back as fast as I can, but I need you to protect them while I’m gone. /pahskiles w :divi/” She turned back to Cat, but she couldn’t find anything else to say, she instead, she pressed her lips to Cat’s forehead for a moment, then turned and headed for the door.

Less than five minutes later, Kara flew into her apartment through the window, to find a handful of worried faces. Eliza, Alex, Susan, Kaldur’ahm, James, Winn and Lucy all looked like they were ready to ask what the hell was going on.

“Konex,” Kara said, “I need a life support pod and crate Gamma Zero Zero One from Sanctuary
and have Kolex prepare the Regeneration Matrix. I will also need a device that can arc one billion joules of electricity to a designated target. Pull the metagenetic profile for Livewire and program it into the Regeneration Matrix and prepare for a transmat from a remote location.”

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Konex said.

“Kara, what’s going on?” Alex asked.

“It’s Cadmus,” Kara said. “They attacked Leslie Willis in an attempt to frame Supergirl. I’m guessing they’re hoping it will kill either the Alien Amnesty Act, or President Marsdin’s chances for re-election.”

“Shit,” Alex replied.

“Yeah,” Kara said. She turned to Kaldur’ahm. “Go to the hospital. Clark and Lois are there with Cat, but I want you at her side until this is over.”

“No,” Kara said. “I didn’t want to do it this way, Lucy, but I’m out of options. The long and short of it is, your dad is up to his eyeballs in some seriously bad shit. When he went after Astra and her followers on Sunday, his intent was to turn them over to Cadmus. If Cadmus manages to tank the amnesty act, it will basically be open season on aliens. Me, my cousin, my aunt and her followers are just the start. This will turn into a war in the streets of National City, and honestly, it won’t matter who wins, because it will leave thousands, if not millions of people dead. I need you to decide, right now, where your loyalties lie. With your oath, with the President, the Constitution, and the innocent lives you’re sworn to protect, or with your father.”

“No,” James said.

“Now just a minute,” James said.

“No,” Kara said. “You know what’s at stake here, James. If Cadmus is moving now, it’s bad. We’re not ready, and I don’t have the time to play nice. There’s a monster out there, a man who’s every bit as powerful as Kal-El, who will kill any alien he sees, and anyone who tries to stop him, and he’s acting on her father’s orders.”

Kara turned back to Lucy. “I’m sorry. Truly. But you need to make a choice.”

Lucy stared back at her, and Kara hated the look of pain on Lucy’s face, but the outcome was never really in doubt. “I’m with you,” she said.

“Good,” Kara said. “Alex, I need you and Susan to take Lucy and get to the DEO. Tell the Director that the man who tried to kill him in Peru is alive, but has been modified with alien tech. He has all of my and Kal’s powers, except for freeze breath, and is roughly on par with us strength-wise. Tell him it’s time to give the President the full briefing on Peru, and on Cadmus. I’ll conference in from Sanctuary once I’ve got Leslie stabilized.”

“James, Winn, I need the two of you to go to CatCo. Winn, call in the team. Tell them we’re expecting an attempted security breach on site. James, the crate over there is yours. All the
instructions are included, but everything inside is code locked to your DNA, so no one else can use it.”

Kara turned to Eliza, who had watched everything silently. “I’m sorry. I don’t have time to explain everything. Leslie’s dying, and if we don’t stop this, she won’t be the last person hurt.”

“Go,” Eliza said. “We’ll talk when it’s over.”

Kara nodded and grabbed the life support pod.

Everyone looked up as Kara entered the ICU floor in full Supergirl regalia with the life support pod floating behind her.

“Um… Uh… Can I help you, ma’am?” one of the nurses stammered.

“Leslie Willis,” Kara replied.

“Um, I’m sorry ma’am,” the nurse said, “but only family is allowed in.”

“Let her through,” Cat said as she approached from the hallway leading into the ward. Kara looked over at her. “Third room on the right,” Cat said. “Go. I’ll handle this.”

Kara didn’t wait. She headed for the room Cat indicated, and found Leslie hooked up to so many wires and monitors it was frightening. Her whole face was black and blue, with portions largely held in place by stitches. Kara felt her rage seething under the surface. Leslie didn’t deserve this. No one did. And she wanted to find Henshaw and make him bleed for it.

She reached up and tapped her ear piece. “Konex, walk me through this,” she said. There was a hum a moment later as Konex appeared via the wonders of matter transport and scanned the room. That done, he directed Kara as she quickly unhooked Leslie and shifted her to the stasis pod. She had just finished sealing it when two doctors and a handful of nurses rushed into the room.

“What are you doing?” Doctor Chandra asked.

“Saving her life,” Kara said as she activated the stasis field inside the pod. “One of Miss Grant’s people has a way to contact me. They told me about Miss Willis’ condition. I offered to help.”

“But you can’t just take a patient,” Chandra said.

“Miss Grant will fill out any necessary paperwork,” Kara said. “But I was told Miss Willis was not expected to survive the night due to an inoperable brain hemorrhage. So, let me ask you, Doctor. Which do you care about more? Saving this woman’s life, or following rules?”

To her credit, it only took Doctor Chandra two seconds to decide. “Take her,” she said.

Kara just nodded. “Konex,” she said. A moment later, the trasnmat system took all three of them.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

,rao, i dovrrosh
Literal: “Rao's Shadow”
Semantic: “Oh, hell”

shisirodh w ,lyliahn,luthr, ath dovrrosho vav
Literal: Damn Lillian Luthor to the Shadows
Semantic: “Damn Lillian Luthor straight to hell.”

.pahskiles w :divi
Literal: (She) makes me see light;
Semantic: No semantic translation is possible, because the sentiment being expressed is bound up within Kryptonian Culture. Light is a common metaphor for joy, peace, happiness, divinity and heaven. The closest it can be rendered is “She is the reason I am capable of feeling joy.”
Chapter Summary

Kara gets a phone call, and Leslie wakes up.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

“Lady Kara,” Kolex said.

Kara jumped slightly as the interruption broke her concentration. She took a moment to take a deep breath, then looked away from the monitor displaying Leslie’s vitals.

“Yes, Kolex?” she asked.

“Your sister is attempting to reach you.”

“Put it through,” Kara said.

“Kara, are you there?” Alex asked.

“I’m here,” Kara replied.

“Would you mind telling me where here is?” President Marsdin’s voice cut in.

“Kolex, patch through video,” Kara said. The monitor when had been displaying Leslie’s vital signs switched to a split screen view. One side showed the Oval Office, and the other side showed J’onn, Alex, Susan and Lucy all sitting at a conference table in one of the DEO briefing rooms.

“Hello, Madam President. I’m currently a few hundred miles off the California coast. A little vacation house I keep, similar to my Cousin’s.”

“Well, perhaps sometime when you’re not wanted for kidnapping and attempted murder, you could give me a tour,” Marsdin said.

“Well, I’m guessing the story leaked,” Kara said.

“If by leaked, you mean ‘is currently the front-page headline on every news website in the country,’ then yes,” Marsdin said. “The CatCo and Daily Planet websites are trying to put a positive spin on it, but Cat isn’t sure how long that will last. Apparently, the board is holding an emergency meeting at 10:00 AM tomorrow morning. Cat believes she’ll be removed from the CEO’s position at that time. It’s also likely CatCo will formally cut all ties with Supergirl under the moral turpitude clause in the contracts.”

“That won’t happen,” Kara said.

Olivia leaned towards the camera. “Miss Danvers, that is exactly what will happen unless you can clear your name in the next seven hours. Please, tell me you have good news.”

“The Regeneration Matrix has managed to repair the damage to Leslie’s brain, not to mention
every other major organ and her bones. Physically, she’s in better shape than she was before the attack. Probably in better shape than she’s been at any point in her life.”

“I sense a ‘but’ coming,” Marsdin said.

“But the technology was designed to work on Kryptonians. Our physiology is naturally regenerative. Even without our powers, we will eventually heal from anything that doesn’t kill us. Under a red sun, we’re as prone to scarring as humans, but the Regeneration Matrix was designed with that in mind. It can repair gross physical damage down to the genetic level, but with a Kryptonian brain, that would be enough. You fix the damage, and neural activity will re-initiate on its own. Humans… not so much.”

“In English, please, Miss Danvers.”

“I’ll put it in High Durlan if you like, but the long and short of it is, Leslie’s in there, her mind and memories intact, but she needs a jump start.” Marsdin was good, Kara had to admit. She would have missed the flinch when she mentioned Marsdin’s species if she hadn’t been watching for it, but it was there.

“Do you have any way to do that?” Marsdin asked. “If she could tell us who attacked her, a lot of headaches would go away.”

“Well, there are two things that might possibly do it,” Kara said. “The first is a telepathic kickstart.”

“We don’t have access to a friendly telepath right now,” Marsdin said.

Kara frowned. “A moment, Madam president,” she said, and keyed in a quick command that cut Marsdin out of the conference with the DEO.

“I thought we were going to brief her on Peru,” Kara said.

“Did you just put the President on hold?” J’onn asked.

Kara shrugged. “I can loop her back in if you want to have this conversation with her on the line.”

“Kara,” Alex said, cutting in, “she didn’t give us time. Once she came on the line, she demanded to speak with you, and wouldn’t hear anything else.”

“Fine,” Kara said. “Look, Director, I know I made a bit of a unilateral decision with regards to something that impacts you personally—“

“It was the right decision,” J’onn said. “If you’re right about who’s behind this, what happened in Peru would come out sooner rather than later anyway. Best get ahead of it.”

“Right. I’m bringing her back in.”

Kara touched a control.

“Supergirl, I’m not sure how things were done on Krypton, but here, you do not put the President on hold.”

“Sorry about that I, but I needed to find out why you hadn’t been read in on a certain issue that has a material impact on our current situation.”

“I see,” Marsdin said. “And would you like to read me in now?”
Kara turned to Kolex. “Is this line secure?”

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

Kara turned back to the video pick up. “Olivia, how familiar are you with Director Henshaw’s record with the DEO?”

Marsdin frowned. “More familiar than I’d like, if I’m honest. I seriously considered removing him based on the early portion of that record. If there hadn’t been such a drastic change in the way he managed the organization after he lost his team in Peru, Director Henshaw would be scrubbing toilets at McMurdo Station, unless I could find some other, less pleasant duty for him.”

“That’s fair,” J’onn said. “But there was a good reason for the change in management styles.”

“I imagine getting a bunch of good men killed pointlessly was a good motivator.”

“For the Hank Henshaw who lead those men to Peru, probably not,” J’onn said. “However, the mission report for Peru leaves out a few details.”

“Would you care to fill them in?” Marsdin asked.

“During the mission, Jeremiah Danvers got separated from the team. That much is in the report. What isn’t in the report is that the alien he found there wasn’t the threat that Hank Henshaw expected. He was a refugee. The last of his kind. A Green Martian, driven from his home world when the White Martians started a civil war and slaughtered his people. The Martian saved Jeremiah’s life, and the two of them began talking. They became friends. Jeremiah even told him about Kara and Alex. Then, Hank Henshaw found them, and before Jeremiah could stop him, Henshaw attacked and wounded the Martian. Jeremiah tried to protect him. He and Henshaw struggled, wounding each other before Jeremiah threw Henshaw off a cliff. Jeremiah died shortly after.”

“The Martian, grieving for the only friend he’d known since the death of his species, decided that hiding did no one any good. So, he took on Henshaw’s form, and he returned, and stepped into Henshaw’s place as director of the DEO, where he could help protect this world from the fate of his own, while also protecting the aliens from Henshaw’s excesses. He was also able to keep the DEO from touching Jeremiah’s family, right up until he recruited Alex Danvers as an agent.”

J’onn stood up and transformed.

“Holy shit!” Lucy shouted as she pushed back from the table.

“My name is J’onn J’onzz, I am the sole survivor of my race, and the Last Son of Mars.”

“/:.zhaolium zw rroskilahres :dhiviao /” Kara muttered under her breath.

“You mean to tell me that an alien shape shifter infiltrated the very organization that was tasked with hunting him down, took it over, and has done a better job leading it than the person whose place he took?”

“Yes, ma’am, I do,” J’onn said. He shifted back into his human form and sat down.

Marsdin shook her head. “I don’t know whether to laugh or order Major Lane to shoot you,” she said. “I’m taking it from Agents Danvers and Vasquez’s reactions that they were already aware of this situation?”
“We were,” Susan and Alex said together.

“Well, this is a new and horrible political shit storm you’ve handed me,” Marsdin said. “But leaving that aside, why does this have any bearing on the fact that Cat Grant’s pet superhero is wanted for at least two felonies?”

“Because the real Hank Henshaw is alive,” Kara said. “You’re aware of project Cadmus?”

“Yes,” Marsdin said. “And I have the executive order terminating Cadmus sitting right next to the Alien Amnesty Act and the stack of Pardons, all awaiting my signature on Monday.”

“Well, Henshaw has been modified using alien technology. Cadmus rebuilt him into some kind of Cyborg Superman,” Kara said. “He’s got almost the full package. Heat vision, Kryptonian-level strength. Flight. The only thing they couldn’t give him was freeze breath.”

“So he attacked Willis,” Marsdin said. “And after you gave Leslie the little on-air verbal smackdown, everyone will assume it’s you. Perfect. Wonderful. How the hell did you piece all this together from the middle of the Ocean?”

“I didn’t,” Kara said. “I’ve known about Cadmus for a while. I’ve been delaying a confrontation, hoping I could get the situation with the Kryptonians and other Fort Rozz prisoners settled first, but I think my confrontation with General Lane on Sunday may have pushed them into acting.”

“So, we have a Kryptonian-level threat in National City, which is being supported by rogue factors within the US government, including Major Lane’s father, and now I have to figure out how to leave an alien imposter in control of our major arm of law enforcement for aliens. Meanwhile, Cat Grant’s media empire is about to be destroyed, likely taking my political future down in flames with it. Does that about sum it up?” Marsdin asked.

“Well, there’s one other thing,” Kara said.

“Oh, please. I don’t hate this day nearly enough yet,” Marsdin said.

“If the telepathic jolt doesn’t wake Leslie up, I have a backup plan,” Kara said.

“That’s actually good news,” Marsdin said, sighing with relief.

“Maybe,” Kara said. “Leslie Willis carries the metahuman gene, which means that given the right circumstances, that gene could be triggered. Metahuman expression is almost always accompanied by a biological reset, which includes neural activity.”

“Metahuman expression is wildly unpredictable,” Marsdin said.

“It is,” Kara said. “Which is why I want to try the telepathic jump start option first, but if that fails, I’ll be triggering her meta gene.”

“I notice that you’re phrasing that as a statement.”

“Leslie did not deserve this,” Kara said. “I might not have been happy with what she said on the radio the other day, but that doesn’t mean that I wanted to see her hurt, and she was hurt because of me. If I have a way of giving her back the life Hank Henshaw took from her, I will. You don’t get a say in that.”

Marsdin’s eyes narrowed ever so slightly. “You know, I don’t think anyone is ever going to enjoy being on your bad side.”
“If they do, I’m doing something wrong,” Kara said. “Madam President, I know I’m the cause of your current problems, but I do need to ask one small favor.”

“What’s that?”

“You’re aware, no doubt, that Lillian Luthor is heavily involved with Project Cadmus.”

“I am,” Marsdin said. “That’s part of why I want to close it down, and not just restructure it.”

“Can you assign a protection detail to her daughter, Lena?”

“Okay… I wasn’t expecting that request. Would you mind telling me why?”

“I’m afraid Lillian might kill Lena. As Lena’s only living relative not in prison, she’d stand to inherit, and I suspect the LuthorCorp board would be far more amicable to Lillian taking over, which would give Lillian unfettered access to all of Lex’s hidden toys.”

“You think she’d kill her own daughter?” Marsdin asked.

“Lena’s not Lillian’s biological daughter. Lionel had an affair and adopted Lena after the mistress died.”

“Right,” Marsdin said. “Protection detail it is. Get Willis back on her feet as soon as possible. Once that’s done, we’ll go from there. Remember, the CatCo board meets at 10:00 AM.”

“We’ll get it done.”

Marsdin cut the line from her end, leaving Kara with just a connection to the DEO.

“Lucy,” Kara said.

“Yeah?” Lucy asked.

“How you holding up?”

“I… I think I want to vomit?” Lucy immediately paled and turned to J’onn. “That wasn’t directed at you,” she said. “It’s just… my dad…”

“It’s okay, Major,” J’onn said. “It’s a lot to take in.”

“I’m sorry, Lucy,” Kara said. “I wish we had time to talk about it, but please believe me when I say this isn’t how I wanted this to play out.”

“I do,” Lucy said.

“Good,” Kara replied. “J’onn, you have your phone?”

“Yes,” he said.

“Stand by for transmat.”

“Whenever you’re ready,” J’onn said.

Kara hit the activation button for the transmat system, and J’onn disappeared from the screen and appeared next to her. Kara tried not to laugh as he scrunched up his face like he’d just bit into a lemon, and shook his head.
“That was almost as unpleasant as being in the room with General Lane,” J’onn said.

“Yeah,” Kara said. “You once described it as feeling like you were trying to phase through solid kryptonite. Which, don’t. No one came out of that looking pretty.” She shuddered at the memory of the day J’onn had phased them both through a kryptonite barrier to get her out of a Cadmus trap.

“Noted,” J’onn said. “Where’s Leslie?”

“In the next room, but I think it’s best if you transform before you go in. Her waking up to the sight of Hank Henshaw isn’t going to do either of us any good.”

“Point taken,” J’onn said, as he shifted into his true form.

Kara stood up and lead him into the next room, where Leslie lay in the Regeneration Matrix. The sight made Kara uncomfortable, because Kara had never known Leslie to be still. The first three times they’d met, Leslie had tried to kill her, but after that, after the battle of CatCo plaza, Leslie had become an ally. There was too much between them to ever really be close. Leslie blamed her for Cat dying, which Kara couldn’t argue with since she blamed herself, and their grief had turned into a brick wall between them. That hadn’t stopped Kara from caring about her, if for no other reason than Leslie had been one of her last links to Cat.

Kara stepped up to the console, and deactivated the Regeneration Matrix, opening the crystalline enclosure.

“Autonomic functions are normal,” Kara said. “She’s breathing and her heart is beating without outside support. We just need to restart higher brain function.”

“I’ll see what I can do,” J’onn said, stepping up next to the platform Leslie lay on. Kara could easily see the look of concentration on his face, but her attention was focused on the brain activity monitor, which didn’t move a bit. J’onn kept trying, working for almost half an hour, before he finally sighed and shook his head. “I’m sorry. There’s nothing for me to latch on to. Without at least a spark of consciousness, there isn’t really anything I can do.”

Kara nodded, feeling the disappointment, and more than a little dread setting in. “It’s okay,” she said. “Thanks for trying. Do you want to transmat back, or would you rather fly?”

“I’d prefer to fly, but I think I the transmat would raise fewer eyebrows at the DEO,” J’onn said. “Just think, pretty soon, that won’t be an issue.”

J’onn raised his eyebrow and tilted his head slightly. “Or Marsdin will cut her losses and have me locked up.”

Kara shook her head. “Won’t happen,” she said. “I have too much leverage.”

“You know something about Marsdin?” J’onn asked.

“Just that she’s a Durlan,” Kara said. “Reptilian species with limited shape shifting abilities. Sort of super chameleons. There’s a huge colony here on Earth. Been here four centuries. Heck, Marsdin’s actually a natural born citizen and everything.”

“You threatened her,” J’onn said, with a look somewhere between annoyed and impressed.

“We do what we have to do to protect the people we love.” She reached out and squeezed his shoulder. “Go on. Kolex will send you back. I’ve got to turn a woman whose career I just ruined
into an insanely powerful metahuman with abilities that can actually hurt me.”

“Are you sure that’s a good idea?” J’onn asked.

“Doesn’t matter,” Kara said. “I’ve already watched Leslie die for my sins once. I’m not up for it again.”

J’onn nodded and headed out of the medical hall. A moment later, Kara heard the transmat working, and turned back to Leslie. She closed the Regeneration Matrix, and turned the system back on, feeding in the metagenetic profile of Livewire she’d brought back with her from the future. There were a couple of small tweaks to it. This time, Leslie’s ability to produce melanin shouldn’t be damaged be the transformation, and she’d tweaked the regenerative powers up just a notch, so Leslie would heal almost as fast as Kara did.

“I can’t believe I’m doing this,” Kara said as she triggered the gene sequencer, and began the process of writing Livewire’s meta genes into Leslie’s body. It took about ten minutes before the process was done. Then Kara took Leslie out of the Regeneration Matrix and carried her over to a table she’d had Kolex prep for just this moment. She lay Leslie down on the table, took her hand and recited the invocation Zatanna had given her to disable the wards on her soul.

“Hit me, Kolex,” Kara said.

The robot floated around behind her, putting Kara firmly between itself and Leslie as it extended the device Kara had ordered it to build earlier. A betahedron connected to an arc projector. The device fired an arc of electricity the strength of a lightning bolt right into Kara’s back. Kara felt the current run down into her arm, through her hand, and into Leslie.

A moment later, Leslie sat up screaming.


Leslie scrambled back, trying to get away from her, but the table wasn’t much bigger than Leslie, and she slipped and started to topple off, so Kara used a burst of speed to zip around the table and catch her. The fall only seemed to make Leslie panic harder, and when she suddenly found herself in Kara’s arms, she reached, swinging her fist out, and punching Kara in the chest. If she’d done it the day before, she would have broken her hand, but with her meta gene activated, the punch was accompanied with a massive surge of electricity, which threw Kara across the room, slamming her into a wall.

Kara winced as she pulled herself to her feet, her chest throbbing even as her powers healed her. As much as it hurt, Kara was glad it happened, because it the shock of it seemed to break Leslie out of her panic. She sat on the ground, next to the table, looking down at her hands as electricity arced between her fingers.

“What the hell?” Leslie asked as she sat staring at her hands. It only took a moment for a smile to spread across her face, then she looked up and thrust a hand towards Kara.

Nothing happened.

“It’s a side effect,” Kara said as she stood up.

“Of what?” Leslie asked.

“You got hurt,” Kara said. “You remember?”
“Yeah,” Leslie said. “One of your super groupies came after me.”

“Not one of mine,” Kara said. “You remember what he looked like?”

“Yeah,” Leslie said. “Black guy. Muscular. Sour expression on his face, like some teenager just stole his parking space.”

“Kolex, project an image of Hank Henshaw.” A hologram of Henshaw appeared in front of Leslie, and from the way she flinched and backed away, Kara didn’t have much doubt she’d been right. “Is that him?”

“Yes,” Leslie said. “But what does that have to do with me shooting lightning out of my hands?”

“Kolex, end projection,” Kara said as she walked over to Leslie. “Your injuries were bad. When he attacked you, he tore some blood vessels deep inside your brain. The doctors couldn’t do anything, but I have a medical device from Krypton that could, so I brought you here.” She knelt down in front of Leslie.

“The machine didn’t have any problem fixing the physical damage to your brain, but Kryptonian and human brains work a little differently. It couldn’t restart your neural activity. I tried a few things, but I couldn’t wake you up. Most people wouldn’t have made it, but you carry the meta gene. You know what that is?”

“No, Sunshine, I haven’t read the news in about twenty years,” Leslie snapped.

Kara rolled her eyes. “Fine. When the meta gene is activated, one of the things it does is basically reboot your entire body. I activated yours to wake you up.”

“How?” Leslie asked. “First you send talk dark and deadly to kill me and now you’re giving me super powers? And why can’t I do it again?”

“You think I sent him to kill you?” Kara asked. “Why would I do that?”

“Leslie, if I killed someone every time they insulted me, my high school would be a smoking hole in the ground, and all the guys I went on dates with in college would have heat vision holes in their head.”

“I thought you were gay,” Leslie said.

“I am, but a lot of guys called me a frigid bitch before I figured that out.”

“Assholes,” Leslie said.

Kara couldn’t keep the shock off her face.

“What?” Leslie said. “You think I don’t know what it’s like to have a date get pissed when you won’t put out?”

“No,” Kara said, “I’m just a little shocked you said something nice to me. Well, not nice. I mean, you called every guy I ever dated an asshole. But sort of nice, because-”

“Oh, for the love of God, either shut up, or kill me.”

Kara laughed. “Okay, that’s more like the Leslie Willis I know.”
“So, why can’t I zap you again?” Leslie asked.

“You’re out of juice,” Kara said. “You’re like a capacitor. You can store energy and let it go whenever you want, but when you run out, you need to recharge. If we were in the city, you could pull from the power grid, but power in this room is heavily shielded.”

“Well, expect to get good and cooked as soon as I’m charged up.”

Kara smiled as she sat down next to Leslie.

“So, why did you really think I sent him?” Kara asked.

“When he grabbed me the first time, he said ‘You can thank Supergirl for this,’” Leslie replied.

“And you believed that?” Kara asked.

“I don’t know,” Leslie said, shrugging. “I didn’t have a lot of time to think about it.”

“You do now,” Kara said.

Leslie frowned, and shook her head.

“Doesn’t really seem like your style,” Leslie said. “If you wanted me out of the way, the cops would show up at my apartment with a warrant and find a kilo of coke under my bed.”

“Were you born this cynical?”

“Hard to buy the little Miss Sunshine act when you got me fired,” Leslie said.

Kara laughed. “You should thank me,” Kara said. “She bought out your contract, when she could have just assigned you to traffic.”

“Laugh it up, Sunshine, but sooner or later, she’ll get tired of you, too.”

Kara sighed and shook her head gently. “I don’t think she got tired of you. I think she just looked at you and couldn’t see anything but the ways she’d let you down. That’s not an easy thing to live with. I feel it every time I see my cousin.”

“Spare me,” Leslie said, but it lacked the normal enthusiasm of her retorts.

“Well, either way, you’ve got your chance at revenge,” Kara said.

Leslie looked down at her hands, still sparking with the last remnants of electrical power in her system. “I suppose I can skin a Cat now.”

“No,” Kara said. “Try it and I will stop you.”

“You think you’re ready to throw down, Sunshine?”

“Yes,” Kara said, and watched as something in her tone made Leslie flinch. “You wouldn’t need your powers though. When we leave here, I’m taking you to NCPD headquarters to give a statement about the attack. You have two choices.”

“Really?” Leslie asked. “Do tell.”

“You can lie. Say you don’t remember the attack, or say I was the one who attacked you. Do that
and I’m finished. Everything I’m trying to build will go straight in the toilet. No alien amnesty, no protection for other refugees. Every remaining Kryptonian except my cousin will spend the rest of their lives in a cage. And to top it all off, the board will take CatCo away from Cat. She’ll be out on the street, watching some walking personification of white male privilege run everything she’s built straight into the ground.”

“Sounds fun,” Leslie said. “What’s the catch?”

Kara nodded. “The catch is, the man who attacked you walks away.”

“I could find him myself,” Leslie said.

“Maybe,” Kara said. “Maybe not. But even if you find him, what about the people who hired him? He wasn’t some Supergirl groupie out to defend my reputation. He’s an assassin, working for an anti-alien group who will do anything to kill the alien amnesty act. So, ask yourself something. Who do you want more? Me and Cat, or the people who tried to kill you?”

“Tough choice,” Leslie said. “The men who tried to end my life, or the women who destroyed it.”

“Oh, please,” Kara said. “With your ratings, you know Cox and Sirius are both going to be knocking on your door inside of a month, offering you anything you want. Hell, as good looking as you are, Fox News might give you your own show.”

“Awww, thanks. That’s sweet but you’re not my type,” Leslie said.

“Yeah, well, I’d say you weren’t my type either, but I’d be lying. Prickly, badass blondes with more baggage than an American Tourister warehouse are going to be the death of me someday. Hopefully not today, but someday.”

Leslie tried to hide it, but Kara spotted the faintest hint of a smile tugging at her lips. “Well, I suppose you can look, as long as you keep your hands to yourself.”

“That’s going to make flying you back to National City a bit tough,” Kara said as she stood up. Leslie’s eyes went wide with just a hint of panic.

“No way,” Leslie said, shaking her head. “You are not carrying me.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “I save your life, I give you super powers, and still no respect,” she said as she held up her hand to help Leslie up. Leslie just glared at her and climbed to her feet without taking the help. “There’s a change of clothes for you in the room over there,” Kara said, pointing to a door in one side of the med lab.

“It better not be a set of tights,” Leslie said as she walked over to the door. Kara waited until the door was closed before turning to Kolex.

“Kolex, connect to Konex. Get an update on the media situation.”

A moment later, dozens of websites were displayed in the air before her. CatCo’s front page headline was “Supergirl Working to Save Leslie Willis,” while Fox News had, “Maxwell Lord Calls on President Marsdin to End Supergirl Threat.” Most of the rest of the major news outlets were going with some variation of “Supergirl Wanted for Questioning.”

Kara took her phone out of her boot, and pulled up her texting app, selecting Cat from her contacts.

Kara: She’s awake and getting dressed.
The reply came faster than Kara expected.

Cat: Thank god.

Cat: And thank you, Kara.

Kara: There’s nothing to thank me for. This was my fault.

Cat: No. Nothing that’s happening is your fault. You couldn’t have known.

Kara: I knew I had enemies.

Cat: Do you know who’s behind this?

Kara: I’m working on it. Is Jackson still with you?

Cat: Yes.

Kara: Good. Keep him with you. I’ll talk to you soon.

Kara fired off the last text to Cat, then she called Maggie.

“What part of ‘Supergirl can’t go anywhere near this’ was unclear?” Maggie growled as she answered the call.

“The part where staying away meant Leslie would die,” Kara said. “Did Alex read you in on the current situation?”

“Yes,” Maggie said. “But I can’t tell any of it to my boss until I get it from Leslie’s mouth, assuming she’s well enough to be questioned.”

“She’s in better health than she was before this happened,” Kara said.

“Well, that’s good,” Maggie said. “I need you to come in.”

“As soon as Leslie’s changed out of the hospital gown,” Kara said. “I’ll have Kolex transmat us to the front of NCPD headquarters.”

“Have him text me first. I don’t want anyone getting shot,” Maggie said.

“Good call,” Kara replied. She turned at the sound of the door and saw Leslie walking towards her. “Actually, we’re on our way now.”

“Give me five minutes,” Maggie said.

“See you soon,” Kara said, then she ended the call and tucked her phone back in her boot.

“Man, Sunshine, you would never know it looking at you, but you do have good taste in clothes,” Leslie said as she ran a hand over the opposite sleeve of the dark blue leather jacket she was wearing. “I wasn’t sure about color when I saw it, but it looks good once I put it on.”

Kara smiled as she took Leslie in. The Doc Martins were classic Leslie. Kara had paired them with a pair of black leather jeans, a royal blue shirt, and a dark blue fitted leather jacket that flared at the waist. The outfit design was similar to something Gideon had made for Livewire on the Waverider, though Kara had tweaked the color palette, and the “Leather” was actually the same Kryptonian barrier fabric as her cape. Soft as kid leather, but nearly indestructible.
“A friend designed my suit for me,” Kara said. “My first choice would have been a Kryptonian military battle uniform, but Kal-El had an established look.”

“Riding to the top on your cousin’s cape, huh?” Leslie asked, a taunting smile on her face.

“You better hope not,” Kara said. “I’m pretty sure the guy who tried to kill you could take my cousin in a fight, and he might make another run at you.”

“You’re not making this ‘saving your and Cat’s ass’ thing sound more appealing,” Leslie said.

“If I want you to trust me, I can’t lie to you,” Kara said. “I just wanted you to understand why I’m going to do what comes next.”

“And what’s that?” Leslie asked.

“Kolex is going to charge you up,” Kara said. “When your energy reserves are topped up, you have a pretty good chance of taking out Henshaw. Or my cousin. And before you ask, yes, you’d have a chance of taking me out, but *not* a good one.” She turned to Kolex. “Nice and slow,” she said. “Let her get used to the load.”

Leslie looked at Kolex as he approached. “How does this work?” she asked.

“Just hold out your hand towards Kolex,” Kara said.

Leslie raised her hand, and Kolex extended the lightning generator. Electricity jumped out of the device and into Leslie’s hand, and Kara heard her suck in a surprised gasp.

“It’s so warm,” she said as the electricity poured into her.

“More?” Kara asked.

“YES!” Leslie shouted.

“Give her all of it, Kolex.”

The robot obeyed, opening up the device until it was pumping a lightning bolt’s worth of electricity into Leslie every second. Kara waited until she noticed the sparks arcing along Leslie’s eyelashes that meant she was near capacity.

“Enough,” Kara said.

Leslie whimpered slightly as the power cut off, and turned towards Kara, looking furious.

“I wasn’t done,” Leslie said.

“You are,” Kara said. “You just don’t know it yet. Much more power, and you won’t be able to hold a physical form.”

“What does that mean?” Leslie asked.

“Lady Kara,” Kolex said before Kara could answer Leslie’s question. “It has been five minutes.”

“Thank you, Kolex,” Kara said, then she turned back to Leslie. “It means, you need to learn to control your powers before you absorb your full capacity or you will lose control and hurt someone you don’t mean too. I’ll explain everything later, but we have to go.”
“Okay,” Leslie said.

“Now, Kolex,” Kara said, and a moment later, the transmat took them.

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

.:zhaolium zw rroskilahres :dhiviao
Literal: Fucker who habitually seeks glory
Semantic: Fucking Drama Queen
National City News Special Report
Trevor Paxton Reporting Live From National City Police Headquarters

“For those of you just joining us, I’m standing outside National City Police headquarters where, if rumors are to be believed, National City’s resident superhero Supergirl is being held in connection to a brutal Thanksgiving day attack on former CatCo radio personality Leslie Willis.”

“Motivation for the attack appears to be comments Willis made on air Monday during her show. The comments prompted a tense on-air confrontation when Supergirl showed up at CatCo headquarters in response to the broadcast. During the confrontation, Supergirl accidentally outed herself as a lesbian. The incident prompted CatCo to fire Willis, many believe in an attempt to appease the so-called Girl of Steel, but it would appear that Willis losing her job wasn’t enough to satisfy Supergirl, who allegedly broke into Willis’ home around noon yesterday, and beat her so severely she required emergency surgery. Supergirl then turned up at the hospital and kidnapped Willis out of the intensive care unit and disappeared.”

“The real twist here is Supergirl apparently turned herself into authorities at around four o’clock local time this morning, arriving at Police Headquarters in what witnesses describe as a flash of light, along with a woman who matches Leslie Willis’ description.”

“Those close to Supergirl, including CatCo CEO Cat Grant and Daily Planet reporter Lois Lane have maintained that Supergirl did not attack Willis and took Willis from the hospital in order to provide her with lifesaving medical care possible only with the technology Supergirl brought with her from her homeworld. Wayne Enterprises CEO Bruce Wayne and Themiscyra Enterprises CEO Diana Prince, who recently announced a partnership with Supergirl to introduce a cancer vaccine derived from Kryptonian medicine, both issued statements earlier today in support of Supergirl.”

“Maxwell Lord issued a statement saying that this incident proves that Supergirl and Superman represent a danger to all the people of Earth. Lord, as you may recall, is currently under indictment on charges stemming from a bombing attempt that resulted in an explosive going off while Supergirl tried to carry it away from the intended target.”

“At this point, the only people who know the full story are inside Police Headquarters, and all of National City waits with bated breath to find out if Supergirl is a hero, or a villain.”

“Reporting live from National City Police Headquarters, this is Trevor Paxton for National City News.”

Kara let out a sigh as she drummed her fingers on the table. It was getting close to seven o’clock, and she was starting to worry. Maggie hadn’t arrested her when she’d arrived at Police Headquarters. She’s simply lead her to an interview room and asked her to wait while they
questioned Leslie. That had been three and a half hours ago. She didn’t understand what was taking so long, unless Leslie had decided that destroying her and Cat was more important than getting back at the man who attacked her.

Even leaving aside the time crunch she was under, Kara was starting to worry about how much damage the delay was doing. She wanted to take out her phone and check the social media feeds, but the interview room was shielded. Her phone would go right through the shielding, but she didn’t want the cops to know that, so she’d ordered Konex to go radio silent unless there was an emergency. That meant she couldn’t talk to the public before she was released, but if something didn’t happen soon, the damage might not be reversible. If public opinion turned against her, the Alien Amnesty Act would be dead in the water, which meant the pardons for Astra and the Fort Rozz prisoners would vanish and J’onn would lose control of the DEO.

“Be ready to move,” Alex said, her voice coming through Kara’s earbud. Before Kara had time to react, the door opened to reveal Maggie and Leslie.

“Come on,” Maggie said.

Kara didn’t argue. She recognized the tone in Maggie’s voice. She’d heard it too many times during the war and it always meant shit was well and truly about to hit the fan. Kara was on her feet and at the door in an instant. Maggie nodded and started leading them through the station.

“Whatever happens, keep going,” Maggie whispered, her words so soft that Kara never would have heard without her super hearing. “When we get outside, there will be a group of reporters waiting. Head straight for them, but don’t say anything, and be ready to protect Leslie.”

They almost made it to the front of the station before anything happened, but not quite.

“Sawyer,” a man yelled. “What the hell are you doing?”

“My job,” Maggie answered, never breaking stride.

“The Captain said to wait,” the man yelled.

“I know,” Maggie said as she pushed the front door open. Kara and Leslie followed her through, and sure enough, there was a veritable mob of reporters waiting for them. Maggie didn’t slow down, even as several cops followed them outside, and Kara never let herself get more than a pace behind, until Maggie stopped, two steps above the nearest reporter.

“Good morning,” she said. “I’m Detective Maggie Sawyer of the National City Police Department Science Division. As you can see, I have Supergirl and Miss Leslie Willis here with me, and I’m pleased to say, the rumors regarding yesterday’s events are all completely unfounded. As you all know, Miss Willis was attacked yesterday in her home. Evidence at the scene led us to believe the attacker might have been Kryptonian, and given Monday’s events, we were forced to consider Supergirl a person of interest in our investigation.”

“Last night, following several hours of surgery, doctors informed Cat Grant, who was acting in her capacity as Miss Willis’ medical proxy, that Miss Willis would very likely not live through the night. Miss Grant was able to get in touch with Supergirl and asked if she could help Miss Willis. Supergirl arrived at the hospital, and Miss Willis was transferred into Supergirl’s care with full permission from Miss Willis’ legally designated medical proxy.”

“Supergirl took Miss Willis to her home where she has access to Kryptonian medical equipment capable of treating Miss Willis’ wounds. Once Miss Willis was awake and well enough to travel,
Supergirl brought her here and Miss Willis was able to provide us with enough information that we could positively identify her assailant.”

“At the direct request of the Federal Agency currently involved in the investigation, we are not releasing the suspect’s name at this time. What I can tell you is that the suspect is a known anti-alien extremist responsible for the deaths of at least ten Federal Agents, a civilian contractor, and at least eighty-five aliens. Federal authorities believe, and the National City Police Department concurs, that the attack on Miss Willis was a carefully planned action designed to discredit Supergirl and undermine support for the Alien Amnesty Act.”

“Finally, in order to dispel any allegations that Miss Willis statement was given under duress, or as some have claimed, is the result of mind control, the Federal Agency involved has eye witness testimony and video footage which confirm that Supergirl was attending a holiday dinner ten miles away from Miss Willis apartment at the time of the attack. The names of the witnesses, as well as the video footage, will not be released to the public due to concerns that those witnesses might be targeted by the same person responsible for the attack on Miss Willis.”

“I am not taking any questions at this time, but Miss Willis has asked for the chance to make a public statement.” Maggie stepped back, and almost as if they had rehearsed it, Leslie stepped forward.

“I gotta say, I’m absolutely freaking insulted that you people honestly thought Little Miss Sunshine here took me down. Seriously people, what the hell!? I mean, I still think the adorkable thing is a load of crap, and don’t get me started on the fashion disaster that is her suit. Hell, I can’t stand her, but even I know she’d never do something this colossally stupid. Much as it pains me to admit it, Blondie saved my life. So, this is me, saying thank you to her. And to the son of a bitch who tried to kill me yesterday, let me just say, choke on it, asshole.”

The reporters started shouting questions at Leslie and Maggie both, but Maggie just reached up, taking Leslie by the arm and steering her towards a black Suburban that was parked at the end of the line of news vans. Kara started to follow, but Alex’s voice coming through her ear bud changed her plans.

“Get out of there, Supergirl,” Alex said.

Kara didn’t question it. She just kicked off lightly, drifting up into the air, then shot up, breaking the cloud layer.

“What the hell’s going on?” she asked.

“Not now,” Alex said. “I’ll fill you in as soon as possible.”

“Okay,” Kara said.

“Supergirl, this is President Marsdin. Can you hear me?”

“Yes,” Kara said, wondering why the hell Marsdin was on the DEO channel.

“Do you have a plan for dealing with the situation at CatCo?” Marsdin asked.

“I think so,” Kara said. “Unless something has changed in the last few hours.”

“A lot has changed in the last few hours,” Marsdin said. “Agent Danvers will brief you as soon as possible, but right now, I need you focused on making sure Cat keeps her job. Pull out all the stops.”
Kara frowned as she dropped back down through the cloud layer and landed on the roof of the CatCo building. She really wanted to know what the hell was going on, but everyone was avoiding giving her details. They were probably worried about security, which made sense, but she didn’t like it at all.

“I’m at CatCo now,” Kara said. “I have a nuclear option, if necessary, but there’s a lot of potential for blowback.”

“What kind of blowback?” Marsdin asked.

“The kind that involves a lot of people asking how Cat Grant’s assistant has enough money to buy a Media Conglomerate with a Market Cap of eighty billion dollars.”

There was silence on the line for a few seconds, before Marsdin responded. “Do I want to know where you got that much money?”

“I may have given a tier three artificial intelligence my E-Trade password over a decade ago,” Kara said.

“Oh, for fuck’s sake,” Marsdin said. “Is that even legal?”

“Well, it’s not *illegal*,” Kara said. “Technically, it counts as an Automated Trading System. It’s just a really advanced one.”

“How much money do you have?” Marsdin asked. “No, wait. If I don’t know, I won’t have to lie to congress about it. Go nuclear. We’ll worry about any blowback later.”

“Understood,” Kara said. “Supergirl out.”

Kara checked to make sure the blinds in her office were closed, then stepped inside and used super-speed to change into her work clothes and switch her hair back to auburn. Once she was changed, she sat down at her desk, fired up her computer then sat her phone on the desk bringing up the holographic interface. Once the computer was up and running, she slaved it to the phone and connected to Konex.

“Konex, you there?” she asked.

“Yes, Lady Kara,” Konex answered.

“I need a status on acquisition plan zero,” Kara said.

“We currently hold fifty-seven percent of CatCo shares, spread across three hundred and twenty-one different holding companies.”

“Perfect,” Kara said. “How long to consolidate stock holdings?”

“Thirty minutes,” Konex said.

“Begin,” Kara said. “Estimated money necessary for Tender Offer?”

“At current market value plus ten percent, thirty-eight billion dollars.”

Kara looked at the current net worth of the accounts that had been built up for her over the last seventeen years, checking the numbers in her head before she finally gave the order. “Initiate the Tender Offer and execute the Blindside protocol,” Kara said.
“Yes, Lady Kara,’ Konex replied.

Kara sat back and took a deep breath. She’d planned for this moment for a long time. She just expected it to be after the Earthquake, during Dirk Armstrong’s takeover attempt. Doing it now was a problem. It meant she wasn’t going to hear about Adam from Cat, so explaining how she knew about him was going to be tough. Of course, if Cat ever found out about the binder in her desk drawer, that wouldn’t matter, because she’d be too busy filing a restraining order to care.

What Kara didn’t understand was what was happening. The board’s attempt to oust Cat didn’t surprise her. It had Armstrong’s fingerprints all over it. But Marsdin’s insistence on making sure Cat stayed in place was strange. She knew that Cat and CatCo had both been huge supporters of Marsdin during her first campaign, and that Marsdin had built her case for the Alien Amnesty act on the back of CatCo Magazine’s Supergirl issue. That meant Cat getting booted from CatCo might hit Olivia’s re-election campaign hard, but this seemed more immediate.

Kara ran a quick search including Cat and Olivia’s names. The first article to pop up hit Kara like Darkseid’s Omega Beams.

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The Metropolis Star Online  
Friday November 27th, 2015  
President Marsdin is responsible for the attack on Leslie Willis.  
By Guest Contributor Miranda Crane.

When I was a little girl, the idea that aliens might visit Earth was the thing of science fiction. No one knew for sure if aliens existed. Little did we realize that even then, there were aliens hiding among us, studying us. Aliens that run the gamut from hideous monsters, to creatures who can invade our very minds. Some of these aliens are so powerful that people might look at them and consider them gods.

It was one such alien who made their presence among us known. A little over fourteen years ago, Superman caught a plane falling out of the skies over Metropolis. At the time, it seemed like a miracle. Then, just three days later, he told Lois Lane that he was from another planet. That humans weren’t alone in the universe. Many hailed this as another miracle, unable to understand the cost that would be extracted over the next decade and a half.

In the time Superman has been flying through the skies of Metropolis, that city has seen an unending stream of monsters and aliens rain down death and destruction. And this is not limited to Metropolis. Look at the damage to Coast City, Baltimore, Detroit, Portland and Los Angeles when aliens go up against the Green Lanterns who operate out of those cities. Other cities have been plagued as well. Dakota City, Seattle, New York, Atlanta, Gotham, Gateway City, Hub City. The list goes on and on.

Nowhere is safe from this rain of monsters, falling from the stars. Monsters who arrive unwanted and uninvited, who cling to the dark edges of society, and bring crime, death and destruction everywhere they go. We have more than a decade of experience that where aliens go, they carry trouble with them, yet some claim that these invaders are nothing more than refugees. Poor souls washed up on our shores, wanting only a safe place to live.

President Olivia Marsdin has long been a vocal peddler of this lie. She ignores the fights which leave cities devastated and our brothers and sisters dead in the streets. Instead she talks of amnesty for aliens. She talks of forgiving them for invading, of offering them citizenship, and allowing them free and unfettered access to our cities, our places of work, or schools.
And then, just a few weeks ago, like history repeating itself, a plane fell out of the sky, and an alien caught it. This time, instead of looking like a young man, this alien looked like a young woman, but she wore that same symbol on her chest. The one they both claim is a symbol of home and unity, but has come to represent death and destruction.

Cat Grant, often referred to as the Queen of All Media, chose to throw away reason to embrace this alien. She named her, called her “Supergirl”, and peddled a sob story about a child, cast into space to protect her infant cousin, only to get lost along the way. Cat Grant held up “Supergirl” as someone who only wanted to help, and to pay back the supposed sacrifices of others.

Cat Grant sold that story so well that President Marsdin was drawn in. Not that it would have been a hard sell, given Grant and Marsdin were roommates in college, and given Marsdin’s known love of “Supergirl’s” cousin. So taken in was Marsdin that she twisted arms and burned political capital she could ill afford to force through her Alien Amnesty act in order to grant pardons to people who were known criminals on “Supergirl’s” own planet. Many of them not just criminals but known terrorists.

And when one soul had the courage to call “Supergirl” out, to name her for the fake she is, what happened? Cat Grant fired Leslie Willis to appease “Supergirl”, but that wasn’t enough. Oh, no. “Supergirl” attacked Willis in her own home, and when it turned out Willis survived the attack, “Supergirl” walked into the very hospital when Willis was receiving treatment, and kidnapped the woman, carrying her off to who knows what fate.

Some might lay the blame for this horrible act on “Supergirl”, and indeed, she does bear the lion’s share of the blame. But I say the blame doesn’t end there. If Marsdin weren’t welcoming these monsters with open arms, this might not have happened. If Marsdin had locked “Supergirl” away as the criminal invader that she is, Leslie Willis might never have been attacked.

And what if Willis is alive? What then? It’s possible she will turn up alive and well and pointing the finger squarely in some direction other than “Supergirl”. But if that does happen, can we ever trust her word? “Supergirl”, by her own admission has access to technology that can load information directly into someone’s mind. How can we ever be sure that any story Willis tells, if she is even alive, will be the truth, and not what “Supergirl” twisted her mind into believing?

Enough is enough. President Marsdin is a traitor who colludes with invaders and Cat Grant is her willing accomplice. We may see some small measure of justice this morning. The CatCo board of directors is holding an emergency meeting, and word is, they are going to remove Cat Grant, that they are going to silence the voice of one of these traitors. It’s a good start, but not enough. I say it’s time and past time to impeach Marsdin, to strip her of the office she has desecrated and try her for her treasonous actions.

Kara sat there for a moment, feeling herself shaking with anger. The time stamp on the article meant it had been published just a few minutes after she and Leslie had arrived at NCPD headquarters. It may have had Miranda Crane’s name on it, but it positively reeked of Lilian Luthor, and the most infuriating thing was the way it cast doubt on Leslie’s statement. There would never be a way for her to completely refute the idea that she’d tampered with Leslie’s mind. People would always wonder.

She glanced at the clock. Two hours and fifteen minutes. She sat an alarm to give her time to get to the board room.

“Konex,” she said.
“Yes, Lady Kara.”

“Do we have sufficient funds to execute Acquisition plans one through five?” Kara asked.

“Affirmative,” Konex said. “However, if executed, we will not have sufficient capital for acquisition plans six, seven and nine for at least eighteen months. Also be advised, under current anti-trust regulations, plan five and plan eight are mutually exclusive options and odds of FTC approval for plan ten without extra-legal incentive is below two percent if plans one through three have already been carried out.”

“Understood. Execute one through five. Prioritize progress on seven and nine. Liquidate all stocks associated with eight and ten in a manner which maximize return, then reinvest profits to accelerate progress on six, seven and nine.”

“Yes, Lady Kara.”

Kara picked up her phone and dialed Lucy’s number.

“Hey, Kara,” Lucy said when she picked up.

“Hey, Lucy,” Kara said. “You busy at the moment?”

“Very,” she said. “Why?”

“I need some legal paperwork done about an hour from now, and as I recall, you are licensed to practice in California.”

“I am,” Lucy said, “but right now, I’m knee-deep in writing provisional pardons for the President to sign. I have to have them done, and an executive order drafted in less than four hours.”

“Damn,” Kara muttered. “Okay. Good luck. I have to go.”

“Good luck yourself, Kara. See you soon.”

Kara ended the call and sent Kaldur’ahm a text message.

Kara: Are you still with Cat?

Kaldur’ahm: Yes. We’re in a secure location.

Kara: I need Cat here, now.

Kaldur’ahm: We’re at least forty minutes away.

Kara: Your phone has a transmat beacon. Tell Konex to send you to my office.

Kaldur’ahm: One moment.

It took about two minutes before the room lit up with the flash of a transmat, but once the flash died away, Cat and Kaldur’ahm stood in front of her desk. Kara stood up and walked around the desk, slipping her arms around Cat and hugging her as tightly as she dared. She was a little surprised when Cat hugged her back.

“Thank you,” Cat said.

“You’re welcome,” Kara said. She let go and stepped back. “Jackson, can you do a coffee run?”
“Of course,” he said. “Breakfast as well?”

“Please,” Kara said. She waited as he left, then turned back to Cat. “I’m almost afraid to ask, but are we going to go back to pretending today?”

“No,” Cat said firmly. “I don’t think I could if I wanted to.”

“You could,” Kara said, “but I’m really glad you don’t want to.”

“I’m sorry,” Cat said.

“For what?” Kara asked.

“For not being able to protect you,” Cat said. “I tried, but the board smells blood, and they will burn everything you’ve built to the ground to get rid of me. Doesn’t matter how much it will hurt them in the long run.”

“Cat,” Kara said, “I’ve known this fight was coming since the day I started here. I’m prepared for it. The same way I prepared for the Tribune layoffs. The question is, do you trust me?”

“Yes,” Cat answered, without a moment’s hesitation.

“Do you have a lawyer you can trust? One who’s good with corporate law, but doesn’t work for CatCo?”

Cat nodded. “Of course.”

“Good. Call them, tell them to get here as fast as possible. Then, I need your help with something.”

“With what?” Cat asked.

“Miranda Crane,” Kara said, and watched as Cat’s eyes lit up.

“Oh, that I can do,” Cat said, voice dripping with malicious glee.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 27 Nov 2015
@MirandaCrane Saw the article. This is about the “Kissing a Martian” thing, isn’t it?

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 27 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl It’s about you attacking an innocent woman in her home. You’re a vicious animal, and you don’t belong here.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 27 Nov 2015
@MirandaCrane I didn’t attack anyone, unless you count a chocolate pecan pie. #thepiehaditcoming

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 27 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Tell that to Leslie Willis.
Leslie Willis @livewire 27 Nov 2015
@MirandaCrane Yo, she-bitch. Turn on the news once in a while. Krypton Barbie saved my life.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 27 Nov 2015
@livewire Awww… That’s the nicest thing you’ve ever said to me. See @CatGrant, I told you people can change.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 27 Nov 2015
@livewire @SupergirlZorEl yes, I can see the difference.

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 27 Nov 2015
How can we believe anything @livewire says? We don’t know what @SupergirlZorEl did to her.

Krypton Barbie @SupergirlZorEl 27 Nov 2015
@MirandaCrane I stopped a hemorrhage in a blood vessel deep inside @livewire’s brain. (I’d make a joke about kissing her booboo better, but people would write fanfic)

Leslie Willis @livewire 27 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl You know you want some of this. @CatGrant she was totally hitting on me. #calledit

Krypton Barbie @SupergirlZorEl 27 Nov 2015
@CatGrant I’m starting to think @MirandaCrane has a point. I may have left @livewire’s brain in the oven too long.

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 27 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl quit trying to turn this into a joke. You and your kind are a violent, perverted infestation on our world.

Cat Grant @CatGrant 27 Nov 2015
@MirandaCrane Yes, because giving away the cure to cancer was such a violent thing to do

Krypton Barbie @SupergirlZorEl 27 Nov 2015
@CatGrant well, I did murder a few pharmaceutical companies’ bottom lines with that #askmeificare

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 27 Nov 2015
@SupergirlZorEl Do you think people won’t realize you’ve messed with Leslie Willis’ mind? Assuming that really is Leslie Willis, and not some alien taking her place.

Krypton Barbie @SupergirlZorEl 27 Nov 2015

@MirandaCrane What makes you think I’ve messed with @livewire’s mind?

Leslie Willis @livewire 27 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl @MirandaCrane Yeah, She-bitch, I wanna hear this too

Miranda Crane @MirandaCrane 27 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl On Monday, she called you a fake in front of the entire world, and today, she’s acting like your friend.

Leslie Willis @livewire 27 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl @MirandaCrane Oh, hell no. Sunshine is still way too perky for me. But if clearing her name pisses off the motherfucker who attacked me, I’m good with that.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 27 Nov 2015

Why do I feel like my twitter feed jumps to an R rating every time @livewire shows up?

Leslie Willis @livewire 27 Nov 2015

@SupergirlZorEl because I swear more in one day than you have in your entire life.

Supergirl @SupergirlZorEl 27 Nov 2015

@livewire You only think that because you don’t speak Kryptonian. #ourcursesarebetter

From Facebook
Supergirl Zor-El
Friday, November 27th, 2015

This has been an odd week for me. In the last five days, I accidently outed myself to the world, I’ve been accused of orchestrating a conspiracy against Maxwell Lord, I’ve been accused of violating Leslie Willis’ right to freedom of speech, then I saved her life, only to be accused of attempting to murder her, kidnapping her and then brainwashing her. And that’s just the stuff I can talk about in public.

I admit, I prefer the weeks where I get to rescue puppies, go to parties, and dance with pretty girls. Sometimes, doing the right thing is hard, and thankless. Sometimes, when you do the right thing, you make enemies of small, selfish people. Sometimes, you don’t even have to be doing the right thing. Sometimes, existing is enough.
Don’t misunderstand. I love being Supergirl. I love this city. I look out at it sometimes and am overwhelmed with wonder. Every light that shines through every window tells a story. A family playing board games. Two girlfriends having a candle lit dinner. A girl doing her homework. A boy drawing in his sketchbook. A mother nursing her newborn. A father reading a bedtime story. And every time I help one of you, a bit of your light becomes a part of me, and it helps fill that hole that Krypton left inside.

I love it, but on days like today, the weight of it sits heavy on my shoulders.

Growing up, I always knew, even before Kal-El was born, that as a daughter of the cadet branch of the House of El, I would not inherit the responsibility to lead it. I had simple dreams. I dreamed of family, of a life in the Science Guild, learning the wonders of the universe. My Aunt’s stories of her life in the military were exciting, but I never wanted to be a soldier or a warrior. I wanted to live, to hold my children in my arms, and perhaps, if I were lucky, to help discover some new truth about the universe.

The day Krypton died, I became the Head of the House of El. I was of age, and my cousin wasn’t. I felt the weight of ten thousand years of tradition, and an unimaginable burden of responsibility settle on my shoulders. The greatest, and most immediate of those responsibilities, I failed to meet when my ship was knocked off course causing me to arrive here twenty-four years late. I woke from my journey only to find that Kal-El was grown. But the discharge of that duty changed little. It is still my duty to make this world a better place. It is still my duty to protect my House and my Family. It is still my duty to protect the memory and heritage of Krypton.

I do not carry those responsibilities grudgingly, but proudly. I have worked hard, even before my public appearance a few weeks ago, to achieve those ends. They give me a purpose and a goal. They give me hope that Rao had a reason for including me among those who were spared when my world ended.

But there are those who hate me, for no other crime than existing. Those who fear me, fear my family, fear my fellow refugees, for no other reason than we are different. It is bigotry, and it is exhausting. It comes closer to draining me of hope than any task laid in front of me.

When Leslie spoke on Monday, when I heard her hurtful words, I reacted in anger. Not because I had any particular care for her opinion of me, but her words turned me into a weapon for bigots to use to beat down those like me. Having lost so much to hate and bigotry in my life, I could not let anyone do that.

And now, someone else is trying it.

I know who attacked Leslie Willis. I cannot give his name, because I have been asked by law enforcement not to, but I can tell you I have met him before, and he has taken from me before. The first time was ten years ago. He came for me, but someone else sacrificed themselves and went in my place. He’s a vile man, full of hate and bigotry, disgusted by anything different. He is small, weak, and full of fear. He is a coward and a murderer, and even ten years ago, he was a pathetic excuse for a man.

Even more pathetic is his motive for attacking Leslie Willis.

In the weeks since I caught that plane falling out of the sky, I have traded on my new-found fame and on the reflected glory of my cousin to work towards helping people like me. Refugees, washed ashore on this world. People who live among you but are held apart and treated as less. I have played to the press, sold my memories, used my private moments to buy sympathy and compassion for my fellow aliens. I have offered cures for disease in exchange for tolerance, and other
technology in a bid to secure our rights and freedom.

Some would call this cynical and manipulative and they might be right, but what choice do I have? What choice did you give me? I arrived here, and I had to be hidden away behind forged documents and a false identity. When I was discovered, the only thing that kept me from a dissection table was a good man trading his life for mine. Another good man, an alien like myself, has spent a decade risking his life every day to make sure the protection that was bought at so dear a cost held until I could defend myself.

When I could no longer hide, no longer work from the shadows, I chose to stand so tall, to speak so loudly, that everyone would have to listen and take note.

But the man who attacked Leslie Willis is a coward. He was a coward ten years ago when he tried to drag a scared, frightened little girl from the home she’d only just found. Because he is still a coward, he chose to attack me with fear, lies and deception. He tried to kill Leslie Willis and lay the blame on me, in an attempt to poison everything I have worked for.

He is a coward, and he is being cheered on by other cowards. Cowards like Miranda Crane and Maxwell Lord. Cowards who would throw thousands of innocent lives on the fire for no other crime save an accident of birth.

I hope and I believe they are the minority. A small number, whose voices are made loud by the strength of their fear, hate and greed, and by the depths of their pockets. I chose to believe that the people of Earth are better than that. I chose to believe that the people of Earth are filled with the love and compassion I have been shown so many times since I arrived here. I chose to believe that the people of Earth are worth all the help I have offered and hope to offer them in the future.

Now, it’s time for you to decide.

Do you believe I attacked Leslie Willis? If I attacked her, what sense would it make for me to save her life? If I attacked her, why has she identified someone else to the police as her attacker?

Which is more likely? The scenario that Miranda Crane and Maxwell Lord, both known for their public hatred of aliens, have spun in the media? Or that the attack on Leslie Willis was an attempt to discredit me and turn public opinion against me and my fellow aliens?

I have faith that all of you will find that you already know the truth.
the plane, carrying it to safety. That night was fourteen years ago, and that figure would come to be known as Superman.

That same night, fourteen years ago, a reporter was grabbed off the streets and stabbed in the stomach by a police officer. She survived and walked fourteen city blocks through one of the worst storms in National City’s history, to collapse in the Emergency Room of National City Memorial. After thirteen hours in surgery, and four weeks in intensive care fighting off sepsis, that reporter would write an exposé that would bring down a congressman, a Deputy Mayor, and hundreds of policemen and mobsters across four cities. It would also fuel the growth of her small media company into the powerhouse that CatCo Worldwide Media would become.

I was that reporter, and that was one of the worst years of my life. I saw a story that had nearly killed me passed over for Lois Lane’s puff piece on the public arrival of Superman. I found my husband cheating on me when I went home early to give him the news that I was pregnant. And one of my best friends was killed covering the war in Afghanistan. I was hurt, bitter and disillusioned. All of my dreams of turning CatCo into a household name were coming true, and they tasted like ash in my mouth.

That’s when I met Leslie Willis. I bought out a small radio station in Nevada. I had never listened to it and didn’t care to. I only wanted a broadcast license for the CatCo radio network that included Las Vegas. The only reason I bothered to meet with Leslie at all is because the station manager begged me to give her a chance instead of firing all the local talent outright. So, I sat down and listened to tapes of her show, and despite myself, I was impressed. Then I met her face to face, and I realized how much talent and untapped potential there was. I saw a younger version of myself, just starting out, with the world in front of her.

That’s when I made my first mistake with Leslie. I saw so much potential there, and the small part of me that still believed in making the world a better place wanted to nurture it, to be her mentor. She’d have done better if I hadn’t. Leslie needed a mentor, someone to put her on the path to greatness, but I was the wrong choice. I was too wrapped up in myself and my own pain to do what was right for her. I taught her all the wrong things, and as long as she brought in the ratings, I rewarded her and protected her from the consequences of her own actions.

Somewhere along the line, I realized I’d made a mistake. I realized I’d nurtured all the wrong things in Leslie. I’d let her become mean and cruel, and all the things I hated when I looked in the mirror and saw them in myself. I saw it, but I had no idea how to fix it, and I made my second mistake. I ignored it, and I ignored her, because she reminded me of my failure.

Then, history decided to repeat itself. One dark night, a plane fell out of the sky, and a lone figure rose up to catch it, and in the aftermath, I found a brilliant young girl, full of promise, standing before me. But this girl was different. This girl wanted my help, but she demanded better. She demanded I live up to my potential. She held me to a higher standard. One I should have held myself to.

And I failed her. I failed her because I let my mistakes with Leslie splash onto her. I let my mistakes put everything she is working to accomplish at risk.

This is an apology to them both. I am apologizing to Leslie for all the times I failed to help her become the amazing person she should have been, and I am apologizing to Supergirl because my mistakes gave her enemies a chance to drag her name through the dirt.

But I want to set the record straight. Contrary to what Miranda Crane and Maxwell Lord have claimed, Supergirl did not attack Leslie Willis. She only found out about Leslie’s injuries when I called her, and she only took Leslie from the hospital on my request as Leslie’s medical proxy.
Supergirl has done nothing but help, and Crane and Lord’s attempts to use this vicious attack to try
to destroy her says far more about their character than hers.

Maxwell Lord’s reasons for attacking Supergirl are obvious. Aside from being scared of aliens,
Supergirl’s actions brought to light Lord’s long history of criminal behavior. His attempts to
discredit Supergirl are the actions of a desperate man trying to save himself from a life sentence he
richly deserves. Both the National City Tribune and the Daily Planet have posted numerous articles
this past week detailing Lord’s corruption and disregard for human life.

As for Miranda Crane, her motivations are every bit as self-serving. Her anti-alien stance is well
known, and dripping with the rhetoric of bigotry and fear. But that’s just the surface. Crane has
long been an opponent of President Marsdin, and sought to undermine her at every step, and it’s
commonly believed Crane is intending to run for President next year. If that’s the case though,
there is one dirty little skeleton in her closet that destroying Supergirl’s reputation would help deal
with nicely. Her long association with Lex Luthor which included gifts and contributions to both
her campaign, and a super pac which supported her. Senator Crane has similar relationships with
both Maxwell Lord and Simon Tycho, which could prove every bit as embarrassing if the current
allegations against them result in convictions. Allegations supported by mountains of evidence,
which could very well be thrown out if Supergirl’s reputation was destroyed.

As this article clearly illustrates, I am not above making mistakes, but my faith in Supergirl isn’t
one of them. I look at her, and the words she’s chosen to love by, “Hope, help and compassion for
all,” and I want to believe she means them, and so far, Supergirl has given me no reason to doubt
means those words. Then I look at the words Miranda Crane uses. She says she believes Supergirl,
a woman who has done nothing but help, is a “vicious animal” and a “violent, perverted monster,”
and so far, Senator Crane has given me no reason to doubt that she believes those words.

Supergirl has shown time and again how far she will go to help make the world a better place. She
exposed herself, shared her past, her pain, her grief, her culture and technology, and all she has
asked in return is for her and those like her to have the right to exist.

Ask yourself how far Miranda Crane is willing to go in support of what she believes, and then
decide which of them is telling the truth.

“Cat, are you sure you want to publish this?” Kara asked.

“Is there something wrong with it?” Cat asked, her usual bravado in place, though Kara could tell it
was paper thin, just by the slight quiver in her voice that anyone without super-hearing would
never have noticed.

“No. It’s wonderful. It’s just… It’s very personal, and I know how private you are.”

“And what you wrote wasn’t personal?” Cat asked. “I know you blame yourself for what happened,
but if anyone here is to blame, it’s me. I made Leslie what she was. I created the conflict in the first
place. And if you are going to lay yourself bare to fix it, how can I do any less?”

Kara stared at Cat, completely floored. She’d known how much potential for goodness there was
from experience. She had loved Cat, almost from the moment they met, but so much of that were
the tiny peeks of goodness and compassion she’d seen lurking under the prickly exterior. She’d
worked so hard the first time around to bring that out of Cat, but this time around, it was almost
effortless, and she wasn’t sure what the difference was. But the woman across from her was *her*
Cat. The one she’d been friends with, right up until the end.
“Okay,” Kara said. “Okay. Post it, and let’s go save your company.”

Cat smiled at her and reached for the mouse.
Chapter Summary

Cat and Kara Deal with the CatCo Board of Directors.

Kaldur’ahm was waiting for them as they approached the board room, holding a stack of folders Kara had asked him to prepare. Standing next to him was, of all people, Siobhan Smythe, holding a tray from Noonan’s.

“Jackson,” Kara said, giving him a small nod. “Miss Smythe.” Siobhan’s eyes opened a little wider, obviously surprised Kara knew who she was, but Kara ignored it. She took the tray from her. “Thank you, that will be all.”

Siobhan gave a slightly disappointed frown but left without saying anything.

“Are they already in there?” Kara asked.

“Yes,” Kaldur’ahm said.

Kara held out the tray to Cat. “Hold this for a moment?”

Cat took the tray, and Kara plucked Cat’s latte from it. She pushed up her glasses, then popped the lid on the drink, and after a quick check to make sure no one else was watching, she zapped it with her heat vision, making it just a tiny bit hotter than usual, before putting the lid back on and putting it back in the tray. She ignored the surprised look on both Cat and Kaldur’ahm’s faces as she took the tray back from Cat.

“Still trust me?” she asked Cat.

“Was signing over all my shares of CatCo not proof enough?” Cat asked, the smile on her face taking any sting out of her words.

Kara smiled back and had a sudden, mad urge to kiss Cat. She stepped on it, crushing it ruthlessly, reminding herself that she was just excited because it had been such a long time since she got to work with Cat on this level.

“Let’s go,” she said.

Cat walked into the board room like she owned it, which up until an hour ago, she had. Still, it was a habit, and one she allowed herself to fall into. She wasn’t at all sure what to expect from Kara, but she knew the show would be spectacular. She took her seat at the head of the table, staring at the nine faces who would thought they were about to determine her fate, and reminded herself of why she hated every one of them. CatCo was hers. She’d built it up from nothing, riding on the strength of her name and her reputation. Over the years, every single one of the parasites in the room had been forced on her by investors, a fact that showed clearly in the fact that of the nine of them, only two were women.

The chief parasite, Dirk Armstrong, sat at the far end of the table, and she could read the victory in
his eyes. The satisfaction. He was a small man, desperate to snatch something from her he didn’t think she deserved. Never mind that she created it, nurtured it, and forged it into a weapon to wield. He wanted it, and because he wanted it, he felt entitled to it. The only thing that would hurt worse than losing CatCo, would be losing CatCo to him, because she knew he would burn every good thing she’d ever done to the ground, just to get her out of the way.

She glanced up as Kara sat her latte down in front of her, before placing one in front of the seat to Cat’s left where Jackson was just sitting down, then placing one in front of her own seat. Then Kara flung the cardboard tray across the room like a frisbee, depositing it in the trash perfectly, with a casual display of skill and contempt for the board that made Cat’s insides squirm with arousal. Little ordinary Kara Danvers.

Supergirl.

“Two assistants, Cat. Really?” Dirk asked.

Cat turned back to Dirk, giving a small shrug. She no longer felt the need to placate the man. Whatever happened here today, whether Kara was able to turn this around or not, Dirk had declared war, and Cat fully intended to destroy him.

“Some of us work for a living, Dirk,” Cat said. “We can’t all get by on our Daddy’s name and money.”

The entire board flinched, each of them shocked by the open display of hostility, and Cat smiled. They’d expected her to walk in here, broken and cowed. If they were half as smart as they thought they were, they’d have recognized the danger the moment she walked through the door. She no longer had anything to lose, and as much as she hated Cat puns, the claws were out.

“That’s uncalled for,” Roger Harris said from where he sat to Dirk’s right.

“Oh, Roger,” Cat said, “someone should have said that years ago. It might have saved us all a lot of tedium.”

“Well, if that’s your attitude, maybe we should have had this meeting a long time ago,” Amanda Baker said.

“Oh, I agree,” Cat said. “I’ve put up with all of you far, far too long.”

There. Now they were starting to see the danger signs. Something wasn’t right. This wasn’t how things were supposed to go. She was supposed to be begging for her job, not coming out on the attack.

“Cat,” Jennifer Winston said, “what exactly do you think is going to happen here today?”

The entire board looked at her, expectantly.

“Oh, I honestly have no idea,” Cat said. “I do know that you expected me to come in here and beg for my job.”

“It’s not like that,” Jennifer said. “Surely you can see the position you put us in?”

“I can see that you all want a piece of my company. The one I built up from scratch. The one built on my very literal blood and tears. I can see how, the moment you think you smell blood in the water, you turn on me, too stupid to realize you’re not the sharks you think you are.”
Every one of them had gone pale, which for Amanda and Joseph was quite a feat, and it just made her smile all the more.

“But to be perfectly honest with you, I have absolutely no idea what is about to happen. I just know it’s going to be highly entertaining.”

“Well,” Kara said, “I hope it lives up to your expectations, Miss Grant.” Cat glanced over at Kara and saw her nod to Jackson, who stood up and started walking around the table, setting down folders in front of each member of the board.

“Ladies and gentlemen of the board,” Kara said as she took one of the folders from Jackson, “If you look at the packets in front of you, you will see from pages one through seven that as of eight forty this morning Pacific Standard Time, all SEC filings are complete, and a Tender Offer has been made by Danvers International to purchase CatCo Worldwide Media. Under the terms of the CatCo Corporate Charter, if a two-thirds supermajority of stock holders vote to approve the sale of CatCo, all members of the board are required to sell their shares so long as the tender offer is at least ten percent above market value. If you see look at page seven of the packet in front of you, you will see that Miss Grant transferred all her shares of CatCo to me at eight thirty-five Pacific Standard Time this morning, and I now own sixty-seven percent of CatCo stock. Page eight is a written demand for an immediate vote on the Tender Offer. Page nine is a written statement assigning all my votes in support of the buy-out. Page ten is evidence of corporate wrongdoing on the part of Dirk Armstrong, specifically emails documenting a conspiracy to orchestrate a hack of Cat Grant’s email, release it to the media, and force her resignation in disgrace. Pages eleven, twelve and thirteen include the relevant sections of Dirk’s contract stating that in the event that he is found acting against CatCo’s interests, he will be removed from the board, and forfeit ownership of CatCo stock and stock options, as well as all CatCo contributions to his retirement accounts, all contributions to the CatCo pension plan, and all profit sharing. Page fourteen exercises clause six of section four of the CatCo charter, giving the stock holders the option of demanding a vote of no confidence in the board in the event any member of the board is found acting against the best interests of CatCo. Page fifteen assigns all my votes in support of a no confidence vote. Page sixteen is a nomination for Cat Grant to act as interim chairwoman until a new board can be elected. Page seventeen is the signature page, acknowledging receipt of all of these documents, and confirming your acceptance of the Tender Offer.”

“In short, the eight of you are fired for gross incompetence,” Kara said, making a sweeping gesture towards the board members, then she pointed at Dirk, “and you, you walking personification of white male privilege, are going to jail.”

Cat had to force herself to look away from Kara, who sat in the chair next to her, looking like nothing so much as a general who’d just completely routed the enemy. It was hard, but she did it. She turned and looked at the board, and every single one of them sat there, unmoving, a look of complete and utter shock on their faces.

“This would be the part where you all sign,” Kara said in a tone that caused several of the board members to flinch.

Roger Harris, either braver or stupider than the rest, leaned forward, glaring at Kara. “Now just a minute."

“No,” Kara snapped. “I don’t think so. You can sign now, or I can have the same team of cops and lawyers from the DA’s office who are, as we speak, ripping Dirk’s office apart take a good look at just who those emails were directed to, and that wouldn’t go very well for you or Miss Baker. Now, sign.”
Eight hands reached for pens, and Cat watched with unrestrained glee as everyone but Dirk signed the papers. A moment later though, her attention shifted to Dirk, drawn by the way his hands curled into fists.

“You bitch,” Dirk screamed, shoving the conference table to the side. It slammed into Roger and Amanda, knocking them both back as Dirk came to his feet, but Kara and Jackson both reacted before he could take another step.

Jackson grabbed Cat, pulling her out of her chair and pushing her away from the danger, interposing himself between her and Dirk. All Cat could see of Kara was her vaulting the table before Jackson pushed her out the door.

To Cat’s surprise, there were four cops waiting in the hallway. Two in cheap suits, two more in uniform.

“He tried to attack her,” Jackson said as he pulled her further from the door. The cops didn’t wait, they disappeared into the board room.

“Miss Grant, please stop fighting,” Jackson said, making Cat pause when she realized she was struggling. “She will be fine,” he assured her.

Cat forced herself to straighten up. “I’m sorry,” she said.

“I understand,” he said. “I loved someone that way, once, as well.”

She looked at him, but he did not meet her gaze, instead scanning the room in the manner of a body guard she had always suspected he was.

“She’s my friend,” Cat said, the denial sounding weak, even to her.

“Of course,” he said. “I had such a friend, once.”

A moment later, the cops dragged a red-faced Dirk Armstrong from the room. The other board members trailed out after them. Kara was the last one to exit the room, and she came carrying a stack of folders, which she offered to Cat.

“The keys to your kingdom, Miss Grant,” she said with a smile.

From CatCo.com
Stock Market In Turmoil Amidst Rash of Hostile Takeover Bids
By Natalie Mercer

Stock prices across several sectors took a huge hit today, after previously unheard-of California company Danvers International submitted FTC filings announcing hostile takeover bids of six separate companies, including Lord Technologies, TychoTech, LuthorCorp, Queen Consolidated, Galaxy Communications, and CatCo.com’s parent company CatCo Worldwide Media. All six companies were already suffering from reduced stock prices before the takeover attempts. Queen Consolidated has never fully recovered from the death of CEO Robert Queen in a boating accident in two thousand and seven. LuthorCorp is still reeling from the recent conviction of former CEO Lex Luthor on multiple charges of murder and terrorism stemming from his attempts to kill Superman. Lord Technologies and TychoTech have both seen their CEO’s indicted in the last couple of weeks, and the reputations of both CatCo Worldwide Media, and Galaxy Communications, owners of The Daily Planet, were brought into question when it appeared that Supergirl had attacked former CatCo radio personality Leslie Willis.
Willis herself appeared outside National City Police Headquarters, making a public statement not only exonerating the Girl of Steel, but thanking the Superhero for saving her life, however, the takeover bids seemed to hit before CatCo and Galaxy Communications stock prices could recover.

While no official announcement has been made yet, but with their stock prices in freefall, analysts predict that both Lord Technologies and TychoTech have little chance of avoiding the buyouts. Predictions are mixed on the reaction at Queen Consolidated, with some suggesting a fierce fight for control, while others suggest the buyout may be welcomed by the current leadership. Analysts almost universally predict fierce resistance from Galaxy Communications, CatCo, and especially, LuthorCorp, which is currently in the midst of a leadership struggle between Lillian and Lena Luthor, both seeking control in the wake of Lex Luthor’s incarceration.
Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Lena looked up from her desk in annoyance as the door to her office opened, but the annoyance vanished as she saw Sam, replaced immediately by a smile.

“Hey,” Lena said.

“Any idea what the Secret Service detail is for?” Sam asked as she walked across the office to sit down in one of the chairs across from Lena.

“I think they’re actually US Marshalls,” Lena said. “I can’t get any kind of clear answer, other than that the President ordered the protection detail personally.”

“That doesn’t sound good,” Sam said.

“No, it doesn’t,” Lena agreed. “It’s nice to see a friendly face, though.”

Sam sighed. “I kind of hate that you said that when I’m here with bad news.”

“More?” Lena asked, her eyebrows shooting up towards her hairline. “This should be thrilling.”

“Someone bought LuthorCorp out from under us,” Sam said.

“What?” Lena asked.

“Who?” Lena asked, her eyebrows shooting up towards her hairline.

“I don’t know, exactly,” Sam said. “The SEC filing for the notice of intent went through at about 11:15 AM Eastern this morning. By 11:45, Danvers International held fifty-three percent of the voting stock. I haven’t had time to do a forensic analysis of the stock transactions, but we’ve known for a while that something funny was happening with the purchase patterns. My guess is, they’ve been buying through subsidiaries and shells for months.”

“Danvers International?” Lena said. “I’ve never heard of it.”

“Neither has anyone else,” Sam said. “I looked. It was incorporated about a year ago. It has exactly one employee, who holds the position of Chairman of the Board, CEO, COO, and CFO. There are one-hundred shares of privately held stock, all owned by that same employee. Someone named Kara Danvers.”

“Who the hell is Kara Danvers?” Lena asked.

“Hell if I know,” Sam said. “The only Kara Danvers I can find is the head of the Supergirl Social Media Group at CatCo, who was Cat Grant’s assistant up until about two weeks ago.”
“Could it be the same person?”

Sam shrugged. “Maybe. I’ve got an investigator looking into it, and it would sort of make sense, because we’re not the only ones Danvers International is trying to buy.”

“Who else are they going after?” Lena asked.

“CatCo, Galaxy Communications, Lord Technologies, TychoTech and Queen Consolidated.”

“That’s quite a list,” Lena said.

“Yeah,” Sam said. “All vulnerable right now, all with depressed stock prices.”

“Odd mix, though,” Lena said. “Lord Technologies might be a good fit with CatCo and Galaxy. I could even see raiding LuthorCorp to get at the LexTel assets.”

“Could it be the Super connections?” Sam asked.

“Maybe,” Lena said. “Though I don’t recall any connection between Queen Consolidated and Supergirl or Superman.”

“I’ll keep looking,” Sam said, “But as much as I hate to say it, I think you should look at the Tender Offer. Even with Lex’s shares, we won’t be able to hold the company.”

“I’m not ready to give up just yet,” Lena said. “See if you can get a hold of this Kara Danvers. I’d like to talk to her before I make a decision. I mean, assuming the Marshalls will let me go to National City.”

“I’ll see what I can do.”

Maggie walked through the police station, head held high, daring anyone to say so much as a word to her as she carried the banker’s box filled with the meager contents of her desk towards the front door. She needn’t have bothered. No one looked at her. No one wanted the taint covering Maggie Sawyer to splash on them.

Fuck every last one of them.

She’d known of course. Every police departments had corrupt cops. It’s something you hate, and you live with. Some cops, and Maggie was one of them, would drop a dime to internal affairs when they saw it. Some cops would call you a traitor for that, but Maggie had decided what kind of cop she wanted to be before she ever joined the force. Had decided when a good friend of hers had disappeared for three days, only to turn up, beaten and bruised. The cops who did it were never caught. Never faced justice. After all, who was going to believe a gay black prostitute who said a couple of cops had beaten him up?

She’d known, and she’d signed up anyway. She’d moved up fast, made detective, made it into the Science Division. She was thirty-three years old, and she was holding her own. She made good busts, did good police work. She helped where she could. Kept aliens who weren’t hurting people out of cells., kept gay kids out of trouble, and absolutely destroyed anyone who threatened either of those communities, and she HATED dirty cops with a passion.

She could never quite talk herself into making the jump to internal affairs. They’d asked three times, but the streets were Maggie’s passion. The streets were where she could help people like her. The outcasts, the misfits, the rejects. Out on the street, Maggie Sawyer was the thin blue line
that stood between the vulnerable and the monsters, in and out of uniform.

And then came Kara Danvers, with her sunny smile, and her sympathetic ear, and a sister she couldn’t stop talking about. Kara Danvers who could fly, and shoot fire from her eyes, and blow the arctic wind from her lips. Kara Danvers who cared, just as much as Maggie did. Kara Danvers, who had finally introduced her to that sister, who was everything Kara had promised she would be. The sister who made Maggie’s insides melt every time she smiled. The sister who, just a few nights ago, she found tasted like peaches, and smelled like apples, and moaned just so.

Kara Danvers who was from the future. Who had lived through a vicious, horrible war, and walked away from the woman she’d loved and had chosen to die and risk having to go through it all again, just for the chance to make things better. Kara Danvers who risked everything to save the life of a woman who’d belittled her and scorned her, not because it was the smart thing to do, or the right thing to do, but because she couldn’t bear the thought of someone getting hurt because of her. Kara Danvers, who was too kind and gentle and compassionate to be someone who’d seen her world die, and spent over a decade fighting a hard, bitter war.

Maggie didn’t regret it. Not for a second. She loved Kara. Kara was her sister, in heart if not in blood. And Maggie had seen enough cases get rigged to know exactly what was about to happen.

Maggie had known there were crooked cops in the National City Police Department. She just hadn’t realized that the Chief was one of them. And the Commissioner. But she wasn’t stupid, and she’d seen the writing on the wall, clear as day, so she’d made a choice to protect Kara in the only way that would stick. She’d talked to the press, and she’d let Leslie talk to the press. She’d let the press see Kara and Leslie standing there together, and even if the Chief and the Commissioner tried to walk back what she’d said to the press, there was no way in hell the DA would press charges. Maggie had spiked the case against Kara irrevocably. She’d poisoned the well.

And all it had cost her was her job, her pension, and her future.

The orders had been specific. Hold Supergirl and Willis until the Captain arrived. He would take over the case. Simple as that, Maggie knew. She’d called Alex, told her what was happening, and they’d worked out a plan. Then, she’d lied to Alex for the first time. She’d told her it would be okay, and she’d get a slap on the wrist, maybe a couple days’ suspension, but Maggie knew what would happen. She could tell by Alex’s tone that Alex didn’t believe the lie any more than she did.

In the end, Maggie didn’t try to fight it. Her union rep’s arguments on her behalf were perfunctory, and when it was over, Maggie had just tossed her badge on the desk and left without a word. She’d just packed her desk and headed for the parking structure.

She used her key fob to pop her trunk and tossed the banker’s box inside. The two bullets slammed into her back as she reached up to close the trunk. The shots were positioned perfectly. Two 9mm hollow point Plus P rounds dead center.

They should have killed her instantly. They should have severed her spine, torn through her heart, and blown out her sternum. Except that Kara had ordered Konex to replace all of Maggie’s, Alex’s and Susan’s clothes weeks ago with Kryptonian fabric which was designed to stop a micro-meteor hit at orbital velocities.

Maggie didn’t feel a thing, but the parking structure was like an echo chamber, and even with the silencer, the sound of a gun was distinctive. Her hand dropped, brushing aside her jacket and drawing her Glock even as she turned. Her would-be assassin stood there, staring at her in disbelief, even as Maggie squeezed the trigger.
Alex jumped slightly when her phone started playing Mr. Roboto. She turned away from the security plan she was looking over, and pulled out her phone, swiping to answer it.

“Hello,” Alex said.

“Lady Alex, Maggie has been attacked,” Konex said.

“What?” Alex said loudly enough that everyone in the DEO command center looked up from what they were doing.

“She was shot in the back twice at close range,” Konex said.

Alex physically recoiled from the words, fear twisting in her gut like a knife.

“She is unharmed,” Konex said. “Lady Kara had me replace her entire wardrobe with Kryptonian barrier cloth several weeks ago, but she requires assistance immediately. Normally, I would contact Lady Kara, however, I believe her presence would make the current situation worse.”

Alex felt relief flood into her when Konex said Maggie was okay, but she knew she had to get to her now. She had to protect Maggie. That was the only thought in her head, overriding everything else.

“Konex, can you transmat me?” Alex asked.

“Of course,” Konex said.

“Do it,” Alex said, ignoring the startled look on Susan’s face as Alex drew her gun.

The first thought to go through Susan Vasquez’s head when Alex drew her pistol and vanished in a flash of light right out of the DEO’s command center was “why the fuck does this shit always splash on me?” She gave herself about five seconds to wallow in her self-pity, before she turned around and started barking orders.

“Reynolds, Tsung, I need two strike teams full kit, in the Blackhawks five minutes ago. Come on people, move like you’ve got a purpose!”

She turned to Wilson, who was at her normal station. “We’ve got a situation. Get me details.”

She reached for her phone, taking it out and unlocking it, then tapping Konex’s contact and hitting the call button.

“Agent Vasquez,” Konex said.

“Report on Agent Danvers’ status,” she snapped.

“Maggie was attacked in the NCPD parking structure. She was shot in the back twice at short range. However, at Lady Kara’s instructions, all of Detective Sawyer’s clothing had been replaced with garments made of Kryptonian barrier fabric. The barrier fabric prevented injury, but Maggie was forced to kill her attacker. Given the situation, I believed it best to contact Agent Danvers instead of Lady Kara.”

“Good call,” Susan said. “Wilson, I want those strike teams at National City Police Headquarters parking structure yesterday.”

“Yes ma’am,” he said.
“Konex, put me through to Supergirl,” Susan said. There was a brief pause before Kara answered.

“Hey, Susan,” Kara said.

“Kara, where are you?” Susan asked.

“I’m with Cat,” Kara said.

“Okay, good. I need you to stay where you are. Do you understand?”

“Susan, what’s going on? Where are J’onn and Alex.”

“Supergirl, I need you to listen to me,” Susan said. “This is adult supervision talking. Do you understand?”

There was a moment of silence, then Kara said, “Yes. Adult supervision. Stay where I am, no matter what.”

“Okay,” Susan said. “Konex will brief you. I have to go.” She hung up the phone and shoved it into her pocket. “Wilson, get me President Marsdin.”

“On it,” Wilson said.

Susan stood there, waiting as the minutes ticked by, until President Marsdin’s face appeared on the screen.

“Agent Vasquez, where is acting Director Danvers?” Marsdin asked.

“Maggie Sawyer’s been shot, ma’am,” Susan said.

“What?” Marsdin asked, disbelief written on her face.

“My understanding of the situation is she took two rounds at close range. She’s unhurt, to the best of my knowledge, but she had to kill her attacker. I have Supergirl on lockdown, and two rapid response teams are heading for the Blackhawks now, but Director Danvers made use of certain technology in Supergirl’s possession to travel to the scene and render aid. We’re waiting for an update, but Madam President, I am not at all comfortable with you travelling to National City at this time.”

“I understand your concern, Agent Vasquez, but the situation is spiraling—”

“No, ma’am, you clearly do not understand the goddamned situation, or you wouldn’t be walking into it. They shot a fucking police detective inside of the NCPD Headquarters parking structure. That’s after they tried to beat Leslie Willis to death in her home and pin it on Supergirl. This entire city is a fucking powder keg, and you aren’t a match, you’re the Goddamned Olympic torch. Either divert your flight, or I am going to take it under my own authority as acting director of the DEO, in Director Danvers’ absence, to enlist the aid of anyone I see fit to prevent this from turning into an absolute shit show. Am I clear, ma’am?”

“Perfectly, Agent Vasquez,” Marsdin said. “I understand Superman is still in National City at this time.”

“He is, ma’am.”

“Can you contact him?” Marsdin asked.
“I can.”

“Do so. See if he will agree to meet and escort my flight,” Marsdin said.

“Understood. Vasquez out.” Susan didn’t wait for a reply, she just reached for her phone, and dialed Konex again.

“I need to talk to Superman,” Susan said.

________________________________________________________________________

Alex materialized in the parking structure with her gun ready and turned immediately toward the sound of a surprised gasp, only to find herself staring down the barrel of Maggie’s gun.

“Jesus, Danvers,” Maggie said, quickly lowering her weapon. “I could have killed you.”

“Are you okay?” Alex asked, looking around, taking in every shape and shadow. “Konex said you’d been shot.”

“I’m fine,” Maggie said.

“Thank God,” Alex said, and without thinking about it, she stepped forward and pulled Maggie into a crushing hug. “You scared the hell out of me.” She felt Maggie hug her back, and a bit more of the terror that had hold of her loosened.

“I scared the hell out of me,” Maggie said. “But Konex was wrong. The guy missed. I heard the shots, turned around and popped the guy.”

“Maggie,” Alex said, finally letting go of her, “take off your jacket.”


“Because he didn’t miss,” Alex said.

Maggie frowned and holstered her gun, then shrugged out of her jacket and turned it around, looking at the back of it. There were two grey lumps stuck to the back.

“What the hell?” Maggie asked.

Alex reached out and peeling one of the lumps away from the jacket. “Bullets,” she said. “Same thing happens to Kara’s cape sometimes when she gets shot in the back at close range.”

“But how?”

“Konex said Kara has provided you with protective clothing,” Alex said. “She didn’t tell you, did she?”

“No,” Maggie said.

“DROP THE WEAPON!” A voice yelled.

Alex turned her head, and spotted two cops, both men, standing there, weapons out.

“Easy,” she said as both she and Maggie raised their hands. “I’m a federal agent, and she’s a cop.”

“I SAID DROP THE WEAPON!” one of them shouted.

“I said, I’m a federal agent,” Alex replied.
“I don’t care if you’re the fucking pope, drop the damn gun,” the cop replied.

“I am going to holster my weapon, then I am going to reach for my ID,” Alex said.

“You are going to drop the damn gun, right-”

“TOH SNUG!” a woman shouted from the shadows.

Both of the cops shouted and dropped their guns, waving the hands frantically as if they were burnt.

“Dloc snug,” the same woman said, this time in a much softer tone. Alex looked toward where the shout had come from, only to see a woman in a tux and tails step out of the shadows, shaking her head. “You boys really should learn some manners. Kcirb llaw.” She waved her hand as she spoke the last two words and a brick wall appeared, blocking the cops from view.

She turned toward Alex and Maggie. “Are you Alex Danvers?” she asked.

“Um… yes?” Alex said as she lowered her hands and holstered her gun.

“Zatanna Zatara, at your service,” she said, before bowing to them. “Your sister thought you could use some assistance.

Alex and Maggie looked at each other. “What is it with your sister?” Maggie asked.

Alex just shook her head.

“You’re sure everything’s good?” Susan asked.

“Assuming I don’t shoot one of these assholes, I think we’ll be okay,” Alex said.

“So, fifty-fifty?” Susan asked.

“Shut up,” Alex said, but there was amusement in her tone.

“Shutting up, ma’am,” Susan said.

“I don’t know how quickly I’m going to be able to shake us loose,” Alex said.

“Anything I can do to help, ma’am?” Susan asked.

“Just make sure the security is set for the President’s visit,” Alex said. “I’ve got Konex putting together everything we can find on this John Corben guy, but this whole thing stinks. I think right now the only reason Maggie isn’t in cuffs is that I’ve got twelve guys with Tavor assault rifles and two gunships parked on the roof.”

“I’m on it, ma’am,” Susan replied. “See you soon.”

The video feed cut, and Susan turned around, only to jump at the sight of Leslie Willis standing right in front of her.

“I will say this for Supergirl,” Leslie said, “she sure knows how to find the hot ladies.”

“How did you get in here?” Susan asked.

“Easy,” Leslie said, then she vanished, leaving behind only an arc of lightning jumping from where
She was standing, to a spot on one of the catwalks, where she reappeared. She leaned down, resting her arms on the hand rails of the catwalk. “You know, when Supergirl said I was going to have powers, I thought it would take me forever to learn to use them. I had the whole thing in my head. There was a training montage, me in a sports bra and yoga pants punching a heavy bag and looking fabulous, me fighting Supergirl, me frying Supergirl with lightning. The soundtrack was Come With Me Now by Kongos. It was a thing. But this…”

She disappeared, and a lightning bolt struck the ground in front of Susan, leaving Leslie standing in front of her. “This is like breathing. I don’t even have to think about it. I can feel the electricity flowing around us. It’s calling to me, like music.”

Susan frowned, not at all liking where this was going. “Are you okay?”

Leslie nodded. “It’s a… It’s like a really good high,” she said. “I’m wired, and I need to do something.”

Susan was going to kill Kara. Really, she was.

“I tell you what,” she said. “Why don’t I have Kafel take you down to the firing range, and you can try blasting a few targets? Sound good?”

Leslie nodded. “I can work with that,” she said. “Get in some practice for when we find this Henshaw guy.”


Kafel nodded and headed for the range, Leslie in tow.

Susan watched them leave, then shook herself as she realized where her eyes had been focused. She must be a lot more stressed than she thought. She’d only been single a month, and she usually had to have a dry spell of at least six months before she was reduced to staring at straight girls’ asses.

Being the adult sucked.

J’onn stared down at the board in front of him, trying to find a way out of the trap he’d been so skillfully lured into, and had to admit there wasn’t one. He reached forward, and tipped his king over, conceding the match.

“You’re a fast learner,” he said.

“You are a capable teacher,” Astra replied. “But truth be told, you give me more credit than I deserve. The game is similar to one we played on Krypton. A bit simpler. \mizrhosh,levrrosh,/ works in three dimensions.”

“I should teach you Go,” J’onn said. “Kara loves it. Says it reminds her of \.:divi,chao,dovrrosh./”

Astra smiled. “She loved that game,” she said. “From the moment I taught her. We played for hours.”

“Was she any good?” J’onn asked.

“No,” Astra said, her smile growing a bit. “I love my niece, but she has no patience at all.”

“She might surprise you,” J’onn said.
“I find you surprising, son of Mars,” Astra said. “Most would be angry, were they in your situation.”

“I knew this day would come,” J’onn said. “A secret like mine can only be kept so long. Oh, it might have held, if Henshaw had really died, but once I knew he was alive, this moment became inevitable.”

“Tell me, does my niece still deceive herself into believing we will be freed?” Astra asked.

“You will be,” J’onn said as he began to reset the board for another game. “One way, or the other.”

“That sounds ominous,” Astra said.

“It should,” J’onn said. “If Marsdin doesn’t keep her word, your niece will tear this place apart to free you.”

“And then?” Astra asked.

“War,” J’onn said. “A long, terrible war.”

“I do not wish that for her,” Astra said, as she made her first move.

“War is coming,” J’onn said. “If not with the humans, then with the Oans and the Apokoliptians.”

“You sound sure of that,” Astra said.

“As sure as I am that I’m sitting in prison.”

“Very sure than,” Astra said. “I trust the irony doesn’t escape you.”

“It doesn’t,” J’onn said. “The humans even have a phrase for it. ‘A prison of your own making.’”

“And yet, you still have hope.”

“I do,” J’onn said. “It’s a byproduct of spending time around the Danvers. They have ways of working miracles.”

“Well, J’onn J’onnz, let us hope you are right. I would very much like to have a word with this man who’s cast doubt on my niece’s good name.”

“You and me both.”

Susan stood at attention as the President walked into the DEO command center, wondering not for the first time what on Earth she had done to deserve a day like this. Superman was only a few steps behind her, and there was a vague look of fear on his face. Given the expression on Marsdin’s face, she couldn’t say she was surprised. If Marsdin has looked at her like that, even a month ago, Susan probably would have run and hid under her bunk. Somehow, though, the prospect of being responsible for stopping the end of the world made her worry less about the President being pissed at her.

“Agent Vasquez,” Marsdin said, and her tone did nothing to hide the anger behind her eyes.

“Acting Director Vasquez,” Susan corrected.

“You’ll forgive me if I don’t apologize,” Marsdin replied.
“You’ll forgive me if I don’t apologize for calling you a damn stubborn fool,” Susan shot back, making Superman, and at least two members of the secret service team wince.

“Well, I suppose there’s no questioning your bravery,” Marsdin said.

“I’m trying to keep you alive, ma’am,” Susan said. “I don’t appreciate anyone adding to the difficulty of that task. Even you.”

Marsdin relaxed, just a bit. “I suppose that’s a fair sentiment, Director, but I don’t believe I have any choice. If what we’re doing is to succeed, we all have to accept a little risk.”

“With respect, ma’am, you could have signed the paperwork in your nice, safe office three thousand miles from the fucking war zone I am trying my best to manage.”

“I could have, but I could not have appeared on stage with Director Henshaw, General Astra, and Supergirl.”

Susan took a deep breath. “We could have arranged that, actually,” Susan said. “Or, at least, Supergirl could have. But it’s done. You’re here. How would you like to proceed?”

“First, I’d like an update on the situation with Detective Sawyer,” Marsdin said.

“The situation is still in flux,” Susan said. “Detective Sawyer called us this morning to inform us that she believed the National City Police Commissioner and the Chief of Police were attempting to railroad Supergirl. She had a signed statement from Willis confirming Supergirl’s innocence, but the Commissioner and the Chief ordered her to hold Supergirl, and a contact she had in the DA’s office confirmed that charges were still being prepared. Detective Sawyer headed this off by making a public statement confirming Supergirl’s innocence, and then allowed Willis to speak to the press. The Commissioner fired Detective Sawyer for insubordination and disobeying a direct order. Detective Sawyer turned in her badge and cleared out her desk. While loading her belongings into the trunk of her car, a known assassin for hire named John Corben shot her from behind with a silenced Glock 9mm. Detective Sawyer was wearing low profile body armor of Kryptonian design when attacked, and as a result, was unharmed. She drew her weapon, which she was carrying under cover of a civilian carry permit and shot Corben twice in the chest. Acting Director Danvers was notified of the incident by an automated monitoring system and took advantage of a piece of Supergirl’s equipment to travel immediately to the scene and make sure Detective Sawyer was safe. I dispatched a pair of strike teams as back up and assumed command of the DEO in Director Danvers’ absence. I notified Supergirl of the situation, and ordered her to remain in place, however, she contacted one of her assets, a sorceress named Zatanna Zatara to render aid. Zatanna arrived in time to prevent two National City Police Officers from taking Danvers and Sawyer into custody. The situation has since devolved into a jurisdictional pissing match between the NCPD and the DEO. The NCPD wants jurisdiction because the attempt was made on NCPD property. We are claiming jurisdiction because Sawyer is a credentialed consultant for us. Of course, we’d be better able to press the claim if we weren’t having to claim to be FBI, but for now, there’s nothing we can do about that situation.”

“Well, that I can help with. Once we’re done here, get me an office, and I’ll make a call.”

“Thank you, ma’am,” Susan said.

“What about the arrangements for the signing?” Marsdin asked.

“Progressing. We’ve been holding off on securing a venue, however. We have no idea how far our enemy’s intelligence reaches, so we want to save that for the last minute. At the moment, we
haven’t even informed NCPD that you will be in town. That’s why I insisted Air Force One land here.”

“How quickly can we have this done, Director?” Marsdin asked.

“Unsure. I’d say one o’clock, but it depends on how quickly we can find a venue.”

“As fast as possible, please,” Marsdin said.

“Understood,” Vasquez replied. “Brody, set President Marsdin up in the office next to the one Major Lane is using.”

“Yes, ma’am,” came the response as a young agent stepped forward. “This way, Madame President,” she said, leading the way towards the office General Lane used when he was there.”

Susan waited until they were gone, then pulled out her phone and dialled Kara.

“Susan, is Alex okay?” Kara asked.

“She’s fine,” Susan said. “Quick thinking with Zatanna. Alex was impressed.”

Kara snorted. “Is that what they’re calling it now,” Kara said, amusement in her voice. “I’d worry that Maggie would notice how impressed Alex was, but Maggie’s probably too busy being impressed herself.”

Susan smiled for the first time in hours. “Having seen Zatanna, I’m pretty impressed too, but that’s not why I called. I need your help.”

“What’s happening?”

“Marsdin is in National City,” Susan said.

“WHAT? No. Oh, Susan, whose dumb idea was that?” Kara asked.

“Hers, and I’ve already told her it was a horrible idea,” Susan said.

“Can’t J’onn do something?”

“J’onn’s not available,” Susan said.

“Why? What happened?”

“Nothing to worry about,” Susan said. “Just, I need a safe venue where Marsdin can hold a press conference. She’s going to sign the Amnesty act, then sign the pardons we’ve prepared, along with a couple of executive orders. Once it’s done, our hands will be untied. We can go after Cadmus. But she has to live long enough to sign them.”

“Do it here at CatCo,” Kara said. “Short of the DEO building downtown, it’s the most defensible location in National City.”

“Um… No offence Kara, but CatCo Plaza is a giant target.”

“It would be, if I hadn’t spliced an Omegahedron into the power system and installed defense field generators around the CatCo building months ago.”

Susan blinked as her entire thought process blue-screened for a moment. When it came back
online, she just shook her head.

“Kara, I could kiss you right now,” she said.

“At least buy me dinner first,” Kara said, laughter in her voice. “We have a studio on the twelfth floor that should be large enough. I’ll get working on it. No motorcade though. You keep Oliva there until it’s time, and we’ll do a site-to-site transmat.”

“Got it,” Susan said. “See you soon.” She hung up, and slipped her phone back in her pocket, then started making preparations while hoping like hell no-one told Kara that J’onn had spent the last few hours in lock up, and that two of the pardons in question were for Susan and Alex.

Christ, today was a shit show, start to finish.

Bruce muted the sound coming from the batcomputer, and leaned back, staring unseeingly at the screen.

“You’re absolutely sure?” Bruce asked.

“Positive,” Barbara said. She was sitting at the workstation next to him.

“We’ve checked everything three times,” Tim said, from the other side of where Bruce sat. “The money trails are incredibly well covered, but the initial deposit was done in nineteen ninety-eight.”

“There was about fifty billion in accumulated assets by the time Kara got hired at CatCo,” Barbara said. “But that number has grown about three thousand percent in the last fourteen months.”

“I don’t get it,” Tim said. “I thought she arrived in two thousand three.”

“She did,” Bruce said. “I tracked her from the Fortress while Clark went out to intercept the pod.”

“Then how is this possible?” Barbara asked.

“I don’t know,” Bruce said, “but we need to find out. Can you get me a physical location on where the transactions were coming from?”

“Up until October of last year,” Tim said. “After that, the connection becomes much harder to trace. Victor might be able to run it down, but we haven’t been able to trace it.”

“That makes sense,” Bruce said. “According to Clark, that’s around the time she set up her own Fortress.”

“Well, before that, everything was coming from this building,” Tim said, pulling up a map of Keystone City, and zooming in to a small building in the industrial district. “I’ve pulled everything I can on it. The property taxes are paid by a property management service, which also pays a maintenance crew to keep the place up to code. Twice a year, an IT subcontractor goes in and upgrades a server rack and checks all the network connections. The old computers have their hard drives replaced before they are donated to a charity which does IT for community centers in low income areas of Keystone, Central and National City. The old hard drives are shredded. There’s a security company that drives by twice a night and monitors an alarm system, but there’s no onsite security. The only thing odd about the place is the amount of internet bandwidth. It’s been steadily upgraded over the years. Right now, it’s at one-hundred gigabits per second, symmetrical.”

“That’s a lot of bandwidth for a single server rack,” Bruce said.
“What do you think it means?” Tim asked.

“I don’t know,” Bruce said.

“This is Kara we’re talking about,” Barbara said. “Why not just ask?”

“Because something doesn’t add up,” Bruce said.

“Because we don’t have all the information,” Barbara said. “Hence the asking part.”

“She has a point, Bruce,” Tim said.

“I think I might need to take a trip to Keystone city,” Bruce said.

“Or I could just call Kara,” Barbara said. “Look, I have my phone, right here.”

Bruce hit the intercom button. “Alfred, call and have the jet prepped for a trip to Keystone city.”

Barbara leaned over, so she could see Tim past Bruce. “Why is he like this?”

Tim threw his hands up in the air. “Repeated head trauma?”

Chapter End Notes

Translated from the Kryptonian:

,mizrholz,levrosh,
Advance - Retreat

,:divi,chao,dovrrosh,
light and shadow
Amnesty

Chapter Summary

Olivia arrives at CatCo to sign the Alien Amnesty Act and the Pardons for J’onn, Astra and the Fort Rozz Prisoners.

Kara and Cat stood near the door of the empty conference room, watching as it filled with light from the transmat beams depositing J’onn, Astra, Alex, Maggie, Lucy, Kal, President Marsdin and her Secret Service detail into the room. The light had barely died away when Kara stepped in and wrapped her arms around Astra.

“Easy, Little One,” Astra said.

“It’s good to see you,” Kara said as she let go, and turned to Alex and Maggie, pulling them both into a hug. “Are you two okay?”

“We’re fine,” Alex said.

Kara let go and stepped back, giving them both a once over with her X-Ray vision. Maggie gave her a look.

“We might need to have a talk about asking permission though,” Maggie said.

Kara shrugged. “You’re alive. Yell all you want.”

“Yeah,” Alex said, “I’m gonna go with Supergirl on this one.”

Maggie glared at Alex. “Fine. Maybe Zatanna will want to go see Lorde next month.”

Kara snorted at the hurt look on Alex’s face, but before she could comment, someone cleared their through, and Kara turned to see a very annoyed looking Olivia Marsdin staring at her.

“We need to talk when this is over,” Marsdin said.

“Oh, Olivia, quit being such a drama queen,” Cat said as she stepped forward. “The girl has been working miracles for a day and a half. Give her a moment to catch her breath.”

“Cat, you know I adore you, but you have no idea how much trouble this girl has caused me in the last week.”

“Hey,” Kara said, “I didn’t *cause* any of the trouble.”

Marsdin glared at her for a moment, before letting out a long-suffering sigh. “Let’s get on with this,” she said.
Cat took her seat in the front row just a moment before White House Press Secretary Danita Wright stepped into the room and walked over to the half podium that was situated on one end of the table.

“Thank you all for coming today. President Marsdin will be here shortly. She will be making a few brief comments, and then she will proceed with the signing of the Alien Amnesty Act, as well as two executive orders, and a number of pardons. She will then take a few questions before departing.” She glanced over at the door and got a small nod from one of the secret service agents, then turned back to the crowd.

“Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States,” Wright said before backing away from the podium.

Everyone in the room stood as President Marsdin entered, but Cat had eyes only for Kara. She watched as Kara, along with her cop friend, her sister, Superman, a muscular black man that Cat had seen at the Gala, and Kara’s aunt all filed in and took up places behind the table. Marsdin herself stepped up to the podium, and Cat finally forced herself to look away from Kara and focus on her old college roommate.

“Please, be seated,” Marsdin said.

Cat lowered herself into her chair as the rest of the press corps did likewise.

“I want to thank you all for coming today. I know the last two weeks have seen a lot of interesting events, several of them centering around one of our guests here today. I’m sure you are all curious as to why Supergirl’s name has been turning up so much, and to that, I will say this.

“With no disrespect to Superman and his accomplishments, Supergirl is a different kind of Superhero than we are used to. She has chosen not simply to step up in moments of crisis, to catch falling planes, to dig survivors out of fallen buildings, to blow out fires and raise sinking ships, though she has done all of those things, but to use her name and her voice to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. She chooses not simply to stand between our cities and those who would harm them, but also between us, and those whom we would harm through inaction, negligence, or through prejudice. She has chosen to speak for those to whom we refuse to listen because we are afraid of them and their differences. She has chosen to demand of us that we do better by others than we did by her when she came here. She has told us the words she will live by; Hope, help and compassion for all, and she has demanded that we live up to those same standards.

“That is why you have seen her name in the media these past weeks. Because any time someone stands up to demand justice, to demand a better world for themselves and those like them, there are always those when will seek to silence them. People who look at the world and see existence as a struggle for limited resources, and fear that allowing anyone else to have more means they will have less. People who look at those with less and see only things to be exploited. And worst of all, people who look at anything different with fear and hatred. Those are the people who will seek to destroy anyone who stands up and dares to demand that we as a society do better, that be provide everyone a seat at the table, and a share of our society’s bounty.

“When this girl stood up and bared her soul to us, those people saw only a threat, a thing to hate. They did not care what she lost or how she’d been hurt. They cared only that she might change the status quo. They did not care for the truth of her words. They feared that they might bring change. They cared not why the aliens whose cases she plead so eloquently might have broken our laws, only that they had.

“In her interview with Cat Grant, Supergirl posed the question ‘How many of the beings Superman has had to fight were only hostile because they knew there was no place here for them?’.
read those words, I was reminded of another struggle for justice, and of words spoken by one of that struggle’s champions in an interview with Mike Wallace. In that interview, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, ‘the riot is the language of the unheard.’ Powerful words. Important words. Words which forced me to ask, how many of our problems we have brought down on ourselves by our own fear and intolerance? How many times have we simply attacked something because it is different than us, when we could have welcomed it in peace and friendship?

“I will also admit that the example Supergirl has set has made me ashamed. I have long thought of myself an advocate for the rights of the aliens who live among us. I have counted myself an ally. But two weeks ago, in a ballroom just a couple of miles from where I stand, it became clear to me that I had failed, and I was again reminded of the words of Dr. King, this time ones written in a cell in Birmingham. In that letter, he wrote that he had nearly come to the conclusion that the white moderate was the greatest stumbling block the black community faced with their constant urging to wait for a ‘more convenient season’. I realized that I had fallen into that very trap. I had promised to work towards helping aliens living among us, but I kept waiting for the right moment to take action.

“This young woman reminded me that the right time for justice is always now. That however well-intentioned, waiting to give someone the freedom to simply exist is always wrong. That we cannot wait to extend mercy, compassion and hope to those who need it without being willing participants in the very oppression we wish to end. I had lost sight of that along the way.

“But there are those out there who looked at her, and they saw what she represented. A reminder to us of the fundamental principles on which this nation was founded. That all of us are created equal. We haven’t always lived up to those ideals. In fact, most of our long history has been a struggle towards those ideals, and there are those among us who will fight tooth and nail to keep us from ever achieving that dream. Because of fear, because of greed, because of hatred.

“These are the people who have been throwing out accusations. Those are the people who have been trying to tarnish Supergirl’s name. Those are the people who have been trying to make us fear her. To them, I say no. To them, I say we will not be afraid, we will not let you fill us with hate, and we will not believe your lies.

“This woman is a hero. This woman saves lives. This woman has stood up before the world and said, ‘let me help’. She has given us her time, her strength, and even her most private pain, and asked for nothing but the right for her and those like her to simply exist.

“And today, we will give her no less. Today, we will say to her, we will say to everyone like her, ‘you are welcome, you are safe, you are wanted.’ Today, we will say to her and everyone like her, ‘let us help.’

“Today, I will sign the Alien Amnesty Act, and provide legal status to all aliens currently residing within US borders, as well as a path to citizenship. That same act will establish a process by which aliens living in other countries can apply for asylum. Today, I will sign an executive order bringing the Department of Extranormal Operations out of the shadow of secrecy under which it has operated since it was founded over ten years ago, giving it full law enforcement authority in cases of alien misconduct, as well as in cases of crime committed against our alien residents and eventual citizens. Today, I will sign an executive order terminating the long, shameful practices of our government, and banning experimentation on aliens. Today, I will sign pardons for dozens of alien prisoners who have been held without trial for no crime other than being born on another planet, and put others on a path to justice that will include trials, and sentences in accordance with the law.

“Today is the day that we as a nation, and as a species, do better.
“And as a first step in that process, I would like to make a couple of introductions. When Supergirl arrived here twelve years ago, she was not alone. As many of you may be aware, her ship was knocked off course, and set adrift for twenty-four years. What Supergirl did not reveal in her interview is that the reason her ship finally completed its journey is that it drifted within communications of a Kryptonian prison ship called Fort Rozz. One of the prisoners managed to hack into her guidance system and link control of the prison ship to her pod’s guidance system. When she arrived here, the prison arrived with her.”

Olivia turned and gestured towards Supergirl’s aunt. “This is General Astra In-Ze, of the House of Ze, formerly one of the leaders of the Kryptonian Military Guild. The General was a prisoner on Fort Rozz, imprisoned because she led a rebellion in an attempt to save her world from the disaster that would ultimately befall it. Today, the thirty-seven year prison sentence she and twenty-eight of her followers have served will end with a conditional pardon. She and her followers, along with a large number of other prisoners from Fort Rozz, will be granted their freedom in exchange for community service. They will serve as first responders and disaster relief in much the same way Supergirl and Superman do. While the Kryptonians will be able to respond nationwide within a matter of minutes, other aliens will be assigned duties which reflect their capabilities. Furthermore, any prisoner on Fort Rozz who has completed their original sentence and has committed no further crime will be released without obligation and allowed full participation in the Alien Amnesty program.”

“Thank you, General Astra,” Olivia said. Astra simply gave a small nod.

“When Fort Rozz arrived, the Department of Extranormal Operations was created to deal with the threat of alien prisons let loose on Earth. At that time, a man named Hank Henshaw was placed in charge of it. Two years later, Director Henshaw led a twelve-man team on a mission to capture an alien. The person you see before you was the only one to return from that mission. At the time, it was believed that he was Director Henshaw, however, we discovered later that was not the case.”

The man stepped forward as red lightning began to course over his skin, and he changed, growing, turning green, until he stood there in black armor with a stylized red X on the front and a cape draping down from his shoulders.

“This is J’onn J’onzz,” Olivia said. “He is, to the best of our knowledge, the last of his people. A race known most commonly as the Green Martians. He has served as Director of the DEO for the last ten years, and after today, he will remain in that role. Beside him is Field Commander Alex Danvers. Major Lucy Lane has agreed to resign her Army Commission and will be joining the DEO as of today as Assistant Director, while former National City Police Detective Maggie Sawyer will be joining the DEO as the Local Law Enforcement Liaison. In addition to dealing with law enforcement among our alien residence, the DEO’s role will expand to include serving as a SWAT team for metahuman criminals, and persons who have attained superhuman abilities through the use of technology, such as the recently apprehended criminal known as Reactron.

“Now, some here may ask why we have chosen to reveal Director J’onzz’s identity here today. The answer is simple. The attack perpetrated against Leslie Willis was, in fact, carried out by the real Hank Henshaw. I want to emphasize, Hank Henshaw is responsible for the deaths of ten DEO agents, and one civilian contractor during the mission to Peru. In addition, he is wanted in connection with the suspicious deaths of some eighty-seven aliens. He is also in possession of metahuman abilities, possibly gained through cybernetic augmentation. All intelligence indicates that he possesses nearly Kryptonian levels of strength and endurance, is capable of flight, and has heat vision.

“We are compromising the secrecy of Director J’onzz’s shape-shifting abilities because we believe
it to be in the public interest to make them aware of the dangers the real Hank Henshaw represents. Every law enforcement agency in the country will shortly be receiving all available details on Hank Henshaw, and as of now, he is at the very top of all Most Wanted lists.

“Now that the introductions and explanations are out of the way, we come to the main event. The signing of the Alien Amnesty Act. Questions will be taken after the signing.”

Cat could feel the room ready to explode. Every reporter there was dying to ask some inane question, but Cat knew Olivia. She had known her for thirty years. So, she sat and watched as Olivia signed the Alien Amnesty Act, and the executive orders, and a stack of pardons. Olivia did the usual mugging for the camera as she signed the Act, the two executive orders, and the first pardon, but after that, it was all business. Sign, sign, sign, until she handed Lucy Lane the last one, then stood up and returned to the Podium.

“Questions,” she said, and when a dozen reporters jumped up, she picked one at random and pointed.

“You,” she said.

“Julie Madison, Gotham Gazette. President Marsdin, what do you think of Senator Crane’s accusations that Supergirl used some form of mind control device on Leslie Willis to keep herself from being implicated in the attack.”

“I think you have no future in journalism if you have the chance to ask the President of the United States a question and waste it on something so ridiculous. When Agent Sawyer made her public statement this morning, she noted that we have both eye-witness testimony, and time-stamped video footage placing Supergirl at a private holiday celebration at the time of the attack on Leslie Willis. Next question.”

Cat listened at to the reporters begging for Olivia’s attention, and just as before, Olivia pointed at a reporter and said, “You.”

“George Tailor, Star City Daily. President Marsdin, how do you respond to allegations that the charges against Maxwell Lord are trumped up by the government because he criticized Supergirl?”

“I don’t, because that’s only slightly less stupid than Senator Crane’s mind control theory. Any questions that aren’t a complete waste of time?”

Cat raised her hand.

“Cat, you have a question?” Marsdin asked.

“Well, not one as inventive as my colleagues, but one I think is relevant to current events, and not the ravings of bigots and rich boys with punctured egos.”

“By all means,” Olivia said.

“You’ve spoken a great deal today on Amnesty, residence and paths to citizenship, along with compassion for the aliens who find themselves here on Earth, but we haven’t heard anything about any sort of assistance programs for aliens to help them adjust and establish themselves. Is that a topic you can address at this time, and if not, when might we hear word?”

“Ladies and Gentlemen take note, that is how a reporter asks questions,” Olivia said. “To answer your question, Cat, at the moment aliens covered under the Amnesty program will have access to the same assistance programs any other asylum seeker or permanent resident would have. Once I
get back to Washington, we will begin work on developing any specialized programs we feel are necessary to help acclimate our new neighbors, but realistically, it will take time and a lot of feedback from the DEO to help determine what sorts of programs are needed.”

“And that is all the time I have,” Olivia said. “Any further questions can be directed to the White House Press Office. Good day.”

The rest of the reporters in the room continued to shout questions, but the people on stage walked out without another word.

“How are you doing?” Kal asked as they stepped out onto the roof of the CatCo building.

“I’m good,” Kara said. “I just wish you and Bruce had made more progress on the Cadmus situation. Maybe Leslie wouldn’t have been attacked.”

“I’m sorry,” Kal said. “Bruce checked all the locations you gave us, but nothing was active. He’d planned to follow up, but he and his crew have been busy trying to run down the last of the Parliament of Owls, Diana has been dealing with some little godling trying to start a human sacrifice cult using trafficking victims as sacrifices, and I’ve been-“

“I know,” Kara said. “I do read Lois’s articles. Not the rest of the Planet, because it’s trash, but Lois’ stuff is good.”

Kal glared at her and gave her a small shove. “Jerk,” she said.

“Race you to the DEO,” Kal said.

“Loser,” Kara said as she shot into the air, shivering slightly as she passed through the Kryptonian defense field that currently surrounded the building. She glanced back to watch Kal take off, but instead, she saw an expression of horror on his face and then, nothing.
The Motion of Falling Bodies

Chapter Summary

One moment, told from eight points of view.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

KPJT Channel 3 News Special Report

Leyna Nguyen Reporting Live From CatCo Plaza

“For those of you just joining us, we are currently live at CatCo Plaza in downtown National City where, just minutes ago, National City’s resident superhero Supergirl was struck from the sky in a vicious attack. A number of reporters leaving the CatCo building following a surprise press conference given by President Olivia Marsdin were filming the Girl of Steel’s departure from CatCo, and caught the attack on film. A word of warning to sensitive viewers, the footage you are about to see is both violent, and disturbing, and KPJT News strongly recommends not letting younger viewers watch.”

The scene cut away from Leyna to taped footage showing the top of the CatCo building. For a moment, there was nothing, but then a small figure in red and blue rose up over the edge of the building. Even at a distance, it was easy to see that her movements were carefree, almost playful as she rolled in mid-flight to look back towards the building. It was this move that put her in exactly the wrong position to see what happened next. A bright red object shot across the frame, coming in from behind Supergirl to strike her squarely in the head, exploding on impact.

Supergirl, lifeless and limp slammed into the CatCo logo so hard she bounced and then she fell. The camera tracked her down to where she landed, half-on and half-off the lower tier of the building, but her own weight dragged her over the edge, causing her to plummet the remaining thirty stories down to the middle of the square in front of the building. The impact of her body shattered the concrete, and she lay there, face covered in blood, hair matted, still as the grave.

Before anyone could move in to see if she was alive, Superman slammed down next to her and scooped her up in his arms, shooting off into the air, disappearing from view.

The scene cut again, showing Leyna standing in front of the crater left by Supergirl’s fall.

“As you can see, Supergirl was struck in the head by some sort of weapon that was strong enough to make even the Girl of Steel bleed. No word has come yet, either from the National City Police Department, or the newly announced Department of Extranormal Operations, as to who might be behind this vicious attack on the hero of National City, or as to Supergirl’s condition. Some are already speculating that she might be dead, while others wonder if Superman will use the same medical equipment Supergirl used last night on former CatCo Radio personality Leslie Willis to save Supergirl’s life. Only time will tell.”

“Reporting live from CatCo Plaza, this is Leyna Nguyen for KPJT Channel 3 News signing off.”
Cat stood motionless in her office, staring at the screens in front of her. Every one of them showed the same thing. The angles might be a bit different, but over and over again the screens behind her desk showed her Kara being shot out of the sky.

It had all happened so fast. The press conference had ended. Cat had slipped back into the empty conference room they’d used as an arrival point. Kara had hugged her and told her she had to go and talk to Olivia for a few minutes, and Cat had laughed as Kara and Clark had headed for the stairwell, bickering like a pair of children arguing over who was the better flier. Cat had just enough time to see the indulgent smiles on the faces of Kara’s aunt and sister before they’d disappeared in a flash of light, leaving Cat and Jackson behind.

She’d been in her office just long enough to fill a tumbler with M&M’s when James had come in, followed closely by Jackson, both wearing looks that told her the news was going to be bad. She’d looked at them and she knew. She couldn’t understand how it could have happened so quickly, but she knew.

She’d watched with a strange sense of detachment as James had picked up the remote and turned on the screens. She’d felt numb as she listened to the first report.

At some point, she became aware that she’d dropped the tumbler and the floor was covered with M&M’s, and it seemed important. It seemed real. Because what she was seeing couldn’t be. The thick air surrounding her, making it hard to breathe, couldn’t be. The weight pressing down on her chest, the blinding light, the way she could suddenly hear every noise in the room echoing painfully in her ears, the way the world was closing in and crushing her, none of that could be real.

She wasn’t sure who caught her when she fell, but it was the hobbit who was kneeling in front of her, guiding her, urging her to lean down and put her head between her knees. She didn’t remember him arriving, but he told her to take deep breaths and he rubbed her back. He wrapped a blanket around her and held a garbage can for her while she vomited into it.

Winslow. That was his name. The computer genius who couldn’t pass the background checks. Winslow Schott Jr., who had a crush on Kara, but hid it carefully. Who had unfortunate family connections. Who Kara trusted.

He stayed with her, speaking to her softly, telling her it would be okay, that Kara would be okay, until sleep took her.

Clark filed into the empty conference room they were using as a transport site, and somehow wasn’t surprised to see Kara pull Cat into a hug.

“‘We did it,’” Kara whispered.

“‘You did it,’” Cat replied.

He watched as Kara pulled away from the hug and he immediately recognized the look on her face. He’d seen it before. On Diana’s face when she looked at a photo of Steve Trevor, on Bruce’s face any time Selina was in his line of sight. On Lois’ face when she looked at him. On Alex’s face every time she looked at the short, dimpled woman standing next to her. What really surprised him, hit him like one of Darkseid’s punches in fact, was seeing that same look reflected back in Cat’s face.

“‘Supergirl,’” he said. “‘Why don’t we fly back?’”

She looked over at him, the smile still on her face. “‘Sure, if President Marsdin doesn’t mind.’”
Clark looked at Olivia and she gave a small shrug. “I’ve got things to take care of at the DEO,” she said, “but Supergirl and I do need to talk before I head back to Washington.”

“We won’t be long,” Clark said as he started towards the door. “Come on, cousin. I’ll show you how to fly like a pro.”

“Oh, please, just try and keep up with me.”

Kara took off, and he followed her, chasing her up the stairs as a speed that would not have been unmanageable for, say, Usain Bolt on level ground, and only slowing down so Kara could punch in the security code on the roof access door.

“How are you doing?” asked as they stepped out onto the roof.

“I’m good,” Kara said. “I just wish you and Bruce had made more progress on the Cadmus situation. Maybe Leslie wouldn’t have been attacked.”

“I’m sorry,” Clark said, guilt suddenly gnawing at him as he realized how much she’d asked him to do that he hadn’t done. “Bruce checked all the locations you gave us, but nothing was active. He’d planned to follow up, but he and his crew have been busy trying to run down the last of the Parliament of Owls, Diana has been dealing with some little godling trying to start a human sacrifice cult using trafficking victims as sacrifices, and I’ve been—”

“I know,” Kara said, cutting him off before he could start rambling about all the little surprises Lex had hidden before he went to jail. “I do read Lois’s articles. Not the rest of the Planet, because it’s trash, but Lois’ stuff is good.”

Clark gave her a good-natured glare, the teasing tone she had taking any real sting out of her words and making him wish they had grown up together. He reached out and gave her a small shove as he tried not to imagine what growing up with her as his big sister would have been like.

“Jerk,” she said, no heat in her words at all

“Race you to the DEO,” Clark replied.

“Loser,” Kara said as she shot into the air with a speed and confidence that surprised him. She rolled over as she rose, so she could look back at him, and because she did, she never saw it, and even for a Kryptonian, the whole thing happened too fast for him to react. The missile slammed into her head before he was more than ten feet off the roof, and the force of the explosion was enough to drive him down into the helipad.

He was up again in an instant, going over the side of the building and chasing Kara’s falling body to the ground. He tapped the DEO earbud he was wearing as he touched down.

“Supergirl is down. Say again, Supergirl is down and in need of medical attention.”

“Kal, what’s going on?” Alex’s voice demanded over the com link.

“Someone shot her with a missile. She’s unconscious and bleeding.” He knelt down and lifted her into his arms, kicking off and shooting into the sky just as fast as he could.

“I’m taking her to the Fortress,” he said.

“Negative,” Alex replied. “Hold position and prepare for a transmat.”
Clark cursed himself for not thinking of that sooner as he came to a complete stop. A moment later, light surrounded him as the transmat plucked him out of the sky.

Alex slipped her hand into Maggie’s as they waited for the transmat to engage. She couldn’t stop the smile from spreading across her lips when she felt Maggie give her hand a gentle squeeze. She glanced over at Maggie and saw a matching smile on her face that made her heart skip a beat.

She didn’t understand this. Not really. She’d tried dating before, and never liked it. Had never really wanted to date, except she knew her mother and her sister thought she should. Except all the pressure on that point had suddenly vanished from Kara right around the time Kara had taken over her old apartment. She hadn’t understood it at the time, though it made sense now. More so, with what Kara had told her about the other timeline.

Now she just worried she was going to mess this up, that it was happening before it was supposed to, and she wasn’t ready. Except that when she looked at Maggie, she couldn’t imagine not being ready for this. She’d known the woman for all of three weeks, been out with her maybe a dozen times including the night of the concert where they’d kissed for the first time, and somehow the idea of marriage, old age and lots of little bad-ass kids didn’t scare her in the slightest. Not if it was with Maggie.

Something must have tipped Maggie off to the depth of Alex’s thoughts, because Maggie gave her a questioning look, but Alex just shook her head as the room filled with the light and hum of the transmat. Just like that, they were back at the DEO, and Alex looked around to see Susan looking relieved.


“Thank you, Agent Vasquez,” J’onzz said. “I trust everything is in order?”

“Yes sir, I-”

Clark’s voice cut through the room. “Supergirl is down. Say again, Supergirl is down and in need of medical attention.”

Alex felt her heart slam inside her chest with the same mind-numbing panic she’d felt earlier in the day when Konex told her Maggie’d been shot, and the same desperate need to get to Kara, but this time, she had to step on it. She reached up and hit her earbud, dropping herself into the com loop. “Kal, what’s going on,” she asked, swallowing a sudden urge to be sick.

“Someone shot her with a missile. She’s unconscious and bleeding,” Clark replied. “I’m taking her to the Fortress.”

“Negative,” Alex said, wondering if Clark had been hit too. Even at his best speed, the Fortress was almost an hour’s flight. She wanted to tell him to bring Supergirl here, but after what happened the previous week with General Lane, she didn’t trust the DEO to be secure. That really only left one place. “Hold position and prepare for a transmat.”

Alex reached for her phone, and dialed Konex.

“Lady Alex,” Konex said. “I have been monitoring. Kolex is preparing Sanctuary’s medlab as we speak.”

“Good, transmat them both. Then me.”
“I am coming as well,” Astra said.

Alex looked over at her and nodded. She glanced over to Maggie, about to apologize, but realized she didn’t need to when Maggie just mouthed a soundless ‘go’.

“Myself and Astra, Konex,” Alex said.

“Understood,” Konex replied.

The room disappeared in a flash of light, and Alex found herself standing in the middle of a brightly-lit room next to Astra. Clark was standing a few feet away, next to a crystal chamber, and Alex could see Kara inside. One of the robots, Kolex, she guessed, was using some sort of beam to cut away Kara’s suit.

“Report,” Alex said as she approached.

“Lady Kara has sustained massive trauma to the head and neck.”

The words hit Alex like a bucket of ice water, making her skin burn and her heart race. “How is that possible?” she asked.

“The explosive was loaded with a self-forging Thanagarian Nth Metal projectile. While Nth Metal does not negate Lady Kara’s abilities like Kryptonite, its meta-dimensional properties do make Kryptonians more vulnerable to weapons forged from it. Given the size of the projectile, and the force of the explosion, I must admit, I am at somewhat of a loss to understand how Lady Kara survived it. Every reconstruction I run of the blast indicates that the projectile should have been sufficient to decapitate her.”

“I can answer that,” a voice said from behind them. Alex, Astra and Clark all jumped slightly, then turned towards the voice.

“Lady Alex, should I initiate intruder protocols?” Kolex asked.

“No,” Alex said as she looked at Zatanna. “How did you get in here?”

“Who is this?” Astra asked.

“Zatanna,” Clark said. “She’s a friend.”

“After I left you and your Detective, I went back home,” Zatanna said, “but the night I met Kara, I worked a bit of magic on her. Protective spells. Such workings leave a connection. Normally, I wouldn’t notice their activation, but what your robot there calls meta-dimensional properties is magic, and Nth metal is lousy with it. When the Nth metal hit the anti-magic ward I burned into Kara’s soul, it was like a gong being sounded.”

“You burned a ward into her soul?” Alex said, the image making her want to reach out and wrap her hands around Zatanna’s neck.

“At her request,” Zatanna said. “I promise, it is not so violent a process as it sounds, but we have no time to discuss it now. Kara needs aid, and I can provide it.”

Clark stepped back, clearing the way, but Astra laid a hand on Alex’s forearm.

“Do you trust her?” Astra asked.

Alex looked back at Kara for a moment, then to Zatanna. Every instinct in her told her to say no.
Taking care of Kara was her job, and no one else’s. But Nth Metal was something the DEO was only vaguely aware of. A material on their ‘to be acquired for study’ list. She needed to help Kara, but she didn’t know how, and Zatanna apparently did. Clark trusted her, but more than that, when Alex had needed help, Kara had called Zatanna. Alex knew Kara well enough to know exactly what that meant. Kara trusted Zatanna with something she valued more than her own life. The lives of people she loved. Alex nodded.

“Yes,” Alex said, stepping aside. “Absolutely.”

Astra moved out the way, and Zatanna stepped forward, speaking in words Alex did not recognize.

Eliza sat on Kara’s couch, unable to put into words how she felt. She’d arrived in town angry, confused and afraid. Angry because she had worked so hard to keep Kara safe, but Kara was out there in a cape, risking her life. Confused, because she was so incredibly proud of what her adopted daughter had accomplished in just a few weeks. Afraid, because she knew this moment would inevitably come.

She had known Clark since before Superman had appeared in the sky above Metropolis. She and Jeremiah had met him before he’d traveled north and built his fortress and come into a full understanding of his heritage. She’s seen what putting on that cape had cost Clark, and she never wanted that for Kara or Alex.

“She’ll be fine,” Lois said.

The words, spoken without preamble, made Eliza jump. She’d forgotten anyone was there with her.

“Sorry,” Lois said. “I didn’t mean to startle you, but I’ve been here before. It’s scary. Hell, it’s terrifying. But she’ll be okay.”

“She never got any pie,” Eliza said, and somehow that suddenly seemed important. “She loves Thanksgiving, because I always make her favorite pie. Chocolate Pecan. There were four this year, but I didn’t make them. And she got called away before she could have any.”

Lois slipped an arm around her shoulders. “She’ll have them when she gets home, I promise.”

The first sob surprised her. She tried to hold the second one in, but the dam was already cracked, and it was only moments before she broke.

Lillian hit the power button on the remote, silencing the TV before she dropped the remote on the table and turned to face the two men sitting across the table from her.

“You said your missile would kill her,” Lillian said.

“It should have,” General Lane said. “Everything we know about them said that they were vulnerable to Nth Metal.”

“Well, maybe you should have used more of it,” Lillian said.

“We used our entire supply, which was three times our best estimate on what it would take to kill one of them. Besides, it’s not like your plan worked any better. Now they know about Henshaw.”

“I did notice that,” Lillian said. “The question is, how?”
“The Willis woman, obviously,” Lane said.

“But that should have just cast suspicion on the Martian,” Lillian said. “You didn’t say anything to Lucy, did you?”

“Of course not,” Lane said.

“It’s strange how every time a Kryptonian shows up, one of your daughters can’t seem to hop into bed with them fast enough.”

“Now just a god-damned minute-”

“Both of you shut up,” said the third person at the table.

Lillian turned to face the blonde man sitting next to Lane. “Something to add, Simon?” Lillian asked.

“All of us failed today,” Simon Tycho said. “Your little frame job, Lane’s missile, Miranda’s PR campaign, and that little bitch buying our companies out from under us. I don’t know how, but Supergirl has been one step ahead of us since the day she showed up. Longer, if I had to guess.”

“Agreed,” Lillian said. “The question is, how?”

“I don’t know,” Tycho said. “But I just got word. Corben’s body has been retrieved, and he’s still viable.”

“What about the Kryptonite?” Lillian asked.

“The stockpiles allocated to us are enough for one power unit,” Lane said.

“Excellent,” Lillian said.

“How long will the actual conversion take?” Tycho asked.

“Eight, maybe nine hours,” Lillian said.

“Then,” Tycho said, “when either of our Kryptonian friends show up, we’ll introduce them to project Metallo.”

“And what if the report from McGill is accurate, and Supergirl is immune to Kryptonite?” Lillian asked.

“We could have Henshaw standing by as backup,” Tycho said.

“I’m still not convinced that will be sufficient,” Lillian said. “If I could just get access to one of Lex’s store houses…”

“Without your daughter’s cooperation, I don’t see that as a possibility,” Tycho said. “And with official support for Cadmus withdrawn, we don’t have the option of waiting for her to come around.”

Lillian let out a sigh and reluctantly nodded her head in agreement. “We’ll proceed then.”

And if it failed, well, Simon Tycho would make an excellent scapegoat.
Bruce picked up the phone without even bothering to check the caller ID. There was no need. He already knew who it would be.

“We’re loading now,” he said.

“I’m on my way to the airport,” Diana said. “Who are you bringing?”

“Everyone,” Bruce said. “This is our fault.”

“We couldn’t know it was this critical,” Diana said.

“We should have,” Bruce said. “She asked for help, and we barely made an effort.”

“You’re right. We never should have waited so long to make Cadmus a focus,” Diana said.

“We were both worried about going up against the US Government, and what that could mean,” Bruce said.

“I know,” Diana said. “I was there for those conversations.”

“I’ve contacted Victor. He’s already working it.”

“Should we call in the Lanterns?” Diana asked.

“I’m hesitant,” Bruce said.

“Why?” Diana asked.

“I don’t think Kara trusts them,” Bruce said.

“Do you know why?”

“No.”

Diana was silent for a moment, thinking. “Okay. Leave them out for now. We’ll see how big this is first.”

Sara dropped on to her bunk, wondering not for the first time what she was still doing here. She kept telling herself it was about Darhk, about killing him before he killed Laurel, but that excuse was starting to wear thin, even to her. She could try telling herself it was about Jax. He was special. The little brother she never knew she wanted, who she definitely didn’t trust Rip Fucking Hunter to protect. That excuse was almost as thin as Darhk. Both were true, but neither one filled the gaping hole in her heart where her sister once lived, anymore than the women she took to bed filled the chasm Nyssa left when she picked a League prison cell over a future with Sara.

She felt lost. She'd felt lost since the Queen’s Gambit had gone down, which, not counting time spent being dead, was over nine years by her personal timeline.

Nyssa had been a balm on those wounds, but however much she loved Nyssa, she knew the relationship was poison. Too many things were pulling them in too many different directions and trying to hold on to each other only ended up hurting them both.

She wanted to go home. She wanted it so much. But home was mom and dad and Laurel, and Laurel was dead, and mom was gone, and dad came with Oliver and all of his baggage, which meant daily reminders that she’d been off galivanting around the time stream when Damien Darhk
had been driving an arrow into her sister's gut.

She thought about Central City. She didn't know Barry and his team well, so there wasn't anything to make it a better option than the Waverider.

Well, it would make it harder to run away from her own mistakes. She wasn't sure if that would be better or worse, but she suspected it would be better. After all, she'd been running from a single mistake for every day of those nine years since she stepped onto the Queen's Gambit.

She just couldn't shake the feeling that there was something out there she was running to. Something, or someone. She could feel her. Sometimes, in her dreams, she could see her. Only pieces, but pieces that made her heart ache. Blonde hair. Blue eyes. A smile that shone like the sun and held a bottomless well of sadness and grief. Sometimes dressing in the angry red of fresh spilled blood, sometimes in something as blue as the sky of a new promise-filled day, sometimes in purple the color of a lover's kiss bruised lips, but more commonly in simple utilitarian black, splashed with red above her right breast forming a symbol of strength, unity and hope.

The dreams had started after she returned to Nanda Parbat. When Ra's had asked her to return to Starling City to search for Merlin, she'd felt the pull of those dreams. Nyssa had called it the voice of fate. Gideon called it trans-temporal memory. Whatever it was, the woman felt closer. Like she was rushing at Sara.

No. That was wrong. She didn't know why, but suddenly and violently she knew whoever she was, she wasn't rushing, she was falling, and no one was there to catch her.

Sara sat up, clutching her chest, unable to breathe because whoever she was, she shouldn't fall. Because the very idea of her falling was wrong, and the wrongness and the stark terror it inspired crushed down on Sara like a boot on her chest.

"Gideon," she cried desperately, "sound the collision alarm!"

She knew. She didn't know how, but she knew, and she was on her feet, headed for the bridge.

"Ms. Lance?" Gideon asked.

"Just do it!" Sara yelled as she ran, racing past memories she hadn't lived, past ghosts of dear friends she'd never met, selves she'd never been, and futures dead and gone. For one moment in the sea of time, she wasn't just Sara Lance, she was Sara Lance, Ta-er al-Asfer, The Canary, The White Canary, Captain Sara Lance, Detective Lance, Sara Danvers-Lance, Inmate 65628314159, Sara Lance-Sharp, Sara Queen, The White Arrow, Sara Lance-Smoak, Sara al Ghul, Ra's al Ghul, The Starling, The Wife of the Demon, The Magician, Al Sāḥir, Lady Cold, the Fury Queen, the Death Witch and a thousand others. Good, evil, whole, broken, caring and indifferent. She was all the iterations of herself in every branch of every timeline in the multiverse wrapped up in one singular purpose.

The Sara who was all Saras dropped into the pilot’s chair and slammed down the harness as the collision alarm finally sounded. Too late. Gideon was too late. But the Saras weren't. Their hands closed on the controls with a surety born of lifetimes beyond counting spent in that chair and against all logic, against all reason, they turned the Waverider towards the temporal shockwave and opened the throttle all the way up, racing death to the Vanishing Point.

Chapter End Notes
Thus ends the first story in the Future Shock Series.

I want to thank everyone who has read this story, and especially everyone who's commented or sent me messages on tumblr encouraging me, or telling me they like it, or they love it, or they are going to drive to Florida and murder me with tar covered flaming pitchforks.

The Future Shock Series will continue with the sequel, Devils In The Dark, which will start posting Saturday, September 1st.

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!