Pen Pal

by He_Fell_For_Fiction

Summary

A single mother grappling with the return of her ex, now married and expecting his second child, Kara's life is hectic and frustrating. Kara's daughter, Audra, is given a school project where she establishes a pen pal through sending a note on a balloon.

Lena is the lonely CEO that discovers a yellow balloon and sends the girl notes and pictures from her travels.
Scene 1: Enter KARA, Single Mother

The sound of the alarm hit her like a bus, adding to a headache she passed out with and made her wish to throw the phone across the room and covered her body with her duvet. Her mouth tasted vile and her shoulders were tensed from the pile of pillows she insisted on sleeping with.

She slowly sat up, turning off the alarm. She blinked slowly, staring at the brown door in front of her in the tiny bedroom she had all to herself. Well…she wasn’t all to herself this morning.

She looked down at the little girl in her bed. Her little face was smushed into the pillow and she gripped tight to the two stuffed animals: one of a penguin and the other a little pink cow.

She smiled softly and she put her glasses on, the child clearer in her view now. She leaned in and whispered, “baby, it’s time to get up.” The girl whined.

“Mommy no,” she mumbled.

“If you get up we can get sticky buns before school—” Kara couldn’t finish before the girl was sat bolt up and she tucked her animals back in to sleep without her. They liked sleeping, Audra told her mother.

Kara pulled the covers over them and got up for the day. She shivered at the hardwood floor under her feet. She and her daughter went to the bathroom. She pulled up the stool for the girl. With it, the girl was at Kara’s chest in height. Kara squirted pink toothpaste onto the white bristles before passing it to Audra.

She hummed as they brushed their teeth, having taught the girl she wasn’t done brushing until her mother had finished the song. The girl spat and made a face before she washed out her mouth. Kara rinsed both their brushes.

The little girl hopped off her stool and put her princess toothbrush in the cup before running off. Kara sighed and grabbed the clothes she laid out for herself. She pulled up the skirt and buttoned up her blouse before the girl called for help.

“Mommy! My shoes!”

Kara sighed and slipped on her heels before running to the girl. The girl sat on her floor. She had gotten on her uniform. The girl hated the skirt and the polo shirt with as much passion her little body could hold. They only allowed the kids to pick their shoes. The girl picked a pair of bright red converse with sparkly blue laces.

The girl put them on for herself but that’s where she stopped. Kara knelt down and had the girl put her foot on her knee. She spoke as she did the tying. “Take the laces, make an X. One goes through the hole and pull. Next, rabbit ears. Wrap the ears and tuck one in. Pull again. Nice and tight, right?”

The girl wiggled her foot and nodded.

“Want to try the other one yourself?” Kara grabbed the second one’s laces, tightening them and holding them up to offer.

Audra hesitated. Kara smiled softly and did her left shoe’s laces for her. She did the girl’s hair up in a ponytail after brushing out the wavy dirty blonde locks. The girl smiled up at her, green eyes sparkling.
“Will I get to see daddy and Imra tonight?”

“We’re coming over for dinner, yes.” Kara forced a smile. She dreaded Monday dinners with her ex and his new wife. It didn’t help she was visibly pregnant and he had gotten his shit together for that woman and that baby. But when Audra and Kara needed him? He ran for the hills and the only reason Kara knew where he was were the phone calls and child support that were barely enough for daycare and not definitely not enough for school tuition.

Three years it took. He came back with a beard and a wife and was now a cop. He met his wife in the academy. She was a Greek goddess with her olive toned skin, wavy brown hair, and sparkling brown eyes. Kara would’ve honestly happily fell for her, for she was that painfully attractive.

Audra smiled brightly. She ran out to grab her backpack. Kara was glad they had figured out a schedule because the past few months had put her through the ringer and gotten her countless lectures from Cat over how “a working mother has to be better than a childless man if she wants to even be thought as a good worker.”

She stood up slowly and went to her room, packing up her bag and looking at the texts coming in.

Cat: Remember to get those contracts mailed

Cat: Cancel my therapy session my mother canceled our dinner

Cat: send my mom some flowers. Not roses. She thinks they’re whorish. Any form of lily will do

And not one thanks or please. The woman wasn’t winning any manners contest but Kara had no right.

The young mother came out to see her daughter waiting at the door. Kara grabbed her keys, took the girl’s hand and they were off. She stopped at the café they both liked. Saturdays they would have brunch with Audra’s aunts and uncles.

Noonan’s was surprisingly empty for a Monday morning. Kara didn’t worry about the line as she stepped behind a businessman muttering into a Bluetooth. She didn’t even know those earpieces were still used. Now it went from terribly douchey to outright asinine.

He was probably yelling at his subordinate by his tone. She blocked him out but heard, “last brain cell,” “complete fuck up,” and (her favorite) “stupidest being he had ever encountered this year and it was February.”

“That’s not a nice thing to say!”

Kara felt her blood run cold as her daughter cocked her chin up and looked at the man.

“Bean, no,” Kara whispered. She looked at the man. “I’m so sorry—”

“Shut up your kid. You seem a bit young to have a kid that big. Maybe cross them next time, sweetheart.”

She bit back about fifty responses as he grabbed his coffee and walked out. The barista smiled at Kara.

“Would you like to try our new chocolate syrup, Kara? It has THC oil.”

“Of, definitely not!” Kara shook her head quickly. The barista, M’gann, tilted her head to the side.
“My last customer just did. And he has a big meeting. Hopefully, that double serving calms his nerves.” The girl grabbed two white cups. “Cat’s usual? And I’m guessing apple juice for the squirt and your chai latte. Sticky buns as well?”

“Are you magical?” Audra asked her.

“She is. She makes those potions that make mommy’s day easy,” Kara told her.

“Wow!”

M’gann rolled her eyes. “Kid, you’re the magical one. You spoke up to that D-I-C-K like nobody else.” She put her hand over the counter. The little girl fist bumped her and flashed a front-tooth missing smile. “Alright.”

Kara grabbed her wallet from her bag and cursed.

“I might have to pay all this in quarters. She stepped up and unzipped her coin purse.

“Oh no. She’ll be counting forever.” The voice was playful, but the words weren’t what Kara needed after that ass.

Kara felt something in her snap as she turned, flashing a fake smile at the woman behind her. She wore a red dress coat with the collar popped up. She had bright lipstick and her hair was up in a bun. Her eyes were covered with sunglasses. Kara saw it and thought about Cat Grant and then pondered the word “bitch.” “Look—” She started.

The woman put a twenty on the counter. She stepped up and grabbed two pre-order drinks from the counter and she was off.

“Who was that?” Kara looked at M’gann. She pocketed the change.

“She shows up every other Monday. She orders a tea and a black coffee with four shots of espresso. I think her heart will give out one day, honestly. Does the initials LL on her order and nothing else.” M’gann handed Kara the bag with her pastries and the travel tray with the two coffees and bottle of juice.

“Adults are mean without the magic potions,” Audra mumbled before sipping her juice.

“They don’t mean it mostly.” Kara checked her watch. The pair stopped at a minipark and ate their breakfast on the bench. “You know what Miss Eman has planned?”

“Her helper, Mister Damien, said we’d be starting our balloon project.”

“Oh! That sounds fun!” She remembered getting a note home about it. The kids would send off balloons with notes attached in the city. The notes would be sent to a PO box and help the kids establish pen pals. The teaches would monitor the notes before they ever reached the kids and would help with penmanship and communication.

“Who do you hope gets your balloon?”

“That street man we see,” the girl giggled. Kara snorted thinking of the tin painted man. He had stayed put through Audra hugging his leg and saying they needed a can of oil to free him. Kara tipped him for it. The girl wanted to have him acknowledge her more than anything.

“I hope so too.”
“Oh! Or Cat.” The girl had met the woman. Though the woman came off as cold, the girl couldn’t fear her.

“Well, I think it’d be better to have a pen pal that’s someone you don’t know.” Or would put in the effort to talk to you.

Kara tossed their empty bag and dropped off Audra at the steps of her school. She went to the post office, the florist, and then to the office.

She got in before Cat. Kara put her drink on the corner of her small desk. She pulled up her inbox as she heard the ding of the private elevator.

She turned and watched as the CEO grabbed the drink and took off her sunglasses. “Kiera, why are you staring?”

“Oh—I was just waiting to tell you that the contracts were mailed, Lisa hopes you do come in soon, and your mom got a dozen calla lilies.” Kara clicked her pen on her desk.

“Well—good job on doing what you were asked to do.” The woman sipped her coffee and made a face. “It’s barely warm.” She looked down at her assistant.

Kara turned pink. “I’m sorry. My first errand was coffee. I took Audra out for breakfast and got your coffee while out so I didn’t need to backtrack—”

“Your child is not your excuse. You think I would’ve gotten where I am if I did the recitals, conferences, and dropping off and picking up?”

Kara looked at her. She wanted to say yes, or at least she refused to make her child feel like she was second to anything. “I…I don’t want what you have.” She winced and prepared to be smacked. Or worse, fired.

Cat’s eyes narrowed. “Not wanting more is the reason that blandsome man is your child’s father. Want better or else just quit. I don’t hire people intending on them staying at where they entered.” She left Kara be, entering her office. Kara let out a harsh breath and returned to her computer.

“Ooh, that was rough.” She looked over at Winn. He smiled sympathetically. They both were used to being yelled at together. They did everything together. He was her hero some days, helping raise Audra. The girl adored him and Kara did too.

“Whatever.” She looked at her phone. “Can you pick Audra up for me?”

“Sure. Why? Cat wants you to stick around?”

Kara scrolled through the text again. “She has brunch with a friend and needs me to screen her calls. Then be her runner as she’s here all-night for this month’s issue.” She scrolled and sneered. “Oh—and her mother said the lilies’ color was repulsive so I need to write her an apology note. You know Audra’s the kindergartener but I feel like the child here.” She smiled humorlessly.

“I’ll pick her up and take her to Mon’s.” He put his hand on her shoulder. “Besides that, how was your morning?”

“Someone bought me coffee and I didn’t catch their name.”

He smiled at her. “Oh, maybe they’re your mystery man. Person of your dreams.”
“Woman and I don’t think so. I almost yelled at her because it was right after this bastard said I needed to “keep my legs crossed next time.”’ She made the quotes with her fingers. “In front of my kid.”

Winn sucked in a breath. “Ooh. If I was there—” He held up his fists and paused “—I would’ve stared him down so hard.” He dropped them down and leaned back in his desk chair.

She shrugged. “It’s fine. Really. I’ve accepted disaster as my normal. My ex has a wife and a new kid on the way and I’m happily single.”

“I can see you’re just glowing.” He turned away when a reporter approached him with his laptop.

Kara blocked them out and blew through organizing Cat’s calendar. She entered in the brunch and wondered who it was. Was it a date? An interview? Or did the woman actually have friends with genuine joy rather passive aggressive commentary left and right?

She watched the blinds be drawn in the large fishbowl of an office. She heard the ding of the private elevator. Kara turned. “Sorry, that’s just for Miss Grant—oh…” She saw it was the woman from before. A painted corner of a mouth quirked as they made eye contact. The eyes reminded her of jade. In color and hardness—untouchable for someone like her so all she could do was gawk.

Kara felt her cheeks go hot and she panicked as she was now without words.

The woman chuckled. “I must apologize then. Should I go back downstairs?”

“You can just go right in…” Kara sucked in a breath. “I’m so sorry.”

“Don’t be.” The woman tapped her desk. Kara noticed how her nails were short, bitten down. It was surprising. They weren’t well-manicured like Cat’s.

In her other hand, she held two brown boxes, folded and wrapped in twine. Stacked on those were two balanced bottles of kombucha. She entered the office without another word. Cat closed the door behind her after they hugged.

Kara took a deep breath and looked at her computer. “Wow.”

She wished she knew the woman’s name, but all she knew was LL.

Kara trudged up to the door. She knocked gently, feeling like all the life had been sucked out of her.

Cat had let LL out from her clutches and came out looking happier. She sat on the corner of Kara’s desk and asked her why her cheeks were so pink. Kara lied about it being the hot office. Cat smirked and said, “not the first.” She left Kara spluttering in confusion.

The door opened and Kara put on a smile. Imra hugged her. “Kara! Good to see she let you out.” Her voice was sweet and the hug was a little awkward due to her belly.

“Look at you! Only a few more months, huh?” Kara had her hands at Imra’s waist keeping them there after they parted from the hug.

“Yes. Mon and I are excited. If you want I can show you the nursery. We just finished painting the walls. It’s so cute—we used glow in the dark paint on a navy-blue wall to make a night light of a starry night scene. My idea but Mon-el, of course, had to do a lot of the work.”
“Maybe another time. My day isn’t over, sadly. Just here to get Audra. Thank you by the way. I’m sorry for the change in plans.”

“Oh, I understand. Bosses can be pains. I understand. My commander has purposely made life a bit harder just for the hell of it.” Imra shrugged and flashed a small smile. Kara rolled her eyes and smiled softly. She hated to admit it, but the woman was sweet. She was going to be a good mother and Audra loved her.

Kara stepped in and was tackled by Audra. “Mommy!”

“Hey, bean.” Kara genuinely smiled. She felt almost refreshed to be hugged tight by her daughter. She picked the girl up with a small grunt and nuzzled her. “What did I miss?”

“I was talking about my balloon!”

Kara looked and saw Mon-el entering the foyer. He was in his uniform, the shirt unbuttoned to show the tank top underneath and of course, his belt was off and locked away before Audra entered the house.

“Hey,” he said. He crossed his arms over his chest.

“Hi.” She smiled at her daughter.

“Hey Audra, how about you go get your bag packed back up?” Mon-el asked. Audra nodded and ran off.

“I was surprised to have Winn drop her off. I didn’t even know he was allowed to pick her up,” Mon-el told her.

“Oh—Maggie, Alex, and Winn have signed consent. I could allow three other adults. They expect another parent and maybe godparents or grandparents. But it flew saying they’re her aunts and he’s got a clean record—”

“Why can’t Imra and I then?” He stepped next to his wife.

Kara looked at him. She had a thought. *Imra and you have been in her life for a year. Those three have been there since the day I knew I was pregnant with her.* “Well, your schedule has hardly allowed that. I only had him drop her off here because I knew Imra is on leave.”

“I’m still her father. And Imra is her stepmother.”

“Maggie is her aunt. If I had died and you didn’t show up, she’d be her mom. Winn coached me when I gave birth to her.” She stayed calm, even if her blood sizzled under the surface.

“Kara.” He furrowed his brow. “Please.”

*Oh, so I’m the irrational one here! You took the money your mother offered and ran and came back without telling me. You became a cop and got married and only showed back up because Imra said it wasn’t right for you to avoid your own fucking kid!* She kept her lips tight for a moment. Kara looked at the couple. “I guess…Winn and Maggie can be taken off.” She frowned. “I’ll call the secretary.”

“Thank you. And Kara, if Cat does something like that again you can just text me and I’ll make sure she’s taken care of,” Imra said. She smiled at Kara.
“I—thanks, Imra.” She didn’t want to be hard to bargain with. Mon-el still had his parents’ lawyers, even if he signed away his stake in Daxam Inc. Rhea would happily make her life a living hell. This was the woman that offered to pay her off to have the child “taken care of,” then paid for Mon-el to disappear and avoid three years of support, she now thinks Kara is lying about the child being Mon-el’s and still at times says the girl should be tested. Audra didn’t know, wouldn’t know for a while, that she could inherit millions. Kara stirring the waters could only shipwreck her little family for good.

Audra came back out. “Mommy, my shoes…” She had them on but the laces slid across the ground.

Kara knelt down. “I think she can do it herself, Kar.” Mon-el looked at her.

“She’s five. It’s okay if she can’t.” Kara moved and quickly tied Audra’s shoes. “Tight?” The girl lifted her toes to bend them at the ankle to prove they were tight enough. “Good.” She smiled.

Kara watched as Audra hugged her father and Mon-el’s face softened. Kara wondered to herself would that last. Would he give her attention after his son was born? Had he really changed? Rhea hadn’t and even if he isn’t per say under her influence anymore she still had some pull.

She just knew if Mon-el broke her daughter’s heart to even a fraction of pain his leaving caused her, she would end his physical existence.

He put her down and looked at Kara. He smiled, but it was small, tight-lipped. Was he uncomfortable or simply just sad?

She nodded at him and took Audra’s hand. They left the apartment and Kara sighed to herself as she checked her watch. She still had to go back to the office but she was allowed to have Audra there.

She had stopped by the apartment to get her car from the parking garage as her simple day turned into complete bullshit at the drop of a hat. Cat gave her mercy but she had a request: pick up dinner and a new bottle of wine. She had had a glass of champagne that was killed by the time the woman she had brunch with was gone.

“Did you finish your homework?”

“Yeah.”

“Dad checked it?”

“Yes, mommy.” The girl pouted a bit. Kara helped her into her car seat and buckled her in. She got in front and drove off.

“How do you feel about Uncle Winn picking you up?” Winn’s and Alex’s cars had the seats. Out of the three, Winn did it the most. Alex had her hands full at work and same went with Maggie. Winn had his whole heart to give. Kara almost wished she could love him romantically and had the girl with a father figure the first four years of her life. Almost.

Kara in ways liked it just being her and her girl. It wasn’t ideal or easy, but it was their life.

“He’s the funnest.”

“Most fun.”

“Funniest?”
“No baby. Close but different. That would be the most funny. Not most fun. It’s weird.” She heard the girl huff in frustration. “How about Imra picking you up instead?”

“Did I make Uncle Winn mad?” She used the rearview mirror to steal a glimpse at Audra. Kara saw her pouting a bit.

“No, bean. He loves seeing you! Honest. But so does papa and Imra. They want to see more of you.”

“Do I get to see Uncle Winn still?”

“Yes, Audra. You still get to see Winn. Just…he won’t be picking you up anymore.”

“Why?”

“Because Imra and your papa want to do it.”

“Why not Winn too?”

“The school doesn’t allow it.”

“Why?”

“It’s a way to keep you safe.”

“Oh.” The girl was quiet for the rest of the ride. They stopped at the small restaurant Cat liked the turkey burgers from. Audra got fussy in the back seat of the car until Kara gave the girl her tablet and headphones. The girl kept the headphones on as Kara entered the liquor store. The woman ignored the small glare the man behind the counter gave her as he wrapped up her bottle.

She got back to the office and Audra was surprisingly still chipper. The girl followed Kara into Cat’s office.

The CEO was at her desk. She wore her glasses and looked down at her laptop keys. She stopped typing furiously when Kara knocked gently on the door frame.

“You finished quicker than I thought.” Cat took off her glasses and shut her laptop.

Kara put the bottle of wine on her wet bar. The little girl walked up shyly to Cat’s desk, putting the paper bag on there for her.

Cat’s expression softened. She looked at Kara. “Have you two eaten yet?”

“Her father fed her.” Kara didn’t look up from her work at pulling the cork from the wine bottle.

“Dinosaur nuggets and cauliflower,” Audra told the older woman, making a face at the second part.

“Why the face? Carter’s favorite was my baked cauliflower when he was little. Your father must not prepare it right.” Cat smiled at the girl.

“Steams it.” The girl scrunched her nose.

“Kara?”

The assistant stopped, holding an empty glass. She looked up, shocked to hear Cat saying her name right. “Yes Miss Grant?”
“Go get yourself something. I can watch her.”

“No, I couldn’t make you—”

“You’re not making me do anything. I’m offering.”

“Okay—I’ll be back soon. Call me if she gets anxious, okay?” Kara finished pouring the glass and corked the bottle. She put the glass down on Cat’s desk and kissed her daughter’s head. She walked out, honestly starving and mind set on a journey that wouldn’t be more than fifteen minutes.

She looked into the office as she rumbled through her purse at her own desk.

Her daughter her hands folded in front of her. Cat let the girl on her lap and opened her laptop back up. Audra smiled said something to Cat. It made the woman type something on her laptop and scroll through. A single click and she was sat back.

Kara smiled to herself and walked off.

Kara yawned and tapped the papers she freshly printed on the printing tray to settle them. She walked back to Cat’s office. Audra was asleep on the couch, Kara’s cardigan her blanket.

Kara put the papers on Cat’s desk. “Thank you for letting her sleep in here,” Kara whispered. Cat looked up from her computer.

“Where do you want to be in five years?” Cat adjusted her glasses. Kara furrowed her brow.

“I—I never thought about that.”

“You don’t? You’re a mother and you don’t think about the future?”

“I do,” Kara said, growing defensive. “I think of the rent and the tuition and her doctor’s appointments; I don’t matter in this mix.”

“Well, you should. That girl’s life can only get better if yours does.”

“I thought you thought I had to tone down the mom thing.”

“Don’t push it. And…if you want she can come around more. Just for the love of god make sure she’s occupied. I had to watch that awful show Doc McStuffins.”

Kara muffled her snort with her hand. She smiled at her boss. “Thank you for letting me bring her. I just…trying to have as much time with her as I can and for some reason, her few meetings with you have made her like you.”

“I’m very lovable, Kara.”

“You keep saying my name right. I should bring her around every day.”

Cat rolled her eyes. “Go home. I’ll see you tomorrow. My coffee better be hot this time.”

“It will be. Thank you.” Kara picked up her daughter.

“How can you just pick her up?” Cat mused. Kara looked right and then left.
“I’m a superhero. Shh,” Kara stage-whispered. She smirked and walked out, careful to not stir Audra. Though the girl was practically limp.

She got the girl buckled up and drove home. Audra woke up just long enough to change into her pajamas and brush her teeth. She was out quick. Kara kissed her head once she was settled in bed and crept out.

After all that the bra was off and she was changed into an old sweatshirt and a pair of boxer shorts. She poured herself a bottle of white wine and grabbed her phone. She noticed a call from Alex and she redialed.

“Hey, what’s up?” Alex asked her, out of breath.

“Hi—do I want to know?”

“Fucking Christ, I’m just doing some yoga before bed,” the woman scoffed.

Kara chuckled softly. “I never know with you. You newlyweds.”

“Anyways, thanks for getting back to me. Winn told me you’ll have to spend a few late nights this week. You want me to take Audra? Maggie’s got the week off and I’m on half-days. We wouldn’t mind.”

Kara bit her lip. “No—Imra already offered.”

“She can’t do that though.”

“Well, Mon wants me to put his and her name on the list of those who can.”

“You can only have three.”

“Alex…”

“Maggie and Winn?” She heard the click of Alex’s tongue. “Look, I know because they aren’t by blood her family and that Winn isn’t married to either of us, but neither is that bitch and—”

“She’s the wife of the girl’s father.”

“Who left! Kara, you spent a year on my couch. On Maggie’s couch. Winn got you that interview… I’m not trying to guilt you but they aren’t by any means her family.”

“Alex, I can’t afford to be challenging. If he takes me to court, he’ll win. I’m sorry.”

Alex sighed. “Alright. Just make sure they know all her allergies and her favorite after school snack and how she takes her cocoa.”

“What do you think was in that letter she came to his house with said?” Kara said wryly. Alex scoffed.

“The nerve of that man sometimes. What was it about him?”

“It wasn’t what was about him. It was what was wrong with me. Nineteen-year-olds, Alex.” It was a light stab at humor but Alex didn’t laugh. “Look not everyone can only like women. You have to actively choose to be a mom.”

“I’ll tell Maggie. You tell Winn.” She paused. “It’s cruel to think but it feels like it was easier when
Mon-el was in Europe."

“Nothing about this has been easy. I’m still trying to figure things out. I’m just lucky. Lucky Audra is so open and flexible. I don’t think I could’ve done that as a five-year-old. I could barely handle it at thirteen.” She felt tears brimming. “She can’t even understand how it feels. I can’t imagine letting her know anything that isn’t that she’s the best thing in my life.”

“Honey, shh. Get some sleep. I’m sure Cat and Mon-el in the bunch have made this day feel extra long.”

“You don’t even know.” Kara chuckled and wiped at her eyes.

“Do you want me to take Audra Saturday morning and afternoon? You can actually get shit done.”

“I’ll talk to her. I’m sure she wants to see her favorite aunt.”

“What’s the competition? Mags ain’t got nothing on me, admittedly.”

“I’m telling her you said that.”

“No! We can’t both be single, kid.”

Kara hung up after a few more cut exchanges and sighed. She finished off her wine and sauntered to bed, checking her alarms before passing out.
Scene 2: ENTER Lena, Sad CEO

Chapter Summary

Family dinner is less than ideal for Kara. Lena's POV of the day of when that letter is sent off.

Chapter Notes

I struggle to write a five-year-old because it's been a while since I had to deal with one. My only memory of him was fifteen rounds of tic-tac-toe I had to lose.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

A week passed in its own grueling way. Kara gritted her teeth through it all, getting a bit of mercy when Mon-el took Audra for a night. She found it a bit odd. She was able to get a full night's sleep and didn't have to get up as she got a day off as well. But that freedom...made her feel antsy. Would Mon-el forget the girl's allergies? Would Audra get stressed out when she was out with Imra? The woman was too far along to chase the girl so what if she got hit by a car?

Kara worked herself up to be so exhausted and now was in bed. She was roused by her phone ringing.

She rolled over in her bed and palmed for her phone. She answered the call without checking the ID. “Kara Danvers.”

“Hey, it’s Mon.” In the background, she could hear indistinct voices, ringing phones.

“Is she okay?” Her first assumption was something he fucked up. Some would call that having no faith. She called it maternal protection.

“Yes! Kara, I dropped her off an hour ago. I just wanted to invite you to dinner again because you had to work last time.”

“Sure. Can I bring Alex?”

“Oh, I already invited her and Maggie.”

She stared up at the ceiling. “You’re working with Maggie?”

“Just ran into her. She had to talk to my commander.”

“Alright. Great.” She cleared her throat. “Imra need any help cooking? I can go over to your place to help.”

“Um, sure. I’ll text her. Thank you.”

“Anytime.” She hung up and dialed Winn who was off that day as well. “Winslow.”
“Where are we going?”

“Doing adult things.” She knew he could cook and Imra and his’ interactions were quite positive. She needed a social buffer.

She heard someone’s voice faintly. “He already did adult things.”

“Who?” Kara whispered.

“That’s my most recent mistake.” She heard a smack. “Ow.”

“Tell James I said hi and will you come with me to Mon’s to cook with Imra? You and she got along at Audra’s birthday party and I can’t be alone with her.”

“What—James—ha!” He chuckled and then deadpanned. “How could you tell?”

“I know that voice.”

“I’m sorry we share.”

“I haven’t gotten laid since college, Winn. You’re wrong here. James and I flirt at work but that’s it. He’s yours to keep. I’m happy for you. At least somebody is getting some here!”

“We gotta get you some.”

“I can wait. Audra will be out of the house in thirteen years.” Kara chuckled as he shuddered.

“Thirty-nine?”

“Mark your calendar. We’ll paint the town red.” She chuckled softly and got out of bed. “I’ll see you?”

“Yeah, I’ll pick you up.”

The two entered the apartment to see Imra on her yoga mat and on her hands and knees. She breathed out as she looked up and saw them. “Oh! Kara, Winn.” She struggled as she tried to get up but rejected any help. “I just expected you, Kara.”

“Well, neither of us are too good of cooks, so…” Kara chuckled softly, sheepish.

Winn rolled his eyes. “It’s good to see you Imra.” He down the bag he carried. He pulled out herbal iced tea and passed it to her.

“Thank you.” She grinned and looked at Kara. “How was sleeping in?”

“Foreign. I got up at six and was expecting to have to push Audra off of me. But once I realized I passed out for another four hours. Is that how our peers feel? Without kids?”

“It’s amazing unless people wake you up,” Winn said offhandedly. She glared at him and he chuckled. “Kidding.”

“Your back and forth. If I didn’t know better,” Imra teased.

Winn and Kara both gagged. Imra chuckled a bit and reached for her yoga mat. Kara swooped down
and rolled it up. She grinned at her. “You won’t get back up if you went that low. Trust me.”

“How bad was it?” Imra swallowed nervously. “Lamaze teachers make it out as not mattering because there is this beautiful life you just brought into the world but really, how bad is it?”

Kara snorted. “I broke Winn’s hand.” Winn shuddered and cradled his left hand. He went to the kitchen with the rest of their groceries.

“You were twenty, right?” Imra looked at Kara.

“Yeah…look it’s weird talking about that with you. I’m sorry. It’s just—I was a little high and dry because of Mon-el. I know he’s changed, but the guy you’re married to? Wasn’t the guy I was dating.”

Imra frowned. “Right…he took until our engagement to talk about you and Audra.” She looked aside. “I almost broke it off because of how horrible it was.”

“Yeah, I heard you read him to filth,” Kara said, resisting smiling. As odd as it was to see her first love’s wife with his child, she couldn’t hate Imra. She was too kind.

“Yeah—wasn’t having it. Rhea isn’t happy I made him come back to America.” Imra smiled at her. “I feel lucky, to be part of her life. She’s amazing. Kara, you did amazing. Better than I probably could as a single parent.”

Kara smiled and put a hand to her chest as warmth spread through her heart. “Thanks…and you could. You’re great with kids. Audra loves you.”

“She loves everyone.” Imra and Kara walked into the kitchen.

Winn and Kara were setting the table when Audra busted into the apartment, Mon-el following behind with his street clothes on.

“Mommy!” Audra ran to Kara and the mother scooped her up.

“Hey, bean,” Kara chuckled softly. She kissed her cheeks.

“Uncle Winn!” The girl squeaked when she noticed her favorite person. He grinned and took her with a grunt.

“Hey, kiddo.” He lit up as if he was looking at his own daughter. “How was school?”

“My pen pal wrote back! I’m the first kid to get a reply. Look, mommy!”

Audra held up the letter. Kara took the slip of paper. It was done in neat cursive on actual stationery. “Do you know what they said?”

Audra smiled proudly and nodded. “I even signed my name like you taught me in my letter.”

“She didn’t let me read it until you did,” Mon-el told Kara. She rolled her eyes and shrugged. The adults leaned in and read.

_Dear Audra,_
This is a cool idea! I work with a lot of not nice people so getting such a nice message made my day. I love your shoes by the way.

And to answer your questions, my name is Lena, I’m 24, my favorite color is red, my favorite pizza topping is spinach. I like penguins too.

I have a few questions for you.

What’s your favorite class in school? What’s your dream job? Princesses or superheroes? I personally love both. And what’s your favorite candy?

Your pen pal,

Lena

“Is it weird that name rings a bell?” Winn mumbled to Kara. They turned it over to see the PO box to write Lena back.

“Maybe you met her at a bar,” Kara whispered. She looked down at Audra.

“Can we reply to her tonight mom?” Audra’s eyes twinkled.

“Yeah. Go wash up for dinner, okay? And take those shoes off.” Kara tapped her on the back to get her off. The girl ran and took her shoes off, putting them at the door and bolted to the bathroom.

“Thank god it’s a woman,” Mon-el sighed. “I deal with too many sickos. This project is just—off.”

“It promotes communication,” Kara said, looking at the looping signature.

“Audra knows how to do that already. Really Kara why did you have to pick this private school?” Kara looked up. “It’s good for her. And she’s above her peers in reading and comprehension. Public school doesn’t offer as much of attention. Eman’s a patient teacher and keeps her challenged.”

“She’s five. How can you tell?”

“How can’t you see how wonderful your kid is?” Winn asked him. Mon-el glared at him but the man stood his ground. “I helped teach her read. She can read two years ahead of her classmates. Be proud.”

“Alright,” he sighed. “So, what’s for dinner?”

“Meat lovers pizza. Beef peps and turkey bacon. I left a few slices just cheese for Audra.” Winn paused. “Also, that pen pal likes spinach on their pizza. That’s just weird.”

“It’s cruel,” Kara muttered.

Audra came back in. She was able to tell the mood. “Was I bad?” She asked. She looked to her mother for either scorn or support. The young woman softened and knelt down.

“No baby. Just talking about adult things. What else happened in school?”

Audra made a face. “Julian keeps taking my crayons. I don’t like sharing with him. He breaks them.”

“You tell the teacher?” Audra just pouted and looked up. “Bean,” Kara admonished. Audra
shrugged and looked at her socks, focusing what was on them. Frogs. “Miss Eman can’t help you if she doesn’t know what’s wrong.”

“Okay.” Audra fiddled with her skirt.

“How about tomorrow we get you some new crayons just for you?” Mon-el asked. He smiled at her. “Put your name on them and all that.” He kneeled, looking at his little girl. “C’mon, I’m not gonna get up until you give me a smile.”

The girl smiled a bit. “Can they be the twisty ones?”

“Sure kiddo.” He patted her on the head and stood.

A few minutes later someone knocked. Imra answered, greeting Alex and Maggie.

The couple came in and Alex lit up to see her niece. She scooped her up and kissed her face all over until the girl giggled and squealed. “Aunt Ally! You’re here!”

Maggie playfully pouted. “And here I am, neglected and unloved by my two favorite girls!” She held her heart. “I could just perish!”

“Nooo! I love you Mags!” Audra moved to hug her with great panic and haste. Maggie chuckled a bit and kissed the girl on the head.

The girl told them about her letter and she was wondering what she should say to Lena back.

Kara was glad to have the three there along. She was able to avoid talking any more to Mon-el about the school situation.

By the end of the night, Audra was dozing off, almost putting her face into her ice cream. Alex held her in her lap.

“Been a long day for the bean,” Alex said softly.

“When did that nickname come about?” Mon-el asked the four. “You all call her that I noticed.”

“It was the name Winn gave her when we found out Kara was pregnant. Kara didn’t want to gender Audra before she, well, knew the gender. So, bean was the nickname we chose. Because if you’re a sprout as being a being, then the bean is the before part,” Alex explained. She arched a brow.

“And I met the girl as a toddler, so I kinda just followed along. And it’s just adorable. The little squirt is precious as hell,” Maggie said, smirking.

“I can’t wait to have our own,” Alex said to her, smiling at her wife. Maggie took her hand.

“Have you two started trying yet?” Imra asked.

“Well there’s a lot that goes into “trying,”” Maggie said. “It’s not just as sudden and simple as you know.”

“I have a lot of questions about it though,” Mon-el started. Winn looked at Kara with a bit of panic before sipping his drink, wishing it was alcoholic.
Lena could lose count how many times she woke up with a sinking feeling in her chest. It was all done in the beauty of this one truth: she was so simply alone.

She would open her phone knowing the only interactions were business. All but Sam. That was personal and business. Though she was still miserably single. She tried the apps, the sites, the services that used algorithms, and she always tried a good old running into someone.

But she was okay with being in her mid-twenties and never had a serious relationship. She knew it would be a lonely life of being a CEO of a company she had to save from shambles after Lex split with his faulty parts and the illegal surveillance. She dealt with the lawsuits, issued the apologies, built and rebuilt. Made it so L-Corp, the rebranded brand, was back on top. Making Lena a Thirty Under Thirty.

In the crowded coffee shop’s door, she reached for her wallet. She looked at the folded-up card he sent her from another small island that is mostly impoverished but he lived the better parts of it. The idealized parts. All it said?

*I am eating and drinking. Yours Truly, Lex*

Damn fool, she thought and tucked it back into her wallet. She stepped in and noticed a young mother. She was fumbling with a coin purse.

“Oh no. She’ll be counting forever,” Lena said lightly from her spot behind her.

The woman turned around quickly and she had a fake smile. Lena knew that sort of smile for she had seen it on so many faces. *I want to slap you* sort of look. A small bit of panic coursed through her and she acted quickly.

She slapped a twenty on the counter, nodding at the woman and then grabbing her and Jess’ drinks.

She stepped out and felt eyes on her back. She looked up at the sunny sky briefly as she made her way to her car. It was a bit of a mess, her workout clothes in the back and her night bag in case of a sudden trip, empty takeout containers, empty bottles of cold brew and water. She knew it would be spotless come her next detailing but it was nothing to be proud of.

She got to work and put the cup of tea on Jess’ desk as she walked into her office. She saw the small smile on the assistant’s face. Lena sank into her seat and took a long sip of her coffee and then opened her laptop to deal with her full inbox.

By the time she’s shaved away the number to reasonably cluttered rather than macabrely neglected (as she so boldly took the day off yesterday).

She looked up from her computer when Jess walked in. “Hey,” she said, voice quiet as she returned her gaze to the laptop.

“I was waiting for you to settle in before giving you your run down.” Jess went on to talk about her upcoming meetings and handing her the invoices she had gotten and of course needed her to sign off on the security report form that pesky incident of protestors outside having to be escorted off the premise.

She was nodding along but paused when Jess trailed off. She smiled pleasantly and walked to the balcony. Lena turned her chair and followed. The woman leaned over and grabbed a yellow balloon from the air.

She came in holding it. “Miss Luthor, I think this is for you,” she joked as she handed the woman a
note attached to it.

She read first a neatly typed note. It explained how this was a project for a kindergarten class. Next, she got a sloppy handwritten note.

She sat down and worked to decipher it.

**Hi! My name is Audra.**

Lena squinted. An odd name but rather beautiful. She went on to read.

**I’m five and I like pengwens.**

“Penguins,” Lena chuckled. She read on. It was more of what the girl liked, and she got a picture of the girl. She was missing teeth and had these loud red shoes with sparkly laces.

Jess cooed, “she’s so cute! Lena, you have to reply to her.”

“No, it’s just…” She couldn’t think of a reason not to. “Alright.” She grabbed her stationary kit usually for thank you notes.

“Can I help?” Jess lit up. She pulled up a chair.

“What about my calls?” Lena joked. The assistant frowned a bit. “Kidding.” Lena put her pen to the paper.

“Dear young Audra—” Lena spoke as she wrote.

“No, that’s formal. She’s five. Her mom is going to be reading this to her. Make it sound like you’re interested in talking.”

“Just Dear Audra?” Lena asked. Jess nodded. She started again. “How about I say this is a cool idea? It is.”

“I mean yeah. And compliment her little shoes. And give her something to reply to! Ask about her likes we can make a care package.”

“I’m going to come off as weird if I do something too much.”

“Oh, come on. The letter promotes you to send photos and such.”

“Well, for now, I’ll just send this. I’ll send some photos from my business trip this month in the next one.”

“So, you’ll do this?”

“I’m going to do this. I don’t want to break a little girl’s heart,” Lena said casually, hiding her excitement.

Jess took the finished letter about twenty minutes later. She hid her smile as Lena did the same.

Chapter End Notes
Thanks for reading and you can talk to me on Tumblr at the same handle. Just all lowercase and no underscores: hefellforfiction
Kara ran through the small halls, heels clicking and keys jingling. The janitor glared lightly as she passed. She cringed as she passed, body language reading to be an apology. She got to the door at the end of the hall and came in. The smell of tempera paint hit Kara in the nose, making her want to gag. She bit it back, already humiliated enough by the fact she was late in picking up Audra.

She saw the girl in the corner painting. Miss Eman, or simply called Eman by the parents, looked up from her desk.

“Kara,” the woman cheered, getting up from her chair. She smiled brightly and came over. “I’m glad you’re here.”

“Sorry for being late. Cat was reaming me for how I took her meeting minutes,” Kara chuckled lightly. She forced a smile. “Thank you for keeping her.”

“Of course. She’s a lovely child.” Audra looked up. “Audra, how about you go wash up and I’ll make sure your mother has all your things. Remember, sing little star in your head while you wash. When it ends, you’re done. And make sure your brushes are clean. Don’t want to ruin the fun for others.” Audra nodded and took off her smock. She took her brushes to the sink in the room, getting up on the stool.

Eman’s head would turn to check on her periodically as the teacher went behind her desk. She grabbed Audra’s backpack from there, the girl had removed it from her hook. Kara took it and slung a strap over her free shoulder. “I was hoping you could ask her pen pal to send photos in her next letter. I’ll be checking them, but it would be helpful as I’m having the kids compile their photos and letters on that wall.” She gestured to the wall with a few photos and a handful of letters so far.

“If you don’t mind, I’ll write a bit for her. A decipherable letter.”

“Of course.” Eman looked at Audra as she came over. She changed her demeanor, face going from obligatory pleasantry to legitimate joy. “All finished?” The girl held up her clean hands. “Good. I’ll see you Monday.”

The girl nodded. Kara thanked the teacher and left with Audra. They got into the car, Kara helping Audra into her car seat and buckling her in.

Kara drove home, putting on the Mulan soundtrack for Audra. They sang along to be a man, Kara lowering her voice comically to make Audra giggle. They got home, and Kara started dinner. They sat together at the table after they washed up. Kara watched, a bit proud as the girl stayed mostly clean through eating her spaghetti and ate her peas with minimal protest.

“How was your day little one?”

“Good. Miss Eman moved me so Julian can’t take my new crayons and break them. I share them with Frankie now. She’s careful.”

“Frankie?” Kara smiled. “I’ve never heard of her. She nice?”

“Frankie’s the coolest prettiest smartest girl in the whole class! She’s really quiet…so nobody knows.” The girl frowned.

“Well, I think you can invite that out of her. Sometimes someone is what it takes to make you open
up. Aunt Ally was a real grump before Aunt Mags came around.” Kara smiled at her.

“I’ll do it!” Audra had a look of determination, green eyes twinkling.

Kara cleared the table and cleaned up. Audra worked on the penmanship worksheets she had for homework, tracing and mimicking the letters on the paper. Kara dried her hands after putting away the dishes. “Hey bean, how about you draw a picture for Lena? I’ll send it to her by Monday, okay?”

The girl lit up and grabbed all her materials from her art box. Kara set out some newspaper for her to work on top of. The girl had her tongue hanging out of the corner of her mouth as she focused on keeping the line straight with her work.

Kara sat on the floor with her, working on her laptop. She stopped to take a few pictures of Audra, the girl looking just too cute with such an intense face of focus. Kara smiled a bit, slightly in awe. This little girl was just…everything to her. Kara struggled with the worst of her life and had to stick around because of her. She, at the time, felt life was shit. But Audra was her light. Her strength. Why she so fondly gave the girl that name.

Audra held up a family portrait when she had finished. Kara put on a small smile and told the girl she loved it. She kissed her head and hugged her close. “Honey let’s go shower.” They grabbed their pajamas and such before getting into the shower together.

Kara lathered her own hair first before grabbing the berry scented, no tear shampoo and gently massaged it into Audra’s chestnut-colored locks. The girl closed her eyes as Kara used the wand to rinse her hair out. She rinsed out her own hair and repeated the order with conditioner. She was careful as she combed out Audra’s hair and the girl was able to wash her own body. Kara took that bit of independence to give her time to wash herself off. They rinsed their hair again and got out.

Audra dried herself off while her mother washed her face at the sink. “Mommy?”

Kara looked down at the girl, seeing she had her towel draped over her head. “Yes, bean?” She dried off her own face.

“Can I have the swirl?” Kara smiled softly and knelt. She got the girl’s hair up in the towel. The girl sat while her mother treated her hair with oils and such. “What does that do?”

“Keeps it soft and not frizzy.” Kara looked at her. “Do you want some?”

“Yeah!” Audra took off the towel and her mother worked the oil through her hair. She combed out Audra’s damp hair, slow and gentle to make sure she didn’t yank the girl’s head. Audra changed into her nightgown. She got up on her stool and grabbed her toothbrush. Kara grabbed her own and they used their respective toothpaste. Kara hummed for Audra. Audra sat on the toilet as her mom finished getting ready for bed. She barely kept herself upright, yawning as Kara put her hair in braids.

Kara blushed out of a bit of embarrassment. “Sorry baby.” She changed into her shorts and hoodie. She saw the girl focusing on how much attention Kara put into her hair.

“Your hair…s’really pretty mommy,” the girl mumbled.

“Thank you.” Kara finished up.

“Why is mine not like yours or daddy’s?”

Kara smiled fondly. “Well, you ever heard of DNA?” The girl shook her head. “It’s this thing that is
what chose how you would look. Half of it is daddy’s and half of it is mine. Parts of who we are is chosen by it. Some people will get stuff that’s just mommy’s and some that are just daddy’s. Some get both. You have both put together.”

“Why does Ally’s hair not look like grandma Eliza?”

“She dyes her hair. She uses this really bad smelling goop and puts it in her hair and it changes it!” Kara cleaned up the vanity. “Her hair was brown like grandpa Jeremiah’s before she changed it.”

“Oh.” Audra frowned. “Where is he? Is he where daddy was? You said I wouldn’t meet him like I wouldn’t meet daddy. But I met daddy… will I meet grandpa?”

Kara kept emotion from flickering across her face. She had so much to tell her daughter still. Just what Mon-el did was on the bottom of the list. Just above that was why so many people weren’t around. Above that was why she isn’t technically a Danvers. The girl had yet to ask because Kara looked so much like Eliza out of coincidence.

It all would suggest the girl was unwanted or that Kara had parts of her that were dark. She was too young, too amazing, too soft to have to be exposed to a single bit of it.

Kara kissed her head. “Darling, remember how I explained that sometimes people really can’t come back? That you won’t see them for a really long time because they just went away without wanting to?” The girl nodded slowly. “Grandpa Jeremiah had to go when he didn’t want to. And you might see him but not for a really, really long time.”

“Okay, mommy.” The girl got off the toilet

She got Audra tucked in, reading a story before the girl knocked out. She smiled a bit and crept out, turning off her lights so that it was just her penguin night light.

She walked over to the picture of her, Alex, Jeremiah, and Eliza. It was their first photo as a family. Kara was a lanky thirteen-year-old, smiling shyly in the arms of her adoptive mother.

She let out a shaky breath and touched it. Her mind went to the day Jeremiah died. She was fourteen. Someone broke into their house. Jeremiah had his girls hole up in a closet and took out his gun. No one knew he even had a gun.

There were a series of shots. Kara counted ten. Alex said it was twenty. Either way, Jeremiah could only have been a part of it. He had only six shots in his gun. The men were either shot or fled the scene. Either way, Jeremiah saved his family but not himself.

She shook her head and went to her bedroom. Sleep was somehow impossible for her to sleep even if she was exhausted. Her body just ached as she looked at the ceiling.

She got up and paced the room. She checked the locks on her front door. She had a bat under her bed. She checked to make sure she could grab it without climbing under her bed.

She tossed and turned when she got back into bed. She got up again and drank a few glasses of water.

She called Winn, seeing he was still awake as he had recent activity on Instagram.

“‘You shouldn’t be up,’” Winn whispered when he answered.

“‘ Says you.”
“I don’t have a little kid,” he grunted. He sighed. “I’m sure you’re awake for that reason.”

“No. It’s stupid. I’ll just go.”

“It’s not if you called.” He stopped. “Kara, you know you don’t owe him shit, right?”

“I of all people know he isn’t owed a single thing. Even if he didn’t know half the shit his mother did to me he still left.”

“He left. He ain’t shit. You know who’s the shit? You, Miss Danvers! You fucking finished college while being a momma. You fucking worked near full-time and went to school and raised a baby. Shit, I barely could emotionally take part-time and school. Go you, Kara Danvers. Kara Danvers is an icon. Like wow, can I have my shit together like that, please? She raises two kids. Audra and Cat Grant.”

Kara laughed and felt herself tear up. “I’m not raising Cat. That would suggest growth. I go tantrum to tantrum with that woman.”

“Heh, yeah I guess that’s better.” His tone was bright.

“Thank you. For more than just tonight. You didn’t have to do what you did. Not my family, not my boyfriend…”

“I tried. Sorry about that, again.” He laughed awkwardly. “Kara, I did it because I love you. And I saw someone I loved in this state of knowing nothing but that she was going to have that kid.”

“You got me a job.”

“I didn’t do that. I literally just told you about a position. You came in and stood up to Cat Grant. Laid down that you could do it! And you do. Kara, you are brilliant. Cat’s right when she says you should expect more from life.”

“If I believed that I should expect more I wouldn’t have fucked Mon,” she said lightly.

He snorted. “Fuck, that’s…accurate.” They both just laughed for a bit. Kara rubbed at her eyes.

“I think I can sleep now…thanks.”

“Yeah. I should turn in too. Love you, Kara.”

“You too.” She hung up and put her phone on her nightstand.

Jess came running into Lena’s office during lunch. Lena looked up from her laptop, her salad neglected on the corner of her desk. “It came!” She held up a letter.

“Well, hand it over!” Lena smiled brightly, and Jess passed it over. Lena carefully cut it open with her letter opener. She had three different pieces of paper in it. The first was neatly written.

“Oh, that isn’t as fun,” Jess said lightly. Lena put aside the first to see that there was a different letter with crayon scrawling on construction paper with dashes of glitter. She smiled as the girl had replied to her questions.

“Dear Lena, thank you to be the first pen pal to write. I like math class,” Lena read out. She paused
to look at the drawings. The girl had done a few simple equations.

“Of all people, the girl who likes math gets the CEO of one of the best tech companies in the world,” Jess mused.

“I expected like recess or gym. Math!” Lena smiled a bit too much, not realizing. She put the letter aside, Jess grabbing it. She found a drawing. “Oh, she drew her family.”

Jess peered over her shoulder. It was a mess of scribbled that had some being anthropomorphic. Audra was in the center, smallest figure. One would expect mommy and daddy, maybe a sibling or pet. This girl had a whole bunch of figures. Mommy and daddy were the next immediate figures but there was a woman with “Irma” above her head. That was crossed out and an adult had come in and corrected it to “Imra.”

“I think there’s a step-mother,” Jess muttered.

There were three other figures. The other figures had been done with yellow crayon but there was one with a light brown color. Two women and one man. They were the aunts and uncle.

“Huh.” Lena had nothing to say about it. She put it down. “So, I think the aunt and uncle, they’re siblings somewhere and the aunt is married to the uncle.”

“Logical way to see it.” Jess frowned. “I wonder what that can even begin to look like for a little girl.” She frowned.

“She’s in a better off family if she’s going to a private school.”

“I think we both know money doesn’t present an ideal family life.”

Lena looked at her desk with a blank expression. Jess left her be, getting the last details for her Tokyo trip the next day ready. Lena grabbed the nicely written letter.

Lena,

I’m Audra’s mother. Her family photo is confusing and complicated but she wanted to make it for you. I didn’t have the heart to tell her that it was bad.

Her father and I never got married and he married recently and is expecting his second child.

Her aunts and uncles are the three most important people in her life. One of them is my sibling, Al. Mags is her wife. Winn is a college friend. They pick her up from school, watch her, know her likes and hates and probably see her more than I do some days.

Thank you for making her days fun and she is excited for weeks to come. I am too.

Lastly, it would be much appreciated if you send photos with your next letter so that Audra can collect them.

Sincerely,

Kara

She scrunched up her brow and folded the letter up. She partially wanted a way to contact the woman. Her heart went out to her at that moment. But she knew nothing about her.
She just put the letters in her desk with the first. She turned on her intercom. “Jess.”

“Yes Lena?” the secretary replied, that being how she addressed Lena when they didn’t have company.

“Could you possibly get me a Polaroid camera for my trip? I’ll give you my card.”

“Certainly.”

“Thank you.” Lena sat back and thought of a detour she could take. She knew there would be a few geisha to be hired for her events. She could ask kindly to photograph them for the girl. She knew that she would have free time that she could go around the city and find some interesting points.

She smiled with a sense of giddiness towards the trip.

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Kara printed off photos she took of Audra and smiled to herself as she compiled the letter for Lena. The woman had sent her second letter talking about a trip to Japan she was taking and sent photos of what she saw. Audra gushed over the pretty geisha and was overjoyed to see some of the characters she watched being cosplayed. She finished up and put it all in the envelope (and added a small thank you card for Lena, knowing she was in some way inconvenienced by complying with the request). She dropped it off before work, lifting Audra up to put it in the box before dropping the girl off, picking up coffee, and getting to work.

Kara got to her desk moments before Cat, handing off the woman’s drink as she came in. Cat stopped this time, looking at Kara briefly yet intensely. “Kiera, what’s that on your jacket?”

Kara was taken aback to be called the wrong name again. She looked at her coat and panicked. Bright pink glitter from the final touches Audra did on the envelope.

“I’m sorry I didn’t notice! Audra has this school project where she has a pen pal and she sent her pen pal’s letter covered in glitter. I’ll take this off for the day and have in dry cleaned.”

Cat frowned and took off her sunglasses. “You are the first impression of me. My front line defenses. How would a queen look if all she had was a poorly made pawn?”

_I’m a pawn and not something with a bit of dignity? Not a knight at least?_ Kara bit the inside of her mouth. “I suppose quite ill impressions can be made. I’ll check myself before coming in from now on.”

“Good.” Cat walked into her office. Kara took off her jacket and folded it up, stuffing it into her bag. She powered up her computer as James came up.

He flashed a small smile and came over. “My first impression of Cat seeing you? God, I hope she’s as cute as you.” He got her to smile.

“Does the glitter add to approachability?” She batted her eyelashes.

“I mean if you think throwing a glitter bomb on Cat Grant would make her less scary…you would be thinking up a way to get fired.” He sat on the edge of her desk. “So, I noticed my bed very much absent of my boyfriend recently.”

She rolled her eyes as he smiled. "So it's official? Not just messing around?"
"I filed it so that it isn't a conflict at work. You know that mess HR approached us with when they thought we had hooked up when we didn't."

“How come the men I reject have to like each other? Didn’t you get the memo that you have to fret over me until I get over myself?” Kara whined. She clicked her pen. He shrugged and smirked.

“Sorry, I found another person with a nice jaw and a lot of cardigans. Had to snatch them up.” He reached into his pocket. “Oh, and here are those photos of Audra from our zoo visit a bit ago.”

He put down the stack. The perks of having a photographer as a friend as his candid shot was god tier. All the good work in her house was James.

“Thank you.” She paused. “Hey, I know it’s weird being friends with someone with a kid, but at the end of the month, we usually have dinner together the all of us. We drink after Audra passes out around nine. Usually at Alex’s house. Two drink max.”

He smiled. “I’d like going to one of those. A lot of those.” He ran his hand over his head. “Kara I was trying to date you. I accepted that you have a kid.” He shrugged a bit and got off of her desk.

He went in to talk to Cat. Kara looked through the photos. She considered letting Audra pick out some to send to her pen pal but then she also felt it was a bit too odd to do so. The photos she sent Lena were those she got from Audra’s classroom. They were in the setting of this being academic requirement. These photos were…intimate. And she didn’t know this woman.

For now, she just held the photo of Audra feeding a giraffe and smiling, cringing away slightly in being startled but overall giddy in getting to be so close to the gentle giants.

She tucked it into the lip of a frame, holding it up. She was able to feel a bit better about working. She knew who she was doing it for. Because some days Cat made it near impossible to not consider quitting.
Kara lingered in the doorway of the hospital room. It was cold and sterile to her. She tried to block away the memories that came to her when she stood there. Lots of crying, the feeling in her gut when Alex said he wasn’t coming, the look on Eliza’s face when she held Audra. Alex swaddled her in a blanket with penguins on it and laid down on the bed with Kara. They both cried, exhausted and a bit delusional, afraid for what was to come for Audra.

Kara held Audra by her shoulders, the little girl holding the gift she picked out for her baby sibling. The girl was excited to see Laramie, so giddy that she, fortunately, didn’t notice her mother’s stress.

Imra had given birth the night before. Young Laramie was a handsome little baby boy with green eyes and brown hair.

Mon-el noticed them first. He got up from his seat next to the bed. “Kara,” he said softly. His clothes were rumpled and his eyes blurry with exhaustion from his first night of a baby.

She smiled a bit and let Audra go. Audra offered the bag to her father. “I got Laramie a seahorse. Mommy says he can’t name him, so I did. He is Shen.”

“Sheen?” Imra smiled. “Why that name little one?” She shifted in her bed, sitting up slowly. Laramie was in the warmer next to her bed. They were quiet to not wake him.

“Mulan,” Audra said, smiling.

“I’m sure he’ll love it. Thank you, baby.” Mon-el knelt and kissed her forehead.

Audra smiled and then looked at the warmer. She walked over and got on her toes to look down. “He’s…squishy looking.” She scrunched up her face.

“Audra,” Kara admonished. The girl huffed and mumbled a small apology.

“You know you looked like that once, kiddo,” Mon-el told her.

The little girl looked horrified. “I didn’t.” She pouted as if insulted.

“Oh, you did. Had no hair, unlike this little guy. Same eyes,” Kara said softly. She bit her lip as she watched the way Mon-el looked at his kids interacting. That moment that was his. All him. And Imra, his eyes sparkling when he looked at the glowing mother who might as well have been a goddess to him. To have made their child and to have been there for every moment. Kara gripped the edge of her cardigan. “I’m going to get something to drink. Audra, you be on your best behavior. Quiet voice. Laramie has very sensitive ears as a newborn and really needs his sleep.”

“Oh mommmy,” the girl responded. Kara stepped out, gently closing the door to make sure it didn’t click.

Kara sighed and leaned against the wall next to the door. She rubbed her eyes.

“What are you doing here?”

Kara looked up to see her. She wore a pantsuit and held in her hand a cup of coffee.

“Rhea,” she said simply. She adjusted her purse on her arm.
“Do I have to call security?” Rhea said cautiously.

“I brought my daughter to see her baby brother. He invited me to,” she spat. Her blood boiled and she kept her voice low.

“Her alleged father,” Rhea corrected. Kara just pressed her tongue into the side of her mouth and shook her head.

“The paternity tests don’t lie. And what are you doing here? Your son told me you all but shunned him for choosing to become a cop over the cushy corporate job you could give him before you eventually handed him Daxam Inc.”

Rhea rolled her eyes. “He’s a fool with a dreamer wife. But that’s my only son and his wife. And that baby boy could inherit it.”

“The girl won’t.” It wasn’t a question. Kara knew it came down to Rhea deciding, and that woman would die before Audra got what she had the blood right to.

“A bastard isn’t worth a penny to me.”

Kara shrugged. “You’ve said this to me countless times. For someone who can’t stand me you take a lot of tabs on me. On the girl you claim isn’t even his. Funny.”

Rhea glared at her. “I should go in there.”

“Does he know you’re coming?”

“He does.” Rhea stepped up. Kara held a hand out.

“She’s in there. I don’t want you to see her. She doesn’t remember your last meeting. That’s how I want it. Give me five minutes,” she muttered before opening the door and stepping in.

She came into the sight of Audra in a chair, holding her baby brother. Mon-el was helping her, making sure she supported his neck. Mon-el was beaming with pride.

Kara put a hand to her chest. Audra looked up and noticed her first. “Mommy,” she said quietly.

“Hey, baby.” Kara smiled. She took a few photos of the two kids. She tucked her phone away and Mon-el walked closer to her.

“I’m guessing my mother is out there,” he mumbled.

“Oh, yeah. We had a nice chat.” She frowned. “You said you were out of her reach last year. I know that is a lie.”

“Two cops don’t make much. I have a trust fund, an inheritance for the bare minimum of communication. I think it’s worth it,” he told her. She looked down.

“Your choice, but I’m not going to subjugate my daughter to that woman.” He looked a bit hurt at that. She wanted to snap and talk of how Rhea had humiliated her. She wanted to scream and ask why he let her. He knew that Kara had only been with him. He let the woman try to use a blank check to get Kara to terminate the pregnancy. He took the chance to avoid becoming a father. He went off the grid, leaving Kara to pull herself up with the world on her back and a baby on her hip.

But she just looked at him, placid. He shrugged eventually and picked up his son from Audra’s lap. The girl pouted, having bonded with the boy.
“Bean let’s get you home,” Kara told her. “Let baby Laramie and Imra rest.”

“Okay.” The girl walked over to Imra, hugging her. Mon-el hugged the girl and held her so she could lean down and kiss Laramie’s forehead.

Kara and she stepped out, Rhea at the end of the hall. Kara and the woman made brief eye contact before Kara and Audra turned a corner.

“Mommy, you okay?”

“Oh, yeah baby. I’m just thinking.” Kara smiled down at her and took her hand. “You did so good in holding Lars.”

“He’s heavy even though he’s so tiny. Was I as tiny?”

“Even tinier. You were six and a half pounds. He’s seven pounds and four ounces.”

“Wow,” the girl whispered. She smiled. “Can I send Lena some of my baby pictures?”

“Sure baby.” Kara smiled legitimately for the first time that day.

Lena came into work with a new letter. She smiled to herself and opened it up before everything else. She got photos first, writing on the back from Kara.

Audra wants to be a zoologist, can’t you tell? Then she drew a smiley face. It was on the back of Audra feeding a giraffe. A woman held her up. She guessed it was her aunt as she wasn’t blonde like in the drawing. Red hair with an undercut.

She was rather attractive. Lena felt guilty for thinking that, that being a married woman. She looked through, hoping maybe to find a picture of Kara, simply curious.

She found one of the little girl, a lot younger. Likely about two. In the arms of a woman in a cap and gown. The date was 2014.

“She’s pretty,” Lena said out loud.

“What Lena?”

Lena looked up to see Jess, holding her tablet with her schedule.

“Kara sent a photo of herself.” Lena held it up. “It’s older. She wrote a note that Audra insisted on this one. The girl wanted me to see baby pictures. Odd…but I got this. That is a college graduation.”

Jess took it. “She’s beautiful.” Kara in the photo had her hair down in loose curls. Her smile was bright, and her eyes sparkled as she looked at her daughter. Her jaw was sharp and she had nice brow shape. She honestly looked like a model.

“I didn’t notice,” Lena said quickly. Jess arched a brow. “Oh—shut up.”

Jess chuckled and put the picture back on the desk. “What did Audra say?”

Lena held up the actual letter.
Dear Lena,

I became a big sister! Laramie is my half-brother. What mommy says. He’s tiny and cries a lot.

I don’t like that.

Lena snorted and covered her mouth with her hand. “Sorry—” She laughed then. “Fuck.” She kept going.

My daddy let me hold him. He smiled like a frog.

“His gums,” Lena rationalized, trying to hash out the girl’s weird way of comparison.

“You know what she meant? Smiling like a frog?” Jess furrowed her brow.

“The girl is odd. I pictured a frog and thought if they opened their mouth, what do you see? Just pink. Looks like gums.” Lena frowned as to why it was odd, that making sense to her.

“Frogs don’t smile.”

“If they did that is what you would see.” Lena shrugged and tucked it away in the little box she had for the letters and photos now.

She grabbed another photo from the folder. She looked at the back: Audra, five weeks.

It was Kara and Audra. The girl was asleep on a blanket on the floor and Kara was curled next to her. Audra held her finger in her hand. She saw a tired smile on Kara’s face, a clearer picture. Her eyes held legitimate joy and awe.

She put it away in her pocket and grabbed the last piece of paper in the envelope

Lena,

Audra was excited about showing these pictures. They’re copies, don’t worry about them. I was nervous to send these, I don’t want to make you feel uncomfortable. I was. Her father hasn’t seen some of these and she wanted to send you pictures of Laramie. But her father said no and he has right to. She and I are working on this and not him and his wife. Thank you again.

-Kara

She scrunched up her brow and opened her laptop. Jess left to her own work. Lena had a meeting during lunch and she had a flight tonight to Germany. She checked her notes and then checked her inbox.

She saw an odd one.

Dear Miss Luthor,

My name is Dr. Lillian Rose. I’m the chairman of In Power Women Empower Women. We are an organization that promotes interest in STEM in young girls. We have various chapters that function in different ways but have a small expo where there are speakers and activities.

I was hoping you would be willing to be a speaker. You are one of the most powerful women not only in the business community but in the science and tech field.
Lena leaned back and shook her head, not looking that much further into the email. She couldn’t have the time for such things. She bit her thumbnail and shut her laptop and went down to check the labs.

She slipped into a lab coat and put on some protective glasses. She stepped in to check on their latest work. She worked in the same building of the pharmaceutical branch of L-Corp. They usually worked in teams independent of each other. There was a chain of command. Team leaders, leaders to supervisors, those to the head of the lab, him to the chair member on the board that handled that part of the company.

But Lena still checked in. She stepped in and looked around briefly. No one acknowledged her, simply going about their tasks. She compared the gender ratio. She was coveted as being the most equal compared to how her male counterparts ran her company.

But she still noticed that it was four-fifths male. She went around. The team members were like that. The chain of command had not one woman at any point.

She talked and observed the reports. She talked to one team member while the woman focused on looking into her microscope.

“Leia, tell me. Why did you pick this field?”

She paused. She looked at Lena. “I saw the medical community fail my mother…so I wanted to be there at innovation. I wanted to be the one working in figuring how treatment can be changed, how we react to it.”

“Why not be a doctor? Or a biologist? I know there’s a high demand for stem cell researchers.”

Leia smiled to herself. “I couldn’t work with you if I became any of those things.” She looked at Lena. “You took over around the same time I had wrapped my graduates. I could’ve done my residency and med school, but I had all I needed to become a researcher in medicine. I saw a female CEO take over and you chose to keep this branch of L-Corp open rather than giving generous bonuses to your board…I wanted that kind of leadership.”

Lena lifted her chin. “I don’t need any flattery.” She paused. “But I want workers like you more often. Want to be here for more than feeling smart and worth the money. Seeing that there is something worth in this work. That you are wanted here and not letting that go to your head.”

“You see it going to people’s head because you’re watching the men,” Leia whispered, smirking. “This field does something to the male psyche I can’t explain. It’s some phenomena, the pretension. I can’t imagine what your life is like. At least I have six other women to get through this with. You are kinda alone up there in that fishbowl.”

“Well, my CFO is female.”

“You having the need to qualify it strengthens my point.” Leia just smiled as Lena bid her goodbye and a final turn away.

Lena went up for her meeting. She was spacing off during the presentation. The board droned on and on, trying to talk over each other. Lena looked over at Sam, the woman just shrugging and taking notes.

Lena put her hand on the table. “Enough, you boys really think we’re getting anywhere here?” She straightened her posture as they fell silent. What I’ll be discussing in Germany is concerned to expansion that was the subject of Lena’s travels. They were venturing more in clean energy. They
didn’t care about the plan she worked on. They nitpicked instead her choice to hire locally when it came to the leaders of the plant and the project and the teams. “The engineers there are far too impressive for me to even consider anything else but leaders there. My recruiting is final. I don’t need your patriotic droning.”

“It’s kind of useless,” Sam mumbled. Everyone looked at her. “I mean our CEO wasn’t even born here. You expect her to give a shit about it? Plus it’s moving into a German town, partnered with a German institute. We have best interest to hire there. The plant will employ the locals. Why do we need American team leaders and heads when we’re going there because of the innovations of Germany tech and engineering?”

Lena smirked a bit at that. She adjourned the meeting soon after. She stayed put as everyone filed out. Sam stayed back as well.

“It’s always a mess really,” Sam said lightly.

“I’m thinking we should re-staff soon. Part of me hates having Lex’s old buddies up in my place. I can tell they don’t like having me here in his place. They get away with less and they hate it. They aren’t making as excessively, and they hate it.” She frowned.

“If you want me to talk you out of firing some of them you aren’t going to get that.”

Lena smiled at her. “How have you been? It’s been too long.”

Sam shifted in her seat. “Ruby and I just got back from our trip to Universal. I can’t thank you enough for the time. She and I needed that. The promotion is a godsend, but the promotion really leaves her a bit high and dry sometimes with my hours. She’s getting older. I owe her more of my time.”

“Of course. If you feel a ball being dropped just say something. Sam, you’re the person I trust the most. I’m not going to scare you away by making you feel overworked. Losing you is the last thing I want.”

Lena stood up and Sam smiled. She stepped up and hugged her tight. Lena hummed and rubbed her back. “How have you been? I heard that a little lady has been the subject of your attention.” They parted.

Lena shrugged and straightened her papers before putting them in a folder. “I mean, yeah.”

“Younger woman too. How much younger? Twenty-two?” Sam crossed her arms over her chest.

“Younger.” Lena fought smiling.

“Twenty-one, right? She has to be able to drink.” Lena shook her head. Sam made a small noise. “Twenty? A college student?”

“She’s a student, certainly.” Lena bit the inside of her mouth.

“Well, where does she go? Stanford? USC? Riverside?”

“Our Lady of Salvation.”

“That’s a primary school—what?” Sam looked puzzled.

Lena laughed. “Sam! The little lady you’ve heard about is a pen pal! Come with me.” Lena took
Sam to her office and grabbed the box. She showed her the letters and pictures.

Sam looked up at her. “So, you’re telling me that a balloon floated by with a letter on it and you just struck up a correspondence with a little girl? And you’re consistent with it?”

“I am.” Lena shrugged. “I can’t disappoint her.”

Sam looked at the pictures. “Wow, she has some hot ladies in her life.”

“Sam!” Lena glared at her. Sam smirked at her.

“What? Just being honest. And her mother ain’t half bad. And single.”

“I think her having a kid says something about her sexuality.”

Sam arched a brow. “I’m a single mother and very aggressively bisexual.”

Lena sat down behind her desk. “Hm, right.” She reached and took Sam’s hand. “You should bring Ruby around soon. I miss my niece.”

“Come over for dinner when you get back from Germany. I’ll make cauliflower pizza.”

“With spinach?”

“…You’ll get your own pizza.” Sam leaned down and kissed her cheek. “I should get back. It’s a long drive. Love you.”

“You too.” Lena smiled as Sam left. She rubbed her chin and looked at the family portrait Audra drew. She thought of Ruby at that moment. Ruby was about to be a teenager. Her mother had gone from a broke teenager to the method to the madness of Lena’s company. Sam was all business and cunning while Lena was a lot of inventiveness. Ruby looked to Sam as a hero and she was endlessly pushed to be who she wanted to be because Sam knew what a fight it was to be happy.

Lena pulled the email up again. She looked up the name. Got a few pictures and a dissertation about ecoterrorism. She had to get to the second page to see Dr. Rose as the chairman of the organization of IPWEW.

She called the number Lillian put in.

She sat back, got transferred by a secretary.

“This is Doctor Rose.”

“Well, Doctor, it’s Lena Luthor. I’d like to take you up on your offer. Could I ask though why a Ph.D. in botany would lead you to be the chairman of an organization focused mostly on tech and robotics?”

The doctor choked up for a second before chuckling devilishly. She drawled, “well we all have to live for something more than a job. Miss Luthor, you’ll just die if you bury yourself in paperwork.” She stopped. “I’ll organize your transportation and such. It’s in the state so it’ll be hardly a commute for you.”

“Very well. I have an additional request.” She looked at the photographs. “You say that girls as young as four can be a part of this. But do they have to be a member of a chapter to attend this?”

“Well, I would suppose no. Why? You have a munchkin none of us know about?”
Lena chuckled. “Something like that. I just need admission for a girl and her mother if it isn’t too much of trouble.”

“I’ll send them overnight. I’ll email more info. Thank you, Miss—”

“Just Lena, Doctor.”

“Then it’s Lillian.”

“I would prefer not calling you that.”

“Well, my friends call me Ivy.”

“Is that because you grow on people?” She heard the line go dead. “Hello?”
Kara folded her computer to make it a tablet and clicked her stylus on. She balanced her cellphone between her ear and shoulder as she walked out of Cat’s office with her list of tasks. She worked with setting a location for her celebration of the anniversary of the publication. Next, she had to worry about the bar, the catering, the arrangements, the guest list…

She groaned after getting off a call just to get a call. From Mon.

She answered. “I’m sorry, I don’t have time for this,” she opened.

“What?”

“I know this has nothing to do with Audra. You and I agreed the first month of Laramie’s life she wouldn’t be spending the night with you.”

He cleared his throat. “Well, you know that Imra had to stay for some treatment—"

“I didn’t know that!” Kara gasped out. She put her computer down and tucked into a hall. “Is she okay? Why is she in the hospital? Is Laramie okay?”

“Hey—whoa—you’re more nervous than I am.” She heard screaming of a baby behind him. He let out an exasperated sigh. “I need some help.”

“That’s a bit weird.” She paused when she heard another cry and he pleaded.

“Please, Kara…”

She was going to say something but she realized she had help. She had a lot of help.

Her mind went to when Audra first got sick. Kara was overwhelmed because she had finals and she was full on crying with a feverish baby in her arms. Winn talked her down and drove them to the emergency room. He was the person talking and he got Kara to mumble all the needed information and wrote them with steady hands. Audra was okay, and her fever broke. Kara calmed down and she thanked him for being calm through the ordeal. He said he wasn’t at all calm. They spent the rest of the day in her apartment

Then to when she got evicted due to missing rent. She was a waitress and a student then. She had a shitty car that she piled all her things into after retrieving it from the curbside. Alex took her in without hesitating. She was at time a med student and more exhausted than Kara was probably—and that was saying something. She didn’t say anything about the crying and took up helping Kara feed. She was there. She was always there.

Kara swallowed. “Fine. I’ll be over there soon. I have an errand to run in your area anyway.” She hung up and grabbed her things. She checked in with Cat before running off. She quickly took the menu plan Cat hashed out to the caterer and then went to see Mon.

She could hear the crying doors away. She knocked and he opened right up. He held little Laramie in his arms and he looked exhausted. “Oh, thank god,” he whispered. He stepped inside.
“What’s the problem?”

“That’s the thing; I don’t know the problem. I fed him, changed him, burped him, tried to take him outside…nothing.” He was bouncing Laramie gently. “I don’t know. I don’t know, Kara.”

Kara sighed. She reached and he passed Laramie over. Kara walked into the living room. She recalled it being in order. That was until Imra was out of commission. Now there were blankets and toys all over the floor. “So, what’s wrong with Imra?”

“Nothing major considering such a gross oversite,” he muttered. He sighed and slumped against the couch when they sat on the floor. “She got an infection and…they just need to keep her under observation.”

“Understandable.” Kara laid Laramie on a blanket. He was still screaming and crying. Kara cooed and sang to him while rubbing his belly.

Oh, all the comrades that e'er I had
They're sorry for my going away
And all the sweethearts that e'er I had
They'd wish me one more day to stay
But since it falls unto my lot
That I should rise and you should not
I'll gently rise and softly call
Good night and joy be with you all

He melted into hiccups and small cries. She let him hold her fingers and kept singing.

Good night and joy be with you all

He looked up at her. She looked over at Mon-el. He frowned. “He just felt like crying. Just giving him some soothing affection and singing can help. It’s white noise. I’m sure Imra sang to him. Talk to him. He knows your voice I’m sure.” She smiled at the little boy.

“You’re really good,” he said.

“I’ve done this before.” She picked Laramie up and cradled him. Mon-el pulled a knee to his chest.

“I don’t know anything about how it was for you.” He looked at Kara, eyes filled with urgency. “Kara, I know I’m really lucky for you to give me this chance. I did nothing to earn it.”

“Am I supposed to say you did? You grew as a person, but I didn’t get to see any of it.” She looked back at him, seeing the struggle in his posture as he bristled.

“So, you see I have changed?” He looked hopeful.

“I do. But that fixes nothing with my trust in you.” He slumped a bit in the shoulders, looked hurt. “Mon-el, you say you can’t trust your mother for all the things she did to you as a child and how she tried to control you and Imra. It’s rational. It’s fair.” She leaned in closer to him. “So, you should see my point of view a bit better with that in mind. See I can’t trust you because of the things you did to
me while we were dating and your willingness to abandon your own child because you felt you weren’t ready.”

“But did you really want the man you were with to be a dad?”

“I wanted to be able to communicate with him so at least he did something. Mon-el I got evicted from my apartment and lived on Alex’s couch. I was working myself to death. A little bit from you would’ve made a world of difference. You chose to rip the silver spoon from your mouth, Mon-el. No one took it from you. Audra didn’t get anything. I’m lucky now but back then it was a lot of step to step.”

“Eliza didn’t help you? Clark didn’t help you?”

She bit the inside of her mouth and shook her head. “She was putting her daughter through med school. Her mother was dying and she was taking care of her. She wasn’t in place to help me and I wasn’t in the place to ask. And that’s not the point,” she whispered harshly, failing to address his second question. “You didn’t help me. You didn’t have to be a dad but you have obligations as a father. Ones you willingly made sure you didn’t have to worry about. You only came back because your mother scared you off. You only came into Audra’s life because your wife wore you down. You didn’t develop. You were convinced.”

“No…” He shook his head. “I want to see my little girl grow up.”

“You missed a lot already.”

“I know. I know.” He wet his lips before speaking. “I…I know things are raw. I’m walking on eggshells.”

“You are? I feel like I am,” she chuckled humorlessly. He took his son carefully and Kara patted her knees.

“Really?”

“I’m the person making the decisions here. If I do something too passive Audra could get hurt. I do something too totalitarian, I could end up with your resentment. Your resentment could hurt me because you’re still in touch with Rhea.”

He hung his head. He held his son close and stood up slowly. “Kara, we need to be in this together.”

“I’m sorry, but I don’t know what “together” looks like here.”

“Switching off holidays and birthdays, sharing the load, sharing the costs…you’ve spent a lot of time alone. And I know that I’m lucky to not be in jail for avoiding child support all those years. That my mother has helped me get out of a lot when it came to my daughter. That she continues to just make this harder—I want that to change.”

“Wanting and making are different.” She stood up and stared him down. “You’ve been a parent for a while now, but you’re finally becoming a dad. You are accepting a lot. Not just with Audra. But with that boy. What changed, hm? Really? Are you ready for the stress? The anxiety? Because you have to accept that a child is a lot of failure with bits and pieces of victory. That you can’t throw in the towel. Because then what?” She looked at him. “Then what, Mon-el?” She put her hand on the back of his head and pushed his gaze onto Laramie’s face. The boy was smiling at his daddy, face smushed against Mon’s chest. “What would happen to this little boy if you quit? Hm?”

He bit his lip as she let him go. “I want to be a dad. I want to be there. Be a hero.”
“How am I to believe you?”

“Because I’m trying.” He set his jaw.

“How?”

“I want to take on more responsibility.” Laramie was beginning to fuss again. Mon-el turned his attention.

“Mon-el, you just did. That baby boy is going to need all you can give him.” She put a hand on Mon-el’s shoulder. “Just…you focus on this for now.” She took her leave as Mon-el quietly sang to his son. Singing Frank Sinatra songs to Lars and periodically kissing the boy’s little hands and head.

Kara shut the door and sighed.

Audra came running up to Kara holding an envelope. “Mommy!” The girl ran into Kara’s arms. Kara picked her up and kissed her cheek.

“Hey, bean.” Kara smiled as she put down Audra. “Lena write you again?”

“Yeah! She sent pictures from Germany and these.” The girl handed Kara over the envelope. Kara opened it and pulled out two tickets and a letter addressed to her.

Kara,

These are two tickets to a STEM convention aimed towards girls Audra’s age. There will be activities, speeches, booths, and various places to sign up for classes and chapters of In Power Women Empower Women. I’m working with the chairman currently for this convention and thought of Audra. Her fondness for math and zoology might show it a fun activity. And I find it personally a way to help reinforce a sense of confidence in the girl. She really is quite a bright child.

It is less than an hour drive from National City and hope you two can make it. I don’t wish to meet you two but would find it a lovely experience for Audra for the least. But if the girl wishes to see me, I wouldn’t be opposed to it. It is up to you, as her mother of course.

Thank you,

Lena

Kara smiled to herself. Her and Audra went to the car. “Did you read this?”

“No, Miss Eman says it’s a federal crime to read other people’s mail.” Kara laughed a bit and had Audra hold the letter and tickets for her after she got Audra into the car seat for her.

“Lena got you and I tickets to a science convention at the end of the month. They’ll be things you can make and ladies in the field will be talking to girls your age and interested in working in scientific fields when they get older. Would you like to go?”

“Yeah!” Audra smiled brightly.

“Okay. Mommy’s going to do some research and try to get the time off.” She kissed the girl’s head.
Kara power walked through the lobby of the Catco building. About fifty different swear words coursed through her brain as she ran up the stairs, trying not to topple the four cups of coffee in the tray. Her alarm didn’t go off. She was running late and it didn’t help she had been given an errand before work to get the coffees. One for Cat, one for LL (Cat mentioned she would be coming), one for Winn, and then Kara’s. Kara held in her other hand a box of pastries Cat wanted her to pick up. She was running up and just needed to beat Cat to her desk. She checked her watch to make sure she was on time.

Then she hit something solid. She collided and the coffee went onto her and the box on the floor.

Kara staggered back and panted with the pain of hot coffee all over her front. She looked up with gritted teeth.

LL stood there, hands up in the air and her eyes looking at herself. She, somehow, had avoided getting a drop on her.

“I’m so sorry—” Kara started.

“You’re sorry? I’m not the one who is covered!” LL gasped and she grabbed tissues from her purse and began blotting at Kara’s dress. “I’m so sorry. I…” She looked at Kara.

Kara swallowed nervously as jade eyes met hers. “Don’t worry about it.” She looked away.

“Do I know you?” Lena whispered.

“You paid for my coffee once,” Kara laughed, forcing out good humor as her skin burned. She knelt to pick up the dropped cups and the box and froze when the elevator dinged. She looked up to see Cat coming and she tensed up.

Cat took off her sunglasses. “What happened?”

LL spoke first, “Oh it seems I ran into your assistant.”

“Kiera, go home and clean up. We’ve had the conversation about how you looking poor reflects on this company.”

Kara hung her head. “Yes, Miss Grant.” She picked up the box and dropped it into her trash. “I’m very sorry—”

“I don’t want to hear an apology!” Cat snapped. Kara winced and frowned. She stood up. “Oh. stop that.”

“Cat,” LL warned. She brushed the woman aside. “Here, I always carry spare clothes.” She pulled out a folded up black dress from her tote style purse. “Go change and I’ll see to it this gets cleaned up.”

“Okay,” Kara whispered. She smiled weakly and walked to the bathroom.

Lena looked over at Cat. “You said her name was Kiera?” Cat shrugged and looked aside. “I swear she looked like someone I’ve been getting to know for the past month. Oh, well.” She shrugged and frowned. She and Cat went into the woman’s office.
“You’re surprisingly gentle.”

“I find your assistant is your first line of defense. No need for cruelty if unprovoked, Cat. Sun Tzu said so himself, a good commander is benevolent.”

Lena peeked out the window as the girl came back out. The dress looked better on her. A collared black bodycon dress. She, though, looked uncomfortable.

“You’re only benevolent because you saw her good looks,” Cat remarked.

“Maybe.” Lena put her hands in her jacket pockets. “It’s been a long few years, Catherine.” The woman made a face and Lena laughed softly. “I was thinking you could come along with me to a convention I’m speaking at.”

“What for?” Cat sat on her couch.

“It encourages young girls to go after STEM. I know you’re the humanities and politics sort of woman but maybe you can write about all that female empowerment.” She grabbed a press pass from her purse. “I got a few of these as part of my requests. I wanted you to take one.”

“I’m not much for that sort of fluff pieces.”

“‘High Rise Jeans: Are They Just for Moms’ is hard-hitting journalism?” Cat scowled at her. Lena smiled a bit.

“Maybe I should write about your pen pal? What was her name again?”

“Audra. She turns six in a few weeks.” Lena smiled. “I hope I have a daughter like her one day.”

Cat arched a brow. She stood up. “You know, I think I might send a photographer with you.” She stepped out of her office. She came back with a tall young man. He was wearing a tight button up and a tie done in a full Windsor. His head was shaved and he carried himself with a sense of swagger. But Lena couldn’t be intimidated, rather intrigued as he had these gentle brown eyes that regarded her with curiosity.

“Lena, James Olsen, Jimmy, Lena,” Cat said. James rolled his eyes. He offered a hand to Lena.

“Pleasure Miss Luthor,” he said.

“Pleasure’s mine,” she said, smiling as she took his hand and briefly shook it.

“So, why am I here?” James looked down at Cat.

“I have an assignment for you. A photo story of the convention Miss Luthor will be telling you about right now. Lena?” Cat looked at the young woman.

“Well—it’s an annual meeting of various chapters of an organization that does work to promote the love of STEM in young girls. I thought giving it some attention would be helpful. I’ve been researching it a lot and it is quite lovely and I plan on doing more work with it in the future.”

He nodded, smiling. “I love it. I’ll do it.” He took the pass. “Could I have a second one for an assistant. I’ll be bringing my tech guy.”


“If you’re referring to my boyfriend, yes.”
Lena looked at him and smiled even more. “I’d love to meet him as well.”

“He’s the hobbit in the blue cardigan outside.” He tipped his head and Lena looked out. She saw next to Cat’s assistant was a young man. He had a five o’clock shadow and was rather short. His hair was dark and cropped. He was smiling as he talked to the assistant and she lit up as they spoke. “That’s Winn.”


“You know, he’s a big tech nerd. The IT guy here but honestly, he could do a lot more. The man has built his own computers and has gutted old pieces and made new things.” He smiled at her. “I think a conversation with you would actually be his dream come true.”

“Well, I want to be able to talk more, Jimmy.” He cringed a bit. “And to talk to him if you speak so fondly.” She held up her card and a second press pass. “Call me. I’d love to have dinner before the convention.”

“Yeah—cool.” He cleared his throat and took it, hit by a wave of sweet smelling perfume when she moved. He quickly took his leave.

“You okay?” Winn whispered to Kara. “I saw you get completely soaked when you ran into Cat’s friend.”

“Whatever.” She shrugged and shifted in the dress. She wished it didn’t hug around her midsection. She had mostly gotten rid of the baby weight but there would always exist that bit of softness, that bit of flesh. She took a cardigan from her desk to cover herself with.

She watched as James entered Cat’s office. “I wonder what they’re talking about,” Winn mumbled.

“You’ll know soon enough. James isn’t good at keeping secrets from you.” Kara returned to ordering the centerpieces of the tables for Cat’s get-together. She had sent the invitations out already.

“I just know he’s mentioned having a boyfriend in the past few minutes. I love it. You can kinda see chick’s eyes gloss over after it,” Winn told her. She smiled and rolled her eyes. “But she doesn’t look half bad, that woman. Do you know her name though?”

“I just have LL in Cat’s calendar. And she doesn’t look like her eyes glossed over yet.”

Winn shrugged. “So…how is Mon-el doing with his single-parent week?”

“I don’t want to talk about that,” Kara said in a sing-song way as she swiveled her chair to face away from Winn.

James came out holding two press passes. “Winn, you and I have a date with photography and pandemonium.”

“IPWEW?” Winn questioned as he took the pass. “Isn’t that a girl power thing?”

“Miss Luthor, the woman in that room, is a speaker at the convention,” James explained.

“Luthor?” Kara looked up. “As in Lex Luthor?”

“As in the man who sent a hitman on Clark? Yes.”
“There’s another one,” Kara said.

Her mind went to Clark. Her cousin was on the other side of the country. He was the one who found her a home in the Danvers. He was twenty-four when she became an orphan. In no place to become a father. He turned to Jeremiah, knowing him from a mentoring program. He was a good journalist, Cat was very, very, very fond of him. She didn’t know Kara was his kid cousin though. Part of Lex’s list of what makes him one of the most wanted men is that he hired a hitman on Clark due to an exposé he wrote on him. The man sent was caught and Clark survived. Lex was now missing.

“I think this one’s different,” Winn whispered.

Kara shrugged as she watched Miss Luthor walk out. She stopped at Kara’s desk.

The boys split away. The woman put her hand on the white surface and looked down at Kara.

Kara had gotten used to looking into green eyes. Audra’s deep eyes made her think of mossy brick walls filled with history. She saw a beautiful and old soul in the girl. But Miss Luthor…it was like she was looking at a piece of polished jade. Valuable, hard, shining…they even had a ring of gold color at the rim that solidified the imagery of a gem pendant sealed in the precious metal. It took words from Kara’s throat, swallowing them down as she now longed for water quiet suddenly.

Kara Danvers was, shamelessly, thirsty.

“You can keep that dress. It looks better on you,” Miss Luthor whispered softly. She winked and smirked. Her bright lips curved up devilishly and Kara dug her nails into her thighs under her desk. She nodded quickly.

“T-thank you, Miss Luthor.”

She nodded. “Have a nice day.” She walked off.

Kara let out a shaky breath and then sucked in a harsh one when she saw Cat coming out of her office.

Cat looked slightly conflicted. She was fidgeting with her hands slightly. “Kiera—Kara…I want to apologize for snapping at you. It was an accident, what happened. Out of your control.”

“I forgive you, Miss Grant. Thank you.” Kara smiled pleasantly at her.

Cat nodded at her and then headed to her office.

“Wait—Miss Grant?”

Cat stopped and looked at her. “Yes?”

“What’s Miss Luthor’s first name?” Kara looked at her.

Cat just smirked. “You’ll know soon enough.” She disappeared into her office.

“Soon enough?” Kara repeated to herself.
I have to thank you all for so much positive feedback. I really love working on and am glad so much interest has been expressed in it.
Lena bit her lip as she looked at the blinking cursor on the word document. She had just deleted half a page that was just her listing of statistics that would solidify the need for such organizations. She frowned to herself as she shut her laptop and sat back in defeat.

She straightened up when Jess knocked before coming in with the mail. She put down the packages for Lena containing contracts and the overnighted samples from a lab in Korea.

Jess looked hopeful as she put a letter on Lena’s desk.

Lena smiled half-heartedly and tucked the letter from Audra into her briefcase.

“Later,” she said softly. Jess pouted a bit. “I’m never going to get this speech done.”

“Want me to look at it?” Jess leaned over Lena’s desk. She read the first few lines. “Lena, you’re talking to girls from age four to fifteen. You don’t need to bust out those five-syllable words. You really don’t need to prove you’re the smartest in the room.”

“I don’t speak like this to say that I’m smarter than everyone else. That’s how I present myself.”

“Just think like it’s a press conference, not a board meeting. You don’t want your words misinterpreted so just be straight with it.”

“For once,” Lena joked.

Jess hunched over and fought a groan. She left Lena be. The CEO glared at her laptop for a few more moments before shutting it roughly.

She took the samples down to the lab.

She got them into freezing and ran it through with her newest team. Leia nodded along as she received instruction, the new team leader. She was taking illegible notes on her pad as she kept eye contact.

Lena went back up to her office, of course working on correspondence and various other tasks that she repeats day in and day out like it is her boulder, and she Sisyphus. She would start again eternally, each day as it rolled to the bottom of the hill.

She rubbed her eyes and sighed. She got out after eight, pulling thirteen hours. That was a good day, she knew. She grabbed dinner on the way home and settled on the couch with whiskey and watching Kill Bill.

She struggled with her chopsticks and gave up, trading for a fork to twirl in her noodles. She reached for her bag and pulled out the letters. She opened the letter and took out the folded papers.

_Dear Lena,_

_Mommy and I are going to the science day. I want to meet you there! We can do all the building together. Mommy said there would be a place to make rockets!_

_Mommy and Miss Eman want to know why you will be there. Are you a scientist? You travel a lot but I don’t know how you look._
I want to be able to do what my uncle Winn does. He can work with computers. I love animals a lot but it would be fun to do what he does. He works with my mommy and sees her all day.

Mommy says that it is rude to assume how people look or how they act, but I think that you must be really pretty because your writing is pretty. I can’t read a lot of it without mommy. Imra tries to teach me how to do it. I can sign my name like the way you write!

-Audra

The little one signed her name like she swore she could. It was worse than her printed writing. Lena smiled to herself and put it aside. She looked up at the ceiling. Kara was probably not much older than her. She couldn’t imagine being a mother at this age. Her job took everything from her a lot. She looked around her apartment. It was too big for one person. The walls were bare and it was all minimalistic.

She had never shared a place with a partner. Didn’t have roommates in college. She lived off campus. But it would’ve been terribly awkward. She was sixteen when she went into the graduate program. She was a TA at seventeen and hardly commanded respect.

She grabbed her whiskey and finished it off and clumsily poured more. She got up, walking around. She aimlessly tossed her trash away and walked around the halls.

You’re at no way ready to be a mother at this age. You could’ve at least had a serious relationship by now, she thought. She laughed a bit.

“When?” She scorned herself. When had she expressed any readiness for a relationship besides her crippling sense of loneliness? It was an oppressive household that kept her from being a teenager and dating. She was scared to death by her own sexuality. She would get physically sick after talking to Lillian or having to sit in their conservative Irish Catholic church. College was terrible as there was such a large age gap it made her constantly on edge and work buried her desires. Now? Work was all her time. It was what she was married to, it was her child—it just was.

She was drinking from the bottle by this point. She got into a random guest room rather her bed. She flinched when her phone went off. She grabbed it and held it up. A phone call from Sam.

She picked up and put it to her ear. “Yeah?”

“I’m just checking on you.”

“I’m jus’—I’m jus’ doing my best,” Lena mumbled to her.

“Wine?”

“Whiskey!” Lena chuckled and put the bottle to her lips, choking on her next gulp. She sat up and coughed. She felt her throat burn and tears form in her eyes.

“I sense you’re nervous about something.”

“Is there something wrong with me?” Lena whispered.

Sam went quiet. “Of course not.”

“Liar.” Lena got off the bed with her whiskey and stumbled through the halls.

“Honey put the drinks away and go to bed,” Sam pleaded.
“Tell me. What’s wrong with me?” Lena slammed the bottle on the counter, the force almost enough to break it.

Sam sighed on her side of the line. “You want to be happy.”


“No—it’s the desire without the effort. Lena, there is no happiness in doing the same thing over and over. You go to work, you come home. You travel, you work, you come home. But what’s home?”

“Home is…” She looked around. “The jury is still out on what home is. I was the persona non grata with Lillian since day one. Lionel couldn’t keep me from that and it just got worse when he died.” She slumped her shoulders. “How come I only think about a family when I’m sad or drinking?”

“Because you wouldn’t be drinking this much if you had a mom that treated you like home.” Sam clicked her tongue.

Lena sat on the floor and put her head between her knees. “Ruby’s home to you?”

Sam’s voice changed when Ruby became the subject. “She is my heart. And where your heart is, that’s home.” Sam sighed. “Lena, I still am unhappy. I don’t have a perfect work balance. I don’t have someone to do this with…”

“You could easily fix that.”

“My kid is a package deal. That scares a good bit of people our age.” Sam and Lena were quiet for a moment. “Just go to bed. When you get really sad you should just let that big brain of yours switch off.”

“Yeah.” Lena laughed a bit. “I think if I had a mom like you, I’d be a lot less fucked up.”

“I would’ve picked up little Lena and carried her off,” Sam said gently. Lena could tell in her voice she was tearing up in the way when a strong sense of empathy triggers it. Even if one’s body has no sense of wanting to sob or even a register of negative emotion.

“I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. I called you because I wanted you to talk.” Sam sniffled a bit. “Lena, you’re twenty-four. You don’t need to have this all figured out. I don’t think I have it right and I’m twenty-nine.”

Lena bit her lip. “I just…I’m going to go crazy if I have to be alone much longer. I hate my own company at this point. It’s solitary not solitude.”

“Let’s go out soon. I’ll get a babysitter and we’ll try to find us some babes.”

Lena swallowed. “I don’t like the sound of that.”

“What’s your idea? Running into a cute girl carrying files and colliding?”

_I mean running into a cute girl carrying coffees threw me for a whirl…_

“Is that not how it works?” Lena mumbled.

“Only in teen movies and fan fiction.” Sam let out a small huff. “You don’t believe in fate, correct?”

“For the most part.”
“Then why do you think that’s how it’ll happen?”

“Because the shock and sparkle is there. Where is the spark in blind dates? Where is the wonder in a Tinder hookup?” Lena sighed. “I might believe in destiny, Sam. I’m not a nihilist. I should be! I’m a scientist! Science telling love is chemical. I should know better.”

“But yet logic tells us that’s no way for animals so advanced to live.” Sam paused. “You deserve love, Lena. You are so wonderful and brilliant . . . and I want you to drink some water and get some sleep. Tomorrow can be different, but it’s too late for today. Just sleep. I love you, Lena.”

Lena mumbled, “I love you, squid.” They both laughed for a moment before hanging up. Lena then slept fitfully.

Winn never got to hear fairy tales. His mother would read him the classics before she left. Winslow was so wrapped up in work he would just sit and talk to his son. The boy would be hiding under his duvet and have to hear sobering rants of his father punctuated with a goodnight kiss and encompassing darkness because the light left with mom.

He never had to learn them outside of school. He had to read a few in creative writing classes. He wrote one, failing because it lacked what a fairy tale had to be. Though what was the concurrent theme? Love? Murder and rape? Child abuse?

He knew Disney movies were the rage and honestly, he wasn’t past belting out some tunes because he would be lying if they weren’t catchy. He had plenty of them on his phone just for when he drove Audra home. People joked he had a prince charming jaw and the voice to match.

His niece made him realize why fairy tales were good to have at least partially memorized. Just one or two.

Because he was the last one awake after game night. Kara had cleaned up all the plates and play money. He threw away the bottles and put the cups in the sink.

Kara passed out then. He put a blanket over her, smiling as she splayed out on the couch. James stretched out on the floor. Maggie was curled up next to Alex on the floor, a couple feet away.

Winn always struggled to sleep. He smiled a bit and looked at his phone, feeling time and the water he sipped at sobering him. Though none of them had drunk too much. The alcohol didn’t come out until Kara had gotten Audra to fall asleep while they watched a movie. Then she carried her to bed and tucked her in.

But Audra came out of bed.

Winn watched her little figure appear in the hallway. At first, he almost jumped, then registered it was only the five-year-old. He got up and walked over to her. “What’s wrong, bean?” He whispered. She held up her empty glass. He got it filled back up for her and led her back to bed.

“How can I get a story?” She whispered to him as he pulled her blanket to her chin.

“How…what kind?” He asked. He never had to tuck her in. Audra didn’t sleep over with him. Only Maggie and Alex. He didn’t have the room to or the means to. If he was sleeping over at Kara’s, Audra usually was down for the night.
“Any story,” Audra told him. She was near sleep. It didn’t have to be good—he just had to be confident in it.

He wished he knew a fairy tale. But he didn’t have one, but he knew a lot of happy endings.

He smiled softly. “Does your mom ever talk about the day you were born?” Audra shook her head. “Alright.” He smiled softly and asked her to scoot over. He put an arm around her, laying back in her bed. He had one leg on the floor as the bed couldn’t fit him and her. “It was spring. It was just after dinner and your mom was with me and your aunt…”

He went on to tell the disastrous and rather comical story of how Kara didn’t believe it was an actual labor, thinking it as Braxton-Hicks contractions as Audra had another month before her due date. He weaves the story of how Kara goes about her day, just thinking she was in pain. She went to a lecture, worked on schoolwork, and was actually planning on going to work as she hadn’t planned on taking leave until the next week.

But then Alex got clued in during dinner and suggested Kara go to the hospital. Kara was too stubborn. Time went on and at one point, of course, Kara’s water breaks and her contractions are getting closer together. Winn drives her to the hospital. They get lost, they got stuck in traffic, they got to the hospital and couldn’t find the entrance because at that time it was late in the night. They get in and Kara, her wonderful self, just quietly tells a nurse she’s in labor.

It was a whirlwind, one where Winn is asked if he is the father at least five times. Kara has a natural birth (she to this day says she wishes she had been shot full of drugs but alas). The first thing Audra does once Kara holds her is shits on her.

By the end, he muffles the laugh about the last part and sees the girl has lolled off.

He smiled, “you’re going to miss the best part. After everything was cleaned up…she was in a room. It was her, your aunt, your grandmother, and me. You did this big stretch in your mommy’s arms and we all just were in love. Your mother said how she didn’t think she would be strong enough to do it, but she did. The doctors worried would you be strong enough. But you were. “Noble strength.” Our Audra.” He kissed her head. “A happy ending and the beginning of a saga wrapped up into one little bean.”

He slowly got out of bed and turned her light back off, leaving only the nightlight.

He strolled out and back into the living room. He saw Kara sat up, glasses off. She looked at him when he came in.

“Did she wake up?” she rasped.

“Yeah. I told her a story to get her back to bed.”

“I swear if you told her a college story like Maggie does when she tucks her in…”

“No. I told her a good story.” He sat next to her. “About the disaster that was your labor.” She rolled her eyes. She leaned into him. His chest used to clench when she did this. He remembered that day in the hospital. A lot of tears and so many whispered promises. He kept it no matter what. Keep that girl loved.

He frowned a bit, thinking of those few months when the girl was a toddler. He had confessed and blocked Kara away. It was the worst for both of them.

I hate ego. He looked at his boyfriend and smiled a bit.
“Life is good, Kara,” he sighed.

“I just want more,” she mumbled. She hugged his arm.

“And that’s okay. Let’s get you more.” He smiled at her. “The next time you’re in that hospital room I want you to have a spouse by your side, not me.”

“And to be drugged within an inch of my life because holy shit.”

“Okay, but how did you power through a lecture silently and yet couldn’t take the final throws of labor?”

“Anxiety-induced strength. I was in a room of three hundred. I already stuck out like a sore thumb. I wasn’t about to cringe and cry.”

He rolled his eyes. “So, what are you looking for in someone?”

“In someone? I think it’ll be a woman soon…I think. I don’t know. I think a nice sweet woman. Has a childish side but not in the way Mon-el was childish. I just…don’t take everything or themselves too seriously.”

“I think it’ll hit you really hard. Whapow! You’ll see them and you’ll just freeze. They’ll talk and you’ll just…be in awe. You are a romantic.”

“Yeah. I mean—does a romantic turn down two people with good chemistry and nice looks?”

“A romantic goes off of a spark. We didn’t spark you. Simple as that.” He got up and moved over to his boyfriend on the floor. “Sparky spark, spark…zap.” He chuckled and laid down with James. James immediately pulled him close.

Kara smiled softly and laid back down.
Act 2, Scene 1: Lena, shy speaker. Kara and Audra, the focal point in the crowd.

Kara didn’t need an alarm on that day. Audra jumped up on her bed a good ten minutes before it could begin to go off. The girl had learned to tell time so she used the clock in her room to tell. She knew when to get up to beat Kara to waking up.

“Mommy wake up! It’s time!” Kara groaned and looked over at her alarm clock. They had an hour before they had to be on the road. She was so used to having to haggle with the girl to get her out of bed. Not today.

“Okay. Okay.” She got up and did her morning routine with Audra. When it came time to get dressed Kara remembered the quid pro quo from the night before. If Audra, who was being particularly fussy due to excitement, went to bed without further incident she could dress Kara for the event.

Kara sighed a bit as she sat on the bed and watched her daughter look through her closet. She pulled out the skirt of something.

She chose the bodycon dress that Miss Luthor gave Kara. The woman kept it. Miss Luthor said to and there was no way for her to return it unless she wanted to do it through Miss Grant. And she’d rather not ask favors of Cat. “This?” Audra smiled at her mom.

Kara changed into it and she also let the girl pick her lipstick color. “Can you put in contacts too?” Audra asked.

Kara had been wearing glasses more often than not, even though she had a prescription for contacts. She had mornings with little time to spare that would be her hyping herself up to put a film on her eyeball.

But she obliged, failing a few times but succeeding. She looked to see her daughter smiling brightly. She didn’t know how her daughter watching had impacted her.

Audra had a budding sense of beauty being for the individual and not for anyone else because of her mother. Kara did what she did because she either liked it or she didn’t like something she was fixing. She never showed worry or sadness over parts of her. Kara was put together in appearance and her daughter knew it. Got excited about it for herself now as well.

The girl got dressed in the clothes she picked out for herself last night. She looked deadly adorable with a t-shirt that said “stay positive!” with an atom model on it and a pair of mustard yellow overall shorts. She wore a pair of black lace-up boots that were a close second to her red shoes in her favorites. Kara did up her hair in a ponytail for her.

They were out the door a bit early. Audra stayed occupied in the back with her tablet and Kara played her usual mix of Disney songs with instances of Taylor Swift.

They got to the convention center and Kara parked. She had to hold Audra’s hand to keep the girl from running off to get inside. They got their tickets checked and they entered.

Kara felt instantly overwhelmed. There were things flying through the air, kids running around, chattering voices, people bumping into them and some crying children. Any event for kids will have those.
Kara let the girl pick what to do first. She immediately picked slime making. Not coding robots, not sugar water density, not even the reptiles! Slime.

Kara put on a small smile as she and Audra worked on their slime and Kara wondered how scientific it was. Then the volunteer talked with the girls, explaining the chemical reaction (what they were in the context of the real world), and what was causing it. How chemical bonds work in a rather abridged way that the girls could physically see and understand thanks to making the slime.

Kara’s victory was keeping Audra clean as the girls were given smocks. The girl skipped along after they got a container for her slime and it went into the tote bag they were given at the entrance.

They found the reptiles. Kara stayed back a bit, averse to such things. Audra was all about it. She held the little snakes they had and even held a tarantula.

“Mommy she’s so fuzzy!” Audra chuckled as she watched the arachnid climb up her arm. Kara gave her a tight smile and nodded.

They went to a few more stands before it was time for the speakers. It was optional but it did draw quite a bit of the older crowd. Audra was the youngest attendee with actual interest. Though that came in wanting to see Lena.

They settled into their chairs. Audra was squirming and pouting as the chairman was giving her spiel about her joy in seeing so many attendees and how vital this passion would be in their later years. Vital things but rather redundant.

“Now I know I’ve caused a few eyes to glaze over so I’ll hand it off our guest speaker. She is the highest ranked woman in the science and tech field. Ladies, and the few gentlemen I see here, please help me welcome Miss Lena Luthor,” Dr. Rose announced. She clapped as a young woman came up.

*L Luthor. Miss Lena Luthor. Lena….*

Kara felt her throat tighten and she looked at her daughter. The girl’s face lit up.

“She’s so pretty,” the girl said. “And that’s why she travels. CEO people do that right? Miss Cat is a CEO, right?”

“Yes, baby.” Kara shifted. She wondered why a CEO gave a little girl time out of her day. Why she tried so hard. Why?

She made her feel guilty in thinking any distrust in the name “Luthor” when attached to that woman. The woman was kind and softly spoken when they had encountered each other. She had made Audra’s day with letters for the past few months.

Kara smiled softly and looked at Lena.

Lena searched the crowd a bit as if she really could find the little girl in the crowd. She really expected a five-year-old to sit through this?

She looked at her note cards. *God this speech is so boring.*

She swallowed and shifted around her notes on the podium. She looked up and made eye contact
with someone in the crowd.

Not just any someone. She recognized those eyes from a single photo of serenity.

Kara was sat in the third row, smiling at Lena. There she saw the girl to her right, squirming in her seat but eyes directed at Lena.

Lena smiled softly and slapped her cards into her palm and spoke up.

“Hi my name is Lena and I have no idea what I’m doing.” She got a bit of laughter, mostly stares. “I’ve spoken in front of boards, teams of people, and the press. You girls are somehow the most intimidating crowd.” She shrugged. “I suppose it’s the idea of seeing the potential. Seeing myself in the past here but with so much more. Chemists, inventors, biologists, zoologists, ecologists, engineers…it’s overwhelming how much pride and hope I have for the field.”

She went on with her speech, completely straying from what Jess and she worked on together. It worked out. She didn’t cuss and she got a strong round of applause after finishing. She stepped off and afterward was approached. A few organizers thanked her, shaking her hand. A few of the older girls came up talking about how they followed Lena on social media and they had her sign a magazine cover she was on that month.

“Lena!” She looked up and saw a little girl in yellow overalls running up to her. Behind her was probably the most beautiful woman Lena had met.

The girl ran up and Lena knew her. “Audra!” She felt her chest be hit with a strong sense of warmth and affection. She took a knee as the girl ran up and engulfed her in a tight hug. “Oh, it’s so amazing to meet you.” She let the girl go and smiled. “I actually brought you a gift.”

“Really?” Audra’s face lit up.

“Well, your birthday is coming up soon! You told me it was.” She smiled softly. She looked up and saw Audra’s mother. Kara.

She was nervous to see her. Her eyes were a striking blue that no picture did justice to. She was smiling slightly, mouth closed and her eyes showing it all for Lena. She was simply happy because her daughter was.

Lena stood up and got her purse from one of the volunteers that held onto it for her. She held up the neatly wrapped red box with dinosaur fossils as the pattern.

“Could you hold onto it and maybe wait until next week for me?” The girl pouted at Lena. “Promise?” She extended a pinkie.

The girl locked pinkies with her and mumbled, “promise.”

“Thank you.”

Kara finally spoke up. “I didn’t expect you to be a person of such esteem.”

“I tried to keep it out of the conversation. Answer what Audra asked and get to know her. I honestly didn’t plan on showing my face or meeting her…but this opportunity arose. And once it did, I thought about women in my field. Thought about this little one. Knew I had to do two things. One, take the offer to speak. Two, invite Audra.”

Kara smiled more, almost a hundred watt. “It’s been a good experience.”
“I got to hold a spider!” Audra interjected.

“You didn’t hold the frog they had?”

The girl pouted a bit and shrugged. “Everyone wanted to hold him.”

“But no one wanted the spider?” Lena looked down at the girl as she nodded. She hadn’t noticed her eyes before. An emerald color. “I’m sure she was happy to get the attention. All animals need a bit of love.”

“Not tigers!” Audra told her.

“Not tigers?” Lena looked up briefly. Kara was looking at her. She wasn’t smiling then. She arched a brow at Lena.

“A lot of felines are solitary.” The girl smiled at her mom—Kara’s stern look disappearing then—and then at Lena. “Mommy and I read a lot of nature books before bed.”

“Well. I didn’t know that.”

“She really loves animals,” Kara told Lena. “We visit zoos and aquariums more than anywhere.”

“Except Seaworld,” Audra told her mommy.

“Especially not them.” Kara put a hand on her daughter’s shoulder.

Lena looked around. “You going to be sticking around here?”

“Well, I was thinking of going somewhere else to get lunch. Why?”

“Can I invite you two to accompany me for lunch? My treat.”

Audra looked up at Kara, flashing her puppy dog eyes. Even if she had Mon’s eyes, she could use them to get whatever she wanted like Kara could.

Kara looked at Lena. “We would love to, Miss Luthor.”

“Please, just call me Lena.”

Lena held her breath until Kara smiled at her. “Okay, Lena.”

Kara felt a cold sweat on her back as they all sat in the booths of the diner. She knew that Audra liked the place a lot and Lena had let the girl pick where to go. But it was dull, it was small, cheap… not where a CEO should be.

Audra asked Lena to play a game with her. They played tic-tac-toe. Lena lost and would make a show out of praising the girl in her victory.

“I won’t stand a chance against you!” Lena said dramatically, smiling. “You ever play chest, Audra? Because you have such a sense of seeing my next step!”

“No. I wanna learn.” The girl pouted. “Uncle Winn tried teaching me but it was hard.”

“I can teach you. It’s hard when you think about all the numbers of it. But when you just look at the
pieces as little people you can move around it’s fun. You’re playing a scene out in a way. Kings and queens. Rival kingdoms.”

“Is there peace in chess?” Audra looked at her.

Lena straightened up and Kara saw a sparkle of amusement in her eyes. “Peace? I’ve never considered that an option.”

“Does anyone?” Audra mumbled and then just focused on drawing the connect the dots on her menu.

Lena looked at Kara. “So, Kara, you’ve been my pen pal as well.” She smiled flirtatiously. “But I feel I don’t know much about you.”

“I’m Audra’s mother. Not much more to know.” Kara shrugged. She had only written to Lena as a warning. Her life wasn’t simple and there was no need to confuse Lena with murky details. Just give her what she needed.

“I would strongly disagree.” Lena rested her chin on her hand, propping her elbow on the table.

“I work for CatCo,” Kara said quietly. Not whispered, voice simply weak as she felt growingly inadequate. This woman didn’t even recognize her she was so forgettable!

Lena tilted her head. “Journalist?”

“Assistant.” Kara watched confusion map out over Lena’s face.

“You’re Cat’s assistant.” She turned red. “Oh wow! I feel foolish for not seeing it now.” She was surprised glasses could do so much.

“Your dress.” Kara lifted the collar up a bit to punctuate.

“It looks even better on you than it does on me when you put your hair down.”

“Audra picked it out for me this morning,” Kara said, smiling down at her daughter as she looked up at her name. Audra smiled.

“Mommy has a lot of pretty clothes. But they’re all the same. Sweaters and dresses.”

“You like fashion?” Lena asked her.

“Yeah! I don’t like having a uniform. They’re ugly.” Audra pouted and looked at her drawing.

“I grew up in uniforms too.” Lena leaned down so the girl and her made eye contact. They both smiled at the other. “Poor and drab. All I can describe them as.”

“Your voice is really funny,” Audra said. Kara jumped and blushed.

“Audra!” She said quickly, shocked. The girl looked confused.

“What?”

“That’s not a nice thing to say,” Kara told her.

“Oh. Sorry,” Audra said simply.
Lena could only laugh at the random comment. “Sorry--It's alright. I was born in Ireland. Moved to the states when the Luthors adopted me.”

“Oh, you aren’t by blood?” Kara looked at her. Lena straightened as she shook her head.

“Why so little people really know me. Lillian couldn’t possibly let the world know that she failed to give Lionel more than one child and that her only fruit was, by the world’s definition, rotten.” Lena’s brows shot up slightly as she grimaced. She waved dismissively.

Kara opened her mouth, hesitating to talk about how she had been adopted as well. She just shut her lips tight and focused on her daughter.

They got their drinks and then ordered. “How long have you lived in National City?” Lena asked Kara when their server left the table.

“Since college. I grew up in Midvale. Little coastal town towards the north.” Kara watched as Lena gently blew on her tea. “You?”

“Only for the year. I don’t know much about the attractions past the Chinese food place I go to and the coffee shop where you looked about ready to bite my head off at. If you’re Cat’s assistant.”

“You know the witch!” Audra squeaked excitedly. It made a few patrons look at the table. Kara blushed and Lena quirked a brow.

“The witch?” Lena asked the girl.

“The barista,” Kara clarified.

“She makes potions that make adults nicer,” Audra told Lena.

Lena was quiet. Her smile grew and she leaned back and muffled a bit of laughter with a well-manicured hand. “Makes potions? I suppose that is quite on the head!” She crossed her arms and rested her elbows on the table. “I take my potions with some added magic.”

“Cat likes her potions with a bit of pixie dust,” Kara mused.

“She does?” Audra lit up.

“Very much so. But hush on it being a potion to her. Very little people really know the magic of these mystical baristas. It’s our secret,” Lena whispered dramatically. “Cat couldn’t understand it.”

“Why does a scientist believe in magic?” Audra challenged.

Lena hummed contemplatively as she straightened up. She tapped her chin and bit her lip. Kara couldn’t help but stare in amusement. Was this woman naturally this wonderful? She didn’t expect it, even if she had been playful and kind in her letters to Audra. She was used to people her age being uncomfortable try-hards around Audra, not having to deal with kids often or at all. She couldn’t expect much of anyone, of course not. But this was...different.

Kara looked down at her lap quickly when Lena caught her staring. The damned woman had flashed a sure smirk when she noticed Kara.

“Potion magic is very much like chemistry. Apothecaries—have you heard that word?” Audra nodded, that making perfect sense to her. “They were little early time pharmacists but also hold so much mythical value. Potions are like solutions and reactions. Magic such as that is science and...
sometimes the amazing things that happen with science are almost magical.”

Audra looked satisfied with that answer. Soon their food came and the shuffling about gave a bit of a lull in the conversation.

“So, you just work and go home I’m guessing,” Kara mused. Lena looked up from stabbing at her salad.

“Basically. If I get home before midnight, it’s a victory.”

“And how often do you travel?”

“Probably about six times a year. Three times is it off the continent.” Lena looked at her. “How long have you worked for Cat?”

“Three years. I used to be a waitress and tour guide at the college. Would pick up a few side shifts as a cleaning lady or dog-walker.” Kara shrugged casually. “It’s not the easiest thing, working for Cat, but it’s good pay and I have medical.”

“You’ve lasted a long time. I heard that her past assistants could hardly take it.”

“How long have you known her?”

Lena shifted. “Well, she’s always been around in my life. Fundraisers, openings, parties…but when I was twenty-two that was when she and I got close. She interviewed me when it went down.”

“When Lex stepped down and you took over,” Kara finished.

“Yeah. She wrote the main scoop on it. The rebranding, the new business plan, my sexuality was also a hot topic for some reason.” Lena’s brows shot up again briefly to punctuate her stance on the last detail. As if her low ton didn’t give it enough of a message.

But why was her eye contact so strong as she talked about it too? Why bring it up? Kara swallowed, throat feeling dry. She took a large gulp of her water before setting it back down.

“Well that’s Cat. The whole person is part of the story.”

Lena’s phone went off on the table beside her. She flinched at it and frowned. She grabbed it and saw the Caller ID. “Sorry, I have to take this.” She stepped away.

Kara frowned slightly. She looked at Audra. “What do you think of her?”

The girl put down her chicken strip and wiped her hands on the napkin in her lap. “She’s cool like Ally.”

“Yeah. A little dorky like you are,” Kara teased. Audra scrunched up her face and grabbed her cup, sipping her juice. “After you finish it’ll be only water until dinner, okay?”

“Fine.” The girl put her cup back and Lena stepped up to the table.

“I’m so sorry, but I have to go.” She grimaced. “I hate to cut this meeting short.”

“Well…maybe another time. Maybe come to dinner at our apartment?” Kara looked at Lena. “You’ll still be writing to Audra, right?”

“Of course!” Lena said. She slapped a fifty down on the table and apologized profusely as Audra
gave her a tight hug goodbye. Kara and she shook hands before Lena walked out.

Kara paid upfront with what Lena left and tipped the change.

When she and Audra got home, Audra went to take a small nap. Kara kept reflecting on Lena as she had time alone.

She wasn’t born a Luthor. She’s smart and kind. I expected her to be intimidating. Clark talked about her like she was cold to him when they talk. Standoffish. But she was so…soft. Well, her attitude. Nothing about that jaw is soft. She could kill a man with it. And I don't even know how long it would take to look that put together.

She changed into different clothes, taking off her contacts and opting for her glasses.

Whatever. I'm sure this might be the end of any contact. Audra got to meet her and that'll be the end of it.

Lena signed off the emergency video conference at one in the morning. She rubbed her eyes and yawned. She sat back in her chair. An investor had gotten cold feet and she had spent the past few hours going through various channels to recalibrate and get him back on track.

She checked her phone. She had a few congratulatory texts for saving the deal. She saw the assault of notifications from social media about her speaking at the convention.

She opened Twitter and her mind went to Audra and Kara.

Fuck I didn't get Kara's number. Shit.

A rush of panic hit her as she thought maybe she could find her on the social.

Wait no. That's weird. That is so fucking weird. She put her phone down and started packing up.

"Well, I could get coffee at Noonan's. Just happen to run into her...that is weirder." She frowned. "And you're talking to yourself again." She sighed and slumped her shoulders. You're reacting like this only because the mother is beautiful. But Audra was so sweet. It was just a lovely little family.

But Kara...wow.

Lena sighed and drove home. The streets were quiet and the lights were blinking either red or yellow in the late night. She got home and got ready for bed. She curled up in bed and checked her alarms before passing out.
Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

"Well, fancy meeting you here," crowed Concidence.
"Please," flirted Fate, "this was meant to be."

Kara stepped into her usual coffee shop after going to work out and showered. She took a breath then, checking her watch to see that she had plenty of time before work. A rarity but never unwelcome. Guess it was lucky Cat had a trip that took up half the day and she gave Kara that time off.

She put her hands into her pockets, having worn chinos and a button down. Audra convinced her to do a skinny brown tie with suspenders Maggie had gotten Kara as a gift when she came out (she joked that she had to dress more like a “daddy” if she wanted to get a girlfriend). She smiled confidently as she made eye contact with a cute young guy with a baseball shirt with a smiley face on it working behind the counter. He smiled at her briefly before going back to making orders.

She felt like she could breathe for once. She had plans to place the order for Audra’s cake this morning. And she could look for the girl’s gift. Maybe she could drop in on Maggie and get her lunch.

“Kara?”

Kara turned her head and nearly choked up. She saw Lena standing there. She wore a low-cut dress, the straps off-shoulder and a good amount of cleavage. Was it supposed to be work-friendly?

She pushed up her sleeves. God, now she regretted what she wore. She looked like a paperboy from the twentieth century. She could’ve been in contacts.

Wait why do I care?

“Lena!” She smiled at her. “Fancy seeing you here.”

Lena smirked at her, amused. “You look rather dapper today, Miss Danvers.”

“Audra wanted me to wear a tie and my sister-in-law got me these. Best way to get ladies apparently,” she said lightly. She blushed after that. “Not that I—”

“You don’t what? Date women?”

Kara cursed internally. “No—I do. I mean I haven’t really. I tried to but—I’m going to shut up.” She frowned and looked at the floor.

Lena smiled at her. “Do you have some time?”

“I-I do.” Kara looked up.

“Mind sitting with me for coffee?”
“Yeah. I’d love to.” Kara relaxed her shoulders and smiled a bit. They ordered and Kara managed to pass a ten before Lena got out her card.

“You’re sneaky,” Lena said. Kara adjusted her glasses and flashed a smirk.

“I’m a mom. The façade of childhood wonder requires sneakiness.” They got their drinks and walked outside. “Why are you outside your office in the afternoon?”

“Why are you outside CatCo?”

“Cat had a small trip. You?”

“My secretary makes me take some lunches outside my office so I don’t go crazy in my little box.” The two sat down at a table placed outside the coffee shop. “So, Audra isn’t here. Does that mean I can maybe ask more about what you wrote about?”

“Sure.” Kara sighed, preparing herself.

“What did you study in college?”

She wasn’t prepared for that. She expected questions about Mon-el, about Audra’s family situation.

“Oh, the graduation photo,” Kara realized. She smiled. “I actually switched majors half-way through my sophomore year. I started with programming. But then I said to hell with it and then I chose the arts. I was good at programming, knew binary and script as well as the back of my hand. But…I love writing, I love creating. Not creating programs.”

“When’s the last time you used your degree?”

Kara pressed her lips together in a thin, tight smile. “My finals.”

Lena sighed dramatically. “Millennials.”

They both laughed a bit. Kara smiled at her. “So, when and where did you study?”

Lena sipped her coffee and put it down. “I started college at age sixteen and got out about the time I took over the company. I doubled majored in bioengineering and robotics. I was at MIT.”

“Nice. Must’ve been interesting. I hear their gender ratio is poor.”

“In parts. The undergrad program pulls forty-six percent women. And a number of majors pull a female majority. Girls like yours are coming in.” Lena thought back to her college years. She didn’t think about being one of the very few females. Rather being the only young girl in classes where the average age was twenty-one.

“Women like you,” Kara said. She smiled. “You’re pretty amazing.”

Lena blushed. “Thank you.” She looked aside.

“Audra can’t stop talking about getting to meet you. She was so eager to write your letter and is waiting for tomorrow to open her gift.”

“That’s good.” Lena smiled softly.

“Could I know what you got her?”
Lena shook her head. “My friend Jess and I picked that stuff out just for Audra. What’s wrong with a good surprise?”

“Nothing. I love surprises!” Kara smiled at her. “You were a surprise to us.” Lena blushed a bit at it. “I mean, a CEO taking time for a balloon? Taking photos in Japan and Germany…”

Lena shrugged. “My assistant and I were endeared by it. Gave us something to look forward to.” She smiled at Kara. “The photos of you and Audra…amazed me. The one with your graduation—Kara you look like another person with your hair down and no glasses.”

“I could be a superhero,” Kara said, smirking.

“Oh, I know you’re not.”

“Oh?” Kara arched a brow. “Go on, Miss Luthor.” She felt her chest tighten a bit at the stab but she kept up the playfulness of the conversation.

“A superhero is without fault. In our encounters, all you’ve done is talk about your faults.”

“It’s kind of hard to feel flawless when a woman who’s done more in twenty-four years than everyone can do in eighty talks to you.”

Lena laughed at her. Kara felt her body tense up and she gripped her pant leg in her fist.

“Sorry. I just…didn’t think there was anyone more defensive than I was.” Kara glared at her and Lena smiled a bit. “Kara, really you seem like you want to be the supertype. Don’t you?”

“What kind of question is that?” Kara shot back.

“Stop being such like a politician.” Lena looked at her solidly. “What do you think of yourself? What do you want to be?”

“I want to be more than I am. I could be so much more. I could be a writer. I could be a programmer. I could be more for my daughter. But I’m a follower. A yes-man. A mom. I’m just…treading water.”

Lena sat back, leaning against the back of her chair and she looked at Kara. “I can tell you think I’m being a bitch right now.” Kara snorted and smirked as if to say “you think?” Lena bit her lip. “I’m like you, Kara. Wanting more…but making excuses for the fact that I’m mortified that I’m inadequate to achieve.” Kara arched a brow, and Lena went on. “I say I can’t fall in love because it was either my mother, my academics, and my job. But waiting until it’s over? It’s not true that obligation keeps you from more. It’s fear. It’s exhaustion.”

“You know you’re bullshitting yourself?” Kara arched a brow. Lena shrugged. She grabbed Kara’s empty cup and took a pen from her purse. She scribbled on the sleeve of the cup.

“Yeah. I was told recently I want to be loved. I want to be loved but do nothing towards being loved. So…I’m bullshitting myself. You are too. But not just in love.” Lena nodded and smiled. “You think you can’t do more but you want more. You think you can’t move up in life but you can. Miss Danvers, call yourself plain. Just remember that plain surfaces often make great canvases. Why would I write a story on pages already flowing with dialogue?”

Lena stood and placed the cup down. “Have a nice day, Kara. It was nice seeing you again.” Lena walked away from the table, leaving Kara alone in the noise of the city around them.

Kara gritted her teeth and looked at the sleeve. The defiant side of her wanted to throw it away once
she saw the string of numbers. She slid it off and put it in her pocket.

Kara got into work around noon. She noticed Cat was in a meeting with the journalist staff. They had this often. Kara didn't need to sit in on it. No need for notes there.

She lingered at the doorway though. Cat was with Mr. Snapper Carr. He ran the Tribune for Cat and made it one of the best papers in the city, possibly the country. This monthly meeting, the hashing out of tasks and certain leads showed that they clashed and yet worked towards the same goal of keeping the publications in the top.

“Last order of business—a South Korean genetics lab struck a deal with L-Corp and exchanged samples. L-Corp released to the press that their intentions are the furtherment into the study of cancer research and being able to create a non-destructive way of treatment. The CEO and her head of research have both agreed to an interview. Any volunteers?” Snapper asked.

There was an odd silence. Kara knew that of course there would be apprehension. There was a reason Cat interviewed Lena. It wasn’t really all out of friendship. It was that after the Kent case there was a sense of fear of unearthing a negative skew of the Luthor’s. There was a poor perception and sure there was plenty of articles written about the incidents of Lex’s misdeeds. But that was a trend. Not discovery. Not probing.

But god, that story could be something.

“I’ll do it,” Kara said from her place. All eyes were on her. Snapper grimaced.

“No way in hell, ponytail. You’re not even a writer here, let alone one for the Tribune. Get me a coffee, since that’s the only thing you’re trusted with around here,” he bit.

She stayed in place. “No one here wants it. Unless you plan on doing it, it won’t get done. Unless you give it to me,” she fought.

Cat’s eyes burned into Kara, her chin tipped up. She was sat down yet she made it feel as if she was looking down on Kara.

“Cat you want me to fire her, or will you?” Snapper muttered, acting like it was meant to be whispered.

“Kara, I’ll email you the details and the visitor pass for Lena’s office will be on your desk tomorrow,” Cat said. The meeting adjourned and everyone cleared, shuffling out past Kara.

Snapper stepped past her, stopping to glare and muttered. “If you want to be one of my reporters, learn to listen instead of talk, ponytail.”

She stared defiantly at him until he lost interest and walked away. Kara walked up to Cat’s desk.

Cat didn’t acknowledge her until she finished what she was doing on her laptop. She adjusted her glasses and looked at Kara.

“She just felt like it was time I finally was in one of those meetings. I
mean, do you expect me to get you your coffee forever?”

“We’ll see. If this doesn’t go as I hope, you may end up making coffee for other people for a long while.” Cat opened a drawer in her desk. “But as I am a woman of intuition, hardly am wrong…I think this is all you need for this.” She held up a manila folder to Kara.

Kara took it, opening it and expecting what she’d need for the interview. She instead saw her resume. Written on it in big red letters and underlined: Reporter.

“If I wanted an assistant, the woman in HR would’ve hired you. I wanted potential. Now get out of here and get ready. For the love of god, don’t wear that outfit to the interview.”

Kara looked down. “I don’t know, the ladies love this look, Miss Grant.” She smirked a bit and walked out, a sureness in her step.

She stopped at her desk and sat in the chair. She leaned back and took out the sleeve from her pocket.

Stop bullshitting yourself.

She chuckled a bit, slightly shocked at what she had done, having yet to realize that she had two interviews to conduct and an article to compile.

Lena rubbed at her eyes, pushing her glasses up and she sighed. She looked down at her desk as her phone buzzed. It was her personal phone, one that was mostly neglected. She picked it up to see a message from a number she hadn’t seen before.

She was certainly surprised! -Kara

Then there was a video. Lena hit play and saw little Audra sat on the floor with the box in front of her. Sat next to her was a man with a substantial amount of facial hair.

“Okay, Audra. Rip into it!” Kara said behind the camera.

The girl ripped the metallic paper right off, it would not impede her. Lena laughed softly at the scene.

Audra got up and ran around and out of frame. She came back and pulled it up from the box. She held a fencing mask. “Look!” She put it on and her body turned to her dad. “En garde!” She jumped at him and he barely caught her. He laughed.

The video ended and there was another message.

I saw the certificate for a year of lessons

You didn’t have to do that

She mentioned wanting to learn. And I did research. The studio has a class for kids her age and they use plastic and not metal

Thank you so much

She needed an activity and t-ball was a disaster last summer
I want to hear that story

Is that the father?

Oh fuck

Shit I wasn’t thinking about that

It’s fine

She looks more like you than him

I guess

Time for us to go to the aquarium

You by any chance know who exactly is interviewing me next week?

Yeah. They’re pretty amazing

You’ll love them I promise

Lena smiled softly and sent the video to Jess.

Kara watched as Audra peeked into the porthole window of the cylindrical tank for the jellyfish. James held her up to the window, that was the best place and above her reach. She whispered, “wow.”

“So, the woman she’s writing sent her that helmet?” Maggie questioned.

“Well…she didn’t send it,” Kara said. She bit her lip.

“You met her,” Alex qualified. “Just you, right? You didn’t bring your kid, right?”

Kara looked at them. “She invited us to a science convention with a high amount of notoriety, not a one on one. And…I could do a lot of research on this particular woman.”


She held up a photo of Lena after less than a minute of searching.

Alex took the phone. “Holy jawline Batman!” Her wife took the phone and looked at the photo.

“Lena Luthor, CEO of L-Corp,” she mused. She turned off the phone and handed it back. “So, you actually met that woman?”

“Yes.”

“And you had lunch with her?”

“Yes.”

“And she played along with your daughter’s shenanigans?”
“Better than you do if we’re being honest.”

“Are you going to hit that?”

“Margarita Sawyer-Danvers!” Kara whispered harshly and stepped back. “I barely know the woman.”

“No, it’s a viable question that the detective just raised,” Alex countered.

“Thank you, Agent Sawyer-Danvers,” Maggie flirted back. They looked at Kara. “So—you going to hit that?”

“No. I haven’t hit anything but a punching bag for a while now.” Kara popped her collar of her jean jacket and cleared her throat.

“Not even with the suspenders? Not even with those arms?”

“You know I’m looking to attract a partner, not a hookup.” Kara rolled her shoulders. Audra ran over to them.

“Mommy, they have rainbow crabs!” She took Kara’s hand and led her off.

Alex looked down at her wife. “I think a hook-up could fix some insecurity problems,” Maggie said.

“I don’t know. I personally felt like shit during my hooking-up period.” Alex put an arm around her as they followed the mother and child. “She needs something. I would never say you need someone to love you.”

“No, we all need love. I was a cold bitch, cocky and nightmarish outside of my job. Then I fell for you. Changed life outside of work. I can be more than a good detective and co-worker. I can be a friend, a sister, a wife, an aunt…” She smiled. “Love got me a family and I felt like I haven’t had that since I was fourteen.”

Alex kissed her forehead. “You can be a mother, too.”

“That’s the next one. Hopefully, the next insemination attempt will work.”

Alex paused, simply smiled back. “Yeah.” She knew that just one more week and she could solidly know and tell Maggie.
Kara shifted nervously in her seat as she worked on an online article for the Tribune. Snapper had told her he wanted to get minor articles to see how she wrote. That was delicate. He was more along the lines that he didn’t want to do this, she didn’t deserve this, and she better prove to have talent.

She was still doing this whilst being Cat’s assistant.

She stopped when her phone buzzed in her pocket. It was a special vibration just for Alex, a set of quick in succession short buzzes to emulate how the woman knocked.

Kara, I really feel like shit

What can I do? I can stop by during my break

I’m fine

Alex, you just said you feel like shit I’m coming over

I’ll bring you some stuff for your stomach

Kara put her phone down and went back to her computer.

“Kerah!”

Kara jumped up and ran into Cat’s office. The woman looked up from her laptop, glasses on.

“Yes, Miss Grant?”

“I was reading over your drafted questions for Miss Luthor.” She took off her glasses. “What the hell do you want to get from that woman?”

“W-what?” Kara put her hands into her cardigan pockets.

Cat stood up and hunched over her desk, hands pressed flat down on the surface.

“Your scope? Your goal? God, you’re all over the place! You have less than an hour to get what you need for five hundred words. Sure, you’ll have things you won’t need but I should at least see the story in your questions.” She shut her laptop sharply. “Scrap it. Redo the questions. And I’ll be calling Lena about how your interview went.”

Kara simply nodded sharply and turned to leave. As she walked out, she took out a small notebook from her pocket and a pen. She scrawled it down.

“What is that?” Cat said. Kara stopped and turned.

“Oh. You and Snapper have been coming to talk to me so much about this and I see there is legitimate advice in the ridicule. Growth in the criticism.” She shrugged. “There isn’t any growth in arrogance. I mean you should write with pride, but no one is flawless. Especially not their first time.”

Cat bristled and looked aside. She sank back into her chair and took off her glasses. “Well…okay. Get me a smoothie. Make sure it’s almond milk and not coconut and have them put cold brew in it. No, nitro. I’ll know, Kara.”
Kara nodded and fought smiling.

She went on the errand before going on her break. She went to the small store on the corner of Alex’s street. She grabbed aspirin, sleeping pills, ginger ale, saltines…candy for herself…

She walked past the shelf of pregnancy tests on her way to the counter.

She bit her lip. There was a possibility. But wouldn’t Alex have considered that? Maggie was talking about it like they had taken a test. But Alex would have said something.

She grabbed a box, figuring it wouldn’t hurt to know before she gave Alex any sort of medication. She got a long side-stare as she was rung up. She just rocked on her heels until she was given her total, swiping her card and then taking her bag.

It was an odd change of role. It had been Alex who bought her tests.

She got to Alex and Maggie’s apartment, using her key. She found Alex laying on the couch with a trash bin at her feet.

“Hey,” Alex muttered, sitting up.

“You eat anything?”

“Maggie made me some broth. It tasted fucking terrible coming up,” Alex muttered. Kara handed her the saltines. “Thanks.” She tore open the package of crackers.

“I got something else.” Kara took out the box and held it out to Alex. “You taken one of these yet?”

Alex adverted her eyes. She didn’t take the box. “No.”

“You should. Alex, I’m not going to give you any painkillers or sleeping pills if you’re pregnant.”

“I have that stuff.”

“Okay—want to take the risk?”

Alex grabbed the box and the drink Kara bought. The bottle was finished off and time passed awkwardly, waiting for Alex.

“You remember when you took yours?” Alex asked suddenly.

Kara shook her head, scoffing. “You bought it because I wouldn’t go to the doctor to get tested. Bought a six pack of beer, saying “if it’s negative you’ll need a drink after all this stress and if it’s positive, I’ll need a drink after the baby is born.””

Alex chuckled a bit. “It’s kind of funny now. Bitchy then.”

Kara nodded.

“You cried when you got the plus. Winn had just come in, didn’t know what the fuck to do.” Alex looked at her. Kara bit her thumb nail and avoided eye contact. “Kara, it’s okay to know that this wasn’t how you planned it. You’re not a terrible person for having your kid be unplanned. You still love the hell out of her because you chose that. You wouldn’t have been terrible by any choice you made.”

Kara stood up. “This isn’t about me. I’m not cutting you off, I just want you to think about you.
Think about this moment. You could have all you’ve ever wanted.”

Alex held up and box, reading it briefly before looking at Kara. “I didn’t accept being gay until I was twenty-four. I couldn’t embrace my desire for women for my entire pubescent years. But I embraced my desire to be a mother. I planned for it, fantasized…” She frowned. “Why was it easier to marry a woman, something I never planned for, then it is to take this test? To get all I’ve ever really knew was part of my future?”

The corner of Kara’s mouth quirked up, arms crossed. “That is such bullshit.” Alex’s brows shot up in surprise. “Alex! You literally told me six years ago you didn’t want babies. You were trying so hard to not have babies.”

Alex scoffed. “I didn’t want them with a man. I met the woman of my dreams. She changed her views on her future for me. It’s all falling into place; what if it falls apart and I get a negative? What if all we get are negatives?” Her face fell, all defiance and sarcasm absent. She bit the inside of her cheek, skin tearing away and the taste of metal coming onto the corner of her tongue.

“It’ll be positive. And if not…it’s not the end of the world. Maggie is ready to try for this, isn’t she?”

“She is.” Alex sighed. “Okay, now or never because I really have to go.”

Kara sat back down on the couch. Her mind went to the day years ago.

Five minutes. Why so long? What right did this inanimate object have to tell her what to do?

Oh right, it only held her whole future in the balance.

Kara sank down to the floor of the bathroom, pulling her knees to her chest and resting her chin on them.

There was a gentle knock. “Kara? You finished?” Alex whispered.

Kara swallowed, feeling her stomach lurch. Was she going to get sick again or was this just the fear of getting a positive setting in?

“Y-yeah. Just waiting.” Kara moved and unlocked the door. Alex stepped in, looking at the white stick on the vanity. She sank down with Kara on the floor and put an arm around her. “Four minutes.”

“Okay.” Alex hugged the girl fully when she noticed tears in her eyes. “Hey, hey. It’ll be okay.”

“What am I going to do?” Kara muttered, pushing herself into a new position. She felt sickened by all this. She felt so stupid. This was their actions to cause this. She could’ve been more responsible. Should’ve been.

“You don’t have to think about that for now.” Alex stroked her hair. “I could be wrong about it.”

Kara trembled. “Y-you could be right. That’s what terrifies me. I’m nineteen, Alex. I’m in college. I barely can take care of myself on what I make. How can I raise someone else? What am I supposed to do?”

Alex frowned. Kara pulled away. Three minutes. The woman wiped at her eyes under her glasses. Not quite in tears…just so exhausted by all this. She didn’t take care of herself—what would that
kid’s life look like when their mother was such a shitty person to herself?

Alex couldn’t bring herself to say there were other ways of going about the possibility. But Kara wasn’t the type of person who would consider it. If she was going to have a baby, she was going to have a baby. No ending it, no giving it up.

Alex sighed. “You have to promise me you won’t drop out of college. You’re on a full-ride no matter what happens here today.”

“What will he say? He doesn’t know. He just thinks I’m sick.” Mon-el…he was twenty-one. Not much better. He didn’t work, thought red vines was dinner, and at times it felt his morals were questionable. He stole even though he had money, looked around even though he had a partner…

But they were young! No one was supposed to just have it all together. This wasn’t supposed to be what one worried about.

Alex grimaced and took Kara’s hand. “You’ll talk it out. You’re adults. And…I’ll be there if you want it.”

Kara nodded, squeezing her sister’s hand. “Thank you.” Alex leaned in and kissed her forehead.

Two minutes.

“How much longer,” Kara snapped. She shifted and sighed. She messed with her glasses and hugged her knees.

Alex just smirked at her. “Jeez, you’ve never been patient.” Alex scooted to the sink and grabbed the box to read it. “Classic plus and minus. I never got those lines.”

“Oh, so you’ve taken one?” Kara mocked. Alex at, twenty-two had had her fair share of cohorts, DOA boyfriends of sorts. Kara walked a different path. Mon-el was her first time, first major boyfriend, the first person she said “I love you” to.

“I mean I always like knowing what’s up with my body. Constant testing, I have my IUD, take one of these every few months if need be,” Alex remarked whilst waving around the box. “I really do not want to have kids in this lifetime.” Mon-el wasn’t ready to be a dad in any capacity. Neither were any of the boys Alex had screwed half-heartedly.

“That makes me feel even better about this.” Kara grimaced.

“Okay, even if I really don’t fucking like the idea of being a mom with a husband and fuckery, doesn’t mean I won’t be there if that test says you are…with child.”

“Right.” Kara checked her watch. “Almost time.” Her phone dinged. “That’s either him or Winn.” She held it up. “It’s Winn.”

Alex let out an unsurprised grunt and opened herself a beer. Kara answered the phone.

“Yeah?”

“Lemme in, I got food.”

“It’s unlocked. In the bathroom.” She heard the door open after she hung up. She peered out to see in the studio Winn coming in. He stepped up to the doorway.

“Potstickers and pizza. I know you haven’t felt well, but…” He smiled shyly.
“Thanks.”

“Whoa, what’s that?” He looked at the box and the tests. “Oh…”

“Should’ve warned you. Not going to say sorry because my head’s literally a thousand places right now,” Kara mumbled. She looked at her watch. “Well, it’s time.” She grabbed the white plastic stick with trembling fingers. It clattered on the ground as she struggled. “I—I can’t.” She let out a harsh breath and leaned into Alex. Her breathing was heavy and she teared up. “Alex, I can’t.”

Winn sank down to his knees. Alex looked at him worriedly.

“Winn, please,” Kara pleaded.

He grabbed it after getting toilet paper and grabbing it with the sheets. He looked down and looked at the sisters gravely.

“Kara, it’s positive.”

For a moment it was calm. Kara opened her mouth to speak, lower lip trembling. She shut it and her body lunged. Alex almost thought she was about to throw up again but instead she was lurching with a repressed sob and her body wracked as she wheezed and tears broke free. Alex instinctively pulled her close and held onto her. Kara cried into Alex’s shoulder and Winn knelt down. He and Alex looked at each other, brows creased. Winn grimaced and rubbed the back of his neck, thinking of the situation. If he felt a pending sense of panic how bad could she feel? Did Kara see this as her whole future to have crumbled away in one instant? Or is it just the overwhelming sense of helplessness?

“C’mon,” he mumbled, scooping up Kara from the floor and carrying the sobbing woman to her bed. They all sat there and Kara kept mumbling.

“This can’t be happening. This isn’t right. This is a nightmare.” She pulled her body off the bed, stumbled to the restroom again. Alex grabbed Winn by the wrist to keep him from following.

“Give her some time to process.” He grimaced.

“What is she going to do,” he whispered.

“I don’t know.” She shook her head. “I don’t know Winn.”

Kara took two more tests, got the same results. By the end of that hour, Kara was back on the bed, curled up and crying and crying.

“Kara, it’s not the end of the world. You have a lot of resources and choices. Anything you pick for it will—” Alex started.

“Don’t call the baby it!” Kara bit. The two stared at her, making her turn red. She hung her head. “Sorry for snapping—just…sorry…”

“Then what the hell you wanna call it?” Alex deadpanned, scooting over to her sister.

“It’s…the bean!” Winn got up. “So, you have a choice, Kara. Bean’s planted, you can dig bean up and there you go. Or give the sprout away. Or…watch bean grow.”

Alex sighed. “Okay, a so…whatever choice you have for bean—” She looked at Winn. He shifted and went to the kitchenette to clean up. “—I’ll help you. How about we go to the clinic later this month? You’ll need to get a true test. I’ll be there for you when you tell Mon-el. If you tell him.”
“No, I have to tell him.” She sat up and wiped her eyes. She sniffled and nodded her head. She looked at Alex. “I’m gonna be a mom, Alex.”

There was a brief pause. Alex took a deep breath and Kara rested her head on her shoulder. “You are,” Alex agreed, kissing her sister’s head.

Alex stepped out of the bathroom. Kara was on the phone, pacing around a bit. She looked at Alex. “Yeah—just remember to have it to Cat’s desk by the end of the day. Thanks. Bye.” She hung up and slid the phone into her pocket.

“Three minutes.”

“Two minutes less at least,” Kara said lightly, forcing a small smile.

Alex walked over to her and hugged her. Kara held her tight.

“Were you this scared?”

“I was shitless. At least you know the answer you want.” Kara chuckled. “God, I didn’t even know what I wanted to happen. I think I wanted to just wake up and realize that was a nightmare.”

Alex nodded and crossed her arms over her chest. “Don’t you have to go back to work?”

“I’ll get back on time, but right now you’re my first priority. You made me yours.” Kara smiled at her. “I’ve honestly yet to make that up to you. I should.”

“We’re family. You don’t owe family shit. You do and do not expect anything.” Alex looked at her phone. “Okay.”

“Alexandra Danvers, you ready to change your life?”

Alex looked down at the test. “I’m…” She just stared in awe. Tears came to her eyes and she cupped her free hand over her mouth.

Kara hugged her again. “You’re gonna be a mom?”

“Yeah!” Alex sobbed out, laughing shortly thereafter.

“You’re gonna be a mom!” Kara picked her up and spun her. They both were giggling. “A new bean. Audra’s gonna have a cousin! I’m gonna be an aunt.”

“I just want Maggie to be back. I want to tell her now,” Alex told her. She was smiling like a fool. She ran her fingers through her hair as tears ran down her cheeks. She laughed. “It worked. I didn’t…is this real? Kara, is this real?”

“It’s really real.” Kara smiled at her. Alex hugged her again. “I’m so happy for you.”

**

Maggie got home. She sighed slightly, feeling drained. Audra was a wonderful little girl but such a ball of energy. She ran around from exhibits and at times she was worried she’d lose her in the winding halls. And after last time…God Kara would have her head.
She shrugged off her jacket and fell onto the couch. She used her heels to get her feet out of her boots and tipped her head back, resting it on the back of the couch.

She heard gentle footsteps and she brought her head back up. She saw Alex standing there in the entrance of the living room. “Hey,” Maggie said softly, smiling lazily. “You know your niece can really take it out of me.”

Alex nodded. “She gets it from her mom.”

“I hope it isn’t a nurture thing. Our kid can’t adopt that habit then, right?” Maggie sat up. She saw Alex was struggling, mouth shifted to indicate she was biting the inside of it.

“Everything okay, Al?” Maggie put her hands on her knees and leaned forward, looking up at her wife.

“You can tell something’s up?”

“I’m a detective. I’m supposed to be able to read micro expressions better than I could read a book.”

“I should’ve known better,” Alex sighed. She made her way over to Maggie.

Alex moved her hands and sat in her lap. Maggie held her steady and looked at her. “You going to tell me what’s up?” forced a smile, nervous there was something wrong. “Is your stomach okay?”

“Mm, yeah.” Alex smiled at her. “Kara came to check on me earlier and we tested a theory she had. You know I love to test theories.” Alex kissed Maggie’s cheek. Maggie just hummed in response. “And her hypothesis was correct. Why I was getting sick…is because I’m pregnant.” She looked her in the eye, forcing herself to despite her racing heart.

Maggie’s mouth was left slightly agape. She shut it silently and took Alex’s left hand into her right, intertwining them. She looked at the immaculate silver ring, Alex took care of it and polished it monthly. Engraved inside it was “ride or die.” She buried her face then into the crook of Alex’s neck.

Maggie sucked in a harsh breath and let out a small laugh. Her voice shook in it and she sucked in more shaky breaths. She pulled away and looked at her wife. Her hazel eyes were brimming over with tears and she hugged Alex tight.

“A baby,” she choked. “It worked. I didn’t…the doctor said don’t be too hopeful and I just expected it to take maybe years—” She wiped at her eyes. “We’re gonna be moms. Moms!”

Alex chuckled. “I didn’t think you would react like this.” She kissed Maggie’s cheeks and then her forehead. “I love you.”

“I love you too.” She grinned, dimples making their appearance as apparent as the sparkle in her eye. “Or, you two.” She touched her wife’s abdomen.

“That’s gay.” Alex smirked and kissed her. Maggie flipped them so Alex lay on the couch and she hovered over her.

When they parted Maggie stared down at her, eyes dilated and a devious grin across her lips. “I mean that’s kind of why this works.” She grabbed Alex’s chin and kissed her again.
Lena sat out on her balcony, checking her watch periodically. The interviewer would be arriving soon. She wondered who it would be. What they would be like. She hadn’t gotten a chance to meet a lot of Cat’s staff for either of her publications. Kara didn’t let up who it was and Cat didn’t get back to her. Of course, did she really expect Cat to do so?

Jess came into the office. Lena stepped back in from the balcony. “Miss Luthor, Kara Danvers from the Tribune is here,” she announced. She was obviously trying not to smile as Lena’s brows shot up.

“You don’t say.” Lena sat behind her desk as Kara stepped in.

The woman stepped in and Lena just smirked, not letting the woman see the moment of surprise Jess so luckily got to indulge in. The woman loved being able to surprise Lena and Kara had given the opportunity. “I didn’t think an assistant would be coming to interview me,” Lena teased.

Kara smiled nervously, fiddling with her notepad and stepped up. “I stepped up and took a risk… here I am.”

“I think it might suit you.” Lena motioned for her to sit in the empty chair across the desk. Kara sank into it and adjusted her skirt. She adjusted her glasses and uncapped her pen as well.

“Well, let’s get down to business. Mind if I record you?” Kara pulled out her phone with a microphone attachment on it.

“You came prepared. You may record our talk.” Lena folded her hands on the desk.

“Of course, and if you want anything off the record just tell me when and I’ll switch off,” Kara told her.

Lena smiled at her. She saw Kara having yet to relax, on the edge of her chair and her notepad resting on her lap.

“Alright. Let’s begin.”

Kara cleared her throat. “Well, I gathered the information on the actual premise of the cells and the research to be undergone with them with Miss Franc, so…I suppose I want to know what the quid pro quo for such data was?”

“It was a buyout. The labs were underfunded despite their potential. They had cells intact and cancer free and it was done quickly. Of course, this was on rats. We aren’t at the level to take volunteers. But as you know that is part of the ten-year plan for this research. I kicked in part of my own personal fortune to pay the half billion for the data, the merger of labs, and equipment. We have a learning curve with the labs you visited today, but I have a lot of confidence in this team we’ve compiled for this research.”

Kara nodded and her hand went along the notepad without her looking at the paper.

“So, are you at all involved in the lab level?”

“I just receive things through the grapevine. I do walkthroughs of the lab, of course, to make sure the task stays. I wish I could be more hands-on but of course, there’s a lot more to do at L-Corp. But of course, this lab and focus on medical research is my choice of action for this company.”
Let’s talk about that. Lex was all about tech and weaponry. That was his idea of expanding.” Lena tensed up, shifting in her chair. Kara put her hand on the desk. “Sorry. I just want to know why medical. It’s not the history of this company.”

Lena’s shoulders relaxed. She looked aside, eyes downcast. Kara saw her whole demeanor as odd. This woman had the power here. She was in her element. But yet her posture just made her look so…small. “I lost my birth mother to cervical cancer. And Lionel of course to liver cancer. It got me obsessed with a cure. There are ways to cure people, put them in remission. But there are risks of it coming back, many places where there is no point of return.” She sighed. “I know that there is an industrial complex in medicine. That patenting treatment has caused a lot of pain. Caused a lot of death, bankruptcy for many families.”

Kara bit the pen cap on the back of her pen and looked at Lena. Lena tried to fight following the pink painted lips as the wrapped around the blue cap. “So, you are doing all this research and you won’t be patenting it?”

Lena looked Kara back in the eye. “No. I’d happily take a loss if it means saving lives. I know it’s more than money. Rich die from it. It’s the little knowledge we have. I want to fix that ignorance and the exploitation.”

Kara stopped and looked at her. Lena looked as if she wanted to run away, on the edge of her seat. “I…” She clicked off the recording. “You okay?”

Lena arched a brow. “What?”

“You just look uncomfortable. Have I done something to offend you?” Kara frowned.

Lena swallowed, her throat feeling dry. “No! Kara, I’m fine. I just don’t know how to conduct myself. I mean—no one really asks why. They think they know.”

“They think it’s all about you caring about how people perceive you,” Kara shot back. “They don’t know.”

Lena stood up and walked to the cart she had with various alcohols and a pitcher of water. She poured herself a bit of water and then filled the rest of the glass with whiskey. She looked back at Kara. “You want something to drink?”

“Water would be perfect, thank you,” Kara said softly. Lena poured her a glass and put a few ice cubes in. She placed it on the desk for Kara. She stayed standing.

“People want me to be like my family. Anything I do is just delaying the inevitable. That’s what it feels with the press.” Lena sipped her drink.

“Really because it seems like a lot of people are afraid of writing about you after the Kent case. Worry about taking the wrong step.”

Lena paused, the drink close to her lips. She put the drink down on her desk and moved closer to Kara, standing over her. “My brother put that man in the hospital. Clark Kent took liberties in his writing that were at times poor, but he didn’t deserve to be beaten and have a number put on his life’s worth. But that was years ago. I speak openly with the press now, hold conferences, one of my closest friends is the queen of media. If they’re seeing Lex in me, unable to see me as my own fucking person and this as a different company with different pillars of values…I’m glad they aren’t in my office. And I’m very happy that I’m not giving them a chance for notoriety or profit.”

Kara sipped her water, struggling to keep the glass steady. Lena settled again in her chair and they
continued the interview.

“Lena, I don’t see it like that.”

“I know, because you’re here.” Lena frowned. “You’re here.” She shifted in her seat, looking over Kara and smiling slightly. It would be easy to miss it. She wanted to tell Kara that’s how she preferred it.

Kara got the woman off that track. She resumed recording. “So why aren’t you really in the lab level, Miss Luthor?”

“It’s really not my expertise. I studied physics and technology. I got my doctorates in both—so it’s really Doctor Luthor.”

“I’ve never seen that written into stories.”

“It doesn’t matter to people when your brother is a terrorist and your adoptive mother had a very public nervous breakdown in response. The world is very theatrical, more so than intellectual. Cat Grant thrives off that truth. Taught me that truth.”

“Yeah, I learned that too.” She frowned. “But you’re smart and doing a lot of good. If I of all people can get past what Lex did to Clark Kent then the world should.”

“You of all people?” Lena looked at her.

Kara bit her lip. “Clark’s my cousin. One of my last living family members. I almost lost him to Lex. But I look at you and see the opposite of that malice. I see hope. I see progress. I see what this world needs.”

Lena turned red. She couldn’t tell if it was out of flattery or guilt. This woman had been so civil knowing exactly what her family had done to hers.

“I see. Thank you.”

Kara stood up and tucked her phone away into her bag along with her notepad. “I think that’s all I need. Thank you, Doctor Luthor.” She grimaced.

“I think when this story prints, we should celebrate. Could you allow me to take you out to dinner?” Lena’s eyes sparkled with deviance and power. She asked, yes, but who was she to refuse?

The reporter felt heat rise in her cheeks under the stare. Kara nodded and ran her fingers through her hair, pushing runaway locks out of her face. “Sure. I’d love to. Thank you, Lena. I’ll send you a draft so you know exactly what’s being put out.”

“Thank you. That’s very professional of you. You’re a natural at this,” Lena complimented.

Kara lit up. “You think so?” She smiled wide, the grin toothy and blue eyes glinted like the stars.
Lena felt lightly taken aback by the woman’s adorableness in the moment. In many of the moments they’ve shared.

“This was probably the most painless interview I’ve had for a while.” Lena tilted her jaw down and turned her gaze at Kara. She smirked. “I wonder what’ll come of you, Kara.”

Kara blushed and looked aside. She cleared her throat and pulled an envelope from her bag. “Audra wanted me to hand deliver your latest letter. There’s a thank you note as well for her gift.”

Lena took it. “Thank you. Has she started the lessons yet?”

“This weekend. She can hardly wait. She mentioned it only once in a letter. How did you pick that?”

“I mean it was either that or a robot that taught her how to code. Or a bug catching kit. But I feel the third option is too cruel for her. And the second one might be playing to your likes more than hers. Based on what I found out recently.”

“I mean I would’ve played with it,” Kara joked. “You and I could’ve had a playdate.” She blushed. “I mean an actual playdate. With toys. Kid’s toys!”

Lena laughed, head tipping back slightly and her face scrunched up. Kara fought staring in awe at how adorable she was.

“I think that would be a good time. Maybe that can be our next meeting.”

“I mean Audra would never forgive me if there were toys and you. She can’t stop talking about that one meeting. Her classmates kinda want to meet you too. My sisters want to meet you. But I think that’s a weird thing…they have never said they were entirely monogamous.” Kara winced. “I should shut up. I should go.” She looked at her watch. “Shit—yeah I have to go.”

“Well, bye. And send me your sister’s number if you get the chance,” Lena chuckled. Kara glared momentarily, before quickly failing to fake disdain for Lena. She just rolled her eyes and grinned before doing a skip to start her momentum and speed walking out of the office.

Jess slipped past the rushing reporter.

“So that’s Audra’s mom?” Jess questioned.

“You recognized her with the glasses?”

“You didn’t?” Jess arched a brow. Lena looked down at her desk. “Oh, Lena.”

“What do you need?”

“This came in the mail for you.” She put a package on the table. “It’s of course already been scanned.” She grimaced.

Lena looked at the side, stamps indicating it had traveled through various countries. “Lex sent a package.” She grabbed her pocket knife from her desk drawer and carefully cut the tape. She pushed aside the packing peanuts and extracted a bottle of rum and a bullet. “Jess.”

“Yes Miss Luthor?” Jess switched to formality, judging it for the best with Lena’s tone of voice.

“Get the hell out.”

Jess hung her head and walked out.
Lena grabbed the letter in the package.

Did you know “bite the bullet” came from the Civil War, Lena? Soldiers would bite bullets to make sure they didn’t bite their tongue off during surgery. Drinking was all they had to numb the pain as well.

Like dad. And I remembered drinking a lot during working. This gift if for you, as during the years to come you will bite the bullet and drink the pain away.

Enjoy!

Lena studied the bullet. What disturbed her was that it had her name engraved on the casing.

She put the bottle in her desk drawer and opened the letter.

The thank you letter had a drawing and a picture of the girl in the mask. Lena smiled softly and went to the actual letter.

Lena,

I got a new uncle. Jimmy takes photos and lets me use his camera. I like it more than using mommy’s phone camera.

He got pictures of fishes at the aquarium.

The word took a few tries but she had the final spelling right. She knew that the girl was getting some help.

Lars liked the fishes, he would stare for a long time. The water bubbles made him laugh. Lars is weird.

Lena chuckled and put the letter down to look at what Kara wrote.

Lena,

I’ll be handing this off to you, I know. I’m sure you didn’t expect me to be the reporter to see you.

It was the day we had coffee. I stepped up during the meeting where Cat and her editor of the Tribune, Snapper Carr, were handing out stories. Snapper Carr wanted to have me fired but Cat said I could do it. I don’t want to be stagnant. I want to write on the blank pages, throw paint on the canvas—all the poor artistic metaphors you could pull on me to inspire me.

So, I went out there to make it so I wasn’t bullshitting myself. What will you do, Miss Luthor? Yes, I am challenging you. I think it just might be what we do now.

Yours Truly,

Kara

Lena smirked and stood up. “Hm, well I guess I can’t turn down a challenge.” She looked out the window and grabbed her glass, finishing off the last bit of whiskey as she watched the clouds drifting in the bright blue sky. The blue made her think of those eyes that looked at her with such intensity, so much focus as if whenever Lena talked she was all that mattered to Kara.
But that was just coincidence, she rationalized.
Welcome to the Big Leagues

“…L-Corp here lies on a new foundation. That as to be a pillar of good to last decades. It is not here the Luthor Legacy being re-written, but the crafting of a new legacy for Dr. Lena Luthor herself.” Cat put the pages down and adjusted her glasses.

Kara swallowed nervously. She was sat in a chair whilst Cat read the whole thing, at times reading lines aloud to have Kara answer for them.

“How do you think you did?” Cat asked her.

“Lena said she enjoyed the draft—”

“If I wanted to know what Lena said I would call her.” Cat stared at her. “How did you think you did?”

“I think—”

“You know what I think?”

Kara bit her bit and looked at her. “No—but I’ll ask. What do you think?”

“You’re too soft on this woman. “Building her legacy?””

“Innovating cancer research isn’t a legacy?”

“Do you know the name of the person who invented chemo?”

Kara paused. She thought that she could maybe name a few doctors and scientists. Marie Curie had something to do with it, right? “Well, it wasn’t one person—”

“And neither is this,” Cat deadpanned, “I don’t want to read about your crush on Miss Luthor. Oh, excuse me—Doctor Luthor. Jesus Christ.” Cat threw the story into her trashcan. “Rewrite it. I want a new draft on my desk asap if you want to be in this issue. Focus on the research I asked you to write about. If I wanted a story on Lena Luthor, I would’ve written it.”

Kara looked at the tossed story. She swallowed and stood up slowly. She put the chair she pulled up back in the corner and walked out to her desk.

She saw a message on her computer as she settled.

Clark: I saw some of your online articles. I didn’t know that you were writing now

She adjusted and began typing.

I mean I’m dabbling. I still run errands for Cat.

Clark: You know I’ll be in NC for a charity event a few months from now

Clark: Maybe we can grab breakfast together and I can see my favorite girls

I think Audra would love to see you

Clark: Bring Jimmy and his boyfriend
You’re already going to be there

Clark: haha very funny

Clark: your stuff is really good

Clark: I’m really proud of you, Kara

She smiled softly.

That means a lot

She pulled her story back up. She deleted her closer and cut away some of the fluff.

Time had ticked by. Kara got Cat to let her stay late and to have Audra come to the office. She just had to pick up dinner for the three.

Kara jogged to Mon and Imra’s door. She knocked gently and the door opened. Mon-el stood there, looking down at her.

“You’re late.”

“Sorry—Cat had me scrap my draft.”

He arched his brow. “You’re writing?” His shoulders shifted as he stood taller, aware and quite clearly surprised.

“In a trial period for it.” She smiled at the reaction. He usually was the half of them with the surprises.

“Is it like more pay or something?” He crossed his arms over his chest. She felt anger settle at the bottom of her spine, bleeding up to the small of her neck and branching to her fingers that shook.

“It’s something I want to do.” She felt like she was speaking through her teeth. It was something she wanted to do. But that didn’t matter him, it was about the money of course. Who was he to wonder as a street cop though? He did it out of want and not out of monetary gain.

“Mommy!” Audra came over and hugged Kara oh so tight. Kara’s fatigue washed away as she held Audra.

“Oh, bean it’s so good to see you.” She kissed the girl’s cheek.

“Look! I tied my shoes myself!” The girl lifted her right foot to show off her handiwork. She had double-laced the sparkly laces. It stood vertically on the tongue rather horizontal. The girl was grinning proudly.

“That’s so great! I’m so proud!” She hugged the girl again and gave her a loud and exaggerated kiss on the forehead. “Mwah!”

“Ew, mommy!” The girl pouted and rubbed the lipstick off her forehead. Kara chuckled.

“So how did this come about?” She put a hand on Audra’s shoulder as the little girl beamed with pride.
“She just did them,” Mon-El said. “I asked her to get ready and voila.” He smiled.

“Good.” Kara took Audre’s bag from him. “Thanks.”

“So… what’s your next big story?”

“A surprise. I’m really proud of it. I’m going to be working on it tonight.” Kara smiled, genuinely excited for the endeavor. Even if so much hung in the balance, she was simply too enthused to feel that panic.

“What inspired this?” She shrugged at him. Part of her didn’t want to say it was Lena. Part of her didn’t want many people to know about Lena. She felt like this intimate secret. Something only Audre and herself got to know.

“Just happened. I gotta go.” Audre gave Mon-El a hug and kiss goodbye before they headed out.

They picked up dinner for the three of them and went back to the office. Audre was rambling about her day and gave over the newest letter from Lena. Kara smiled when she saw the neat scrawling of the address on the envelope.

The elevator dinged and opened for them. Audre blitzed out whilst Kara sauntered out behind her.

Cat was at Kara’s desk when they walked into the mostly dark office. “Miss Cat!” Audre exclaimed. The woman flinched slightly and looked up.

“Audra,” Cat greeted, taking off her glasses. Kara was surprised she got the name and didn’t call the girl something like Audrey. “How are you darling?”

“I got a letter from my penpal Lena. She’s the most prettiest and smartest women ever!”

Cat looked up at Kara, arching a brow.

“She has a school project where she took up a penpal. Lena is hers.”

“Oh. Oh,” Cat said. Oh…

Kara nodded awkwardly, seeing it click for the woman. Though what was clicking, she couldn’t tell. Cat took her dinner and disappeared into her office. Kara sat at her small desk and pulled over Winn’s desk chair for Audre. The pair laid out their dinner and ate whilst talking about their days.

Audre talked about how she helped Imra put Laramie down for a nap. “He liked the lullaby you taught me. Imra was shocked I knew it. Why?”

“Grandma Eliza taught me. It’s common to around where Imra was raised, not really here.” Kara held up a napkin for the girl. She took it to wipe the orange sauce from her face.

“But you were a big girl when you became a Danvers. Big girls don’t need lullabies,” Audre said.

Kara clicked her chopsticks. “Bean, anyone who needs comfort can enjoy a nice little tune. It would calm me when I had those really bad episodes I talked to you about.”

“When you struggle to breathe and need to focus on feeling happy?”

“Yeah. Those.” The girl just nodded, that being the extent of what anxiety was to her young mind. Kara was out of control of it and she needed to return back to normal during it. It was hard to describe mental illness to someone so young and how could she let her daughter know she struggled
to live day to day?

Kara finished up her dinner and tossed the containers away under her desk. She opened her laptop back up. Audra finished eating and worked in her coloring book.

Kara watched time click by whenever she peaked at the corner of her screen. Audra got up from her seat and grabbed Kara’s cardigan. “Can I go sleep in Cat’s office?” she mumbled.

“Yeah. I’m sorry baby,” Kara sighed. She frowned slightly. The girl just smiled.

“S’okay mommy.” She went into the office. Kara watched as she climbed onto the white couch after taking off her shoes and curling up under the pastel pink cardigan. Kara printed out her story and walked into the office later.

Cat looked up from her screen. “You finished?”

“I did.” Kara placed it on her desk. “I’ll be going now to take her—”

“No. One moment.”

Kara grit her teeth and nodded. “What do you need? I can get it for you I’m sure—”

“I don’t need a thing.” Cat looked at the story. She pushed her hair back and leaned back in her chair. “Obviously there is always room to grow with flow and prose. But it’s good. It’ll make next print with your efforts to stay here and go that little bit that other others don’t do.” She put the paper down. “Kara, why do you think I ride your ass the most in this company? That I keep you and belittle you when I would fire anyone else?”

“Because I sometimes scream back?”

“Because you give a shit, Kara. Pardon my language but she’s asleep. Kara no one is crazy enough to do what you’ve done here in this job. For the most part, that’s a good thing. But it has given me an air of yes men. I hate those in concept. In practice, it can be nice. Yet…it’s refreshing in days to have your headstrong aura even if you hide it behind that shy persona you think helps make this job easier for you. That I’ll leave you alone if you just curl into yourself like a kitten.”

“That obvious?” Kara cocked her head to the side. “Someone told me to stop bs-ing myself. I didn’t want to take what I had. I didn’t mean the disrespect. You have all my respect, Miss Grant. You started where I am and you did more by my age.” Cat crossed her arms.

“Kara, I…have something to show you. Can you pick her up before that god-awful couch hurts her neck?”

Kara carefully picked up Audra, the girl’s head lolling onto her shoulder. She kept the girl in the cardigan and they walked off. “Where are we going?” Kara whispered. Cat led her down a hall and extracted a key.

“Snapper wanted me to fire you throughout this whole thing. I’m slowly realizing he is a bitter entitled straight man—like many of the men I have stomped on to get where I am—and I’ll have to reconsider his place in this company for such poor judgment of character. But I digress, blah blah, if you do anything to make me regret this know I will make you regret that step…” She opened the door to an office.

Small, yes. Bare essentials only, surely. But it had a small futon with a fluffy gray blanket draped over it with a couple of pillows, a desk, a chair, and a desktop computer.
“If you’ll be doing more of this, you’ll need a better couch for her.” Cat held the key up to Kara.

Kara carefully laid Audra down on the futon. Her fingers trembled as they grasped the key. She held the brass tight and it absorbed her warmth quickly. She shut her eyes tight. “You said that under no circumstance could I cry at work—it’s really hard right now.”

“You’re going to get a lot of resentment out of this. You’re one of two new journalists I’m taking on. Two of the only women on the staff that works for both publications. I’m not proud of the gap but it’s something I’ll be working on in the next five years.”

Kara smirked. “I’ll learn to grow some thick skin, Miss Grant.” She tucked the key away. “So, who’s this other girl?”

“Nia Nal. She’s in a different place than you are. You’re a writer but she’ll be more of an editor and coordinator for a department here as well as overseeing part of the team on the Tribune with Snapper.”

“Wow, she’ll have a lot to do.”

“She lives for it. I don’t know what a girl as young as her could live for but work, really.” Cat straightened up. “People think being twenty-something is all play. It shouldn’t.”

“I haven’t played much.”

“That’s why you’re here and not on that main floor.” Cat sighed. “Now I have the task of finding a new assistant.”

“No, leave that to me. I’ll stay at my desk until you have a replacement.” Kara smiled at her. Cat looked a bit surprised, covering it up quickly. She cleared her throat.

“Very well. Now, get out of here.” Cat walked to the doorway. “Goodnight, Kara.”

“Right.” Kara gently woke Audra up and the girl looked around.

“Mommy, where are we?” She whispered as she sat up.

“In mommy’s new office. We’ll set up a little place for you in here, okay?” Kara smiled softly and kissed the girl’s forehead. “No more sleeping on Miss Grant’s couch.”

“But she’ll be alone then,” the girl mumbled and leaned into her mother. Kara muffled a chuckle.

“She likes it like that.” Kara took the girl’s hand and walked out. They gathered their things and went down to the car. Kara kissed Audra’s forehead after getting her in her seat.

She got in and drove off. She checked Audra briefly in the rearview mirror. She had lulled off again.

Kara got home and carried Audra up. She nodded kindly at her neighbor just getting home as well as she got her key into the lock. She unlocked the door and walked in. She woke Audra up just long enough to get her into her pajamas and her teeth brushed. She went down without a story, without a conversation—just out like a light. Kara kissed her forehead and walked out. Her phone went off as she got herself ready.

She buttoned up her nightshirt as she answered the call.

“Yeah?”
“Hey, it’s Lena.” She heard rustling. “Kara, um, how are you?”

“Just got home from work.” Kara walked to the kitchen and grabbed herself a beer from the fridge. She twisted the cap and took a sip. She sighed and leaned against the counter.

“This late?”

“Cat had me rewrite the story. But…it’s worth it. I got it. The promotion. Lena, I have to thank you.”

“I didn’t do anything, Kara. You used your own ability,” Lena told her. Her voice was bright, cheery. “I’m happy for you, though.”

“Means you owe me that dinner.”

The woman let out a sigh. “Rain check, maybe. I’ll be in Metropolis for a while. I mean…I’m technically temporarily in National City.”

“Oh.” Kara hoisted herself up on the counter. “When do you leave?”

“I don’t know. It’s been two years. It just…god, I shouldn’t be talking about this I barely know you.”

“Lena, come on. You can talk to me,” Kara encouraged.

“I’m young, I know I have a lot to do in life. But It sucks being alone right now. I don’t have a family. I barely have friends. And I don’t even have a hint of a partner.”

“If a beautiful, young, rich, smart woman can’t find love, I really have no hope,” Kara said lightly.

“You’re only two years older than me.” She heard the woman swallow.

“Drinking too?”

“Doing it harder than you most likely.” She laughed. “I got a gift of a bottle of rum. Lex, I can’t find him but he finds me.”

Kara swallowed. “You ever report him?”

“Always. I’ve always cooperated. I’m not my family with a distrust. Lex is a monster, I know it. I didn’t want to believe it for a long time, but all that happened…he sickens me. I want to see him in a jail cell rotting. I don’t like that he is off and gets to torture me.”

“Makes the two of us.”

“You know I always wondered what Kent’s life was like. I’ve talked to him a few times. He’s interviewed me and come to me for leads. I’m an open book for him because I owe him. Not out of guilt. He helped me clear my name with how he writes about me. He’s super, really. It’s like he has an alter ego whenever he gets into that mindset. A different person that is just so set on having good be good and create a clear line.”

“That’s Clark. Lois and him, it’s like watching a bad rom-com play out. Attractive, well-off, happy…they live in an Instagram filter.” Kara paused. “Do you want to come over? It’s not really late.”

“What?”

“What’s the problem with that? You have somewhere to be tomorrow besides work? If we’re both
drinking, why do it alone? I have some beers here. Enough for us both.”

“I—okay, I guess you have a point. Text me your address and I’ll be over.”

“Awesome. Dress down, Doctor Luthor.”

“Alright. Alright.”
Wine Drunk

Lena showed up a half hour later. She nervously raised her hand up to the door, gently rapping her knuckles against the wooden door. When the door opened, Kara stood there wearing shorts and a buttoned nightshirt. She had her glasses on and hair down. She looked…soft.

Lena sucked in a breath and held up the bottle of white wine she grabbed before coming over.

“Um, thought we could class it up maybe.”

Kara smiled softly. “I can tell.” She looked down. “This is dressed down?”

Lena looked down at the pencil skirt and blouse she wore.

“I can’t exactly be seen wearing pajamas outside.”

“How can you tell?” Kara sipped her wine. She paused and looked at it. It was the sweetest wine she had. She looked at the younger woman.

Lena just smiled softly at her. She held up the glass. “It’s bigger to accommodate that pretentious twirling people do.” She did it to exemplify it. “You don’t do that for white wine. Why it’s the small glass.”

“Huh.” Kara looked at the bottle.

“It was what the store owner recommended for a decent wine. I’m more of a red type but…” She held it to her nose. “I’ll take a sweet wine any day.” She took a sip.

“I pegged you for a whiskey woman. I was expecting you to maybe bring that.”

“As much as I’d love to spoil you with an Irish whiskey older than your daughter, I came from work and the selection at this hour isn’t too vast. And I didn’t think you wanted the rum.”

“It’s appreciated either way. All I had was beers.” They moved over to the couch.

“So, you got promoted.” Lena sat crisscross whilst Kara put her feet up on the coffee table.

“So, you’re depressed.” Kara sipped her drink.

Lena scowled at her. Kara just arched her brow. “Do we need to be a little drunker before we get to that?”

“Maybe.” Lena topped herself off. “I guess you won’t let me avoid the topic.”

“My good news takes second priority to you drinking alone in your primitively-designed, absolutely hawk-nest of an office.” Kara adjusted her glasses and smiled at her softly.

“Me being first priority? Huh…” Lena sipped her drink and frowned at the window across the way, it reflecting them. Kara was looking at her, attentive and actually giving a damn and all she could do
was be filled with angst?

She grimaced.

“You have a million other things to worry about. I mean as a mother—”

“You have a billion worries as a business owner. You have no reason to call me. No reason to text me. Lena, friendship isn’t a convenience. It’s an effort and a choice.” Kara put a hand to her knee.

“You don’t have to talk about it. I just wanted to open it up for you. I know you have a good friend in this Sam character you default on talking about, but I know she’s off across the country, so I was hoping to maybe be a good rebound.”

Lena looked at her and smiled slightly. “It’s just Lex’s box coming. Anything from him makes me feel like I have to just disappear. I have nothing in that family besides the carcass of Luthorcorp and the fucking name slapped onto a document when I was four. Past that, that is not my family. Far as I care, I’m an orphan again. But when he does this…I can’t forget like I want to. I know I can’t really forget with the fucking media almost wanting me to be Lex—but not seeing or hearing him and Lillian is almost enough. Then he sends me a bottle of fucking rum and a bullet—”

“Whoa, sorry. A bullet?” Kara took her feet off the table and turned her body towards Lena. “He sent you a bullet?”

Lena shrugged. “Bite the bullet and drink away the pain. Says that’s what they did during amputations in the Civil War. He likes to fuck with me. In ways, his ultimate revenge was giving me Luthorcorp.”

“You could always just liquidate it all.”

Lena tensed and sighed. “No…I had to do it. Because what happens then, Kara? I sell it, it usually will come with negotiations, modifications. People will lose jobs, I turn over my research, and any hope I had to help people goes down the drain.” She shrugged.

“You help a lot in ways that aren’t your research. You founded a children’s hospital. You fund women’s shelters and LGBT homes. You made a speech at a seminar for IPWEW.” Kara smiled at her, the two made eye contact. “Lena, you’re wonderful.”

Lena grabbed the bottle and topped off Kara. “You need to drink more.”

“I need to stop. I’ll wake up with a hangover and I can’t afford that. Audra has me up at six.”

“It’s nine Kara and this is your second glass. You will be okay.” Kara sipped from her glass. She saw that the other woman looked satisfied with the choice.

“The last time someone egged me on to drink more I ended up with Audra. You angling for something, Luthor?” Kara smirked and put her glass on the side table.

“We Luthors always have an ulterior motive, Miss Danvers.” Lena punctuated the sentence by clinking her ring on her glass. “So, what’s her dad like, really?”

“I don’t want to speak ill about the father to my child.”

“Kara, I’m your friend. Friends shit-talk about exes together.” Lena smiled at her, and Kara had to muffle laughter in the moments following.

“Heh, fine! But you’ve forced me.” Lena held a hand up in surrender, accepting her part in this. She
polished off her glass. “So, we were nineteen. I meet him by kicking his ass.” Lena snorted and coughed.

“Sorry—” She pounded on her chest as she coughed. “Wine went up my nose. You kicked his ass?”

“We went to college together. I was at a party with some friends. Actually, she threw the damn thing with her sorority. I lingered outside that group of girls but there was a respect and I’m actually friends with a few.”

“I didn’t peg you for the sorority type, Kara,” Lena teased. Kara pointed a finger at her.

“I was in cohorts, not a pledge. I won’t repeat myself.” Lena smiled and Kara waved her off and went on. “So, he’s passed out after doing a keg stand and his friends are gearing up to draw dicks on his face and shave his eyebrows. They screw off when I yell at them and I check on him because I don’t want this guy to die and ruin the reputation of my friends. So, I crouch and check his pulse. He wakes up and grabs me by the neck. We get in a brawl. I win because I actually used to be even more buff than I am now.”

Lena peered at her legs, the way the muscles slightly twitched as she adjusted. She bit her lip and looked Kara back in the eye. “Yeah.”

“He remembers me and guess what? We had a class together. I think he’s an ass at this point. He’s obviously a rich kid who just so happens to have ended up at a public school. It was expensive enough anyway.” She frowned. “So, he hangs around. I try to be just friends and I watch him hump anything that moves and at times he did things that were admirable.” She frowned. “We get together one night in my apartment. Dated for about six months before I started missing my period and getting sick as hell.”

“How was it when you told him?”

Kara frowned. “I said I think I might be pregnant. He panicked and ghosted me. I tracked him down and said he was going to be a father. He was sheet white.” She shook her head and let out a small “tsk.” “So, the next day I get a call. It’s his mother. She asks me to lunch. I go. She insinuates that I’m lying about the parentage. That I was trying to get money out of this.”

“What a heartless bitch,” Lena interjected. Her eyes were wide. She hadn’t drank a drop since the story started, clasping the glass in both hands like it was a mug of hot tea rather a glass of wine getting warmer by the minute in her palms.

“She helped him get out of it. See it doesn’t look too good to have an illegitimate kid. Offered him a nice cushy place to hide off the continent. My sister in the FBI couldn’t even find him, Lena. He came back with a woman. Engaged to her at the time and was enrolled in the academy. Both of them. The story of his coming back has multiple versions. His guilt overtook him, his wife threatened to not marry him if he went on acting like he wasn’t a father, or that she gently said he should and he took heed against his mother’s will. I know Imra was a part of him coming back and the news almost broke them up.” She shrugged. “My feelings for him disappeared when he did but I can safely tell you he was my first love.”

“What’s his name?”

“Mon-el Daxam,” Kara told her.

Lena paused her wine inches from her lips. She looked at Kara. “Odd name.” She wet her lips and poured herself a bit more wine.
“His father named him.” Kara shrugged and rested her head in her hand, elbow propped on the arm of the couch.

Lena rolled her shoulders and scooted closer to Kara. “Do you date?”

“I’ve tried.” Kara tapped her nails on her glass. “My friends set me up a bit. Winn, actually hit on me a lot. And James, you’ve met him, him and I flirted back and forth but I just tapped out. Now he’s dating Winn.” She shrugged. “There’s a running joke that once Audra moves out that’s when I will paint the town.”

“That’s so pitiful.” Kara glared at her. “Kara, you are a young, hot, and smart woman. Just because you are a mother doesn’t mean you aren’t deserving of a love-life.”

Kara cocked her head up, voice rising slightly as she jumped to her own defense. “The thing is that I don’t just hurt myself with my love-life. When you’re just dating around you don’t really think of ‘it’ll either end or this is forever.’ But people can’t forget that when you have a kid.”

Lena poured Kara another glass, busying her hands and changing Kara’s focus for a moment. “Lena, I have things to do tomorrow. And don’t you too?” Kara knew that was rhetorical. Of course, a CEO of a billion-dollar company had things to do tomorrow. It was so childish of her to even invite her out. She probably wakes up at ungodly hours and was going to sleep once she got home. Kara was burdening her, she knew it.

She began constructing a way to kick the woman out for her own good. But as she moved to set her small plan in motion, Lena just shrugged at Kara. It stopped Kara from getting up and faking a yawn with a theatrical stretch to signal to wrap it up.

“I can get through a day with a hangover. I do it at least once a week.” Lena looked at the quickly emptying bottle. “I guess I didn’t think of that.”

Kara paused for a second to remember the conversation. Yes, their lacking love lives. “That I’m a mother?”

Lena rolled her eyes. “Kara, the only reason we met is because you are a mother. I didn’t think of love as make or break. I think that’s where you get scared. Tell me, did you want Mon-el to be with you forever when that test read positive?”

“What? No—how could you even—how dare you even come to me—” Kara’s brow furrowed and she got up from the couch, stumbling a bit with the setting in buzz. “I guess…I expected something. I knew Mon-el in that state was in no place to be a husband, maybe not even a father. But if he could’ve given me something, anything, I would’ve been content.”

“You dated besides him?”

“Lackluster. Some Tinder dates and set-ups. I’m not the type to just fuck and ghost. Honestly, I haven’t had sex since Audra was a toddler. I could probably bite through a screen door with how pent up I am.”

Lena smiled at her, tipping her glass. “Kara, I’m going on a drought not seen since the Dust Bowl.”

“How many months?”

“Two hundred and eighty-eight.”

“You’ve never had sex,” Kara gasped.
Lena put her glass down and crossed her arms over her chest. She had a resigned smile. Not proud, ashamed, or bashful. She had not a drained face or a pink cheek. She could only upturn the corners of her lips as she saw Kara fight dropping her jaw and her wine glass.

“Miss Danvers when you collect yourself, I can explain.” Lena uncrossed her arms to touch her fingers lightly on the table to punctuate. They were splayed as if she were about to clasp a glass by the brim.

Kara sat next to her on the couch once more. “Never?” She whispered.

Lena shook her head. “I, well, had no sense of being swept in the moment to do it. When I was the age where you might lose your virginity—about fifteen through seventeen—my peers were anywhere between twenty and twenty-five. I was a girl and they were all women. I had some chances I guess. I had that the maid’s daughter and I would make out in the pantry…”

Lena blushed then, looking off. Kara looked at her profile, the sharp jaw and her green eyes staring at a time now past. A woman she probably could call her first love. A childish one at that.

“Sorry.” Lena shook her head, closing her eyes. “I just didn’t have the chance by circumstance. I could’ve one random day gone out to a club and let a girl maybe have her way with me in a bathroom stall but I had come so far, why not keep it to actually caring about the person? Doing a lot of stuff leading up so it’s not awkward but a climax in the story and euphemism meaning.”

“Yeah. Why not?” Kara finished off the bottle for them. Lena noticed her hands were trembling. She put her hand on Kara’s wrist.

“Did I say something to offend you?” She furrowed her brows. Kara straightened up and shifted from Lena’s touch.

“No. It’s just the wine. I promise.” She forced a smile and put the glass and bottle down. “You shouldn’t drive. My couch is fairly comfortable so if you’d like to stay…”

Lena smiled slightly. “Sure.”

Kara grabbed the bottle and their glasses, taking them to the kitchen. “If you’d like I can get you some water. Keep off a headache…”

Audra stood there holding her penguin stuffed toy. Her wavy blonde locks were knotted by sleep.

“Mommy…mm, can I have water?” She mumbled in her sleepy voice whilst she rubbed her cloudy green eyes.

“Audra, you should be in bed sweetie,” Kara said quickly. She put the glasses and bottle in the sink and put her hands on the girls’ shoulders.

“Kara is everything okay?” Kara tensed up. How would Audra take this the wrong way?

Audra’s head turned to look into the living room. “Lena!” The girl was bright-eyed suddenly and she ran over to Lena, hopping up and tackling the woman in a hug.

“Well, I didn’t think you’d be awake at this hour!” Lena chuckled.

“You smell funny,” Audra said to the woman.

“Okay!” Kara piped. “Audra, you have school tomorrow.”
“Why is Lena here? Are you guys having a play date?” Audra looked at Kara. The woman opened and closed her mouth, stammers forming in her throat but she was saved by Lena. Sort of.

“No, I wasn’t playing with your mother!” Lena chuckled. Kara turned red and glared at the woman as her daughter blinked innocently. “We’re having a sleepover and were talking about boring adult stuff like work.”

“Mommy’s a writer now! Did she tell you, Lena? Mommy’s going to be like Cat,” Audra said, puffing her chest out proudly.

“She didn’t talk much about it; how about you tell me while I tuck you back into bed with your glass of water?” Lena smiled at the girl’s posture. She was truly something.

Audra bristled. “But—”

“Hey, big beautiful minds cannot grow if we do not get our ten hours, Audra. Understand?” Lena booped her nose and the girl scrunched up her face, fighting a smile all whilst this happened.

“I wanna stay up and talk to you,” she whined and became limp in Lena’s arms.

“Audra Alura Danvers,” Kara warned. “If you keep this behavior up you won’t get to help Maggie and I pick out baby clothes this weekend. Now Miss Luthor has a sweet offer for you if you listen to us. Double or nothing kiddo.” She got the girl’s favorite cup filled with water, lidded, and slid the reusable straw she had for it into the hole in the lid.

Audra got off of Lena and walked over to Kara. She took the cup. Lena came over to her and picked her up. “Okay, kiddo!” She grunted and smiled at Audra, getting the surrendering scowl she had to melt away. “Bedtime part two.” They walked down the hall.

Kara crossed her arms over her chest and smiled softly. She went to the linen closet to grab some blankets for Lena.

Lena got into the room and put Audra on the bed. The girl drank her cup empty and climbed under the covers. “You know her first printed story was about me,” Lena told her.

“She wrote her story about you?” Audra’s expression didn’t show awe but rather hurt.

“Heh,” Lena breathed, sitting on the edge of the bed and looking at Audra. “I’m sorry that we’ve been becoming friends behind your back, kid. But we’ve been having a lot of fun talking. Your mom talks about you a lot. She’s really proud of you, you know.” Lena pulled the girl’s covers up to her shoulders.

“She is?” Audra smiled shyly.

“Oh, we both know she tells you all the time! Don’t be so modest, Audra.” Lena nudged her jaw gently with her knuckles. She couldn’t imagine Kara being anything else but wildly loving. Audra flashed a toothy grin, the dimple of her cheek caving in. “Okay, I need to leave you so you can sleep.”

“But you’re sleeping over. Can’t you stay with me?” Audra mumbled sleepily.

“I can’t.” Lena looked at the tiny bed, covered in the Spider-Man sheets set the girl had.

“Because you’re sharing with mommy?”
Lena turned red and laughed nervously. “Why would you think I was sharing with your mother?”

“Don’t friends share beds?”

Lena bit the inside of her cheek. “Sometimes, but when the friends have known each other for a long time. I haven’t known your mommy for very long.”

“You want to share a bed with her?” Audra blinked innocently even though the words, taken in the adult context, made Lena’s heart beat so hard it felt like it would break through her sternum like in a cartoon.

“If your mom asks to share one day I’d be personally honored.” *But she’s straight so not happening kid.*

Audra giggled. “You’re silly, Lena.” The girl yawned. Lena looked around. She saw a nightlight was already on so she simply clicked off the lamp on her bedside table. There was a gentle glow in the room from the light plugged into the wall. Audra smiled softly at Lena before she drifted off. Lena tip-toed out and shut the door slowly to minimize the click.

She walked out to the living room to see Kara had set up the couch. The woman was gone already. Lena looked down the hall to see the light in the crack under the door. She was tempted to knock and say goodnight, but she instead just got on the couch and set an alarm on her phone.

She laid back on the couch and covered herself with the blankets.
Kara woke up to her alarm, groaning and palming blindly at her alarm clock. She covered her face with her duvet to shield herself from the sun bleeding in from her window. Her head throbbed slightly but she knew that it would at least be gone once she ate something.

Moments passed and the door opened. She sat up and put on her glasses. Audra was standing there fully dressed.

“You got somewhere to be this early?” Kara teased, smiling softly as she shifted to the edge of the bed, putting her feet on the cold hardwood floor.

“Lee got breakfast,” Audra told her. Kara arched a brow. A part of her expected Lena to be out the door without a word.

Kara got out of bed and stretched. “Lee? I didn’t realize she had a nickname,” she chuckled.

“Just for me, she said,” Audra warned. Kara nodded, her expression becoming severe for the hope of a joke. Audra just grinned at her.

“Want to pick my clothes for the day?”

“Yeah!” Audra ran to the closet and opened the sliding door. She opened the drawers and pushed aside shirts. She threw a club collared short-sleeved blouse that was baby blue at her mom. Kara caught it.

“Pants or skirt kiddo?” Kara walked over to the closet.

The girl pointed at a black pleated skirt. Kara grabbed it and grabbed a pair of black closed-toe kitten heels. “I’ll be out soon.” She kissed the girl’s head and went into the bathroom.

She stepped out and checked her phone. Missed call from Mon, few notifications on Twitter. She stepped into the kitchen after replying to Mon-el, asking what the issue was.

Lena was leaning against the counter, wearing clothes she didn’t arrive in and had her makeup on. She was texting on her phone. Audra was at the table playing on her tablet and had a half-eaten muffin on a napkin next to her.

“Made a run.”

“No coconut in that right?” Kara asked her. Lena looked up from her phone.

“You don’t like coconut?”

“Oh, I do. But Audra is deathly allergic,” Kara warned. Lena turned red.

“Oh—no! She’s eating a chocolate chip one. Not vegan or anything,” Lena said quickly, putting her phone down. She let out a shaky breath and rubbed her brow. “Sorry. I should’ve thought about that you two might have allergies. I’m really sorry—”

“No, it’s okay; no way for you to know.” Kara smiled lightly. “So, what did you get?” She walked over to the travel tray.

“Oh, I think I remembered you like chai tea so…” She pointed to the cup left on it. Kara smiled at
her and grabbed it.

“Perfect. I quit coffee after graduation.” Kara sipped it and hummed. “Where did you go? This is better than anything I’ve tried in the city.”

“It’s that hipster place Cool Beans. It’s closer to here I’m surprised you don’t just go there instead of Noonan’s.”

“It’s tradition,” Kara shrugged. “We get brunch there, Cat likes their lattes.” She grabbed a muffin from the bag and checked the time. “Did you drive here? I can drop you off at L-Corp or call you a car.”

“Oh, I already have that taken care of. Sam’s in town for a bit. She’s picking me up soon.”

“Okay.” Kara faked a smile. She wondered briefly if Sam was really just Lena’s friend. Lena admitted to being single but didn’t mean she didn’t maybe see her in a romantic light. She had nothing in National City, she said. If she had no home here, how could she tell? Was it Sam that gave her that sense?

“You’d like her. Maybe you can join her an I for dinner sometime this week?”

“Yeah, text me and we’ll work it out.” Kara smiled at her.

“Mommy?” Audra looked up from the show she was watching on her tablet. Her hair was tied in a tight bun that Kara gathered that Lena had done since she had the same hairstyle as well.

“Yes, bean?” Kara walked over to her, putting her hand on the back of her chair.

The girl smiled shyly. “Can Lee come over for game night this month?”

“If she wants to. Ask Miss Luthor?” Kara looked up and smiled at Lena. She looked taken aback.

“Lee…would you come game night? It’s fun! We play board games and sometimes video games. All the family comes. Not grandma Liza or daddy but Ally, Mags, Winn, and Jimmy! They’re so cool,” Audra rambled on, stopping when she realized that she needed to give Lena a chance to reply.

“I would love to! I’m sure your mother can give me the info and I’ll be there.” Lena flashed a toothy grin. Kara stared at her, surprised by how cute and pure it was. Lena with her lipstick on and other makeup had a dominance to it but even put together…she was still so soft when she smiled like that.

“Yay!”

“Alright, Sam just texted that she’s on the curb. I must leave.” Lena sighed dramatically. “Until next time, Danvers girls!”

“No, Lena! You should stay,” Audra whined. Lena looked at Kara. The young mother just smirked.

“I’m not against keeping you in our clutches. But alas, you have people counting on you. Have a good day.” Kara hugged her. “I’ll text you.”

“Please do,” Lena mumbled and stepped back. She smiled at Audra. “Alright kiddo.”

Audra got up and ran at her, hugging her tight. Lena grunted at the grip and hugged back. “Write back soon,” Audra said.

“I promise I will.” Lena let her go and patted her on the head. “You’re gonna rock today.”
Audra nodded, the look of determination too adorable for the women to handle. Kara put her hands on her daughter’s shoulders.

Lena looked at Kara one last time. Her blue eyes had her thinking of the marbles she played with as a kid. Not the sky above or the ocean beyond the city…but something innocent and happy. Kara flashed a small smile. Lena returned it before grabbing her bag and leaving.

She got down to the car and got into the passenger seat. “I can’t believe you had me pick you up from your booty call,” Sam chuckled, adjusting her sunglasses so that she could look Lena in the eye.

“Screw off.” Lena shoved her shoulder. “It’s not like that! It was just a friendly session of drinking and talking.”

Sam frowned. “I thought that was our thing!” She drove off. “I feel cheated on. How could you?” Lena laughed and shook her head. “Good to see jetlag hasn’t killed your spirit.” Sam shrugged. “So, she’s just a friend?” Lena shrugged. “She has a kid.”

“So that’s a deal-breaker?” Sam arched a brow.

“Sam.” Lena shifted uncomfortably. “It is for me. Not out of immaturity or hatred. I…just can’t do it.”

Sam sighed and gripped the wheel tighter. “I know.”

Kara got to work early that day. She had a hop in her step as she entered her meeting that morning. It was introducing her and Nia to the staff. It was her first encounter with the woman. The woman was a bit taller than Kara and had brown hair. She was mostly quiet, but Kara didn’t think it was her being shy. Her posture just…screamed being sure.

She set up her room, having packed up her desk before the meeting. Winn had eyed her nervously until she explained what was happening.

She pulled out a picture of Audra on her first day of kindergarten. It had been nearing six months since then. She smiled at the photo and set it on her desk. She dug through various frames and small souvenirs. She had the bottle cap from her first “not date” with James when they stayed late working on the layout with Cat. He bought her the glass bottle of orange soda from the bodega down the street and they almost kissed in the elevator. She had the glow in the dark pen Winn gave her. There were tickets to an event Cat had her come with her.

She paused at the coffee sleeve with Lena’s number on it.

“Nice place.”

Kara jumped and looked up. She saw Nia standing there. In heels, she was over six-feet tall. Though it didn’t mean that was what made Kara feel small around her. It was her stoic face that kept any thoughts from shining through. There was no reading her or predicting her.

Cat came to mind. Kara swallowed, her throat going dry. “Thanks…you have an office?”
“No, I’m in the wild. Maybe that’ll help me get to know everyone.” Nia stepped in. “Anyone I should worry about?”

“I don’t know. But I do know you can find a good friend in Winslow from tech.”

“Which one is he?”

“Kinda short, dark hair, wears a cardigan. Mid-twenties.”

“Kara, you just described fifteen of the guys that work here.”

“He has all the toys on his desk,” Kara chuckled. “And he’ll be the one who starts squirming once you look at him.”

Nia nodded. “Okay, but the design and layout guy. James Olsen—that Pulitzer winner—I heard he split up with his girlfriend he had in Metropolis. He seeing anyone while he’s been here in NC?”

“Yeah, he’s dating someone in the office.” Kara got up and grabbed a picture of her and Clark. She hung it up on a nail left from the last person that had the place.

“Is it you? Because your posture changed.” Nia shifted her weight and leaned against the doorway, watching Kara’s movements with just her eyes.

“No, he’s a friend.”

“What’s her name? Don’t tell me he’s Cat’s man-nip.” Nia smirked.

“No, he’s dating the aforementioned Winslow. Though he goes by Winn.”

Nia’s face dropped and Kara swore she was turning red. “Oh. I…I’m sorry.”

“I didn’t expect to fluster you!” Kara grinned. “Jeez, you were so composed during the meeting. Hearing you were only twenty-two intimitated the hell out of me. I wasn’t even working here at twenty-two, let alone being a woman of multiple positions here.”

Nia put herself together, shaking her head briefly and looking Kara in the eye. She steadied her voice, tone rather grave. “Cat found me in a little scouting scheme. Now’s the time isn’t it? Twenties are the time of doing.”

“What she told me.”

Nia nodded. “I noticed their reaction at the meeting was even more tepid than mine was. What did you do to get on those bitter men’s bad side? Or is that just the piss poor welcoming committee around here?”

Kara grimaced. “Uh, I became a writer more by force.” She stopped and toyed with the file folder in her hand. She hooked the edge under her nail and would click it in and out of that place, creating quiet clicks. “They were passing out stories, ya know. Cat wanted someone to talk to the infamous Lena Luthor.” Kara rolled her eyes. “There was complete silence and I was kinda lingering. So, I, heh—I step up and say I’ll write it if no one wants to. Snapper wanted to fire me but Cat said “okay, don’t fuck it up.” And…here I am. That story come out in a few days and I got this place.” Kara smiled.

“You got some balls, Kara Danvers,” Nia said. Kara blushed and shrugged.

“So, what’s your first task at the new job?”
“Helping James. Speaking of which, he wanted me to bring you this.” Nia held up a wrapped present. It was paper thin and the wrapping was a navy blue with specs of silver that looked like stars in the night sky. Kara took it and lifted the tape at the edge and reached in. She pulled out a sheet of paper. It was part of the plan for this month’s issue. It had a photo of Lena posed regarding the camera, a smoldering stare. There then was the story. What she wrote laid out and a tangible final draft.

Kara smiled to herself. “Thanks…um.” Kara stood up and put the picture in a drawer of her desk. “Sometime this week, would you like to join me for lunch?”

“I’d love to.” Nia straightened up and looked over her shoulder. “I should get back to my desk. Have a good one.”

Kara sat back as Nia left. She opened up her laptop.

Game night was a staple in the group. Sometimes Kara’s only inkling of a social life.

Winn and Alex were always there. Maggie became a regular after marrying Alex. James was a recent addition. Mon-El and Imra…Kara found it hit or miss. She didn’t even bother since Laramie was born.

But Lena was a first. Kara had called everyone and warned about it. Winn was excited about being able to talk her ear off about the tech L-Corp has been releasing.

Audra was practically vibrating with anticipation come six. Kara was nearing the same sense of anticipation.

Maggie and Alex arrived first. Maggie brought a case of sparkling cranberry juice for herself, Audra, and Alex. She had given up all Alex had to give up during the pregnancy. Including alcohol.

“I’m surprised Miss Luthor wasn’t the first here,” Maggie teased. “Seems she’d be miss punctual. Or had already been here.” Kara punched her on the arm.

“Stop it,” Kara whispered. Audra stared innocently at them.

“Hey bean, let’s go set up the game,” Alex said. She and the girl went into the living room.

Maggie and Kara set up the drinks in the kitchen. “James and Winn got the pizza?”

Kara nodded. “How’s Alex doing?”

“Oh, her director has moved her officially to desk duty. She’s pissed but, like, of course, she shouldn’t be trying to get culprits and dealing with crazy people.” Maggie leaned against the counter. “I already started reading books. I know that’s so premature but I literally am clueless.”

“You’re not clueless!” Kara chuckled. “I was.” She jabbed Maggie in the side with her elbow. “Mags, you’ve been part of Audra’s team for years. You’re amazing at it. Yeah, it’ll be different when it’s your kid, but it’ll be better then. Your wife is making a life, Maggie! You’ll see the baby move in her belly in seven months. You’ll hold her when she gives birth. You’ll get to do tummy time, skin to skin, look and see Alex in them in their eyes, or their hair, or their nose…it’s amazing, Maggie.”
Maggie smiled. “Thanks.” She gave Kara a one-armed hugged. “So, does Lena know you like women?”

“I haven’t outwardly said it. But I mean, you say I just don’t look straight.” Kara scrunched up her brow. She didn’t understand why that mattered really.

“But you also have a kid which means you fuck men.” Maggie crossed her arms as the woman spluttered for a moment before jabbing her with two fingers in the ribs.

“You know what I said about cursing and game night?” She scolded as Maggie winced and rubbed her side.

Maggie sighed and took a dollar from her pocket and grabbed the jar on the counter. She put it in. “I will single-handedly send that kid to Disneyland at this rate,” Maggie muttered and put it back down. She watched Kara’s body language shift. “Hey, you okay?”

“Yes.” Her voice was a bit higher and she adjusted the collar of her shirt.

Kara checked her phone when it went off. “Winn is here…oh.”

“Oh?” Maggie looked at her. Kara was just smiling like a fool. “What?”

Kara ran to the door, practically skipping.

“Is it uncle Winn?” Audra asked as she saw her mother make her way to the door.

“Well…” Kara opened the door. Winn and James stood there…with Lena. Audra cared only for Lena, running at the woman and hugging her tight.

“Lee!” Audra squeaked out. Lena chuckled and held her tight. “You came.”

“I’m not one for breaking promises.” Lena straightened up. Kara was there to greet her with a hug as well.

Maggie crossed her arms as Winn and James stepped past them. “Got the pizza and how are we going to set that up?” Winn whispered. Maggie took the boxes from him. “Vegan pizza for you and Lena on top.” Maggie smirked.

“Thanks, man.” She took it to the kitchen, placing it on the counter. “I don’t think there’s anything to set up. Not if Kara doesn’t let it drop casually that she likes women. Lena has probably got the “why am I falling for a straight girl” mindset.”

James arched a brow. “I don’t think they’re going to get together. Kara really isn’t going to date anyone, guys.”

“I didn’t say anything about dating,” Maggie hummed, walking away from the couple.

She saw Lena was now talking to Alex. Maggie approached. “Hi.” She smiled and put an arm around Alex’s waist.

Lena looked at her. “You must be Alex’s wife Maggie,” Lena said, her voice smooth and she flashed a toothy smile. She held out a hand. “I’m Lena. Audra’s pen pal and a friend of Kara’s.”

“Yeah, Kara was just talking about how she interviewed you a bit ago,” Maggie said. Lena looked down and lowered her hand as Maggie ignored her gesture. “Hey, you shouldn’t be ashamed of your place in life. Your work is pretty great. I actually send a lot of underprivilege kids your home’s way.”
“Oh, are you a social worker?” Lena looked up.

“A cop.” Maggie smirked as Lena shifted her shoulders. “Alex here and I both work for the law. Funny, we actually met because of that. She was freshly in the FBI and I was a street cop still. We got into a screaming match about jurisdiction. Here we are now.”

Lena chuckled. “That’s quite... amusing. I wish Kara mentioned that!”

“She talks about us?” Alex looked over at her sister. Kara’s eyes widened briefly in panic.

“Not too much. Just explained how you play into Audra’s life. Audra sent me a family drawing and you, of course, were part of it and so was Winn.” Lena smiled. “I see she has a lot of love.”

“Yeah, the squirt just really melts your heart.” Maggie smiled as the girl came out of the kitchen with Winn and James, carrying their food and drinks already.

“Ladies please, let’s begin,” James said. “We going to do teams?”

“I think Kara and Lena should play the same team,” Maggie drawled. Lena arched a brow and Kara stepped up to speak.

“I’ll play with James. Audra and Winn usually play together. You can do a trio, Al,” Kara said.

“I mean if it’s with Lena,” Alex teased. Lena blushed and shuffled into the kitchen. Alex was amused to see the slight way Kara’s nostrils flared.

“I wanna play with Lena,” Audra pouted.

“You don’t want to play with me?” Winn asked, hand to his chest.

“No,” the girl said bluntly.

“Audra!” Kara gasped. The girl looked up, confused. “Be kinder.”

“No, sorry Winn,” the girl corrected. “Can I play with you and Lena, mommy?”

Kara bit her lip. “I’ll ask Lena if she’s comfortable with that.” She went into the kitchen. Lena was looking through the drinks they had set up. “The alcohol doesn’t come out until after her bedtime.” Kara grabbed them plastic cups and poured out club soda. “But, I’ll have mercy for your first time.”

“Oh—thanks.” She noticed Lena was fidgeting as she took the cup. Kara grabbed the bottle of Jack Daniels’ from the highest cupboard and poured a shot of it into the cup Lena held.

“You okay with playing with me and Audra on a team maybe?”

“Is that even a question? At least I know you two. I’m sorry but your sisters terrify me!” Lena’s eyes were wide. Kara chuckled.

“I guess I forget that they’re scary if you don’t know them.” Kara took her hand. “C’mon.” She led her into the living room and the group began to play. Audra sat in Lena’s lap and moved their piece. They played Monopoly. The two couples worked in tandem it seemed about their choices. Maggie flirted with Alex by having her blow on the die for good luck before every role.

Winn was cocky the first half, having bought up several of the colors and beginning to build on them.
Kara noticed Lena had a furrowed brow as she looked at the board. “Winslow, I propose a buyout.”

“Heh, what did you have in mind?”

“That baby blue card. You collecting only a few bucks on it. Statically, you’ll never land on the others. Considering you have, at this point, moved around the board three times, resulting in a hundred and twenty squares…I mean where you are you’d have to roll a total of fifty-two squares and do that before, say, I do. Or Maggie does. You have built up enough to do so and the ninety pounds could be more than you’ll really make with that square.”

He arched his brow and toyed with the edge of his stack of hundreds.

“That was a lot of smart lingo. Are you actually…using math and business in a game of Monopoly?” Alex asked, arching a brow. Lena smiled innocently.

Kara looked at. “Lena can I maybe get into your mindset?” She whispered.

Lena held a hand up.

Winn took the deal. Lena smirked as Kara handed over the money. Kara knew they had two of the color now but that didn’t really do much for them.

Audra rolled their next turn, got a seven, and they had the third one.

Winn grimaced as he had to hand over the first houses for them. Maggie and Alex bankrupted out first and Maggie grumbled about it “being a stupid game anyways.”

Alex was just glad to be able to stand up and walk away without worrying about Maggie trying something without consulting her. She came back with pieces of pizza stacked up on a plate and plopped herself down into Maggie’s lap. Maggie went from not pouting to just contentedly watching, her arms wrapping around her wife’s abdomen.

Lena and Winn had a battle like it was chess, throwing taunts back and forth.

“You got lucky with that blue. I won’t slip up again. I’ll bankrupt you with my red territories.”

“You think you’re the first capitalist threatening to ruin me?” Lena smirked. She looked at Kara. She softened. “Um…is this okay? I’m not leading a bad example am I?”

Kara laughed. “No, this is usually how it goes. I’m just the object of his back and forth.”

“Winslow has a six-game night streak right now,” Maggie told Lena.

Lena nodded. “Does the winner get anything?”

“Pick the pizza toppings. We’ve had Hawaiian for the past three months,” Alex said, shuddering a bit. “Makes me almost consider taking a slice of Maggie’s vegan pizza. Almost.”

Lena nodded a bit. She handed Winn his dice. “Be careful now.” He arched a brow and handed off his dice to James. The man took his arm off his boyfriend’s shoulders and rolled his dice. They passed go and landed on their own property. It went on.

Winn got put in jail his next turn. Lena just seemed knowing as he drew that chance card. His face dropped.

“Embezzlement?” She deadpanned. She handed Audra the dice. “Gently this time, kiddo.” The girl
just dropped the dice. They bounced once and twice. That resulted in an eight. They collected the payout as due to landing on the free parking.

The new few rounds went. Winn got out of jail. Kara, Lena, and Audra got the dark blue and green properties. They steadily collected tax and Winn had to sell a hotel. It was enough to make his eye twitch.

The game was still going as Kara tucked Audra in for bed. The girl weakly protested, clinging to Lena and whining about wanting to see the game end.

Kara told her that it wasn’t going to end soon and she didn’t want to be tired when she went to see her dad the next day. The girl said goodnight, giving everyone a hug before getting ready.

Kara came back to seeing Winn was almost bankrupt and Lena had a stack of dark five-hundred-dollar bills that was almost the entire stock of bills the game had.

“You’re cheating! How are you cheating?” Winn finally snapped. He looked at the dice.

Lena looked a bit offended at the accusation. “How can I cheat? You have control of the bank so I’m not taking money. These dice belong to the game so they’re not tampered with.”

“Those numbers you were rattling off. You get me to sell and all of sudden you had a monopoly. You knew what you were doing.” He was all but pouting at this point.

“You’re such a sore loser, Winn,” Maggie mocked.

Lena smiled and began to chuckle. “I’m sorry—” She covered her mouth and nose as she let out a small snort. “You think considering statistics as cheating? I used a bit of intimidation, yes, but that was because I had a golden opportunity.”

“Golden?” He glared.

“I was recognizing that we needed a seven to get the third property. I just needed the second one from you before I got that one with a dice roll. If I had two you would’ve never sold because that is smart! But if I have one, why not? Because what are the odds of landing on that last square I need?”

“You mentioned seven—that’s the most likely number to roll with a pair of dice,” Alex interjected. She let out a sharp breath and shook her head. “Bravo, Luthor. That’s something.”

“But you didn’t seem surprised when I got a chance card,” Winn said. “Did you shuffle them when no one was looking?”

“Never! I knew that your odds of getting a go-to-jail with a chance card were fairly high considering we had shaved away at the deck with no jail cards. Once you landed on it thinking you were going to maybe pass Go or even Free Parking…I was kinda amused.” Lena paused. “In my early twenties, I got kicked out of a lot of casinos for card counting.”

“That’s so cool,” Maggie said. Lena shrugged and smiled sheepishly.

“Alright, I need a drink.” Winn got up and went into the kitchen.

Kara looked over at Lena. Lena looked at her and flashed a soft smile. “Half spinach, half pepperoni sound good for next game night’s pizza?”

“Hell yeah! You’re my hero!” Kara held her fist up. Lena stared at it. “C’mon, don’t leave me
hanging.”

Lena gently bumped her fist against hers.

“I don’t think we should let Lena play games of chance then,” James said. Winn came back with two bottles of beer, handing one to his boyfriend. James held him close and rubbed circles on his back to calm him. “Hey, it was a good run.”

“No, let her play. I want a rematch,” Winn said. He straightened up. “I’m not happy, but I have to respect the strategy. And Audra looked pretty excited to be winning.” His shoulders slumped.

Lena sat back. “So how long has this game night been going on?”

“About five years,” Alex said. She grabbed her can of sparkling pomegranate juice, taking a sip.

“We started it to keep Kara from becoming a total recluse when she became a mom. It would be she put Audra down and we’d study and then play Cards Against Humanity. Bring in boyfriends and girlfriends or study buddies,” Winn said, smiling. Kara wanted to reach and touch his hand, but could only awkwardly smile.

“Then Alex got a job right out college, came out, and started dating Maggie. Maggie would come around.”

“That was a bit of a nightmare,” Maggie chuckled, putting a hand on the back of her neck. “I didn’t know Kara was a mom and when Audra came padding out I was wide-eyed. I didn’t like kids, thought they were annoying as fuck, gross, and ugly.” She turned red. “So yeah I’m gonna be a mom soon.”


“Briefly? You’re twenty-four,” James said. “Planning a kid that young?”

“Oh, I never planned it out. I just had to think about it because I was betrothed to someone.” Lena bit her thumb nail. “It was before I took over the company. I was fully done with school and Lillian hit me with a fine print in Lionel’s will; I was given my trust only if I was a student or married. And I wasn’t out, had resolved I never would be…so I let Lillian set me up with this guy.” She sipped her whiskey and soda, the cheap liquor burning her tongue but nonetheless welcomed as she thought of him. “I didn’t tell him I was gay. We just met and he was very obviously in my position—under his mother’s thumb. We talk, kinda of hit it off and he tells his mom he’ll do it.” She sighed. “He found out eventually. Enraged and well, I was ousted.” Lena leaned in, pausing before going on. She stopped as James piped up.

“Wait, you were having an arranged marriage? Only a few years ago?” James held a hand up as if with a motion he could truly stop the whole mood being set by Lena’s demeanor and story. She closed her mouth, resolving it was best to stop with her tangent for now.

She sat back again. “You think it disappeared because common society doesn’t do it?” Lena shifted her weight so she was closer to Kara. Kara unconsciously put a hand on her knee.

“God, why not talk about that in an interview? People ask so much about your family. Why not expose the fucked up high society bullshit? They shamed you into the closet!” Maggie said.

“You think that would stop it? How many marriages do you think are real amongst the rich? Especially in old money! New money you find these people were married before fortune quite
possibly. But old money? No…it’s all about the parents lording their children’s funds over them.” Lena shrugged.

“You hating the society is why you won’t have kids?” Alex asked.

“No. I think it’s the fact I’ve fucked myself up so much I can’t really have that life. Find a wife to nurture a child with. It’s not that I hate kids. The opposite. Why I opened the children’s hospital. Why I did that speech. Why I did the pen pal project…” Lena looked briefly at Kara and then at the group. “I just don’t see myself feasible to recover to what happened enough to give a woman and a child the attention, love, and empathy they are entitled to in a family.”

“I understand,” Maggie said. “I know a lot of my denial came from my own family putting me on the streets. I had to fend for myself because someone gave of their paternal and maternal instinct for family pride.”

“They kicked you out?” Lena’s voice almost cracked. She looked dumbfounded.

Maggie smiled sadly, her dimples indenting and her shoulders slumping. Alex’s grip on her tightened and Maggie rested her chin on her shoulder.

“My father said I had wronged him. Shamed the family. He dropped me at an aunt’s house. I got emancipated and worked my way through high school. Did an associate’s and then joined the force.”

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,” Lena muttered. “Catholics, huh?”

Maggie laughed half-heartedly. “Truly. What would yours say?”

Lena shook her head. “I…we can talk about it another time.” She swallowed harshly and finished off her drink.

“Let me top you off.” Kara took the red cup and walked into the kitchen. Alex got up and followed her. Kara hunched over the sink, grasping the edge. Alex shut the little shutters that made the only partition between the living room area.

“You okay?” Alex whispered, rubbing her shoulders. Kara shook her head.

“Um, yeah. Just heavy talk, you know?” She rubbed her eyes, pushing her glasses up to her forehead.

Alex nodded solemnly, knowing that this was more than that. Kara just hadn’t realized why it hurt to hear.

Kara mixed the drink. “It’s just so sad to hear someone has been so damaged that their whole life won’t be what they hoped it to be. Or…at least perceiving it as so.” She frowned.

“What she says doesn’t change her fondness of Audra. She’s good with her. Like Winn almost. Almost.” Alex sometimes wished the man had been the person Kara chose. He was wonderful and at this point a brother to her. But she knew the reasons and could only thank whatever power to have him in their life and that he was happy now.

She took the drink back and Alex followed. Lena innocently took the drink from Kara.

“What were you guys talking about?” Alex asked Maggie.

“Telling Lena about my recent project,” James said. He returned then to his tangent about
performance art he had been doing stills of for an online slideshow. He was gesturing widely and had a sparkle in his eye. Kara could recall how hat used to twist up her gut. But now it made her heart full. Though her chest ached as she saw how Lena smiled and nodded along with his explanation and complimented the photos he had uploaded onto his cloud, able to show on his phone.

She was being attentive. Being absorbed into the small group. Winn leaning in and whispering, “she fits in well,” felt like the last thing she needed at the moment.

Kara shook her head and sat back, silent for the rest of the night. The group told old stories to Lena and listened to what the woman had to talk about her recent days and old times in college.

Eventually, they all did the usual of grabbing blankets and pillows from the linen closet to sleep on the floor and the couch.

Kara stayed up, waiting for everyone to pass out before disappearing to her bed. She crept past Lena on the couch only to be stopped when the woman woke up and grabbed Kara’s wrist.

“Kara,” she mumbled.

“Yes?” Kara leaned down. The woman blinked slowly and sat up.

“Can I come next time?” Her hair was down in loose waves and she had taken off her makeup before they all began to lay out. She looked downright cherubic.

Kara moved Lena’s hand from her wrist to clasping it in both of hers. “I would be honored to have you.” She smiled softly. “Sleep. I’m going to sleep in my bed I have to take Audra to Mon-el’s tomorrow morning.”

“Okay.” Lena smiled sleepily; her mouth lopsided with her eyes closed. She laid back down, hand sliding from Kara’s grasps. Kara lingered there until she heard her breaths slow in rhythm. She leaned over the arm of the couch and kissed Lena’s forehead.

“G’night,” she mumbled. She stepped back and walked to her bedroom.
Chapter 14

Lena fought rubbing her eyes as the dull morning become the insufferable afternoon. She knew that one day her body would simply refuse to go on fumes after all this work. Jess would lightly say how all the coffee, stress, and no sleep would give Lena a heart attack before forty. She just brushed off any promotion to sleep well. It was ironic that her first full night’s of sleep had been incidents where she should’ve been uncomfortable; sleeping on Kara’s couch had given her two of the best night’s of sleep she had had ever since taking over the company.

Maybe in all her adult life. She recalled seething wide awake in her late teens. Her mother was belittling her at every turn and they had screaming matches whenever she was home. Lex would step in when Lillian got physical with a slap or when Lena kicked over chairs.

She couldn’t sleep next to her ex-fiancé. She tried sharing a bed with him before the marriage. One would expect Lillian to be opposed, but the woman knew at this time that Lena was gay. It had been the center of many fights when Lena was in the beginning of her twenties and the end of her teenage years. She wanted the girl to “get over it” and maybe having male intimacy could help with that.

She never had sex with him and could barely sleep next to him when he wrapped his arms around her. When he found out she was gay he tried to stay with her and she spent a few nights on the couch as they spent waking hours screaming and bartering.

Weeks later it was anonymously leaked to a paper that she was gay. She couldn’t be a Luthor pawn anymore. Couldn’t be married off if you had a sign above you promising no chance of mutual intimacy and affection. Her ex disappeared off the face of the earth. How could someone who was already such a mystery disappear?

Lena grimaced to herself as she stared blankly at her laptop.

The door to her office opened and she snapped out of her trance. She looked and saw Jess coming in with Kara behind her.

“She wouldn’t leave until she saw you,” Jess said.

Kara smiled sheepishly. Lena looked at Jess. “Jess, whenever Miss Danvers shows up I want her to be let in immediately or for me to get a note that she visited.”

“Yes, Lena.” Jess turned and left the two. Lena looked at Kara.

“What brings you here?” Lena asked, smiling softly.

“I think I’ve come to know you well. Figured you’re running on E and might need a pick me up every once and a while.” She held up a brown bag. “You mentioned like that Asian fusion place a few blocks from here. I mentioned your name to the hostess there and she told me your usual order. They gave me drinks on the house too. So, thanks I guess.”

Lena shut her laptop. “Guess it says a lot about me that she knew that.”

“I mean I’m sure any place that sells potstickers can pick me out of a lineup.”

“Let’s go to the couch.” Lena smiled and got up. They moved to the couch in the back of the office. Kara set up their lunch on the coffee table. She extracted two cans of tea from her purse. “Mint or peach?”
“Mint.”

“Thank god,” Kara whispered and twisted open the peach tea, taking a sip and shimmying her body in delight.

Lena rolled her eyes and grabbed the other bottle. “You’re such a dork.” She grabbed the travel bowl of noodles and miso broth Kara laid out. Kara saw her eyes light up a bit.

“Comfort food?”

Lena smiled slightly, shifting so she wasn’t facing towards Kara. “Um…it was the first place I went when I moved here. People recognized me wherever I went in Metropolis. I’m a little less known in National City. Or at least was. The owner actually was sweet. He gave me a free drink of sake when I said I had just landed, cheering to it. I take only friends there so I’m relaxed and always kind there. I’d never take a business partner.”

“Maybe you can take me one day,” Kara said lightly.

Lena looked over at her and smiled. “I’m definitely taking you there. But Joe will flirt with you big time if we sit at the bar.”

“I mean I could probably get us free drinks.” Kara stabbed her dumpling with her fork, looking down at the black plastic container in her hand. She bit the inside of her cheek. “Hey, I want to say sorry about the heavy subject matter of game night. I didn’t want you to feel put on the spot.”

Lena watched as Kara ate the rather large dumpling in one bite. “You can put it away. It still amazes me.” Lena chuckled half-heartedly, not wanting to touch on the subject brought up by Kara. But she had to. “Is that what this is about?”

Kara spoke after swallowing. “No. I could’ve apologized over the phone. I just…wanted to see you. Friends do that.”

Lena rested her back on the arm of the couch. She tucked her leg under herself. “It’s something you have to know about for us to be friends. I could tell you were worried about how I felt about Audra when I was talking about how I don’t want kids.”

“Lena, I didn’t worry for your care of Audra. I mean I do, but I know that it’s positive. Your second nature with her honestly is why you saying you didn’t want kids made me feel saddened.”

“I didn’t say I didn’t want them…I just know it wouldn’t be fair for any child to have me as a mother! If I’m not fucked up towards them then the world will be.”

“The world doesn’t really have much a care of queer women having kids anymore. It’s just ignored especially where we live.” Kara shrugged.

Lena paused. “I don’t care about the world hating me for being gay. I care about how the name Luthor is dipped in poison.” Lena looked at her.

“Change what that name means. If anyone is going to, it’s you.” Kara took her hand. “Lena, you are so brilliant and kind. A wonderful combination to have intellect and empathy.”

“I think it’s a concoction for anxiety, but go off.” Lena hung her head.

“You should talk to Winn one on one soon.”
“Why would I do that?” Lena muttered.

“Winslow Schott.” Kara got up without another word, just a kind nod and gentle smile to promise this exit was not bitter.

Lena stood there in the middle of her office. It clicked for her and she thought of Winn with a newer, heavier, point of view.

Winn was used to being a fly on the wall at work. As in always smashed into without regard to his quality of life or feeling.

He clicked his pen and stared blankly at the deconstructed sketch of the new AI home assistant L-Corp released. His most recent success with Edmund was changing his voice for monotone robotic voice to Morgan Freeman.

“What can I do to fuck with you next Mister Edmund?” He mumbled.

“If you reset him more then a dozen times in quick succession he’ll speak only in Gaelic.”

Winn jumped with a small yelp and turned. There stood Lena Luthor. She was dressed to the nine’s and probably wore a face of makeup more expensive than his whole outfit. She outsmarted him in a game and he hated to feel like he had a small ego but it felt like a small kick in the gut.

“Why would it need that?”

“Oh, it’s just to scare them as they troubleshoot. They’ll panic and actually call for support or bring it in at that point instead of trying the on and off method over and over. It can be undone in minutes and people who can fix it know why it does that.”

“That’s actually…pretty cool.” He looked at her. “So what brings you to my desk? You need directions to Kara’s office? You here for brunch with Cat?”

“I came to invite you downstairs for coffee.” She shifted awkwardly.

He looked at her and put his pinkie nail between his teeth. “Uh-huh. Why?”

She sighed. “I suppose I could try to stoke your ego and say that I want to talk tech with you. But the honest reason, at least for this visit, is I learned something. That we’re even more alike than I had previously assumed.”

He straightened his back and swiveled his chair away. “Lena, I don’t want to talk about my dad with you.” He realized that was a bit too harsh. “Or anyone. Sorry for you to have wasted the trip.” He pulled up the code he had been working on for the new system Cat wanted to install to prevent time wasting.

“So, you’re not afraid of becoming like him?”

His hands smashed ungracefully onto his keyboard, sending a crash and a string of key smash in the string. In a moment he created a good half-hour or rewrite if he royally fucked it up. He swiveled his chair and looked at her.

“So, coffee?” He stood. He was bitter the ride down and was only happy as he got his mocha at the small coffee cart outside. Lena got black coffee with shots of espresso. “That’s a lot of caffeine. Why
not just do it quicker with a tablet or something?”

“I’d rather not suffer the tremors and weight loss.” She sipped her drink. “Not in college anymore.”

“I think my computer science classes will be the sole cause of me needing a pacemaker in my older years.” He blew on his drink gently. “So, you’re afraid of becoming like Lex?” They began walking around the block.

“The more time passes. The world is waiting for it.”

“You were adopted it’s not like you share his bloodline and whatever mental illness he got from Lillian.” He wondered to himself about all the shit the woman said a few nights ago. What did she leave out and what was the real problem? Was it the brother? The mother? The father? The ex that outed her? Was she saying she didn’t want kids as a technique to further herself from Kara?

She bit her lip. “Lex was a psychopath.”

_You’re thinking about this too much. And so is she._ “And Lillian Luthor is currently being treated in a mental asylum for sociopathy. She’s criminally insane saying she is seen as a co-conspirator in the tech malfunction that killed five people over the course of a month. I know the story. He got it from her.”

“And from Lionel. He was a psychopath. He had exceptions but he hit the criteria.”

He stopped in his tracks and she followed, setting them a few paces apart. She looked lost in worry and he felt himself seethe. “So what, Lena?” He let out a frustrated sigh. “My father has a mental break down and killed innocent people with a fucking bomb. He made a shiv and killed two guards in an escape attempt. That man is fucked and I have half his DNA. Of course, I’m terrified that I could break like that…but I know that I’m a good person. That I’m loving and calm. That even if the whole world beats me down or takes what I think I should have…that I have no right to take life from others.”

He saw she still had a furrowed brow and her eyes had this dull look of…defeat? Pity? Self-doubt? Jesus Christ.

“And if you even think you have the capacity to kill people like Lex did with no empathy or regret, then I’m sorry it’s more than the environment you were raised in, Lena.”

She tensed and her posture shifted and he realized it was too harsh. She was coming out of vulnerability and a sense of doubt. He yelled and now she was trying to look cold. He was half-surprised to not have coffee thrown in his face and have her storm off.

Why did she stay? Why does it matter to her about what his father did? How did it make them similar?

He looked at her and it clicked suddenly. He hadn’t even been trying to figure it out but it just made sense suddenly. Why care about so much about a mental illness she was so unlikely to develop? Even if she was emotionally abused and neglected the odds were stacked in her favor to not have that specific illness (though others he knew she hadn’t escaped).

“Let me guess…it isn’t a coincidence that you got adopted. Rich people don’t just adopt a random kid from Ireland.” He swallowed and she grimaced. She cocked her head toward the street corner. He moved, people walking around them, thinking this was a lovers’ quarrel. They began to walk again. “Lionel’s affair?”
She nodded.

_Son of a bitch._

“Lex was absolutely screwed but you…have a chance still. And after years of abuse, it fucking feels like you just could. When people make you angry, act like they’re above you because of their age or their monetary value…it weighs you down.” He stopped at the next corner with her. The world passed them by. He saw people with cameras from a car. She shifted her shoulders and he turned his face away. She seemed only a bit inconvenienced whereas he felt on edge at noticing. “Lena, Lex was a sick man. He was gone before he killed those people. You won’t fall that low.”

“You don’t know.”

“I do. I was you.”

“Was?”

He touched her arm briefly, not comfortable enough around her to show physical affection but had enough empathy to know she wanted a reassuring embrace. “Your trauma is more recent. It’s been, what, two years? It’s been over a decade for me. You learn to live. Not accept it or understand it…but you can live.”

“Live?” She looked up at him.

He hummed and looked up at the sky briefly. It had been cloudy all morning but it began to clear up. “Lena, I get to love someone. That’s a recent thing I could change and honestly, it’s a big thing. To love someone and reassure yourself that you are capable of amazing things such as that.”

She nodded her head and stared ahead. “You and James are a good couple. You got anything planned for the future?” She turned her head to look at him.

He smiled a bit and couldn’t keep eye contact, having to downturn his gaze. “He says his nice apartment gets lonely and I mean if I could leave my studio.” He was smiling like a fool at the moment.

“Jeez, you’re smitten.”

“Oh, stop it!” He shoved her lightly. He laughed harshly when she almost fell over due to being in heels. “Sorry!” She grabbed his arm for stability. “I’m really sorry.” She let out a breath of relief at not eating the pavement and glared at him.

They held that position for a moment before he broke the air with a small, nervous laugh. She lost her scowl and just shook her head and let out a small, “tsk.”

He smiled to himself. “So, what else can Edmund do?”

Lena hummed and looked up briefly. “Ask him the meaning of life next time you’re at home.”

He nodded a bit. “Noted.”

They walked a few more rounds talking about tech. He got what he wanted from game night, hearing some about what she was working on and the ideas about the recent releases. He was surprised to hear that was what she studied most in school.

“You need to let me into your testing groups. Please!”
“I just might have to steal you from Cat. You sound a bit overqualified for tech support.”

He smiled. “I mean there are some perks to it…”

“Is it eye candy one and eye candy two?”

“James’ face and James’ body, yes.” He smiled at her. “I got over Kara years ago, Lena.”

She was pink in the cheeks and looked aside.

Audra,

I got the update that your project is wrapping up. I want to thank you for the opportunity and the friendship. You are a bright and kind young girl and I am hopeful for the world with you in it.

Those around you have been enjoyable. Winn is someone I see a lot of myself in (I see why he’s your favorite). Alex and Maggie first scared me until I saw how they were around you. You have magical powers to be able to tame such loud people to be quiet and kind. Unless that is just how they are once they are comfortable around others.

Your mother has to be my favorite of them. A kind woman with a beautiful outlook. She glows with pride when she talks about you and when you’re around she seems to be home. That kind of love warms my heart and I feel honored to be friends of you both.

I’m rambling I guess. Sorry, so I’ll wrap up the rest.

Enclosed I have my last few photos. My friend Sam and I were in my hometown. Not where I was born but where I majorly grew up. The first photo is from the top floor of L-Corp. The second is of the bistro I’d go to study in and the third is in the park where there usually would be street performers. There also is a few gift cards for you to take your mother out for a nice little shopping spree (she honestly does need your fashionable eye sometimes).

I wish you both well and hope to see you soon

-Lena

Kara put the letter down and looked at her daughter, the girl hugging her pillow. Her hair was damp as she had just gotten put down after her shower.

“Hey, don’t be sad. You’ll be seeing Lena around still,” Kara said softly. Audra just made a small noise and rolled away. “Audra.”

“She’s not going to care anymore,” the girl mumbled.

“Who put that idea into your head?” Kara put her hand on Audra’s back. “Lena cares very much for you.”

The girl sniffed and rolled to face her mom. “She doesn’t have to talk to me now.”

Kara stroked the girl’s hair. “Baby, she never had to. Lena kept talking because she enjoyed talking to you. You’re the last person getting letters still, Audra. Miss Eman says she’s surprised to be
getting letters still. It has to end but that doesn’t mean you’ll never talk to Lena again.” Kara chuckled lightly. “How about I call her? Invite her over for dinner next week?”

The girl lifted her head. “Really?”

“Yeah. We can make spaghetti for dinner.”

“Can Cat come too?”

“Hey kid, only one CEO over for dinner at a time,” Kara told her, nudging her cheek gently with her knuckles. Audra smiled softly.

“Okay, momma.” She rolled over, settling to get comfortable. Kara turned on her nightlight and turned off her lamp.

“I love you, bean.” Kara kissed the girl’s forehead and backed out of the room as Audra mumbled a drowsy, “love you too.”

She sighed slightly and sat on the couch. She pulled out her phone and texted Lena.

*Hey, I know it's like midnight for you, almost one…*

*But I have the impression that you’re up*

**Lee: Yeah Sam and I just got out of a business dinner. You ok?**

Would you like to come over for dinner when you come back? Us and Audra.

**Lee: I actually would like to take you out some time. Just us. But dinner with you girls is a lovely idea.**

*You and me? I couldn’t say no!*

*Guess I can buy a dress with the cards you gave*

**Lee: Or a suit? You were pretty cute in those suspenders**

*I’ll see what I can do Dr. Luthor*

**Lee: I expect only the best from you Miss Danvers**

Kara paused and typed out a few different messages.

*I didn’t realize you thought so highly of me*

She backspaced until she had a blank line again.

*You know I didn’t think it would come to this. I like that it’s this way*

She deleted the whole message.

*She wonders if you’ll care since it’s over. I do too. But I know you. You really care a lot. Thank you for caring. I don’t recall last time someone new has bothered to.*

She frowned, deleted it, and tucked her phone away.
Lena was back in town and it had been raining for the first time in months. She sighed to herself as she stepped out to look for her driver.

The weathered middle-aged man she had known since she was a teenager was waiting for her under a black umbrella in front of the modest black Lincoln. He nodded at her and got the door for her.

“Thank you, Ernest.”

“Have a good trip Miss Luthor?” He asked after getting into the front seat. He pulled out and drove off.

“I mean if getting a deal that can double our real estate profits is good news,” Lena said. She smiled to herself. “How’s your son doing?”

“He’ll be going back to school after his recovery. I can’t begin to thank you for what you’ve done for him—”

“The scholarship is in place for every child of an employee in the household. And when I heard Ryland’s story I had to help.” She smirked. “His chest healing up well?”

“He couldn’t stop smiling once he was coherent and saw the bandages. I wish I had recorded it. I hadn’t seen a face so overjoyed since…well, mine when he was first born.”

“That’s sweet.” Lena smiled and looked down at her phone again. “Sorry, it’s a friend messaging me.”

“A friend?” Ernest teased. She scoffed and looked at the screen.

*Kara: What’s the dress code for where you’re taking me?*

*A nice dress will suffice*

*Do you dance?*

*Kara: What type?*

*Ballroom.*

*Kara: Yeah Alex made me take lessons for her wedding*

*Then I might have to show you off on the dancefloor at this place*

*Kara: No way! I can’t wait!*

Lena smiled to herself. She wondered then where Kara was. Sneaking this text while she was in a meeting? Waiting to pick up Audra in the car lane? In her office, stopping from her train of thought to reply?

She shook away the thought. Kara really wasn’t paying her that much mind.
Kara ran around the apartment, panicking to herself as she got herself ready for dinner and getting Audra ready for Mon-el picking her up soon.

“Do you have your uniform? Your project?” Kara stumbled around the living room clad in a towel. She had her makeup done and contacts in but waited to slip into her clothes until Audra was ready, lest she get anything on the brand-new dress.

Audra tied her shoes and got up. “It’s okay mommy,” the girl said. She was able to tell Kara was getting worked up, in her mindset of anxiety. She grabbed her night bag with her PJs, toiletries, stuffed toys, and the noise-canceling headphones they got her for staying the night at Mon-el’s house. She had an mp3 of just white noise.

Kara chuckled a bit once she slowed down. “Right baby. Sorry.” She came over to Audra. “I’ll be picking you up from school tomorrow. I’m off tomorrow so right when I pick you up we can have a girl’s night. Cook dinner together, watch a movie before bed.”


“Amazing choice.” They had watched it probably ten times in the past few months. Kara still cried every time. She had gotten lucky that Audra usually was asleep by the ending.

There was a knock at the door. Kara moved to the door and looked into the peephole. She opened the door and Mon-el stood there in his uniform.

His eyes went down to Kara’s attire. “Oh…um…” He looked up again and cleared his throat.

“Going somewhere?”

“Cat has a charity banquet and I’m still doing some of her assistant’s work until she gets one.” She shrugged.

“Okay.” He very pointedly looked her in the eye as Audra came up. His eyes went to Audra when she stepped up to the door. “Hey, kiddo.” He smiled and took one of her bags. “Let’s get home. Imra and Lars are giddy to see you.”

“I got my last letter this week,” Audra told her dad.

“Your last?”

The girl pouted. “The project’s over.” He nodded.

“Well think about it this way; you’re about to be done with kindergarten! Less than two months now. The project can’t go on with school being out.”

The girl smiled a bit. “I’ll be in first grade.”

“Yeah.” He put his hand on her back. “Let’s go. I got the squad car.”

“Can I play with the siren?”
Mon-El looked up at Kara. “Nooo…that would be irresponsible.” He looked at Audra and winked. She gigged. Kara said her goodbyes and the girl stepped out the door, getting a small lead down the hall.

He looked back at Kara when Audra was out of earshot. “Take a picture, it’ll last longer,” she said dryly at his struggle to keep his eyes level.

“I’m not—” He cleared his throat. “Just surprised. Are you going on a date? I hope it goes well.”

"Just a meet up with a friend. I know it will go well." She shut the door and went to get dressed.

A few minutes later someone knocked again. Kara by that time had gotten dressed and put on her heels. She ran up and opened the door.

Lena Luthor stood there, leaning against the door frame. She wore a suit. That was a loose term for it. She had a pair of slacks but her jacket was all she had on top. Its last button was just above her navel and the lapels covered her breasts. The v-dip of the coat gave a good view of Lena’s cleavage and her porcelain skin. Her hair was free from any ties and left down in loose waves.

Kara struggled to form any thought. She just stared and gripped the door.

Lena took the silence to look at Kara. She had mix feelings that the girl opted for a dress. She knew that she said that would work but she almost hoped she would do a sports coat and that tie she wore at the coffee shop. Though the dress hugged her curves and had off the shoulder sleeves that showed off the muscle tone and tanned skin.

“I’m surprised your heels don’t make you taller than me. Same height for once,” Lena said. She smiled softly. Kara snapped back, looking up.

“Well, you’re in stilettos.” She fidgeted with her earring. “Um…you look really good. I feel like I didn’t dress up too well. You look…”

Lena blushed and just snickered slightly to cover it up. “Sam bought it for me in Metropolis. She said if I didn’t wear it that she would fly over and glue me into it. I can’t exactly conduct business in such a thing.” She gently held a lapel between her fingers and popped it briefly to emphasize.

“You look riveting. Maybe with a bit of help from your wing-woman, we can get you a cute girl’s number.” Kara smiled and offered an arm to Lena. Lena hooked her arm with Kara’s.

“I’m very much okay with just being with you.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “You flatter me.”

“I’m just being honest. Rather sacrosanct for friendship, I would say.” Lena smiled at her as they went down to her car. “How’s Audra doing?” Kara struggled not to gawk at the Tesla. Lena just looked at her expectantly.

“Pouty about the project being over. You made a little girl very happy, Lena.” She exhaled pointedly as they got in. Lena shut the doors with the push of a button and they drove off.

Lena sighed, “I can’t believe it led me to meet you. I mean I could’ve met you several times before. Hell, within days of that first letter! I wouldn’t have had the chance to realize how your family is so wonderful.”

Kara smiled sadly. “Bold of you to assume we had only one way of becoming friends.” She adjusted
in her seat. She didn’t want to speak of it fully but part of her…felt an energy that made getting to
know Lena unavoidable.

“Yes, because I’m sure you’d want to befriend the person who spilled coffee on you.”

“Would you want to befriend some random assistant?” Kara shot back.

Lena whipped her head over at Kara at a stopped light. “Don’t say that. Kara a job doesn’t make
anyone lesser. A paycheck, an education, an office…do not give worth. It’s superficial.”

Kara at Lena. Her green eyes had a spark to them. Hell, in the night light they looked almost gray.

The two jumped when someone behind them honked. Lena saw the light had changed and she
accelerated. “Sorry.” She loosened her shoulders. “Honestly one of my only friends is my assistant.
Well, my secretary is what I really call her and what she likes as a title. Jess is my lifeline and I treat
her like that.”

“I noticed.” Kara smiled softly. “So where are you taking me that has a dancefloor?”

“Le Chat Rouge. Heard of it?”

“I’ve had to call them a few times for Cat.” Kara shifted. “Lena you really don’t have to do this.”

“I promised I would treat you to dinner to celebrate your first story. It’s overdue.” Lena pulled up to
the valet. The man helped Kara out of the car as Lena came around and gave him the keys.

Lena offered an arm to Kara. “C’mon, dear,” she joked. Kara smiled and looped arms with her. They
walked in and were seated by the hostess right off the bat.

Kara looked around where they had been settled. It was rather secluded from the rest, tucked near the
dance floor where the light fell past them. Felt strategic for Lena.

“You take all your girls here?” Kara teased. Lena smiled softly at her, looking across the table. The
low candlelight made her look ethereal.

“Only the special ones,” she said softly. Their server came to take their drinks. Lena ordered them a
round of whiskey and then promised Kara it would be her only round that night.

Kara opened her menu and bit her lip. No prices. Wonderful.

“Avoid from the fish, I think it’s personally a low point of theirs. Though it’s been years since I had
it, so…” Lena held her hands up briefly before placing them back down on the table. They got their
drinks and Lena asked for a bit more time, addressing the server by name and smiling at them. “I
want to propose a toast.”

“To what?” Kara picked up the amber liquid in the crystal glass. Hers sizzled and popped with the
club soda in it whereas Lena had it straight in her glass.

Lena looked at Kara. “You.” Her eyes caught the light, looking almost gold. Kara sucked in a breath
and nearly rasped out.

“To us,” she drawled to Lena and gently clinked their glasses. She drew hers to her lips and took a
slow slip. “That’s smoother than I recall whiskey being.”

“We do it right.” Lena took a long sip and placed her glass down on her cocktail napkin. “Lionel
owned a distillery off the south of Ireland. Take a ferry and spend a night in this small cottage a mile out from it. I had my first drink when I was fifteen there. I had a clear bourbon while he had a fifteen-year whiskey and he told me about how his life was when he was my age. How he was excited to see my next fifteen years.” She realized the memory had put a smile on her face so strong it hurt her cheeks. “I’m sorry.”

“No…That’s sweet.” Kara took her hand. Lena held her hand, stroking her thumb absently along the knuckles.

Their server came back and Kara quickly took her hand away. Lena looked down at the grain of the table as they both awkwardly ordered.

“He, um, was a good man to me,” Lena said lightly. “He had his flaws but I knew he loved me.”

“That’s good.” Kara nodded and smiled weakly. She looked around the restaurant.

“Did I do something to make you uncomfortable?” Lena asked, fighting a frown. If she really did, she had no right to be disappointed. If she was seeming to advance she had to admit she really was.

“No. I, I feel like I should say something to you about myself.” Kara shrugged and looked at her. “I had a brief relationship last year. Why I’m a bit reluctant and joke how I won’t date until Audra is out of the house.”

“Go on,” Lena said, leaning back against the booth.

Kara sighed. “Siobhan was this woman Cat hired at the office. For her to have two assistants as she was publishing her book at the time so she needed to split it up a bit. We clashed at first but I realized that she wasn’t so bad. In fact, quite dedicated and sweet. Pretty hot too.” She blushed a bit. Lena looked stunned.

“You like women,” she said.

Kara looked at her, mouth a bit agape. “Oh…you didn’t know?”

Lena shook her head dumbly. Kara chuckled sheepishly.

“Sorry. I do.”

“Bi?”

“Yes.” Kara sipped her drink. “It took a while to figure out, but it’s what very much fits.”

“Okay. Go on. Sorry.”

Kara rolled her eyes. “Well, she and I struck up a little bit of an affair. For a few months, it was nice. Lunch dates, coffee dates, a bit of a mid-day delight…” Kara paused when she saw Lena shift uncomfortably. “Sorry.”

“Don’t be!” Lena had a tight, forced smile.

“It just didn’t work out,” Kara finished. “She moved for work and I knew she wasn’t really okay with the whole situation I was in. At the time Mon-el was just coming into the picture as well. He didn’t know I was seeing anyone. No one knew really. My attorney was worried it could be used against me. Especially it being a woman…” Kara bit the inside of her cheek. “The instability of me dating around could help Mon-el if he wanted full custody. Because wanting a social life is so
audacious and selfish of me.”

“That’s such bullshit,” Lena gasped. Kara chuckled humorously and shrugged.

“It’s…life. I guess I can just move on. Mon-el accepts the split custody. Has her every other weekend and one day during the week. Share birthdays and Christmas. But that took time.” She sighed and shook her head. “I have a lot to thank of Imra. She talked him down a lot.”

“How can a man with no interest in being a father suddenly go to possibly wanting to gain sole custody?”

“Beats me. I think it was an ego thing. Him not thinking. He never fought for it or even brought that sentiment to the judge. Paternity test happened and then we negotiated the terms. Audra was only four at the time so they weren’t going to really ask her in court which parent she wanted to be with.”

“Would you put her through that?”

She tensed up and looked down at her drink in her hands. “I’m really glad it didn’t come to that.” She looked up at Lena and gave a half-smile, quirking one corner of her mouth up. “I don’t think she would choose him if that’s what you think. I just couldn’t take putting her through something traumatizing. Why she hasn’t met her grandmother who only addresses her as “the girl” or the “supposedly his child,” and the classic “that bastard.””

Lena looked at her empty glass, holding it in her hands and pressing her thumbs into the grooves of the crystal. “She sounds like an actual devil.”

“She has an image to uphold I guess. Imra and I have really rocked her boat. But Mon, I think he still is under her control in ways. He gets his trust and Laramie is now in Rhea’s will.”

“I’d like not to hear names, Kara. I could know these people,” Lena said softly.

“Right. Sorry.” Kara grimaced. “I guess I forget you are of that society.”

“An inheritance brat? I’m not too different from the fellows I rub elbows with. We all got something. Be it our seed money or the whole corporation.” Lena looked at her.

“No…you’re different.” Kara gave her a soft regard. “You just are.”

“Something’s blinding you then.”

“Must be your evil ways. Did you put acid in my contacts?” Kara smirked.

“No. Only the nectar of a wild pansy,” Lena chuckled softly.

“Midsummer’s Night is a favorite of mine. I played Titania in sophomore year.” Kara’s eyes lit up at the subject of the play.

Lena’s mouth was slightly agape at the news. “You were a theatre kid?”

Kara batted her eyelashes innocently. “You couldn’t tell? I have a rather big flare for the dramatics, Lena.” She flipped her hair and giggled.

“Did you ever sing? In musicals?” Lena had images in her head of a young Kara along on a stage. A spotlight, a soliloquy, the crowd completely captivated by the young woman. Lena understood why they would be. Hell, Kara, the person was enough to sway her. Let alone Kara playing a character.
Kara blushed. “I’m not going to answer that.”

“You just did.” Lena smirked as Kara kicked her lightly under the table. “Not like I’ll see you perform.” She saw as Kara shifted. “I can? Oh, I can!”

“No,” Kara defended weakly. “Nooo….nothing online.”

“I have to go make a call…” Lena started to get up only to have Kara grab her by the wrist and yank her into the booth with her. Lena yelped a bit and they laughed together. The majority of the other patrons were old couples who were annoyed as hell by the rowdy pair of young women. “Kara, people will recognize me here.”

“Not like I’m groping you.”

Lena looked at her and touched her arm, running her fingers up the bare skin to her shoulder. Kara shivered and moved away from her. “It’s the whiskey. Got you touchy-feely, Luthor,” Kara chuckled nervously.

Lena looked down. “Heh, yes, the whiskey.”

They went on with dinner, chatting about the surface. Lena’s trip, Kara’s new projects, what she hopes to do during the summer.

“We’re going to see my foster mother a lot. Alex was waiting to tell her about the pregnancy until she had just finished her first trimester so when we go up will be when Eliza finds out.”

“That’s sweet.”

“You’d love Eliza.”

“I actually think she lectured at my college. Elizabeth Danvers, right?”

“Correct.” Kara smiled. “She did?”

“Yeah. I must’ve talked her ear off once she took questions afterward. She asked me if I was coming from the high school around there. I told her I was a grad student. Then she just said, “I need to introduce you to my daughter Alex.””

Kara snorted. “Oh, yeah. Eliza knew Alex was gay before Alex did. The mom sense thing. Alex came out and Eliza put a hand on her shoulder, told her how she loved her and that she was glad she finally said it.”

“Oh my god, she didn’t,” Lena gasped.

“Oh, she did. My coming out though? Shocked her.”

“You proud of that?”

“Just a little bit.” Kara’s brow crinkled as she smiled. She held her hand up and mimicked pinching to express it. Lena just rolled her eyes.

“Jesus, Mary, and Joseph,” she breathed and sat back, whipping her cloth napkin down on the table in finality. A white flag of surrender, if you will.

The check came, Lena taking it and putting her black card in without hesitation.
“I’d invite you to my place after this, but I believe you said you have business to attend to tomorrow morning.”

“Unfortunately. But seeing you was the pick me up I needed after traveling.” She smiled.

When they left, Lena again offered her arm to her. “We didn’t dance,” Kara whispered as they came into contact with each other. Lena wondered how she was so warm. The restaurant was cool and Kara had on a sleeveless dress.

“Some nights it’s best to be those who watch than do.”

“Suppose we should call it a night then,” Kara said, grimacing.

“Sadly.” Lena took her hand and they walked out.

She was quiet as their valet came with her car and she felt too discouraged to talk as she drove. Time ticked away until when she had to say bye to Kara.

She gripped her steering wheel tightly in her hands. She tried to ignore the eyes on her.

“What?” Lena mumbled.

“Your mood just shifted when we got in the car. You okay?”

“How can you read me like that?” Lena groaned and relaxed her shoulders.

“I honestly don’t know,” Kara shrugged. “Something about you just… is second nature to me.” She smirked. “So you can’t really keep anything from me.”

“I guess I don’t want tonight to end yet,” Lena said lightly.

“You’re coming over for dinner next week. And don’t act like I won’t call you at some point between.”

Lena nodded and felt the heat rise in her cheeks. “Why do you care?”

“I just do. I think everything would lean to me not liking you. You embody similar traits to people I hate the most. I should dislike you in the worst case you only got close to Audra to hurt her. But… once I saw you… poof. It was gone.”

_I was gone_, Lena thought. She bit her lip as she pulled up in front of Kara’s apartment building. “Your stop.”

“Walk me to the door of the building?”

“Of course.” Lena shut off the car and then got out. She was shuffling around with her keys when she was suddenly pressed against the car and had lips pressed against hers.

She impulsively tensed up and gripped the woman by her shoulders. Kara felt the hesitation and withdrew.

“Let’s blame it on the whiskey,” she started. She started to back away. Her look wasn’t anger or embarrassment. Rather… regret. Fear?

“No,” Lena whispered. She slid a hand to the back of Kara’s neck. “No.” She pulled her back down and caught her off guard this time. The kiss wasn’t that hesitant peck where all that met was their
lips. It was limbs, necks, fingertips. Lena was swept up in the smell of berries on Kara from the body spray she wore. Kara’s fingers locked into the loose waves of Lena’s hair, the tresses silky to the touch but left in small ravished knots when Kara pulled away. Her fingers slid down Lena’s neck, making the woman shiver.

She backed away, touching her face as if her cheek had been slapped and not her lips kissed. She looked at Lena. Her lipstick was smudged and her cheeks also a brilliant red. Her hair tussled and her lapels wrinkled as part of what Kara had gripped onto.

“You have a good night, Lena,” Kara whispered, disappearing into the building.

Chapter End Notes

I could wait a week to update but I feel antsy about classes starting back up so why not write?
Chapter 16

(2) Missed Calls from Lee

Kara looked at her phone and frowned to herself. She tucked it into her waistband and put her gloves back on. She squared up and ran through her striking drills against the punching bag.

*This is your own fault. Not hers. Christ what’s wrong with me…*

She knew why she really avoided the call. It didn’t matter to her that Lena kissed her back. It was a kiss, a gesture that could be something not romantic. Something possibly out of hopes of lust or a release of infatuation.

She paused and sucked the hot air of the empty gym into her lungs. She wiped the sweat from her forehead and stretched out her back before going in with kicks rather her fists. The tension reverberated through her and she felt the strain soothe her mind. She wanted her body to ache and not her chest.

She knew the tension was palpable that night. She was too sober to excuse herself as being sad and lonely without inhibition. Frankly that excuse would be too cruel towards a woman in Lena’s place.

She walked away, whipping off her gloves and going to run on the treadmill. She turned it up to as fast as she could take it and went. Why did she mention Siobhan? Why did thinking about her make her feel heavy? Lena wasn’t like whatever that was. An infatuation born out a rivalry. A bit of relief as Kara had gone so many years without comfort.

Was she doing this again? No, she did this so many times. James was a part of this, wasn’t he? She flirted and swooned and let there be kissing. A few dates even. Give a glimmer of hope and then wuss out.

She did this so much. It wasn’t about hurting Audra, she realized glumly. The girl would understand if people came and went. She was so sweet and welcoming but accepting of changing tides. Kara couldn’t begin to fathom how well-rounded the child was. It was a blessing from the heavens above almost that two individuals who were absolute messes could create something so wonderful.

No…it was Kara. The scar every chance of love rubbed. There was no catharsis with what happened with Mon-el so how could she move to love someone?

*Everyone leaves so why give them the chance? Maggie and Alex will never. Winn won’t. James now has come to a place where he goes where Winn goes. You only like certainty and isn’t there something so uncertain above love?*

Though was Lena love? Couldn’t be yet. An interest, a great sense of care…an inexplicable sense of the same energies at work for the two. Chemistry? A lovely sense of back and forth and a desire to comfort the other and to grow for them.

She challenged Lena to find it. Find what she wanted. Was that kiss her move? Had Kara demoralized her? Though it would’ve been so cruel if things went on. Surely, they could’ve gone on! Take her up to the apartment and see how she looked in ecstasy would’ve been easy. The look in Lena’s eyes showed that she gave up all her composure and was ready to hand herself to Kara. Be
that for love or lust or nothing at all…was all Kara’s choice.

And she got nothing. One she was afraid to do and the other she liked to think she was too kind to do. Maybe it was all selfish and she was kidding herself. Maybe she was secretly the terrible person all along and she was only lying to herself or others.

No one is completely villainous but no one is innocent. Lena has said things to you that would make it so all you could have would be lust added with the qualms of friendship. But not love or domesticity.

Kara glumly gathered that she could never force anyone to be a parent. Best to keep herself from falling for a woman who verbally said she feels unfit to be a mother. Even if Kara thought she would make a wonderful parent it wasn’t fair to force that idea.

And Lena was so young. If she was to come to terms that her viewpoints were coming from insecurity rather her true desires, and Kara stressed if, it would be best for it to be done with a woman she could start from the beginning with. Not someone who was already chapters ahead.

She hopped onto the sides of the treadmill, gripping the handles and panting. She hunched over, sweat running down the bridge of her nose and along her neck. She shoved the hair that fell from her ponytail away and shut off the machine. She went to the locker room and changed quickly before Audra finished up her swimming lesson downstairs.

Audra approached her mother on the pool deck, wrapped in her Tinkerbell towel. “Have fun my sweet?” Kara said to her.

“Yeah, we wore flippers.” Audra looked at her mom. “You’re all sweaty.”

“I was upstairs kiddo. Get ready and let’s head home.” Audra went to the girls’ locker room and Kara waited in a chair in the halls.

She shut off her phone for the night and went about the rest of their schedule. Audra did her homework at the kitchen table whilst Kara made dinner. Audra cleared the table when she finished up and they ate together.

“When will Lena be coming?” Audra asked softly. Kara felt her chest clench and she shifted uncomfortably.

Kara sighed, “I don’t know. She got really busy.”

“Okay…I miss her.” Audra sulked.

Kara looked down at her plate. “Audra, how would you feel if mommy got herself a special friend?”

“Dating?” Audra smiled. “Like Winn and Jimmy?”

“Yeah. It might be with a boy or a girl. I explained how mommy likes boys and girls, right?”

“Yeah. Ally likes only girls and daddy likes only girls. You like both. Winn does too.”

“And you can like whoever you want,” Kara finished.

Audra scrunched up her face. “I know.”
Kara smiled softly. “ Doesn’t mean you have to now. I really hope not! Just focus on being your wonderful self, bean.”

The girl giggled. “Can I have another roll?”

“Yeah.”

Lena poured herself another glass of red wine as she got the please leave a message spiel from the robotic voice. She put her phone down.

*Stop being obsessive.*

She grimaced and stumbled over to her couch. She laid out and turned on her music. She palmed for her book, grabbing the worn paperback copy of *The Phantom of the Opera*. She thought it was a horror when she was younger but she came to see the romantic tragedy. She pitied the Phantom and could read his story endlessly. She watched the show whenever it came into town. She refused the sequel.

She opened to the most recent dog-ear and read lazily, knowing the story well enough to not dedicate herself to the words. She didn’t need to take them in, simply fall into their warmth and the weight in her hand. She ignored the old annotations she made and the stains from coffee, tea, ink blots.

She hesitated at the same pages. The tender ones, the fear, hesitation, loathing…instability. She grimaced and shut the book, resting it on her chest. She sat up enough to sip her drink.

*What are you? Villainized and without love. Locked away and an object of a mother’s loathing. Pitiful. Do you only see this story as tragic because you want to be romanticized? All you are is pitiful.*

She tucked the book back in the nook between the table and the couch, wedging it in. She got up and finished off her glass of wine.

She walked up to the balcony and walked on. She looked out at the city below.

*Could I say how when I went back to Metropolis it didn’t feel like home anymore? How this place could be more than temporary…and why it is possibly a place to make a home.*

She sat in the lone chair on the balcony and looked through the glass. The lights glinted off of it. She went inside and grabbed a bottle of scotch, over the sweetness of the wine. She stumbled back and sat on the floor of her balcony. She twisted it open and held it to her lips.

*I scared her off. What did I do? She kissed me! Did I do it wrong? Do I disgust her? I hate myself. I hate this. I could’ve been normal. Jesus Christ. Why can’t I just be normal?*

She hugged her legs. She felt tears come up, eyes stinging and the hotness in the corners of her eyes dreaded. A sob ripped through her throat and what was left of her composure. She cried and hugged herself and the bottle.

“Lena!” Splash!
Ice cold water hit Lena and she was awake in moments. She gasped and spluttered as she sat up. She had chunks of ice next to her and she felt shivers coming.

Once her eyes opened she got hit by a pounding headache and she reached to touch her head just to see her hand was bleeding.

“Fuck…w-what…” She looked and saw Sam standing over her. She saw a broken bottle and the morning sun. “What time is it?”

“Nine. I called Jess to do our final walkthrough for the dinner without us. She knows the run through.” Sam knelt down. “What happened?” She helped Lena up and moved her inside. She got her into her room and onto her bed. She dug through her closet, getting the unopened first-aid kit from the bottom of a bin. She knelt in front of Lena and started to tend to her hand.

“I…had a bad dating experience.” Lena winced when Sam cleaned out the wound with peroxide. “I don’t know. Kara’s been, uh, not talking to me for the past week.”

“Oh my god, and you didn’t call me?” Sam stopped wrapping up Lena’s hand. “Lee, I’m sorry…” She got up and put an arm around Lena. “You okay?”

“I just feel so stupid.” Lena chuckled bitterly, resting her forehead on Sam’s rest. “I fucking expected what from her? I told her my whole spiel of not wanting kids. Of course, she wouldn’t want me! But why kiss me and then do this? Why did she kiss me? What’s wrong with me?”

“She kissed you?” Sam moved away from her.

“Ugh—Yeah. And I kissed her. Like, hold her by the neck and her hands in my hair kind of kiss. But she ultimately ran away and hasn’t talked to me.”

“She might’ve just panicked Lena. She’s probably coming out of retirement.”

“I never started! How does she think I felt?”

“How much have you tried to contact her?”

Lena shrugged. “My phone has my call logs,” she slurred as she laid back and covered her face in a pillow. “I literally never get hangovers this fucking sucks and why is it happening today?”

“Get dressed. I’ll make coffee and something for you to eat.”

“Thanks.” Lena rolled over and got off the bed.

Kara stared off blankly at the televisions behind Cat. The pictures flashed and had different moving parts. It looked like the technological version of watching gears turn. She wondered if that was what the inside of Cat’s mind looked.

“Are you listening?”

She sucked in a breath and looked at the woman in front of her. She wore her glasses and a scowl.

“Sorry…I didn’t get much sleep or any caffeine.” She had laid awake, a terrible chill on the back of her neck and a sense of illness through her whole body.
It had been a week of that. She had kissed Lena. Then Lena kissed her. Maybe it was more heavy petting. Lena’s fingers were on her neck, nails digging into the skin. She had tangled her fingers into the back of Lena’s hair and pushed her against her with a hand on her lower back. She still recalled her taste, the smell of her expensive perfume.

It felt like a bit of normalcy. How she was supposed to be four years ago. Dinner, kissing outside her apartment building and escaping with a stirring in her that could only be butterflies.

But once she laid in bed butterflies became bees. They stung her sides and buzzed in her ears. Lena texted and called that morning, wanting to talk.

Kara just ignored her. She made the woman be vulnerable and then left.

She deserves more from you.

Kara frowned to herself and looked at Cat.

Cat clicked on the intercom for her new assistant. “Eve, can you get Miss Danvers a coffee?”

Kara was about to say she didn’t drink it, but she figured not to was best for her own survival. “Thank you,” she mumbled.

“Speak clearly,” Cat scolded. She sat back. “So, I have a favor to ask of you.”

“What do you need?” Kara leaned in. Cat went to speak, pausing as Eve came in and handed Kara a plastic cup of iced coffee. “Thanks.” She smiled at the woman whilst Cat paid her no mind.

“I need you to stand in as my assistant for an event.”

“Why not bring Eve?” Kara asked as said woman took her leave.

“It’s a charity event. My plus one I want someone who knows the ropes.”

Kara exhaled. “When will it be?”

“Tonight.”

“Let me call Audra’s stepmother, see if she can stay another night.” She grabbed her phone and dialed Imra.

The woman picked up quick and whispered. “Kara, is everything okay?”

“Yeah. Did I catch you during Lars’ nap?”

“Tummy time. It’s okay. What do you need?”

Kara avoided eye contact with Cat. “I had something come up at work. Would you possibly take Audra for another night? I can make other plans for Audra if you can’t. I completely understand with the baby—”

“Kara, I wouldn’t mind that at all. Audra’s an angel with Laramie. And I think Mon would enjoy to have her here. He got to take up an extra patrol and missed time with her. Or he better. I think he forgets he won’t get this time back.”

“Oh, I know that.”
Imra chuckled half-heartedly. “I’ll pick her up and take her to the park, explain she’ll get an extra sleepover.”

“Okay. She’ll need a clean uniform for tomorrow. You have the key to my apartment, right?”

“I do. Good luck with Cat. I knew that woman wouldn’t give you any mercy with that promotion.”

Kara smiled. “Have a nice day, thank you Imra.” She hung up when the woman bid her well. She looked at Cat. “Okay, I’m in.”

“Wonderful.”

“I have to thank you for coming all this way just for a charity dinner,” Lena said. She adjusted her ring, twirling it on her finger as she stared off, just past Sam. She felt her eyes crossing.

Sam smiled from her spot on the other side of her desk. “I have to address how dead you look.”

Lena grimaced and hung her head. “I’m still recovering. I have to thank you for coming to help me. You do that a lot.”

Sam shrugged. “I’m used to being the mom.” She got up and mixed them some drinks. “Pre-game? Because I know once this hangover lifts you’ll be back on that horse of freaking out and calling her.”

“I guess you’re right,” Lena rasped and adjusted her sunglasses. She really regretted the wall of just windows right now. “I should have those things blocked out.”

“It would ruin the feng shui,” Sam cried dramatically, handing Lena her glass and shaking her head. “It’s going to pass, Lena. You just have to realize this—you are a mess.”

“Thanks.”

“No, I mean this out of love and to make you think of what to do. Because you feel helpless, and that makes you stressed, and that makes you sad, and that makes you drink.” She paused. “You told her ‘I’m too fucked up to love a kid the way they deserve’ right?”

“I did.”

Sam sighed and sat back down. “There’s the problem. At least, a small part of it.”

“So, this is my fault?” Lena straightened up.

“She isn’t fully your antagonist. I’m annoyed by her actions but I suppose it would be painful to fall for you, if she is, knowing you would in no part want to be part of her future.”

“But I do. I kissed her back.”

“Is that just because you really wanna lose your virginity? Are you going to skip because she has a kid?”

“No!”

“She doesn’t know that.” Sam leaned in. “I know where she’s coming from. I worried a lot about who would stay and who would go. I’m mostly happy with being single so it hasn’t hurt me
nowadays. But it’s different for Kara I think. I can only know so much without knowing her.”

“She doesn’t know because she’s ignoring me.” Lena grit her teeth.

“She’s going off of what she knows.” Sam sighed. “I’m sorry if this is frustrating but it’s what happening. You have to give her time. It’s only a week. She could be dealing with other stuff.”

“Right. Right. I should just focus on this dinner.”

“Exactly. Watch pot never boils.” Sam smiled. “So which charity is this?”

“It’s one of L-Corp’s non-profits. You run it, Sam.” Lena looked at her over her glasses.

“Right. The charity I only sign a document once every three months whilst you pump your money into these fundraisers, its budget, do volunteer work on its behalf…but I “founded” it and “own” it,” Sam chuckled. Lena shrugged and watched clouds inch past them in the sky.

“Cecilia Tribute Project. It’s in place to give scholarships to children of a single parent,” Lena mumbled.

“Cecilia—your birth mother’s name?” Sam frowned at her. Lena deflated and she looked at her glass.

“Yep.” Lena finished her drink. “You have your speech?”

“Yeah.” Sam patted her jacket pocket. She looked at Lena. How she looked just…beaten down. It made a part of her die a bit. This was her friend. A loyal woman who wanted to do good. “You know you can stand behind this.”

“Every Luthor family charity has been audited in the past five years. Ones that go by different names and me giving my credit to my trusted friends have been left alone.”

“Oh, Lena. I should call the church…” Sam pushed a lock of hair behind Lena’s ear. “I think I found a missing martyr.” She smiled softly and kissed Lena’s forehead. Lena leaned into her before hugging her. Sam was always taken aback by Lena’s hug. It was tight and connected. She was craving affection from those around her and proof of their love. It was what she expected of someone so touch-starved all their life.

“Yes. Let them kill me. Tell them I would rather be burned and not quartered.”

Sam shoved her away after a bit, smiling playfully to show it wasn’t in disdain. “You’re morbid.”

Kara put down her glass of wine on the table and looked around. She sat next to Cat and made conversation with people at the table to deflect off of her. Cat knew she was a seemingly frank woman and that could reflect poorly.

But Cat did talk to someone. A handsome man. Silver fox came to mind when Kara looked at him. He had mostly black hair despite a few sparkles at his temples. He had a straight and bright smile. He wore a pressed suit and a gold ring on his pinkie that Cat complimented.

“Heirloom,” he said. He held it up and showed no ring next to it.

Kara turned away, not really in the mood to see what Cat’s game face looked like.
There was a dancefloor, a string quartet. She recognized a few people from magazine pieces Catco did.

She really felt bored and was only glad that she was being nice enough to get the numbers of those around them. She could maybe use them in later time for stories. She tried not to think of how a few of these men were giving them in hopes of their relationship being a pleasure and not business.

Kara looked around. She knew there were only a few speeches and the silent auction and then it would be done. She wondered what would’ve happened if she said no. It felt worth it at this point.

She sat back as someone came up. It was a withered woman in a skirt suit droning on about the organization and what it stood for. Kara liked it. Giving scholarships to young mothers and children to single parents.

The woman then introduced the CEO of the project. Samantha Arias was a woman who couldn’t have been older than thirty. She wore a blue dress simply cut but still elegant. She was poised as she placed down her papers.

“This idea came from a place of empathy. Knowing that my successes were pure luck and coming to terms that for so many, their story isn’t like mine. How I was raised and what I went through, though hard as I hadn’t support from my family, still was easier than so many. I wanted to change that. Give successes to mothers going it alone and the children they have. To see how the project has grown to now provide millions of dollars in scholarships for single mothers and their children is cathartic. The years of no one helping me as I grew up with just me and my daughter, Ruby. To get where I am…” She paused and sucked in a breath. She looked down. “I can only thank the true founder. Lena Luthor.”

Kara tensed up.

“She…wasn’t expecting Sam to really do this.” She frowned. “Cecilia was my birth mother’s name. I have no memory of her but I didn’t want that for the world…so I made this in her name. On a topic that mattered to me. Education and equal opportunity. I got where I am out of sheer luck. But, that changed for me once I was adopted. There are thousands who don’t have a lucky streak. Create a cyclical occurrence of oppression and suffering that I hope to end with this project.”

She grimaced. “Thank you for your donation and your time.” She stepped away. A few journalists shuffled over and there was indistinct chatter about.

“A Luthor charity…”

“…How odd…”

“I forget she’s adopted…”

Kara stood up and excused herself. She moved over to the crowd around Lena.

Lena was standing amongst them as they used phones to record her. She looked up and locked eyes with Kara.

“No comment. Enjoy your nights,” Lena muttered and stepped out of the semi-circle.

“Lena—”
Lena walked right past her, not stopping. She only gave her a passing glance. Her look resembled that of a scolding headmistress towards a misbehaved child.

Kara didn’t make chase as people had for that moment failed to notice her. God, they couldn’t notice her.

Lena got into her car after the dinner. They raised the needed funds. Sam refused to apologize. She messaged Jess that in the morning they would be working on a press release.

She stared off at the passing city as Ernest drove off. She felt her phone buzz then. She took it out of her purse and grimaced.

Kara: I didn’t realize it was your charity

Well that wasn’t supposed to be known

I didn’t think Cat would actually bring a plus one

Should know better

Kara: We have to talk don’t we

You just realized that?

Lena winced after it went through. That was a bit harsh.

We do.

I’m on my way home. I sense Audra is somewhere for the night. I’ll tell the doorman you’ll be coming

If you want to.

She sent the address.

Chapter End Notes

This is about 4,000 words. The last part was going to be for the next chapter but I figured it would be best to have a glimmer of hope. As of course Lena just storming off would be truly defeating.

I don't know how I'll be taking this story in ways of intimacy in the next chapters. I left this unrated because I don't know really.

Thank you for reading and giving a lot of positive feedback. It's the most feedback any of my stories have ever gotten really.
How Lucky I Was

Kara looked down at her phone as she got out of the dinner. The valet brought Cat’s car up. She saw the address. It was close…

“Cat, I gotta go.” She put her trench on and tucked her phone away.

“What? Where are you eager to go to?” Cat looked at her.

Kara looked off. “I am seizing my moment. Twenties are the time of doing, right?”

“Not if you had other commitments. Kara, we need to get on top of the story Lena gave us here!”

“If you let me go I can get you more information, I promise. Great? Okay. Bye!” She sprinted off, weaving people. She got around the corner and went to signal a cab. She looked around. How the hell would she get one in downtown National City in the rain?

She cursed and kept running. She dodged people and weaved through the stopped cars.

A car skidded to a stop just shy of her and she slid across the hood. Her dress shoes had filled up with water and her wet hair hit her in the face. How the hell could it rain in southern California?

She got to the apartment building and ran into the door, shoving it open. She stood there, dripping wet and panting in the marble lobby.

The doorman looked up from his book. “Can…I help you?” He arched a brow.

“Here to see Lena Luthor,” she said calmly.

Lena got home and changed out of her dress and into a robe. She took off her makeup and wrapped her hand in a new bandage.

She got a buzz from downstairs.

“Miss Luthor, there’s a Miss Danvers here. She the visitor you mentioned?”

She pressed the button. “Yes. Let her up. Thank you.” She paced around until she got that gentle knocking at her door. She yanked it open.

Kara stood there in the attire she had at the dinner. She had a trench coat over the suit now and her hair was clinging to her face. “I didn’t realize it began to rain that bad,” Lena mumbled.

“It is if you’re in it for a long time. I ran here.” She smiled sheepishly. Lena rolled her eyes.

“You could’ve taken a cab,”

“Have you ever tried to get a cab in the rain?” Kara stepped up, smile more sure, cockier and toothier.

Lena grimaced. “For a mother, you’re quite impulsive.”
Kara just smiled at her. Lena wanted to hit her where it hurt to get it off of her chest. But...finally seeing her made it harder. She hung her head and pinched the bridge of her nose.

"Oh my god, your hand!" Kara took her hand and held it gingerly. Lena pulled away from her as if burned from her touch. She glared slightly. "I should start," Kara said, clearing her throat.

"Let me get a drink first." Lena made her way to the bar cart. She felt Kara’s eyes follow her to it.

"Want something?"

"Vermouth straight is fine."

"You working up an aesthetic tonight?" Lena made up their drinks and then came back over. She handed Kara her drink and the woman stared down at herself.

"Can I get some clothes to change into?"

"No. You’ll be out of here quick."

Kara frowned.

"Don’t give me that, Kara. You’re being unpredictable and I’m really confused on what the hell you want. I invited you here for answers."

Kara looked aside. "Right..." They sat at the kitchen table. "I’m all at fault here." There were gentle droplets falling from her hair and the hem of her trench.

Lena just stared at her. Kara hung her head, unable to meet her eye.

"I should’ve talked. Be an adult. Either apologized for being so forward or explain why. I’m sorry about that."

"Why?"

Kara looked up. "Why?" she echoed.

"Why kiss me? You think it’s wrong now."

"I don’t think it’s wrong!" Kara cried quickly. "It wasn’t. I felt like how I should feel. A rush and couldn’t breathe. Couldn’t think. I ran away because I was so taken...I hid..."

"Why? Kara, I called you and called you. I thought you hated me."

"I don’t! I just...I panicked. I realized what I did and why I did it." Kara looked at her. "You looked so breathtaking. And it felt like something else. It was a feeling that I haven’t had in a long time. Or anytime at all. It scared me."

"Because of what I said?"

Kara sighed and sipped her drink. She placed it down and crossed her arms in front of her. She leaned in towards Lena. "I should’ve stayed away from you if that was the case."

Lena put her hand to her chest. "Oh." She sat there, expecting Kara to get up and go. Apologize in finality and leave her for good. She sat up, poised. Why beg?

"But...it’s not." Kara bit her lip. "Lena, you hold all the cards. I want to say that. I want to be with you. Christ, I would be honored. But I know there’re limits. And me running away doesn’t help."
She reached across and took Lena’s hand. Her skin was cold to the touch. Lena was so used to her being warm.

“You hurt me.”

“I know. I’m sorry.” Kara sucked in a breath. “Can we start somewhere?”

Lena looked down. She felt weak. Pitiful. She shouldn’t have let her here. She forgot this woman had a pull. If she had asked her to kill a man, she would’ve. Asked her to buy a corporation, she would’ve.

She laughed a chaste chuckle that was dry in tone. “I don’t know where to start.” Her smile looked more like a grimace.

“How about this?” She sighed. “Tomorrow night, I’m going to cook for three and not two. It should be ready about…six thirty. Come or don’t. I won’t tell Audra so I can’t disappoint her.”

Lena bit her lip. “I forgot we made plans for the three of us.”

“That’s not your fault.” Kara grimaced. “I go on about how I don’t date to protect Audra. I’m really just using my daughter as an excuse to me being afraid of getting hurt. I’m a coward, Lena. Not a good way to sell myself up but I have to be honest.”

“We’re both scared,” Lena said lightly.

“Yeah. I guess.” Kara ran her fingers through her wet hair. “I should get going then…” She stood up.

Lena put a hand up, stopping Kara. “How did you get away from Cat? What happened was a bit scandalous and you were her only reporter that saw it firsthand. She would’ve taken you right to her office.”

“Um…I said I’d get her more info.” She laughed a bit too sharp. She was fucked but that wasn’t Lena’s fault.

“I’ll be releasing a press release tomorrow by nine claiming the charity was founded by me but is technically run by Sam.” Lena adjusted her robe and shifted in her seat. “But I’ll send you an email by…” She looked at the clock. It was pushing one. “Two. It’ll say why it’s like that. Why the charity has a place in my heart. And what triggered it.”

“What?” Kara stared at her, mouth agape slightly.

Lena smiled at Kara. “The only way Cat will get a word out of me will be through you now. She doesn’t know about us being friends, right?”

“She does not.”

“Then just say I liked your interviewing style and you came to my place promptly with a bottle of fine whiskey and some questions I wanted to answer. Because Cat texted me the second I got off stage. People swarmed me. She wanted me to come to her. I think she thought you were joining the maw of reporters.”

“I was going to ask you for that dance you didn’t give me,” Kara said wryly, smirking.

“Right.” Lena looked at her. “Go home, Kara. In a car.”
Kara nodded and walked out.

Lena woke up in her bed at six-thirty. Four and a half hours was enough for her to be able to roll out of bed. She numbly got dressed, moving robotically as she applied her makeup and did up her hair.

She got on her shoes and packed up her bag before being on her way. She drove herself. She stopped at the coffee shop she usually went to. It was busy as always.

“Rush order for Lena!” M’gann called. She jumped a bit in surprise. She walked up to the area to grab coffees. There was a tea and a coffee with three shots of espresso. Lena looked at M’gann. She smirked. “A KD called in and paid for these.” She winked. “Have a nice day, Lena. It’s nice to know your name.”

Lena blushed and took the cups. “You really are magical.”

M’gann just laughed heartily and went back to making drinks.

She got into her car and put the drinks in her cup holders. She drove to work, went up to her office. She dropped Jess’ tea off before strolling into her office.

Jess came in a few minutes later when Lena was settled in.

“Your mood is different.”

“Is it?” Lena asked, looking at her. She looked at her laptop. “Let’s work on this.”

Jess nodded and pulled up a chair.

Kara yawned and looked over her laptop screen. She went right to the office after changing the night before.

She rubbed her eyes under her glasses and submitted her story. She looked at her phone as it chimed.

Lee: Thanks for the coffee. Jess says thanks as well

Thanks for the story. Cat only minorly scolded me when I came into the office at three and dropped the news that I got an exclusive. You didn’t have to save my ass

I almost think you adore me still

Lee: I’m trying

Lee: Kara I realized I’m not good at coping

I’m not either. How do you think we go into this?

Lee: I fell asleep on my balcony and cut my hand on a scotch bottle

Lee: If that can show how I really can’t
Kara winced.
She tried to call Lena but her call got rejected.

*Lee: Sorry. Just a bit of revenge*

*Ok, I can just talk with you after dinner tonight?*

*Right?*

*Lee: have a good day.*

Kara put her phone down and leaned back.

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Kara got home with Audra with a bit of dread. The girl was sulking about them having had begun to clean up for the end of the year.

“This summer is going to be a blast. We’ll go see grandma Eliza, we’ll go to the beach, have the fireworks in July…”

“Frankie has to sleepover this summer!”

“At some point, yeah. I got her father’s number. I'll talk to him soon. I promise.”

“Yay!” Audra hugged her around the waist as Kara began dinner. Audra went to change out of her uniform. Kara looked at the clock anxiously as she worked.

*Would she come?*

She almost cut herself whilst cutting veggies, mind elsewhere. She cursed and looked around. Audra was in the living room watching a cartoon.

Kara sighed and went back to cooking. Her hopes fell as she finished and it hit six thirty. She opened the cupboard to grab out the plates.

Audra heard someone knocking at the door while Kara missed it.

Kara only heard the scream. She ran over and saw Audra jumped onto Lena. Lena was against the wall on the other side of the hall, being taken back by the force of the girl running at her and jumping into her arms.

“Am I late for dinner?” Lena said lightly. She put the girl down. She was angled, her left side angled towards from the direction she came. She was dressed down, a jacket over a v-neck and a pair of jeans. Her hair tied up and Kara couldn’t tell if she was wearing any makeup or not.

But Kara would’ve been damned if she didn’t think she was the best thing she had laid her eyes on in years.

“Right on time,” Kara said, smiling at her.

Lena laughed and carried the girl in. “It’s good to see you too, Audra.”

“She goes by bean, too.” Kara smiled at Lena.
“Well, bean, where do I sit?” Lena put down the girl and the two sat at the table. Kara plated the meal whilst listening to Audra ramble on about her time while she didn’t see Lena.

“I got to change Laramie. He’s really gross but bath time’s fun. Daddy puts him in the sink and I sit on the counter. Keep Laramie laughing. He’s really cute when he laughs. Not when he cries.”

“I’m sure.” Lena smiled at her. “So, school’s wrapping up soon, huh? Your mother told me you’re going to see your grandmother really soon.”

“Yeah! Grandma Eliza. She lives on the beach. She taught me how to swim and we built big castles. Ally and I look for sea glass. Mommy has a necklace from a shard.”

“I do.” Kara served the two and then grabbed hers. She sat down.

“Could I see it?”

Kara took the necklace off. It was a light blue piece. It was triangular with sharp angles. But it had a slight dip that made it look like a heart. It was wrapped in copper wire and on a silver chain.

“It’s beautiful. Alex makes the charm?”

Kara nodded and took it back, clipping it back on.

“You should come,” Audra said. “Grandma Eliza loves science like you.”

“Does she?” Lena chuckled a bit. Kara watched the two.

Kara had expected the peas to go over as a fiasco with Audra, but Lena stepped in before Kara had to barter.

“I thought you liked science, Audra!” Lena gasped.

“I do. I don’t like peas.” The girl scrunched up her face.

“Oh, but think. You know what an atom looks like, right?” The girl nodded hesitantly. “Electrons, we know are negative. Right?”

“Yeah. Everyone knows.” The girl rolled her eyes.

“Oh? Smarty here huh?” Lena looked at Kara. Kara rested her chin in her hand and smiled at her. As to say, “what exactly are you trying to do?”

“Well, you see these peas are like electrons. Negative little buggers. But you see…inside you is positive. You’re so positive. So you’re unbalanced. You need these little electrons to balance you out. And your momma gave you the perfect amount to make you neutral. Understand?”

Lena was speaking a bit slow, afraid she might be speaking beyond the girl’s knowledge. It was a shot if she knew what electrons are she might now the primary goal of an atom.

“Yeah.” The girl scooped up a spoonful of peas. “So, I eat this and I’ll be stable?”

“Very stable!” Lena smiled at her. “Cross my heart.”

The girl made a few faces and took some water, but she finished every pea on the plate.

Lena looked back over at Kara. Kara mouthed a simple “thank you.”
Kara cleaned up after dinner. Lena and Audra were in the living room playing with Audra’s dolls. Kara stopped and managed to sneak a few photos. One she had Lena looking down at Audra, face scrunched in a smile and her doll moving across the floor.

Kara came in and sat with the two. “Can I join in?”

Audra smiled and grabbed Kara a doll, handing it to her. Kara looked through her thing of clothes and dressed the then nude doll. She was confused about what they were acting out, sitting back to figure it out. Audra switched rolls. From being the one in need of help to being the hero it seemed.

Kara thought quickly and found a dress she fashioned into a cape for her doll. She made it fly in. The two acted as hero and sidekick trying to save Lena’s doll.

Audra giggled as Kara’s doll carried Lena’s off bridal style. “They kiss then, right?”

“Huh?” Kara squeaked, blushing.

“At the end. The hero saves them and kisses them.” Audra tilted her head to the side.

“I guess I’ve earned a kiss, Lena,” Kara said lightly.

Lena scooted towards Kara. She leaned in and Kara arched a brow. Lena shared a look with Audra. The girl stared expectantly.

Kara straightened up her shoulders and looked at Lena.

Lena moved the doll so hers ‘kissed’ Kara’s. “Mwah,” she said. She put her doll down and smiled at the pouting Kara. “My hero.”

Kara rolled her eyes.

Lena sat on Kara’s couch, going through her Netflix queue. Kara came in and sighed. “She’s in bed finally.” She walked over and collapsed next to Lena. She tipped her head back.

Lena smiled softly and put on Parks and Rec. “Love that show,” Kara said. She moved and rested her head in Lena’s lap. “Ugh…I’m beat.”

“Didn’t sleep?” Lena stroked her fingers through Kara’s hair.

“I stayed up writing. I wanted to get it right.” Kara looked up at her. Lena was watching the show. She could see the curve of her jaw, her chest rising and falling with her breaths. Kara sat up and looked at Lena. “Your memory of Cecilia is minimal but she sounds like she made a large impact.”

Lena smiled sadly. She hung her head, looking at her fidgeting hands in her lap. “Lionel made sure I knew her well. She…he says she was the love of his life. But he met her at the wrong time, he said. Lillian threatened to “take care of her and the bastard.” So, he left to save her. She died…and he scooped me up.” Lena shrugged. “She’s my tie to sanity. Lionel had his own problems, I know. He emotionally and at times physically abused Lex. I won’t say that’s what drove Lex to hurt people. My entire family is just fucked.”

“You’re not.”

“Yet.”
“Don’t say that.” Kara put an arm around Lena. “Hey. You’re pretty great. The reasons you cited, to make sure the charity could just be and not have issues…is amazing. You gave up years of glory for it.”

“It’s really not a sacrifice. I still did what I could. It didn’t hurt me.”

“But you accepted that the world doesn’t see you in your own light.” Kara’s fingers played with Lena’s hair and she kissed her forehead. She mumbled, “that okay for me to do?”

“Yeah…” Lena sighed and leaned into Kara. “I won’t have my own legacy. Just damage control. I’m okay with that. Because it matters that I know what I did. I’ve given a thousand people scholarships. Changed lives.”

“Exactly. God, I wouldn’t know what I’d do if I had student debt on everything. I got really lucky.” Kara sighed and looked at Lena. “How can I help with the cause?”

“We have a daycare enter that is run by volunteers. If you ever have a morning or afternoon free.”

“I’ll see what I can do.” Kara smiled at her. She rested her head back. “You probably have to go home, right?”

Lena licked her lips and looked at Kara. “I owe my hero thanks.”

Kara grabbed her chin. “It’s gained a bit of interest.” She leaned in and kissed her, soft and slow. Unlike the other two. Not brief but burning. Not clumsy but with a sense of hesitation.

Lena’s body reacted the most, her arching into it and her hands sliding up to Kara’s shoulders.

They parted for a breath and Kara rested her forehead against Lena’s. She took off her glasses, placing them on the table.

“Wow. I’d say that’s the best so far,” Lena mumbled. She sat back.

Kara stared at her, blue eyes dilated. She got on top of Lena. “Another?”

“Yes.”

Kara closed the space between them. In this kiss she caught Lena’s lip in her teeth briefly, getting a gasp. She pulled away then and moved to her neck, placing burning kisses on the alabaster skin.

“Kara…” Lena wrapped her arms around her shoulders and dug her fingers into her back. “What are you…ah…”

“I didn’t think you’d come. I was losing hope. I thought I fucked this up. I know I made you feel weak. God, I’m so sorry. I want you to feel strong. Feel like a goddess, an empress…because you are so ethereal.” She leaned in and whispered in Lena’s ear, “so powerful.” She nipped her ear, making the woman whimper. “Heh.” She put her hand under Lena’s shirt.

Lena shut her eyes. She felt a pain her head and her heart sped up.

“You ungrateful child! I tried to help you and here you up and act like a dyke. What would your father think!” The voice pounded in her head and it was Lillian’s commanding voice. Her body broke into goosebumps and felt tears form in her eyes.

“Stop. Stop. Fucking stop!” Lena shoved Kara away. Kara arched a brow at her after she landed on the other side of the couch.
“Lena? Hey—you okay?” She had shifted within a heartbeat. Eyes went from dark as the ocean during a storm to like a puppy dog’s. Scorned but still adoring.

Lena panted and avoided looking at her. “Sorry. I just…” She shivered. “I’m sorry.”

Kara hesitantly inched to her and put an arm around her. “Hey…” She pulled her close and smoothed her hair over. “What’s wrong?”

“When I said I really fucked myself up I’m not being dramatic,” Lena laughed bitterly. “I’m afraid. I’m sorry but I’m not ready for that yet.”


Kara got up as Lena sat there in place. Kara paused and looked down at her. Lena looked up shyly, like a young child.

“Lena,” she sighed and put a hand to her cheek, stroking her thumb along her sharp cheekbone. “How about you stay? On the couch, or…we can cuddle tonight.”

Lena swallowed. “Couch.”

“Okay.” Kara went and grabbed her a blanket and better pillow. “Do you want something else to sleep in?”

“Um, no. I can sleep in this.” Lena took the pillow and blankets. “Thank you. I’m really sorry.”

“Lena, the first time I let someone go down on me after I had Audra I promptly had a panic attack during. You know how weird it is having a man spoon you with an erection while you try not to hyperventilate?”

Yes, but you don’t need to know about it. “Sounds like it’s not your proudest moment.”

Kara laughed awkwardly. “Far from it. It’s just…firsts are scary. Scarier if something happened. Lillian made your life hell and I get that might make this scary. See someone maybe? I did. It helps. I mean I still am working on it but I know that if I was with someone now it wouldn’t scare me anymore. Not that I’m saying I want to do anything sexual with you. I mean, it would be an honor and if you ever are ready I am too. But no pressure. Don’t worry. I’m not over eager. Just happy to have you,” Kara rambled off. She punctuated with a crooked grin.

“Kara, just go to bed. I’ll be fine.” Lena set up the couch for herself. Kara nodded and walked off.
Lena was gone when Kara woke up. The blankets were neatly folded with the pillow on top. There was a travel tray with two cups and a bag. Chai tea and hot chocolate. Sticky buns were in a bag, still warm.

A note was scrawled neatly on a piece of paper attached to the tea.

_Had a flight. Thank you for dinner. I’ll call you when I land and I hope you girls have a good day. Enjoy your breakfast_

_-LL_

Kara smiled softly. She let the girl pick which one she could have with her fruit salad. The girl picked the drink. Kara hadn’t really cared about health until she had Audra. She used to only eat pots stickers and pizza. One time in college she had just a jar of marinara sauce for dinner. Something about knowing a kid can’t grow well when they eat like absolute shit changed it. She learned to cook and change herself.

Didn’t mean she didn’t miss the habit. Just did it when Audra wasn’t around to adopt her bad habits.

Audra and she were out the door soon after. “Why does she leave so early?” Audra asked.

“Lena’s a busy woman.”

Audra frowned. Kara patted her head. “What’s on that beautiful mind?”

“Are we in the way?” Audra mumbled.

Kara paused. She could wonder about that privately. “No, you aren’t. She adores you. Sees you as her little sister or a niece I’d assume.”

Audra couldn’t be. But Kara? She had a clawing feeling she could be. That woman had so many obligations. People looked to her. She didn’t need to worry about petty things.

_STOP it. She scorned herself mentally. She got Audra dropped off and went to work._

She came in and there sat someone at her desk. Nia Nal stared at her, stoic.

“Hi Nia,” Kara said, trying not to have her voice crack. “How are you?”

“Close the door, Kara.” Kara shut it behind her.

“Everything okay?” She spoke slowly, knowing she had done something wrong. But what?

Nia stood up and motioned for Kara to sit in her place. Kara moved over and sat down slowly, smoothing her skirt. “I wanted to warn you about something a photographer brought to me,” Nia said slowly as if afraid someone had their ear pressed to the door. No one but them could know.

“Okay.” Kara looked at her. “What is it?” She swallowed.

Nia opened a folder she had placed on the desk. Kara saw a picture of her and Lena kissing. Then a photo of her entering Lena’s building, then Lena entering hers.
“These are a week apart. That’s my apartment building! What the hell is this?” Kara grabbed the photos, splaying them out.

“I know,” Nia said. “He had been shadowing Lena Luthor a bit. I told him to knock it off for now. Said I would tell Cat he was harassing one of her close friends—that shut him up—but I have to ask in case of what happens. Did this relationship start before or after you wrote about her?”

“After. I knew her before…we met through odd circumstance.” Kara looked at her. “We aren’t sleeping together. The second photo was after a fight we had.” She sighed. “Who knows?”

“Just us. I paid him for these. Catco owns them but if no one knows…they’re just stuck as they are.” Nia sighed and took out an SD card from her pocket. “Here’s the only other copies. I won’t tell anyone.”

“Why?”

“Because stabbing you in the back has no benefit. Even if it did, what the hell is it worth?” Nia shrugged. “Just keep an eye on that. I don’t imagine people knowing she’s sleeping with a reporter who wrote well about her will look good no matter when the affair started. Just needed to know there was no conflict.”

“No. I wasn’t going to fuck up my make or break project,” Kara said shortly. Nia held her hands up in surrender.

“I’m seeing this as how they will. People who won’t want to hear your side. People don’t entirely want the truth. Just the shock and scandal and think that anything that follows is revealing of the true character of the person they wanted to hate.”

*If the world thought Lena slept with a reporter to get a good story about her…that would hurt her and her image is so fragile. All she cares about.*

“Thank you. We’ll have to be more careful.” Kara took the pictures and shredded them. She tucked the SD card into her desk drawer and locked the drawer with its key.

**

Lena fell onto her hotel bed and groaned. A day of meetings and introductions…all to have cold feet ruin the prospects. No one was hurt but her and her pride.

She frowned to herself and reached into her bag, pulling out the postcard.

*Dear Icarus,*

*Do not fly too close to the sun. I sense being trapped on the island for what you know is better for you.*

*All my love,*

*A.L.*

She grimaced and tore it to pieces, throwing it into the ashtray and lighting it with a match from the book next to it.

She rubbed her hand over her face and stretched out her back.
“Christ,” she muttered and pulled out her personal phone.

She saw a text from Kara. It was from a few hours ago, around nine o’clock for Lena, after work for Kara. Now it was almost eleven in Metropolis and around Audra’s bedtime back in NC.

**Kara: Would you let me take you to dinner when we see each other again?**

Lena shot back her response.

*Bold of you to assume I’ll come back*

**Kara: I don’t know**

**Kara: I’m beginning to think something has made NC home for you**

*Cocky Miss Danvers*

**Kara: I just want to say I appreciate the second chance and pursue actually dating and not just making out and comforting each other during a crisis**

*Is that not dating?*

**Kara: shut up you ass**

**Kara: should probably sleep and not talking to me.**

*I’m ok honestly.*

She bit her lip.

*I just want to hear your voice*

A moment later she got a call from Kara.

She took the call and laid back. “I’m beginning to think you’re wrapped around my finger,” Lena whispered.

“Doctor Luthor, don’t be so cruel,” Kara muttered. It was late and the grogginess made her voice raspy.

Lena bit her lip. “But it’s fun to tease you.” She turned to her side.

Kara huffed. “Lena, you already haunt my dreams, don’t make my waking hours tortured by you.”

“You really turn up the charm when you’re frustrated,” Lena shot back, getting up and changing into her pajamas.

“Just— a lot of stuff is happening. Did happen. I got it fixed with a co-worker’s help. But it’s just a little embarrassing. I just want to see you as soon as I can. Is that allowed? That okay?”

Lena hesitated. Kara’s voice sounded troubled, the tone like a child’s asking to sleep in a parent’s bed after a nightmare. She thought she was the one in bad shape.

“I’ll come over.” There was a quiet moment, only their breathing on the other’s line. “Kara?”

“Mm?”
“I’m…really happy to be trying at this with you. Know that.”

“Okay, Lena.” Kara let out a tired chuckle.

**

Lena got out of the hotel room and went down to the bar after the phone call. She fiddled with her spinning ring as she got to the semicircle bar and sat in the sleek blue enamel stool. She leaned against the bar and ordered a White Russian. She hunched over as the drink got placed in front of her.

“Need some company?”

She looked up and saw Clark Kent. Just what she needed.

He had a drink in his hand. His clothes were crumpled up and she saw that damned scar. It was a bandaged wound in the courtroom, going along his strong jaw. It was a ragged gash that looked like a star of David. His stubbled covered it a bit, making it just look like a birthmark under the dark scruff.

“Why are you here in a hotel when you got a beautiful wife back home waiting for you? Don’t tell me there’s scandal,” she mocked, not in the mood for pleasantries.

“Worked real late. Needed to clear my head. Find this place quieter, cleaner than any pub on my block.” He held his drink to his lips. Clear liquid with gentle bubbles and a slice of lime.

“A gin man,” she observed. “Of course.”

He smiled sheepishly and put his drink down. “So, I noticed I didn’t get a press release about yet another merger.” He looked at her. “Want to talk about that?”

“I could give a shit about that. No one will be losing their job, I just get fucking egg on my face and have wasted a weekend.”

He nodded a bit. He looked at her with a great amount of caution. More than usual.

“You can mention her,” she muttered.

He hung his head and scratched at the scar. “She told me she met you. Befriended you.”

She smiled wryly. “Okay.”

“I didn’t trust you when you took over, Lena. But, I think…you’re not like Lex. You’re injured but not broken.”

She wanted to say to him it was nice to hear that from someone who was one of those most hurt by Lex. But his perceptions wouldn’t change hers or the worlds. And she didn’t want to avoid the subject. So, she sighed and spoke up. “Clark, I’m courting her.”

He tensed up. “She’s a grown woman.” His voice was steady. He looked off, almost repeating that to himself rather than saying it to Lena.

“But she talks about you like you’re her father. I know she lost both her other father figures. You’re all she has.”

He took off his glasses and pinched the bridge of his nose. “I’d say it’s more like an older brother
relationship. But...I don’t know how to feel. She hasn’t dated since college and that ended up with me getting a call from Eliza about the pregnancy.”

“I assure you I won’t accidentally get her pregnant.”

He rolled his eyes. “I know you met her through Audra. She explained that part to me. I’m glad to know you have a good relationship with her. She’s a special little girl.” He smiled softly.

Lena shut her eyes. “She is something.” She smiled to herself as well. She felt her chest pulled, longing to see Kara and Audra. “I miss them.”

“It’s painful as hell to leave them when I get to see them. God, I remember Lois and I were only engaged when Kara had Audra. We flew in to see her in the hospital. Lois held Audra and…she was gone. She said she couldn’t wait until we had a baby after we left.”

“Tick tock,” Lena said. He glared a bit. She smirked. “I’m a bit worried about her. I don’t see myself being a mom.”

“No twenty-four-year-old does.”

“No, there’s more to it.”

He stared at her. Lillian got multiple convictions and she got out getting put in a mental hospital for the criminally insane because her psychological abuse on Lena showed she had a sense of awareness to be able to achieve such manipulations. Hearing what she did in court royally fucked him up to hear. He wanted to reach out to her some days, thank her for confessing all that to get him justice or ask how she was. Because such abuse wouldn’t leave physical scars, but the emotional ones…

“What she did to you is the problem,” he finished for her.

She only swallowed down the rest of her drink and coughed a bit, hunching over. The bartender cautiously took her glass and went to mix her second round.

“Tell me, if you know you can’t be a mom why are you bothering?” He looked down at her, turning toward her. He almost wanted to put his hand on her shoulder.

She frowned. “I want to change that. She’s special. We both know she is. Kara is…not someone you just get out of your head. Can’t just go without thinking about it every damn day.”

“What if you can’t change?”

“I have to.” Her answer was quick and her voice steadfast. She had resolved to work to be in it for the long run if possible.

He couldn’t figure out if this was terrible news or good news for him. Lena could give them good lives but is it safe for them?

He sighed. “You should get help with that.” He pulled a notepad from his coat and scribbled down a few lines of information. "Here, this is for my friend Doctor Quinzel. She’s one of the best in the state if not the country."

“No, I—”

He put his hand on her wrist and gripped tight. He looked her in the eye. “If you want me to be okay with this, prove it to me you’re willing to be there for them. That means working on your mental
state. Helping you helps them. Why I’m doing it.” He let her go. He looked down at her again. “And I…think about you too much. I owe you my justice and my med bills. Please let me help?”

He looked a bit vulnerable. She sighed and took the paper. She owed this man so much still. An unselfish request really. Was she in the place to say no? She could at least give the façade of accepting his kindness. “Thanks,” she muttered, looking at the neat and quick writing.

He paid off his tab and left her there at the bar.

**

Lena looked up at the six-story concrete building. She looked at her phone again and strolled in. She had a flight in the night so she knew she should’ve gone somewhere else. Out with Ruby and Sam maybe. Though if Sam heard Clark’s idea she would’ve been on board.

Might as well save the time and spare her the lecture. She strolled in and went up to the fourth floor. She was luckily alone in the small box as another person seeing her she knew would cause her to become discouraged. She got up and went down the narrow hall. A man stepped out of an office with his young son and they looked at her. She smiled briefly at him and kept walking. She saw the office and opened the door. The secretary looked up from her computer and looked at Lena.

“Hello, do you have an appointment?” She looked confused, of course knowing her boss’ schedule would have her unavailable for the time being.

“No…but Doctor Harleen Quinzel should know I’m coming,” Lena said shyly.

“She’s fine, Dee.” Lena looked up and saw a woman in her early thirties standing there in a doorway that had been previously closed. She adjusted her glasses as Lena just stared. “C’mon, Lena.”

Lena stayed in place. Harleen rolled her eyes.

“Just troubles with past experiences. But if Clark thinks you need help, you really do.” Harleen sat in a chair behind her desk and motioned to the plush chairs in front of it.

Lena sank into one. “Well, Doctor Quinzel—”

“Call me Harley,” she said kindly.

Lena nodded. “Well…Harley…it’s regarding my homosexuality.” She sucked in a harsh breath.

Harley frowned. “I want to say first thing, I know a bit more coming into this than I do with normal patients. So I have to ask about Lillian Luthor’s abuse? Did she put you in any sort of therapy?”

“What? No! My mother wasn’t religious in her hatred of me liking women. She was obsessed with her image. Having a gay daughter isn’t exactly a shining impression.”

Harley put her pen down and sat back. “You care about what she thinks?”
“No.”

Harley smiled at her. “Rather quick.”

Lena glared and then looked down, her expression softening. “Just… I live to save my father’s legacy now.” She wrung her hands.

“Luthorcorp isn’t what it was. It’s just L-Corp. Why erase his name if you want to change how people see the name?” Harley smiled to herself as Lena bristled.

“There’s a blip called his son.”

“You ever thought Lex cracked under the pressure you’re in?” Harley clicked her pen and stared at Lena, trying to get her to meet her eye. Lena did, briefly.

“I know he did. He savors the fact that I am living in dread.” Her voice was low and bitter. She winced a bit, breaking the stare. “You must think I’m a monster…”

“Why?”

“I don’t think this is a good first impression.” She scratched below her ear, just where her jaw began as the nervousness made her hair stand a bit on end.

“It’s not the best but it’s not my first impression of you. We met at the conference for I.P.W.E.W.” She motioned to a picture of Dr. Rose and herself at the said event.

“You know the chairman?” Lena arched a brow. She almost felt compelled to grab the wooden frame and study the photo to see if it was legitimate.

“I’m dating her!” Harley said proudly, smirking. “A brilliant and beautiful woman lives with me and she texts me when she’s on her way home. We went to Bora Bora last summer and will be going to be renting a bungalow in Hawaii. We’re talking about adopting a little one.”

“Ooh, kids… wow.” Lena chuckled nervously, taking in all the personal details relayed to her.

“You hate kids?” Harley smiled. “And you’re sleeping with Kara?”

Lena blushed. “Rather brazen for a doctor.”

“You’re not a patient and you’re not paying me.” She clicked her pen again. "Clark may have mentioned you're Kara's girlfriend as well."

“If I do pay you, will you stop talking about me and my non-existent sex-life with Kara?”

“I won’t take it. A favor to a friend.”

“Why do you owe Clark?”

She sighed a bit and her playful expressions seized. Her voice was more severe. She was the one unable to meet Lena’s eye. “He helped me get out of an abusive situation. I have an affection towards him. And when he introduced me to his kid cousin when she was nineteen, I got a sense of care for her too. Before she had little Audra.” Harley pointed to a frame containing a couple polaroids. Clark Kent was in one along with Bruce Wayne.

“Huh. You know Bruce?” Lena leaned in to study the photo. She had met Bruce a few times. Charity benefits, her graduation party, had a meeting once or twice with him. He took his charity
work so personally and had a fair amount of intimate cases of it, helping one family immensely or randomly giving a scholarship. Usually went without press and only mentioned in conversation with people he liked. People joked around about him being a vigilante in how passionate he was about helping those being put into harm.

“He helped me finish school. I dropped out because of my boyfriend at the time.” She sighed. “It was bad times.”

“He’s good on helping those lost. His adoptive son I know is finishing up college soon.”

“Timothy is a fine young man,” Harley agreed. She sat back. “You don’t hate kids.”

“Who could?” Lena looked at her hands, fiddling with a ring on her thumb. “Um…I don’t know what to say.” She looked up. “I’m with a woman I really care about but she’s a mother. Clark only cares because he is the father-figure to Kara.”

“You don’t think there’s any goodwill towards you in his action of recommending me?”

Lena shook her head.

“I see why that would make you not want to come or leave. You can explain away people caring about you, I think.”

“People who loved me before did it out of benefit.”

Harley frowned. “That’s no way to live, Lena. Now I can go on to say due to the mental disorders they had that your mother and brother didn’t love you. I know that would be something you have known since you wondered about what they are capable of and incapable of.” She sat back and was twirling her pen. “I can also say that you have not been diagnosed with an antisocial disorder. Anxiety? Most likely. Depression? Oh, I could tell the second I looked up your name and saw the tragedy in your younger years. PTSD? Yeah if you have sexual dysfunction and fear of motherhood all because of abuse. But I will never place you in that diagnosis and will not venture it. Because I know it will not give me any way to help you.”

“I can’t turn?”

“Well, we have yet to figure if it’s genetic or environmental. But saying you have gained a strong affection for Kara and I see no possibility of an ulterior motive in doing so…no. Sociopaths are incapable of love as an emotion. They can say it, enjoy intimacy as a fleeting idea of sexual contact, and maybe even have a sense of pride in having the best mate—but they do not love outside of this. They know to mimic the actions of love but they won’t feel it.”

Harley looked at Lena.

“I let a man develop feelings for me and angered him into ousting me years ago. I am capable of lying about love to get what I want,” Lena said lowly.

“Then every gay person with a secret is a sociopath.” Harley smiled as Lena looked at her like she was a fool. “Just taking it into the grand context. Being in the closet is damaging for more than just the person hiding, but that is not out of your lack of empathy. You did this to please Lillian?”

“Yes.”

“You did what you had to do. It’s not perfect but for that time it was how you survived. You didn’t come out until she was imprisoned, correct?”
“Correct.”

“See? You came out because you felt free to. She is the root of your problem with sexuality. And I would figure also your quick mental maturity without emotional maturity following along may be another factor. And honestly, I think you’re just plain anxious.” Harley ripped off a corner from her legal pad. “I don’t give medication out without five meetings at least. I think you need to see someone. I can give you a list of my colleagues in National City or we can figure another way of communication.” She slid over. “That’s my personal email. Clark didn’t give you that and I’ll have to beat his ass for telling someone my number.” She sighed. “But I suppose you wouldn’t be here right now if he gave my business number.”

“Dee is by the book it seems.”

“I need things in as much order as possible.” Harley shrugged. “I lived in chaos. I much prefer it this way.”

Lena bit her lip. She knew it could benefit her to see someone. If she was going to be there for Kara and Audra, she had to really be there. “Video calls? Early afternoon for me is within your work hours, correct?”

Harley nodded. She handed Lena the slip and leaned back in her chair. “I know I’ll be putting you on meds so let’s keep talking and I’ll work on that. Anti-anxiety will be my main focus I think.” She ran her fingers through her hair and looked at Lena over her glasses. “I don’t think you’re the Xanax type. But in case you have an addiction streak, I think Lexapro or Zoloft may be out the best way of action. Since there’s no history in bipolar in the Luthor family, from what has been released in the profiles for the past two generations…you’re solid to the former without many effects. I don’t think I can kill your sexual drive any more than it already is emotionally.”

“How did you know I was related to the Luthors?”

Harley smiled softly. “I interviewed your mother a few times. A smart woman but truly loose with the tongue. But since it is in her medical eval I cannot publicly disclose it so don’t worry about me talking about it.”

Lena wondered if she was to feel comforted. “Was she suffering?”

“Lena if you were in a place with no individuality and hardly any mental stimulation, would you feel at ease?”

Lena looked down.

“You haven’t visited?”

“Not for years.”

“For your mental health, I strongly advise you never do.” Harley frowned, taking off her glasses and putting her elbows on her desk, leaning towards Lena. “That woman wants another victim and it shouldn’t be someone so young and bright. Let her turn the guards insane or the psychologist. Not a young woman. No.”

Lena just nodded slowly and walked out. She laughed to herself a bit. Lillian had already driven her a bit insane.

*But I'll be damned if she keeps me from being happy beyond her confines.*
Lena looked up from her laptop as Jess came in. She held a white paper bag and a water bottle. She wordlessly put it down.

Lena tore open the bag, taking the orange pill bottle and opening it. A white table slid into her palm when she gently shook it. She took a sip of water, put the pill in, and swallowed. She gulped down more water from the bottle to make sure it went down.

“How are you doing with this new doctor? Quinzel was it?”

“She thinks I use this job as an excuse to not be happy.” They had been working at it for a month. They spoke twice a week for an hour so far and did so over video chat. Lena began to pay, sending her seven hundred every week. Two for each session, fifty dollars for each session being under such strange conditions, two for the discretion. Harley tried to stop Lena from sending that last bit as she had confidentiality regardless. Lena kept sending it and Harley didn’t wire it back.

“When’s the last time you saw Kara?” Lena glared briefly at the retort. She looked away.

Kara was a big topic for them. Harley said her goal wasn’t to make it so Lena could be a mother to Audra. It was rather to get her to a place where she could be a sexual adult if she so chose to without feel distress. She had extensively steered a session to get simple questions in and later admitted it was to see if she could classify Lena as asexual.

The verdict was sexual aversion wasn’t because of a lack of interest.

“Honestly how much you bridge the topic tells me you’re itching for that connection. Makes sense in your sexual prime.” Harley flashed a brief smile after saying it. Lena could only look around her office and mutter under her breath about that not being too much her business.

Harley quickly quipped it was saying Lena was paying her to figure this stuff out.

The weeks had made her think more about Kara. She would lay in bed and wonder what it would be like if she had kissed her more. What would Kara look like under her clothes? Her muscles usually feel taught and she has curves. But is there a defined line? Are there tan lines? Freckles? Was this woman actually carved from marble to masquerade as a female Adonis?

She had thought like so for months now. The only thing that changed was the emotion. Rather than feeling guilt in her gut along with the flame, she felt an emptiness. The longing that had her curl up and squirm.

Lena looked over at Jess, returning to the moment. “We had dinner a few days ago. Just me and her. We went to this little place under an alias. Took an Uber and sent Ernest a different place with a look alike. Got a few hours alone before she went back to relieve her babysitter of her duties.”

Lena wanted to talk about the photos. Kara told her that night. The honesty made her grateful for the woman but made her stomach churn a bit. Her affections for the woman could only grow. She felt though Kara’s interest would decline soon.

Lena sighed. “I’m set up to see her tomorrow. But…god, I feel so childish to miss her.” She picked
compulsively at a scab on her jaw.

Jess smiled at her. “Well, you have some free time before your lab walkthrough. How about I have Ernest bring the car and you go have lunch with her?”

Lena frowned. It would be too out there. Her office was different. Jess could make sure no one got through, and she could have the security wipe the tapes of Kara entering and exiting. But at Catco, there’s no hiding she was there. And if she didn’t see Cat, people would wonder.

She couldn’t expose Kara to the drama. God, if they focused at all on Audra because of her…

“No. It’s fine.” She put her glasses on. “But do send Miss Danvers a dozen Gardenias. No name on the card. Say, “I’m counting the moments to when I can see you.””

Jess wrote down the request and smirked at Lena. “I like this on you, Lena.”

Lena rolled her eyes and looked back down at her work as Jess left her.

I hope it sticks.

Kara and Audra set the table as someone knocked. Kara ran and answered the door.

Lena stood there carrying three pink carnations and a night bag. Kara chuckled at the bag. “You already know our tactics.”

“There’s some method to the Danvers girls’ madness I think.” Lena stepped in.

“More flowers?” Kara asked softly. Seemingly ready to scold Lena for being outwardly romantic around Audra.

“Oh, not for you.” Lena smiled as Audra came over. “Audra, here dear.” She crouched down and offered the flowers to the girl. Audra blushed and thanked her.

“How about you put those in the vase with the others?” Kara told her. Audra tutted off with her gift. “How sweet of you.”

“You two are a package deal. So, I’ll spoil you as so.” Lena snuck in a kiss from Kara when Audra didn’t see.

“Hm, as lovely as that is, we can’t be too obvious around her just yet.”

“Right.” Lena smiled and put her hand on Kara’s lower back. “Were you working out today? God, I can feel the tension…” Her hand ran along the muscled back and up between Kara’s broad shoulders. Her fingers were warm and Kara could feel that through the thin fabric of her t-shirt. She shivered and leaned into the touch. “I can help you with that later.” She smirked.

“W-what?” Kara turned a bit pink. She was confused that the woman that pushed her away a little over a month ago was touching her with slow and purposeful caresses. Sure, they had seen each other. But mostly all they did was kiss in Kara’s car, tinted windows enough to hide the affection, or longing touches in public as they couldn’t simply just be.

Lena stepped past her to the kitchen table. “What’s for dinner?”
Kara snapped out of it and stepped up. “Oh—tacos.” She stopped and looked at the vase briefly. The three carnations stuck out against the white flowers. She wanted to ask Lena why she picked them. She hadn’t seen the type ever before.

They made up their plates and sat around the table together. Lena talked about her trip and mentioned she had run into Clark.

“Just randomly?” Kara questioned.

“Really! I was at the bar of my hotel and he had come after working late. Said the bar was quiet there.” She looked up at Kara. “He come up often?”

“Three or four times a year. Lois will try to come as much as she can.”

“Lois is really fun. Her sister Lucy is really pretty. She’s like super smart and works for a lot of powerful people. We can’t know about who though.” Audra shrugged. “Lois writes. Like mommy. And Clark. You know them?”

“Clark and I go back. I knew him when I was a teenager. He and this fellow Bruce Wayne were an odd pair. Bit rude but loved each other a lot deep down. I’d say your aunt Ally and Winn’s relationship is comparable.”

Audra seemed to understand it. She asked about Bruce, having a loose idea that he was important. He was like Cat and Lena.

Dinner passed with the three talking about what had been happening. Audra was excited to sleep over at Frankie’s next week. Kara had a story about this teen fiction writer. Lena scraped the surface, not delving in too much about her work and had failed to mention to Kara about her seeing Dr. Quinzel.

After dinner they went for a walk as the sun was starting to set, bathing the city in warm light and was enough to feel safe in the streets. People were sat outside on patios and they chattered on as the three passed. Of course, people would stop to look briefly, unable to resist people watching or have their interest peaked by the two young women with their pinkies locked as a little girl with gold locks skipped ahead of them.

They passed a small park and went in. Kara and Lena sat together as Audra played on the monkey bars. Kara felt a hand on hers. She turned her palm up so Lena’s hand rested on hers. She watched her daughter, a small smile on her lips as their fingers played. The digits twirled, unfurled, traced, caressed in their own little dances until they parted. Audra had turned to make sure they were watching. They both smiled at her. When she looked away they met with a clash again. Lena’s hand was clumsier than Kara’s. But they were also smaller, with thinner and smoother digits. Lena could feel the callouses on the palms just below where the fingers met her hand.

Kara trapped Lena’s hand with locked fingers. She daringly took it up to her lips and kissed a knuckle before letting go.

They walked back to the apartment, Audra holding Lena’s and Kara’s hands.

“We’re going to the aquarium soon. Will you come with us?” Audra yawned and she stumbled a bit. The two women chuckled and they kept her from falling.

“I think so.” Lena smiled down at the little girl. “If your mommy allows it.” She looked at Kara. She rolled her eyes.
“You think I would say no?”

They got home and Lena sat in the living room while Kara got Audra ready for bed. Audra asked for her story to be told by Lena. They obliged and Lena told her a story out of a storybook Audra picked out. She was trying to speak like a gravely old dragon when she looked up and saw Audra had fallen asleep. She smiled softly and put the book down on her nightstand and adjusted her blankets. She shut off her light and walked out quietly.

Kara was sat in the kitchen, pouring hot water into two mugs. Lena walked behind her and hugged her. She buried her nose between Kara’s shoulder blades, her hair tickling her cheeks. It smelled of green tea and musk.

“It feels different,” Kara mumbled.

“Clark and I talked about you. I said I was dating you. He was a bit off about it. I know he’ll never be perfectly fine with me. But he had an olive branch. He offered me help. Recommended his friend Doctor Quinzel. Harley. I know you know her.”

Kara chuckled softly. “A little, yeah.” She put two tea bags into the mugs. She turned then and looked down at Lena. She smoothed the woman’s hair down and then rested her hands on her shoulders. “How long have you seen her?”

“A month. Twice a week.” Lena looked down at Kara’s hips, where her hands rested. The tails of her shirt hung over them, shifting to give brief triangular peeks at the flesh. She circled her thumb over warm and bare flesh. “Working on my trauma. My aversions.”

“I-I see…” Kara stroked her cheek. “I did notice recently you have been more affectionate.”

They moved to the couch with their mugs. Lena settled against Kara.

“She thinks I’m afraid of being happy. I want to change that. I really do.” Lena looked up at Kara. “I’m not working to be just part of your life but to make myself a better person.”


“It feels different. You’re right.” Lena kissed her jaw. Kara put her mug aside and looked at her. She took off her glasses and grabbed Lena’s jaw.

“How different?”

“You’ll have to see for yourself.” Lena kissed her, not soft and slow. Rather the wanting, ravenous way a woman in control of her sexuality could muster.

It was a bit clumsy, moving together to get laid out on the couch. Kara’s leg slipped and her mug flew off the side table. They parted, untangling so Kara could curse incessantly at the broken ceramic and spilled liquid.

“Leave it,” she muttered into Lena’s neck, putting her arms under Lena and lifting her. She shifted and wrapped the younger woman’s legs around her waist. “Hold onto me.” She carried them to her bedroom. She felt Lena’s grip was a tad desperate. She kissed her cheek and her jaw as she laid her out on the bed. Lena’s arms went from Kara’s shoulders to her back, fingers digging into her clothed back. The nails couldn’t leave marks through the fabric, chewed down from anxieties.

But they were nimble still. Lena’s left hand slipped between them and undid the buttons from collar to hip. Kara splayed away from the two sides and straightened up her back, sat up and straddling
Lena.

“You can set the pace,” Kara whispered. “You have the control.” She took Lena’s hand and placed it to her abdomen. Lena stared at the skin. Tan, taught as she pictured. But she saw blemishes. Pink sunken in valleys by Kara’s waist, stretching over her stomach on both sides. A small cluster of freckles just below her chest. A birthmark near Kara’s back that she almost missed. A scar that looked like a chunk was taken out of the place where the left protrusion bone resided. She could feel it when her thumb stroked the area. Her breasts didn’t fit her body Lena observed as she slid her hands up to cup them. At least they were small for her broader frame, and they were hidden under a tan bra. Lena slid her hand over and undid the front clasp.

She had seen other female forms. Friends, fellow students in the locker room, those she saw on the screen during her nights of restless libido. But this was different. It made her heart speed up, her skin felt prickly. She could only stare and caress, feeling the imperfections only to return to worshiping the valleys of Kara’s muscles and the taut skin over her shoulders, her arms. The gentle curve of her chest and the firmness it had in Lena’s trembling hands.

At this point, Kara’s breath came a bit heavy, a few gasps or sharp inhales. She felt insecure. She had parts of her she couldn’t change. She had parts she hated. Lena stared, touched the parts of her she didn’t like. The areas she stared at and prodded when she looked too long in the mirror at night. She fought frowning and wondered if she could do this.

“My god, you are beautiful,” Lena rasped. She leaned in and kissed between Kara’s breasts. She held her lower back, holding Kara up as she leaned back. Lena’s lips went in a trail to just above her navel. She shifted back up, the change in weight sending Kara on her back, head at the foot of the bed. Lena was on top now.

The skirt of her dress rode up, puddling at her hips. Kara growled slightly and her hands instinctively went up, yanking and fumbling with the buttons on the back. “You really had to pick something hard to get off,” Kara muttered. She finished with her work. The top of the dress slouched as it had no taught pull from the back. Lena pulled it down slowly, Kara’s eyes following the fabric down and down and down. The whole dress was at her hips and Kara could now see her torso. She laid back down, stared.

Ample bosom and skin that shone like porcelain in the faint light. Black lace against her bosom she wanted to tear to pieces but fought to, trembling fingers undoing the clasp on Lena’s back. It slid down her arms and was aimlessly tossed. Kara felt afraid to touch the soft skin with her tough hands. What if she hurt her?

Lena leaned over her, dark hair curtaining down, tickling Kara’s shoulders and cheek. Kara ground up shamelessly, rather quite lewd of her she knew. But the small gasp she got of Lena and how the woman’s arms almost gave out was enough to almost drive her mad. She wanted to pin Lena down then and keep her up through the night. Have her cry out in her first moment of assisted ecstasy.

But they had limits. Couldn’t be loud. No...she knew this wasn’t the time to be beastly and lay her claim. Paper thin walls would ensure Audra would hear them.

They were back to kissing, rolling around the bed as Lena kicked away the dress and Kara squirmed out of her jeans. They were under the covers, skin to skin. Hands clasped to shoulders or cupping cheeks.

They pulled away, panting and delicate.

“Lena?” Kara whispered.
Lena bit her lip and she rested her head on Kara’s shoulder. Her arms gave out and her weight was on Kara. God, the woman was so warm. Lena wanted to just curl into her and spend the night and morning there. Forget the company, the new letter from Lex, her next therapy session. Nothing should matter but this. Kara’s arms wrapped protectively around her waist and she was almost afraid at how natural it felt for her. God, she felt taken.

“I think that’s enough for tonight.” Lena nodded at her words.

They only breathed at the moment, the sheet clinging to sweaty limbs. Lena wondered to herself when she slinked away from Kara would her skin smell of her? Kara held her, kissed her shoulders and stroked her hair. Whispered how wonderful it was to have this.

Lena shifted to her side, being spooned by Kara.

“It’s been long since the last time I’ve been close to someone like this.” Kara buried her face into the crook of Lena’s neck. She smelled of sweat and floral perfume. Her neatly pinned up hair was now down in lightly tangled tresses. The movement sent a delicate smell of tea into her nose from her shampoo.

Lena was silent, holding Kara’s hand where it was on her shoulder.

Why couldn’t I do it? I know there are reasons to not do it, reasons outside of myself but…

“Lena,” Kara spoke softly. “Waiting is worth it. You should do it when you’re ready. Don’t feel bad if this is what you can do. It was wonderful.” Kara kissed her shoulder. “It’s the most we’ve done. I don’t even think you’ve slept in the same bed as me.”

“I was afraid of what could happen.” She swallowed. “Only time I slept in bed with someone was with him.”

Kara was silent for a while.

“You never slept with him like that?”

“I couldn’t. He wouldn’t force it on me but I knew it was beginning to frustrate him. We were sleeping together because I thought it would maybe awake desire for him. That I could do it.”

“But that’s not in your nature.”

“I know now.” Lena turned toward Kara, head on her chest. Kara lazily stroked her hair. “Sorry.”

“No. I want to know about this.” Kara held her close and kissed her forehead.

Lena sniffled. “I have so much to say. I’m afraid you’ll realize this is too much. You shouldn’t have to deal with me—”

“Hey!” Kara sat up and pulled Lena up with her. She held her by the shoulders and looked her in the eye. Lena trembled under her touch, fighting tears. “Lena, I…love you. You aren’t something to deal with. You’re not a burden. You are an honor. One I almost missed out on. When you’re ready to speak, do so.”

She let Lena go and hunched over. Lena only stammered.

“Y-you…what?”

“You heard me,” Kara muttered and turned away. She turned on the light and stumbled to find some
clothing. She felt a hand on her wrist. “You don’t have to say it back. Just know I do.”

“Let’s go to bed,” Lena whispered. “Please. Don’t leave.”

Kara had to oblige her request. It was enough. She honestly half expected Lena to be the one getting dressed, in complete terror at Kara being so easily attached.

Kara woke up in the middle of the night, suddenly. She hazily looked around and shifted her body. She felt no weight on the other side of the bed. The covers were peeled away and that side of the bed was still warm. She felt a sudden wave of emotion in her drowsy realization.

Fuck, Fuck no! I scared her away. Fuck Danvers, why did you say it? Why did you think that would do anything good? You scared someone so delicate of course she left you here. You fuck!

She lay on her back and stared at the ceiling, gritting her teeth.

This is what you get for opening up again. Bit in the ass. Fuck…

She heard the door open a silhouette was clear in the light. The door shut, the light disappeared. She heard the shuffling steps, saw the figure. She heard a gentle clink and then the person was below the covers.

“Cleaning up the glass and tea. Oh, and got your glasses for tomorrow,” Lena whispered sweetly.

Kara could only wrap her up tightly in her arms and kiss her. Pinned her down and kissed her hard and feel every free inch of her skin against her own. She could’ve cried of relief.

Lena chuckled sleepily when they parted. “Relax. I was just gone for five minutes.” She snuggled into Kara and they fell asleep again.

She didn’t know as Kara thought, but I thought you were just gone.

Chapter End Notes

Gardenias have a symbolism as the flower of secret love. Pink carnations represent motherly love.
Kara sucked in a breath as she looked at Audra drawing from her spot on the futon in her office. The girl smiled at her, stopping her pencil on her paper. “You okay mommy?”

“Yeah, baby.” Kara looked at the clock. She could step out. She was sure Audra was going to get antsy soon if they didn’t leave the stuffy office. “Do you want to go take a walk and get a strawberry smoothie?” The girl nodded eagerly. Kara smiled and grabbed her purse. They went to the café half a block away, getting a chocolate banana smoothie and a strawberry one. They sat outside, Kara not in haste to get back too quickly. “You know you’ve grown just right in front of me.”

Audra just giggled and sipped her drink. Kara smiled softly.

“You’re pretty great, kid. I know you understand a lot more than you let on sometimes.”

The girl put her cup down and shifted her mouth into a little grimace. Didn’t fit such a young face. Her freckled nose scrunched up.

“Am I in trouble?” She whispered.

“No baby.” Kara smiled at her. “I have some good news to tell you. But I just want you to know I love you so much. And I’m very proud of you.” She sat back. “You understand a lot. You know a lot of people say kids your age can’t understand relationships like Alex and Maggie’s? You do. A lot easier than some adults do. It’s special. It’s wonderful.”

“I already know about the baby. What can you tell me?” Audra perked up. Kara chuckled.

“It’s not about them. It’s about me. I’m just saying, Audra.” Kara rested her elbows on the table and leaned in. “I’m sure you noticed Lena has been in our lives even more than before.”

“Yeah. We’re going to her home tonight right?”

“For dinner, yep. But there’s a reason why.” Kara exhaled and looked at the girl. “Lena and I are girlfriends.”

Audra smiled. “You are?”

“You don’t have any questions. I know I haven’t dated ever—”

“You are now though. And it’s Lena!” She squealed and clapped her hands. “You and Lee.”

“Yeah.” Kara smiled softly. “I’m very fond of her.” She couldn’t put it into the girl’s head that she loved her. For the girl, love meant permanence. She didn’t want to get her hopes up. Or her own. “I just want you to know. She does too. But I have to warn you. That means her and I will be gross and kiss in front of you.”
Audra scrunched up her face. “Okay.”

Kara chuckled. “We’ll keep it to a minimum. Just don’t tell daddy, okay? I want to talk to him about it myself.”

“Well, mommy.” Audra sipped her smoothie. “We should get her flowers.”

“We should.” Kara smiled.

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Lena ran around the apartment, checking there was nothing precarious or dangerous. She checked the rice in the pan, covering it up when she almost got a steam burn. She ran her hand under cold water and looked at her clothes.

Should she change for the fourth time?

Downstairs buzzed.

“Two very special ladies are here,” Tommy chuckled.

She rolled her eyes and clicked the button. “Do you have to ask anymore?”

He laughed before it cut out. A few minutes later Lena got a knock at her door. She opened it quickly and there stood Kara and Audra. They dressed up both in blue dresses and Kara had even opted to put in contacts instead. Audra held up half a dozen purple calla lilies.

Lena felt all her anxiety fall away. She took the flowers. “Thank you, sweetie.” She leaned down and kissed the girl’s forehead.

Audra smiled happily and looked up at her mom. Kara brought a bouquet of white heathers from behind her back. Lena blushed and took those. “What have I done to deserve you girls?” She put an arm around Kara’s waist. Kara boldly kissed her.

Lena melted into it, holding Kara closer. They parted and saw Audra looking embarrassed.

“Sorry, bean,” Lena said softly. She was blushing and smiling. “So I take you know about your momma and me?”

Audra smiled then and smiled. “Girlfriends.” She giggled.

Lena got the flowers in a vase. “Exactly right. Been dying to tell you. Turns out you were the perfect wingman, kiddo,” Lena stage-whispered to the girl, earning a crooked grin and a low-five. Kara just rolled her eyes.

“Do I have to take back my choices?”

Lena pouted and went into the kitchen. “It’s about ready. Sit! I’ll serve you.”

“Lena I can help you—” Kara started.

“No. I don’t cook much so this is a special occasion. Let me.”

Kara shrugged and pulled out Audra’s chair for her. She sat next to her daughter. Audra adjusted the skirt of her dress and messed with the bun her mother put her hair in.
Lena came back with two plates and placed them down. Audra had a significantly smaller portion compared to her mother of course and had plain white rice rather the veggie friend rice Lena made. Kara ate like a fiend and Lena had come to see that quickly into their relationship.

Lena came back with an open bottle and her own plate. “Just sparkling juice,” Lena said before she poured the gold liquid into all three of their glasses. She sat down and looked at the two.

Kara looked down at her plate. The dumplings were deformed but all the way cooked. The rice seemed a bit too browned but smelled appetizing. She wasn’t going to say a word even if she found it to be pure gruel.

“It looks delicious.”

Lena smiled nervously. “Not the most attractive thing.”

“Just needs to taste good, right? Doesn’t need to win any beauty pageants.” Kara grabbed her fork and dug in. She sort of wanted to pause before making any indication. Lena made this because Kara liked this stuff. She was likely not raised on shit like this. Wasn’t really her eating habits to have this stuff.

She saw Lena looking expectantly, nervously. She finished the first bite and smiled. “It’s good. I really appreciate you making this for us.”

Lena looked down. Audra took over the conversation, talking excitedly about how she got to be with her mom in the office again. Nia and James took her down to a shoot and she watched models get makeup applied on them and she talked to a few of them.

Lena nodded along and asked with how she thought of the women. Audra smiled.

“Really pretty. Like you.”

Lena blushed pink and teased how the girl was as much a flirty person as her mother. Kara nearly choked at it and stuttered to defend herself, failing but also proving her own defense. How could such a klutzy tongued woman possibly be a Casanova?

“We’re going up to Midvale at the end of the month. Will be gone for about a week,” Kara told Lena later in the dinner.

Lena looked up. “You know I wouldn’t be opposed to meeting Doctor Danvers in a casual setting….” She smiled coyly.

“I haven’t told Alex and Maggie yet. Eliza knows I’m dating someone.”

“She know this someone is a woman? I’d hate to blindside her.”

“She does. She hasn’t been blindsided since I came out. It was rather comical how she didn’t see that coming.” Kara smiled. “So, you’d be willing to go? Drive up with us maybe?”

“I’d love to! With the contracts being renewed in these past few weeks afterward we’ll be in a lull so it’s the prime time for me. Before the trip I’m taking to England a month from now.”

“All business?” Kara smiled.

“Mostly. I have some old friends up there I’ll get drinks with. I lived there with my ex for a bit.”

“Papa lived there,” Audra told Lena.
The woman nodded a bit. Kara looked at her. Lena shifted in her chair and sipped her drink. Her body language changed and Kara couldn’t place why.

Kara dropped Audra off for her sleepover and practically raced around the city to get what she needed. She had the next day off and Audra was going to be picked up by Mon-el. She had the next day and a half just to Lena and herself.

She picked up flowers, wine, and that wasn’t the last of her plans. She had a key to Lena’s apartment as she finished up before the woman. She wanted to make the night special.

She got to her last stop of renting some movies Lena really liked. Not romantic comedies but would be nice to unwind with. Some of them were a bit childish with was amusing. She liked watching *Help!* and *Can’t Think Straight* and the god-awful *Charlie’s Angels* movie series. She argued how a lot of people had a sexual awakening with those damned things.

She then commented on how Kara reminded her of Drew Barrymore’s character.

Kara checked her watch and stopped around the corner for a coffee. She got a text from Jess that Lena would be leaving soon. With that Kara rushed to Lena’s apartment building. She had all her bags as she walked in. Tom only chuckled at her as she nodded and went to the elevator. She got up and opened the door whilst balancing the goodies in her arms or dangling from her fingers.

She dropped down her bags and went into the bedroom. She put the movies near the television and adjusted the lights, lit candles and put the flowers in a vase. To go with Lena’s secret communication of messages she had white and yellow lilies. Another one was daffodils and red camellias.

She changed her clothes and set the bottle in a thing of ice.

She heard the door opening and she stopped. Lena’s voice called out.

“You beat me here, right?”

“Yeah. Just hanging out in the bedroom,” Kara called back.

She heard a small laugh. Lena’s voice was rather unique to her. Low yet womanly. It was authoritative yet had this vulnerable quality where she awoke a sense of protectiveness in Kara.

Lena came in slow, stepping out of her heels and putting down her briefcase before going into the room. She expected Kara to be terribly romantic. She hadn’t been able to work that day thinking of the plans they made. It felt odd to plan something.

Though Kara was very adamant that it didn’t have to go *there* unless they felt they wanted to.

She stepped in and saw Kara sat on her bed. There was a small army of erected thin candles sprinkled about the room. Their yellow little heads gave a warm glow that bounced well off of Kara’s bronzy skin and golden hair. She was sat on the back, arms behind her to hold her weight and her head tilted to the side as she looked at Lena. She flashed a gentle smile to suggest a love and tenderness…like Lena was the only woman in the world.

She let out a strong breath and nearly felt lightheaded.
“You okay?”

“You okay?” Lena drifted to her and leaned down, kissing her lips slowly, briefly. They parted and Kara smiled briefly.

“I’m all yours for the next forty hours. What shall we do?” She whispered.

Lena hummed and bit her lip teasingly. “Hm… I have a feeling you have a lot of ideas.”

“They’re undeveloped. Not going to push my endless luck.”

Lena pushed her down onto her back and straddled her. “This is really cliché you know.”

“I’m sorry I wanted it to be different from my first time.” Kara rolled her eyes. Having sex on the bottom bunk in a fraternity house while NSYNC played is not…what you want.

They went to kissing, hot and heavy kisses with hands scrambling for buttons and hems. Kara was undressed first, skirt kicked away and shirt splayed out.

“You know just because we have the night doesn’t mean we have to—”

Lena kissed her to cut her off. She bit her lip as she pulled away, making Kara whimper. “Are you really trying to talk a girl out of sex?”

“Um… Maybe. I should stop.” Kara blushed. She flipped them and undressed Lena, tossing aside her dress and ripping her tights to shreds. She held Lena against her and kissed the exposed pale skin of her shoulders and neck. She left marks on her breasts and her stomach, moving down her body.

It felt rather predatory, icy blue eyes dilated to nearly black as she got to between her legs. Lena whimpered and tangled her fingers into Kara’s hair.

With that Kara paused, touched her wrist and kissed her hip. “It’ll be okay.” She pulled down her panties and spread her legs, fingers pressed into her soft thighs. She was tempted to stop and leave more marks. Though she felt Lena would scold her later for the few she already left.

The neighbors would hate Lena for the noise. How Kara’s mouth had a direct effect on what noises escaped Lena’s lips was far from restrained. Though a woman who spent over a decade avoiding this part of her deserved to be so loud.

Lena clawed at the sheets and cried out Kara’s name like it was her only salvation as Kara’s mouth and hands spoiled her. She wondered why she had waited so long for this but felt glad now to be sharing this with Kara.

Kara pinned her hips down, thumbs resting just above where her hip bones jutted out and Lena’s legs locked around her head. She held her down and let her peak time after time, Lena’s hips weakly thrusting against Kara’s mouth with each wave of pleasure.

Lena’s body shuddered weakly one more time as Kara pulled away. She rested her head on Lena’s thigh and caught her breath. Lena’s body was slick with sweat and had the musk of sex to it.

Lena panted and ran her fingers through Kara’s hair. “Shit… that was… is it always like that?” Lena pulled Kara up. Kara smiled down at her.

“I aim to please.” She kissed Lena’s forehead.

Kara laid next to her and held her close as she composed herself. Her body trembled still and she
gripped tight to her.

“We can stop here,” Kara said, body thrumming with pent-up arousal. She figured that she could finish herself off in the shower if Lena fell asleep.

“Why?” Lena straddled her, the warmth between her legs settled on Kara’s abdomen. She ran her fingers down her body from between her chest to below her navel. Kara’s skin got goosebumps from the light touch, on the edge and just wanting Lena to touch her.

“In case you wanted to….hm.” Kara tipped her head back. “I mean you don’t really—I know you… Lena!” She lost her thought as Lena’s mouth was at her breast, teeth gently capturing her nipple and the warmth of her tongue stroking over it.

Kara shuddered and gripped to Lena’s shoulders. “S’good,” she moaned out before Lena pulled away. She smirked at Kara and Kara could see her cocky expression in the dark. She turned red and buried her face in a pillow.

Lena smirked and came back up, kissing Kara briefly. It was an expression of her next actions. The slowness, the tentativeness, and tenderness of her fingers as they crept down Kara’s body. Kara gripped onto her and could only let out reserved gasps and quiet moans, restrained.

Lena made it her own goal to get her to cry out loud enough to make those around her who felt she was to die alone to know she was with the most wonderful woman. She pulled her hand away to Kara’s dismay. Kara looked at her, expecting the end, trying to conceal disappointment.

But she could only shift as Lena got between her legs and what was shy turned bold. She didn’t act like Kara, pinning down or clawing at flesh. Kara writhed against her and held her hair in her hand, grinding into her mouth and crying out.

“Fuck—Lena—mm…” She growled and her hips bucked as she peaked, shuddering and her back arching before collapsing back. Lena pulled away and straddled Kara as the woman sucked in breaths of air.

“You still up to go?” Lena whispered.

“Aren’t you tired?”

“I spent my whole adult life to this point avoiding this. You think I want to be done?” Lena smirked at her.

“You don’t…feel bad?”

Lena smirked and kissed her. Kara rolled them, pinning Lena down. She kissed along her jaw and whispered. “I love you, Lena. I love you so much. I feel so honored. You’re so sexy. I’m glad you were so loud, so people know that you’re mine.” She nipped her earlobe and had turned Lena pure red.

“You’re foul,” Lena muttered and cocked her head to the side. Kara could only chuckle and kiss a mark she made. “I know what you did. I’ll have to hide those tomorrow!”

“Why? You’ll be right here tomorrow.” Kara pulled her up and into her lap. The candles had burned down, the majority dying naturally in their little tin casings. The fallen armies gave only the moonlight bleeding in behind Lena as a form of light. She held Lena in her lap as she put her hand between her legs. Lena’s body moved down against her fingers and her arms wrapped around Kara’s shoulders.
The woman was flushed and hair tussled with sex. She still looked otherworldly with the gentle blue light behind her, creating almost a halo and a hue. Kara struggled not to just stop and stare, but she didn’t want to rob Lena of any pleasure. She deserved to be swept up again and with that, Kara delivered such ecstasy.

They switched positions a few more times. Hours later Kara and Lena collapsed and held to each other. Kara almost felt like she was going to pass out. She didn’t expect Lena to go so long as she did.

She was panting as Lena snuggled into her side after having taken care of Kara a few more times.

“You really have been waiting too long,” Kara sighed and rubbed the sweat from her brow. Lena chuckled sleepily and snuggled into Kara’s side.

“Too far?”

“No! God, no.” Kara chuckled softly and kissed her forehead. They put on one of the movies and ordered takeout. Kara dressed to get the food and they sat back in bed. Lena hummed the Beatles songs in the movie and Kara wondered how her singing voice might sound.

Kara sipped her drink and adjusted her boxer shorts. Lena sat there in her nightshirt, the blue silk shining gently with the blue light of the television.

She looked back to the screen as Ringo fell through the floor, drum set and all. Kara laughed. “I just—this movie is something isn’t it?”

“I love you.”

“Hm?”

Kara looked at Lena. The woman stared at her. Kara moved and paused the movie, flicked on the bedside lamp on her side.

“I love you, Kara.” Lena moved up to her and kissed her jaw. “I love you. And that’s why I need to tell you the truth.”

Chapter End Notes

virginity, walking on air, happiness, one true love, and “you’re a flame in my heart” are the meanings of the flowers
Lena made them both tea and they sat on the balcony after getting into their pajamas. Lena sat in a chair and put a foot up on the edge. Kara leaned against the rail and looked at the passing cars down on the road. “Um, I have to tell you something about me,” Lena said.

“Oh. Anything.” Kara smiled at her. The lights of the city skirted across her face.

Lena wrung her hands after putting her tea down. She got up and walked back inside. Kara ‘tsked’ and looked out at the city. There was a gentle chill and she held her tea in both of her hands.

Lena came back with a shoe box and sat back down on the chair. She opened it and passed a stack of postcards to Kara.

Kara looked at the top card.

**Dear Icarus,**

*Do not fly too close to the sun. I sense being trapped on the island for what you know is better for you.*

*All my love,*

*A.L.*

She turned to the next few.

*I see what you do with my work. You change its meaning and make it what it’s not.*

*Tell me when you’ll accept your true nature, Lena. We miss you on the other side.*

*-Lex*

*Enjoy a bottle of the tequila I drank and thought of you with a pistol to my head. I hope you think of me with a razor to your wrist and drink for me*

*-Alexander*

Kara stopped after that one. “Why did you show these to me?”

“Lillian isn’t my only problem.” She looked at her tea. “I think of Lex so much and I’m working through it with Harley. But I have nightmares. Usually, it was him killing me or making me kill Clark. Make it my fault when…I know I didn’t do anything to hurt Kent.” She sucked in a breath. “But I see him. I see the eyes we share and wonder if the mind behind them could be the same.”

Kara opened her mouth to speak.

Lena spoke before she could. “I don’t need to hear it. I know I can’t really be like him. But I just wonder, will there be something that breaks me? What broke him?” She frowned. “How come he can torture me and avoid capture?”
Kara looked at another.

*You try so hard, Lena. You always tried hard. Dad coveted you and mother tortured you. For me, vice versa. Can we stop being enemies and be family?*

Kara frowned at it.

“Do you miss him?”

Lena sipped her tea and put it on the cold concrete of the balcony floor. “I did. But I was trying to convince myself he could be rehabilitated. Maybe it was a mental break and we could have an amicable relationship as he rotted in a mental institution. I bring him his favorite meal on holidays and play cards.” She paused. “But then he sent a bomb to a company I was considering buying, almost killing me and my associate and her employees. I found out shortly Lillian was his outside man. And I knew he was lost. And she was gone too. The trials happened and I finally saw what he did to Clark.”

Kara stopped. She remembered the dark time. She almost dropped out of college to help Lois take care of him. He had his jaw broken and a chunk of skin taken. He got the shit kicked out of him and they were worried if he would be able to walk after. He could now thanks to the medical care he received but he still had a limp.

“I do. I cried at his bedside when they worried he might not wake up. He did and testified with a bandage on his jaw and cheek and in his wheelchair. He couldn’t look at Lex when he testified. And after the life sentence, Lex…was wind.”

Lena bit the inside of her cheek. “I can never atone for the pain he caused Clark. I paid his bills, hired the best therapists and he is walking, but it eats me alive. An innocent man was almost killed for an investigative piece.”

“I mean it got Clark his book deal,” Kara said dryly.

Lena wrung her hands. “I thought you should know. You know my relationship with Lillian. She snapped, she had abused me, I don’t talk to her. But besides mentioning the rum he gave me in passing…you don’t know. And that’s what impacts you most.”

Kara frowned at the shoebox of different postcards. “He’s a monster. I’m sorry to say this about your brother, but I wish he blew his brains out as he described.”

Lena hung her head. “Me too.” She laughed, weakly, sullenly and she hugged herself. Her voice cracked amongst the laughs and Kara wondered to herself if she was near tears. It was hard to tell in the city light. Kara moved down and saw the reflection against her cheek to indicate teardrops. She wiped them away and kissed Lena.

“Can I take these to Alex?”

“Yeah…go ahead.” Lena wiped at her eyes. Her voice trembled. “Kara but it’s different now. When I get nightmares, I get afraid of him hurting you. Hurting anyone I’ve met through you. Him hurting Audra.” She sucked in a harsh breath. “A few months ago, all I could lose was myself. And I was okay with being lost. But now I have all I could ever want and I’m scared to death that he’ll find out and I can lose it all. I couldn’t…I really do love you, Kara. It is the most terrifying thing I’ve done and my life has been one horror after the other.” She looked at Kara. “You make my heart race like a rabbit’s and whenever you’re out of my sight I wonder if that’s the last time I’m going to fucking see you. When I’m sleeping over I check to see Audra is still in her bed because if she got hurt under my
nose…I couldn’t live with myself.”

She was sobbing at this point, voice breaking and her grip on Kara’s arms almost painful. “I love you. I do. It’s an impulsive yet well-earned love.”

“Hey, hey…” Kara pulled her close and held her tight. “Hey, it’s okay. I love you too.” She kissed her, the lips metallic tasting with Lena’s anxious biting. She pulled away and picked the woman up and carried her back inside. They got onto the couch and Kara held her tight as she calmed down.

“I understand if you want to stay away—”

“I’m not going anywhere.” Kara held her close, held her hand and kissed her knuckles. They hung in silence. Kara wanted to speak, rambling on to make Lena smile. She would have done anything but could do nothing.

Lena settled her head against Kara’s sternum and Kara ran her fingers through her hair and kissed the crown of her head.

Lena fell asleep and Kara got out from under her. She picked her up and carried her to bed. She laid her out and cuddled her close. Lena was practically wrapped around her like a koala. Her cheeks were still wet.

She brushed them away with her thumb and kissed her cheek. She rolled onto her back and Lena went with her, on top of her. She pulled the covers up over them and settled in.

Lena woke up in her bed. She sat up and looked around. There was a cup of hot coffee on the bedside table and the spot next to her had pushed aside covers and when she touched it, it was still warm. She heard running water in the bathroom and she knew Kara was showering. She grabbed the coffee and sipped it slowly, staring out the window.

Kara came out with her hair wet and a towel around her waist and another draped over her shoulders. She smiled at Lena. “You’re awake. You feeling okay?”

Lena swallowed hard and put her cup down. “Yeah. Thank you for taking care of me. I didn’t mean to ruin something. I know you probably planned something else to happen.”

“I was going to suggest a drink but I mean I didn’t mind just going to bed. I’m a mom, I can fall asleep about anywhere at any time.” Kara chuckled and took the towel from her shoulders and finished up drying her hair before going to her bag. Lena watched her every movement, the muscles that popped with certain gestures.

“Don’t get dressed,” Lena whispered softly. She crawled to the other edge of the bed, to Kara. Kara stopped and looked at her. Lena reached and pulled her towel, the tucked edge slipping away and then the whole thing fell away.

Kara felt her cheeks heat up. “you don’t want to talk more this morning?”

“I said what I needed to say,” Lena whispered. “You know now that’s been eating me. Unless you have something, why can’t we just enjoy the morning?”

Kara smiled a bit and got into bed with her.
They laid in bed after a lost hour. Kara chuckled to herself as Lena got up to take her shower. She saw the marks on her body and she felt pleased with herself. “What do you want to do for the rest of the day? Make this place even messier or actually leave?” Lena asked.

“I wouldn’t mind getting some food. What’s good around here?”

“There’s a crepe place around the block. Let me shower and you get dressed.”

“Yes, ma’am.” Kara smiled.

Lena disappeared into the bathroom and Kara thought of how domestic it felt. She wondered how it would feel to have it be to have Lena in the morning dynamic with Audra. One of them makes breakfast, the other helps Audra get ready and they go out the door together, going their respective ways.

She was used to being alone. But Lena made her realize she was lonely. Not desperate…just ready. Ready to not be lonely and not be alone. She smiled to herself, getting up and getting another cup of tea and getting dressed. She tied up her hair as Lena came out of the bathroom. Hair and makeup done, simply needed to get dressed.

“We’re just going to breakfast. You don’t need to worry about that stuff.”

Lena just looked at her. “I do.”

Kara realized what she meant. The world followed her moves. And she was a woman. They would know if she was slacking off, be swift in their assault. It could only get worse as Lena aged, have her body possibly be changed by motherhood. Cat got reamed sometimes with her refusal for Botox and to be known to leave the house without makeup and with her glasses on rather than wearing contacts.

Bullshit, Kara knew, but what mattered is that she knew. Lena got dressed and they walked to the café.

“This place has the best crepes, I swear,” Lena told her as they walked in, Lena holding the door for Kara. Kara rolled her eyes and stepped in, taking the hold for Lena to step in. They got in line, subtly holding hands as they read the menu posted up on the wall in colorful chalk.

“Kara?”

They turned and saw Maggie holding two stacked up to-go boxes and a tray of cups with tea bag strings dangling out of them.

She looked at their clasped hands and suddenly had a shit-eating grin.

“Well, well,” she mused. Kara and Lena blushed red and broke away. They got their food and coffee and stepped aside with Maggie.

“What’s got you all the way here?” Kara said, clearing her throat.

“Alex was craving chocolate crepes. So here I am.” She looked around. “What were you two up to?”

“Audra had a sleepover so Lena and I…had a movie night.”
“As friends?” Maggie arched a brow.

Lena looked around. “No, as girlfriends,” Kara said.

“You have the afterglow, Lena. Congrats on now blooming into a full-blown homo. The Doc Martens will be delivered to your doorstep to signify your initiation.” Maggie nudged her in the side with her elbow. Lena scoffed and hugged to Kara’s arm.

They broke apart when people stared. Maggie noticed the micro-expressions. Kara looked stressed, brows furrowing and she fiddled with her necklace. Lena shrunk up and switched her weight to turn her body away from the general sitting area.

“No one knows,” she whispered.

“No one can know,” Lena remarked under her breath, fingers itching for Kara’s. They had been taking risks but the dense place of people likely to take notice made it impossible.

“Okay…um, you two have a good morning.” Maggie smiled, forced and brief. She strolled out and left the couple. She had to ask Alex if she knew.

Kara got them a table and Lena ordered their breakfast. They sat outside, Lena putting on sunglasses and had her back to the approaching foot traffic of the sidewalk.

“Alex knows. Winn too. I just figured they would tell their partners,” Kara said, shrugging.

“Does Audra’s father know you’re seeing me?”

Kara tensed up and cleared her throat. “Um…”

“I know you’re afraid of him using it to defame your character if things go sour, but you do realize that the longer he doesn’t know, the worse it’ll be when he finds out,” Lena told her, gently kicking her in the ass.

“Fine, I’ll talk to him. But you’ll have to meet him soon then. His first thing will be wanting to meet you.”

“Fair enough. In fact, I’ll take him and his wife to dinner. I don’t know, I kind of think we’ll recognize each other. I don’t really recall Mon-el, but I recall his mother, Rhea.”

Kara stopped, her cup clutched in her hand but shy of her lips. She put it down and shifted. “Rhea?”

“She used to be a business partner. We were going to have a merger, but around the time Mon-el broke off from her, now I see why, we dropped all contact. She was…an odd woman. She played into my weaknesses and at times hinted I should marry her son. I ripped the contract up to pieces one night because I realized what she really wanted.”

“What did she want?” Kara whispered.

“To steal from me. Many people know the prosthetic we’ve been developing that would be able to communicate with your cerebrum and communicate it to the fingers, to at least give you the ability to grip things back if you’ve lost a limb.” Lena paused, frowning to herself. “Rhea can rot in hell. If I know anything more I might want to harm her the next time I see her. And that would not go over too well for my “not Luthor” image.” Lena smiled wryly.
Kara chuckled a bit and took Lena’s hand. “I see him tomorrow. We’ll talk.” She sighed. “And I suggest you turn those postcards over. I can tell Alex you need to talk to her if you’d like.”

“No, I have the number of the actual agent on the case. Thank you though, but I won’t concern her with that. I’d like her first impression of me as your partner to be made up in Midvale and not me asking for a favor. She might…see me as a danger.”

Kara grimaced. “Yeah—she does that. She’s protective. Her and Maggie both. Kind of treat me like a teenager sometimes, but they do it out of love.” She shrugged.

Lena smiled at her. “You act like that whole group of yours won’t fully go to war alongside you if called for.”

“We would do that for each and every one. By the way, can you make game night next week?”

“She’ll be a bit late, but I will be there.”

“Okay, remember we get to pick the pizza toppings. But I absolutely will not get spinach on my goddamn pizza.” Kara had a steely look, a seriousness Lena knew was legitimate but she couldn’t help but laugh at her partner.

Mornings in the Ardeen-Damax house were still a bit of mess as things worked into place. Mon-El was trying to make breakfast whilst holding Lars. Imra was looking for her other shoe so she could be out the door as she was working that day, Audra still wasn’t dressed even though Kara would be there in less than an hour.

“Oh—” Imra stopped, sitting down to tie her shoes and she looked at Audra. “Audra, turn off the television and get dressed.”

Audra shut off the TV and went to her room.

Mon-El set down a cup of coffee for Imra. Lars cried cradled in his arm. He turned away and tried to calm him.

“Here, give him over,” Imra sighed. She took her son and took him to the nursery after checking his diaper.

Mon-El relaxed and washed his hands before checking on breakfast. He cursed as he saw the egg had begun to burn. He took it off the burner and scrapped away the edges and chopped them with the edge of his spatula. He put down the toast and looked through the cupboards for the peanut butter.

Audra came out first and he saw she was dressed in a tutu and striped tights and a shirt that was neon blue with Moana on it.

For once she dresses like a kid. He knew that Kara let Audra dress how she liked, but she always was put together. Honestly, she dressed better than her father did some days. But he smiled at his daughter at that moment and sat her down with her toast and some strawberries.

“Like your style kid,” he said lightly before he poured her a cup of juice and kissed her head. Her hair was tied in a braid that he took twenty minutes to do earlier in the morning, but he was proud of it even if there were flyaway hairs.
There was a knocking at the door. He checked his watch. Kara was early. Imra came downstairs and got the door.

“Kara! Good to see you.”

“Hey, how are you? Almost out the door, I see.”

“Oh, I got an hour before I have to go. How was your time?”

“Good…um, Mon-el here?”

“In the kitchen. Come on, would you like some coffee?”

“I’m fine.” Kara and Imra came in. Imra sat at the table, adjusting her hold on Laramie.

Kara stood awkwardly. Audra smiled at her mom.

“That’s certainly the getup today kiddo,” Kara chuckled, walking over and kissing her head. Mon-el saw she looked nervous rather than annoyed to be around him.

“You okay?”

“Um, yeah. I just wanted to invite you guys to dinner with me and my new partner.”

Mon-el nearly dropped the pan in his hand. He quickly got it on the stove and wiped his hands on his jeans. Partner?

“Oh, you’re seeing someone! That’s lovely.” Imra smiled at her husband and then at Kara. “What’s their name?”

They both knew of Kara’s coming out. He remembered she said it defiantly yet shyly around the time they were sorting through custody agreements. He eventually found out she was afraid he would react poorly and use it against her.

“It’s Lena!” Audra squealed, grinning.

Kara rolled her eyes and crossed her arms.

“The pen pal?” Imra asked.

“Yeah…we met up and she was very sweet. Amazing with Audra. Became good friends. She came to a few game nights.” Kara blushed and put a hand on the back of her neck. “Don’t worry, she’s clear of anything. Honestly, she’s something.”

Audra was beaming. Mon-el saw both of them absolutely glowing. He felt his chest tighten and he dwelled even more how bad he fucked up things for Kara. Not that he had to have married her but a bit of support. He could’ve done something…fuck, anything to make her life stable.

He sucked in a breath and spoke, “Dang, I’d love to meet her…” He forced a smile. He walked to behind Imra, putting his hand on the back of her chair and looked at Kara.

“We can talk about when we can do this then.” Kara smiled softly. She and Audra left soon after.

Mon-el got to washing the dishes.

“You’re okay with it?” Imra asked him. He paused, clutching a spatula in his gloved hand.
“I’d be a hypocrite. I’d be a terrible person.”

“I’m not saying you hate that she’s with someone.”

“Are you suggesting I don’t like that she’s dating a woman?”

“I’m asking if you’re okay with the pen pal being the person she’s dating. I know you were skeptical.”

“I’m fine with it.” He sighed. “I am, honest. I don’t know, I’m nervous. I’m sure Kara felt nervous when she met you. Any partner is a potential impact on Audra’s life.”

She nodded and checked the clock. “I should go.” She got up and passed off Laramie. Mon-el leaned down and kissed her cheek. “I love you.”

“You’ll get mine when you get home,” he mumbled. She nudged his jaw with her knuckle and put her hat on and saluted before walking out the door.

Chapter End Notes

A lot of people thought I was going to make Mon-el her ex. I thought about it but like I don't think Kara would be able to stomach that in any universe. She's a kind person but the object of her affection being with one of the people she used to hate most?
Mon-el adjusted the empty carrier on his back as pushed Lars gently back and forth. He would make faces at him to get him to squeal and smile. At six months the boy was bright-eyed and even had a head of dark brown hair.

Mon had come to hate changing plans once he got settled down. But Imra took someone’s patrol and Brainy got sick. He was left with Laramie and upon finding that out, Kara insisted instead of canceling they could simply take the kids out in the afternoon. Maybe a bit of time at the park nearby his home.

The sun was setting soon, making it a bit cooler. Lars had on a jacket as a precaution. He checked his watch as he caught the back of Lars’ swing. The boy looked up at him below the brim of his bucket hat. Mon smiled softly and took a picture on his phone to send to Imra.

_The squirt really is having the time of his life_

He got a quick reply.

_Unless you want to make another, stop being so cute with him_

He tucked his phone away and looked up to see Audra running over and two women behind him. He pinpointed Kara but there was a woman in all black at her side. Pale skin and a slicked bun. He knew the look.

“Dad!” Audra stopped shy to catch the swing with her brother. The boy smiled at his sister and Mon came around and picked Audra up.

“My little bear cub,” he said fondly, holding her up and kissing her cheek before putting her down. Kara smiled at him as she came over. He saw she was holding hands with the woman.

The park was almost empty at this point. A ways away there was a kid playing in the sandbox with his mother sitting on a bench with her book.

“Hey,” Kara said to him.

“Hey yourself.” He smirked and watched over her shoulder as Audra scampered off to the sandbox.

“This is Lena Luthor,” she said. Lena held her free hand up shyly and smiled just as timidly with her red painted lips.

He held his hand out and she took it to shake. He put it down. “Good seeing you again.”

“Likewise,” she said. She looked down at Laramie and her eyes lit up. “Who’s this little cutie patootie?” Her voice adopted that “baby talk” quality.

“Laramie.”

“After your father, huh?” She looked down at the boy. “Your eyes have a rather strong quality to them. Two for two.”

“I mean they’re the money makers.” He smirked and grabbed the chains of the swing. He gently pulled Lars back and forth, barely enough to move him but not too much it would bump Kara and
Lena. “Sorry for the change of plans. I’m sure you had plans for a nice place.”

“Honestly? An afternoon with Audra and Kara is much more appealing than sitting in a dimly lit restaurant.”

An afternoon without me, he thought.

Lena went to the sandbox as Mon-el got Lars from the swing. He looked at Kara.

“How are things going with her?”

“Pretty good. Not many people know…the group knows. No one at work. You and Imra now.”

“Eliza know?”

“Yeah. She’s excited to meet Lena.” She smiled.

“Eliza coming into town soon?” He arched a brow.

She grimaced and put her hand on the back of her neck and her other cupped around her elbow.

“Um, no…she’s coming to Midvale with us. We’re driving up tomorrow.”

“Wow. Lena Luthor taking two weeks off? You might be magical,” he joked. She didn’t laugh, just looked at where Lena was sitting on the edge talking with the kids and helping them craft a lopsided kingdom.

The mother with her book watched over the cover of her book. Kara and Mon-el walked over.

“It’ll need a moat,” Lena said to the kids.

“Yeah!” The boy began scraping with his little yellow shovel. He had curly ginger hair and freckles speckled across his pale face. He was dirty and Audra’s dress was already soiled at the skirt with the specks of sand. And…Lena had taken a few risks with putting her pantyhose clad feet into the sand and her hands under the heaps.

Mon-el sat next to the woman as did Kara. He shifted the carrier, putting it on his chest and putting Lars into it. “Um, which one of you are the other parent to that little girl?” the woman whispered.

Mon-el glared at her as Kara chuckled a bit. She smiled softly. “Sorry, that’s my partner, Lena. I’m Kara. This is Mon-el, and that little guy is Lars.”

The woman visibly relaxed and that was the end of it.

The two women didn’t see as Audra picked up a pail from the box. Mon-el looked at his daughter as she went back to the series of faucets on the fountain and she stepped on the peddle for one, filling
Damian noticed her, walking over and the two whispering and looking at Lena as she seemed satisfied in her efforts on getting as clean as possible whilst staying as dry as possible.

Mon-el nudged Kara and got her attention in the right moment. Right as Audra and Damian threw the pail of water at Lena and got her soaking wet.

The scream was high and the look of betrayal priceless.

“Audra!” “Damian!”

The two mothers got up and set in motion. He bit the inside of his cheek to keep from laughing.

Lena was squeezing out her hair as she looked down at the two kids. Mon-el got up and walked over to hear what was going on.

“…hey, I’m not mad,” Lena said lightly as Kara spoke.

“That wasn’t nice Audra.”

“Damian now how was that called for? You just met the woman and see now you’ve ruined her nice dress!”

The two kids mumbled apologies.

Lena just held up a hand and smiled. “It’s just a bit of water. It’s forgiven.” She got a mock stern look at Audra. “But not forgotten, kid. Watch yourself.”

Audra smirked.

“Don’t encourage her,” Kara said as she shook her head.

Lena looked at the woman. “Your son just got led to action by an older kid. It’s fine. Maybe teach him to be a leader and not a follower.”

Lena went to her car, having a towel in there.

Mon-el just looked Kara with a small smirk. Damian and his mom left pretty soon.

“You saw exactly what they were doing,” Kara muttered to Mon-el as he began to laugh once the pair was out of earshot.

“Kids will be kids. I like Lena if she can see that. I’ve gotten a water balloon to my jewels from this kid. A pail of water is nothing!”

Audra smiled as Kara rubbed at her temple and sighed. She eventually broke and laughed a bit. “Okay, it’s a bit funny. But really! Don’t do that.”

Audra nodded and hugged Kara. Lena came with a towel around her shoulders. Audra hugged her too.

Lena put her hands on her shoulders. “I said I wasn’t mad, kid. It’s okay.” She tipped Audra’s head up with her hand, made sure she knew. “I’m not mad.”

Mon-el frowned a bit as Kara just shook her head. She didn’t get it. “I’m not mad.” Possibly
something Lena wanted to hear at every turn. Lillian was always finding something wrong with her. He knew something was up with what he saw. He didn’t know…the depth of it until it was too late to help Lena.

Audra went to the slide with a snake head at the bottom and Mon stepped up to Lena.

“I’m really happy you got out.”

“You’re acting like I was living a waking hell,” she said lightly.

“I just…realized after the news broke what I saw. Lillian scared the hell out of you when we were kids. I should’ve, as the older one, tried to protect you—”

“Mon-el, she was good at hiding it. They usually are. Rhea’s so good that I swear you don’t even see it.”

He sighed. “I guess that’s got validity.” He frowned. “What was your breaking point with her?”

Lena took Kara’s hand unconsciously. “I was tired of living by her wishes. Mon-el you aren’t living in Rhea’s idea of what you should be. You married a woman outside of our society, you became a cop, you came into Audra’s life…had this little guy—” Lena smiled at Lars. He gurgled and reached out for her as he smiled. “Don’t you feel at some point you said “enough?””

“Meeting Imra. At a bar. She was outgoing and caring…” He stopped himself, realizing it was awkward. “I dated her without thinking. My mom tried getting me a betrothed and I rejected it. She got angry and I said fuck all. I quit working for my mom and we got a flat. I was working odd jobs at that time until we got engaged. We decided to move to the states after my mother came back into the picture and said I couldn’t marry her.” He shrugged. “That I had a duty as the sole heir for Daxamite Inc. I told her, “sell it,” and split.”

“That’s not the end of it,” Kara tutted.

He glared a bit but sighed, running his fingers through his hair. “She…I still have my trust fund.”

Kara went and pushed Audra on the swing.

Lena watched them. “What did she put Kara through?”

“A lot,” was all he could say, frowning. “I’m not proud of what she had to face.”

“Good—nothing to be proud about.” She looked at him. “You still take your trust?”

He shrugged and hung his head. “You wouldn’t?”

“I’m not in your shoes. I know I can’t judge you for wanting some more stability for your young family…but I will not learn independence on her. She has leverage on you, Mon-el. You don’t feel it…yet.” She looked at the sleeping baby on his chest. “He might. You’re giving her an in to his life.”

“Why do you think it’s just him with an in?”

“Kara wouldn’t let Rhea touch her baby with a ten-foot pole. And our society doesn’t like illegitimate kids. Trust me.”

“What do you have a kid I don’t know about?” He muttered.
“Hey, ass, listen to me,” she remarked, adjusting the towel on her shoulders and walking past him, his eyes following. “Cut her out and I’ll help you out.”

“I don’t want your help. Correction—I don’t need it.”

“You can raise a kid on your combined income. If he’s smart enough, college might be a snap. But what about her?” She looked at Audra and Kara. His eyes followed.

“Child support is thousands…” He muttered, “Imra and I filed joint…it’s so fucking much. I mean—I know Kara is paying a lot for the private school. That she makes a lot less than I do…but it racks up. Rhea deposits money monthly and doesn’t care what I spend it on. It pays back how much they take from my checks and a bit more. The bit covers how much Imra loses.” He sighed.

“I’ll cover it.”

“Now I want you to think how that’ll make Kara feel. She hates me enough and your relationship is new. Lena, I know you’re trying to help…but you won’t be helping. It works for now and the costs are only so high because I ducked out for four years and, well, I make more than Kara. A lot more. I know.”

She grimaced. “I don’t like thinking you’re right, but you are.”

He looked at his daughter flying through the air just to arch back down to be pushed back up by her mother. “You’ll help her more if you just stay with her.” He looked at Lena. “I can tell you’re wrapped around their fingers.”

“And you’re okay with that?”

He looked down at the turf, kicking up the woodchips a bit. “Yes…and no. I have no right to be jealous and I am. Imra has joint custody…so she has a relationship with Audra, but it’s so limited. I’m part of maybe a quarter of her life. But Kara’s spouse? They will really have it. Joint custody for the majority. I would never do anything to hurt Kara now, but I still have selfish regards toward it all. I want to be in Audra’s life. I know Kara doesn’t think so, but I did choose to come back. Imra wasn’t going to leave me if I didn’t. We could’ve gone anywhere in the world. But I knew there was little kid out there without a dad.”

“She has a lot of love in her life. Do you see that?”

He sucked in a shaky breath. “I do. I know Winn, Maggie, Alex…now you and James—you’re doing what you can to make that girl’s life better. Winn was her first male role model. He’ll shape her perception of the opposite sex more than I ever will.”

“He’s a good man.”

“He is.” He frowned. “I used to be friends with him in college. His feelings towards me are at best neutral now.”

“Do you think you’re deserving of forgiveness from any of them?”

“No—I just miss the good times with him.”

“Right.” Lena shook her head as she walked over to Kara and Audra as Audra had gotten off the swing.

He followed her. Kara looked up. Her brow was crinkled, the scar between her eyes crinkling up.
“Everything okay?” Kara asked them.

“Yeah. Just talking about some unresolved stuff,” Lena told her. She pulled her close and kissed her cheek.

Audra scrunched up her face. Kara noticed and nudged her daughter lightly. “Hey, mom deserves some love too, you know.”

“You promised,” Audra whined, hanging off of Kara’s arm.

Kara rolled her eyes. She looked at Mon and cleared her throat. “You want…to talk?”

“Yeah.”

Lena took Audra’s hand. “I’ll take her to the apartment.” Kara nodded and kissed her briefly on the lips and promised Audra she would be back soon.

Mon-El and Kara walked off. He looked down at Laramie to see him staring at him.

“Almost home bud.” He looked at Kara. “I like this one.”

Her eyes widened a bit. “Well, she’s…the first.” She crossed her arms and focused on where she put her feet rather than him.

“No, she isn’t. Kara, I knew about Siobhan. That one lunch we had…I was early and I got lost and I saw you two in this vacant area. I just ducked back and walked away.”

She turned red, humiliated by the reality that he could’ve seen quite possibly anything from benign touches to full-on groping. “You didn’t do anything?”

“Kara, I had been gone for five years and I screwed you over. What right did I have to say you couldn’t date?”

“You could’ve used it as an argument about Audra’s home life being unstable.”

“Kara, you have always had things planned out. Always been the person to care. Sure, you fumble and things seem to almost always seem to go awry if they could…but you have it together more than anyone I knew.”

“I was almost homeless once or twice.”

“I know. You made sure I did that first night…” He chuckled a bit as she looked up. A few screaming matches had been exchanged between them. Well, more than a few.

“So you like her?”

“I kinda always did. I don’t know. She didn’t bend but she was quiet. I knew she was hurting. Both our moms sucked. Good angst as kids. But now I see a backbone. Confidence. Actually giving a damn. I don’t know if that’s being CEO or something you did, or both…but I’m glad she’s happy. That you are. That Audra likes her so much.”

“It’s pretty amazing. She knows her night routine and she’s trying to get into the dynamic. Kind of fits. We part ways, her going to work and me taking Audra to school. She helps Audra with homework sometimes. I don’t know. I’m afraid of her getting too attached but then again, I should be afraid about the same for myself.”
“I think you should be aware she is just as attached if she puts that sort of effort, Kara.” He looked down at her. “There would be a very big change in dynamic if this lasts. You would be in the public eye.”

“We’ve been trying to avoid that.”

“It won’t last long Kara. There are photos of us. And I never took you to an event or was blatant. People just noticed us in the day. And the Daxam name is far from the Luthor one.”

“Okay. I get it.”

“I’m not trying to scare you. I support this. Because you and Audra are happy. Lena is so in love, I know.” He put his hand on her shoulder. “I’m saying this from experience. That at times it will feel unfair. You’ll decide what you can take and what you want will not always be the same thing.” He sighed. “But don’t get scared away, if this is what you want.”

“It is.”

“I know you don’t want my blessing, or really care if you have it, but you do. I’m happy for you, Kara.”

She moved toward him, giving him a side hug to not crush Lars. “I actually…kinda needed to hear that you’re okay with it. I always was afraid you would get mad, maybe try to take her away—”

“I wouldn’t do that.”

“I have anxiety. I think of things that could never happen and they eat me up inside. It has for years.”

“I should get Laramie home.” He looked at the sun that had begun to disappear. The lights had gone on in the park. “You want me to walk you home?”

“,Well Audra won’t be there.” Kara smirked. He rolled her eyes. “Lena’s apartment is close here. We’re driving out in the morning.”

“Have fun.” He hugged her again and looked down at her. Lars babbled between them. Kara chuckled at the baby boy and put a gentle hand on his back. He cooed.

“Bye to you too, Laramie.” She stepped back and put her hands in her pockets. She crossed the street, walking away from him.

\textit{Audra’s lineage might come out.}

\textit{She deserves to be proud. We’ll leave it. I don’t care. Rhea does. And I don’t care}
Kara woke up to her alarm and she tapped it off. She sat up slowly and yawned. She looked over at her bedside. She peeled away the duvet to see Audra holding onto her penguin plushie. The pink cow was now tucked behind the pillows. The girl was curled in the fetal position and curled into Lena’s side. Lena was laying on her back, arm around Audra and the other resting on her abdomen. She looked…peaceful. They both were down for the count and content.

Kara regretted that she had to wake them up. She took pictures first before she first woke Lena up with a kiss on the cheek and whispering, “babe, wake up.”

Lena groaned softly and opened her eyes. She mumbled in a sleepy voice, “what’s it to ya? Yer really gon’ make me do this…” She yawned and looked at Audra. “Oi…”

Audra sat up and blinked. She was squinting at her mom, looking like she was glaring. Her blonde hair was everywhere as she went to bed with it wet. Kara laughed a bit and turned on the lamp. Lena muttered something in a different language as she covered her face with her hands.

“You two went to sleep before I did. How are you so out of it?” Kara sighed as she got up and grabbed her clothes from her bags, having planned out to have a travel outfit packed for this morning.

Audra mumbled, “I had a nightmare.”

“What?” Kara looked down at her. Audra turned into Lena, hiding her face from the light.

“She had a nightmare. I was awake taking a phone call from Sam and I heard her crying. It took an hour to get her calmed down and she wouldn’t sleep in her bed. I took her here,” Lena said for the girl, as Audra had shyly climbed under the covers. Lena got out of bed and stretched. Her back popped and grunted. “Hey, sweet pea.” She peeled away the covers. “We gotta go! We have to meet up with your aunts at our first stop soon.”

The girl whined. “It’s cooooold.”

“I guess I gotta get the bucket of water…” Lena started to the door. Audra was up and out like a bullet. Lena smirked, satisfied. She turned and looked at Kara as the woman dressed.

Kara zipped up her hoodie. “Nice tactic.”

Lena smirked and changed into plain clothing. Comfortable, yet put-together look with the port wine colored chinos and a crewneck black shirt. She put a jean jacket over it all. “You can use the bathroom just off there. I’ll check on Audra in the guest bathroom. You got your toiletries bag in there still right?”

“Oh, well, hers. Mine’s packed away.” Kara shifted uncomfortably. “Did she say what the dream was about?”

Lena walked over to Kara, pulling her close by her forearms and looking up at her. “It was just a kid’s imagination. She said there was a scary man and that she couldn’t find any of us. I told her she wasn’t ever going to be alone. If anything at one point how loved she is will be an annoyance to her.
She told me how that would never happen, I made her a glass of warm milk, we sat on the couch and I stroked her hair until she passed back out. Finished my phone call and carried her to the bed. This was…one in the morning I think?” Lena looked up as she tried to recall the hazy time.

“Thank you.” Kara rested her forehead against hers. “You know, I don’t know how I did without you now. I had a whole system in place to keep my life in balance. I thought someone new would ruin it…that so much that’s happened around you would ruin it.”

“Gee, thanks,” Lena muttered, scrunching up her face in mock anger.

Kara kissed her cheek. “C’mon. You know I’m trying to say I really appreciate you being around. Helping.”

Lena blushed and looked away. "What would I do?” Her expression softened and her shoulders lowered. "I--I care about you both, respectively."

"You already said you loved me. Don't mince words," Kara teased.

"I did...I don't know. I guess I love her too.” Lena fidgeted with the lowest button on her coat.

"Don't tell her that. You have leverage because she doesn't know she can get whatever she wants with ease." Kara kissed her cheek before going to check on Audra.

Time on the road started a bit bumpy. Packing the back seat required a bit of finessing and Kara got a call from Maggie saying they were running behind by a lot. The then five months along Alex had had a long night so Maggie let her get some more rest that morning.

Kara adjusted her glasses and checked her phone as they finally got into the seat. She had a few messages from Nia that she could only describe as a textual depiction of anxiety.

**Nia: I’m in the office**

It was only six am. Nia usually didn’t have show up at the office until nine.

**Nia: I can’t find your laptop you said you left it right?**

She did. It was on her desk. There was a file on top of it with prints of the slides.

**Nia: Kara I need it for the presentation**

She knew, why it was out in the open.

**Nia: I can’t do this alone I know Cat has too much faith in me**

She could do it alone. Cat had the right amount of faith in someone so brilliant.

**Nia: what if I make her angry? I’ll lose this job**

If that were true, Kara’s job would be as good as gone. If Nia couldn’t impress Cat Grant, no one
Kara laughed to herself. “I need to make a call, one sec.” Lena started up the car as Kara talked Nia off the ledge and kept repeating, “you’ll crush it. Just stay calm.”

She got Nia breathing normally and they said their goodbyes. She smiled a bit and looked at Lena. “Sorry, that was a co-worker of mine. She’s going solo on something we worked on together. I know she can do it.”

“I’m sure she will. Are you talking about Nia Nal? I remember Cat talking about her last time we got lunch together,” Lena said, getting into the mess that was the California highway.

“Yeah. You ever meet her?”

“Nope! I mean Cat was like, “you know she could use a guide around the city.” I told her I was going to be out of the city for a bit.”

Kara smirked. “Yeah.”

“What?”

“I think she was trying to set you up with Nia.” She chuckled a bit.

Lena blushed. “I wouldn’t.”

“I know. It’s funny—you’re kinda dense about flirting. Nia is the one person at work that knows.”

“I owe her a debt then,” Lena sighed, knowing the one co-worker that knew had paid off the photographer.

“I’ve been trying to pay her back. All I can do is give her my friendship.”

“I’ll have to extend some myself.”

They got to Midvale as the sun began to set. Eliza was out on the porch when they showed up. Audra bolted out of the car, running to Eliza and the woman barely was on her feet when Audra ran into her.

“Look how big you’ve gotten! God, you’re growing to be so beautiful,” Eliza swooned, down on a knee to be level with Audra. She touched the girl’s cheek and smiled.

“Grandma so much happened! Do you know? Do you know?” Audra smiled.

“Know about what?” Eliza chuckled.

Alex and Kara came up next. Eliza dotted on Alex.

“Look at you. How are you feeling? Do you know the gender? Oh, wow I can’t believe my little Alex is going to be a mom!” Eliza smiled. She looked at Kara. “How are you doing? You said you had someone you’re bringing with you. Please tell me you brought Winn. It’s been so long since I saw him.”

“I hate to disappoint, Dr. Danvers.” Lena stepped up with Maggie, carrying some of the bags.
Eliza looked up and saw Lena. She smiled a bit. “I know you.” Lena sucked in a breath and held it there nervously. “Dr. Lena Luthor! A prodigy from MIT.” She smirked and shook Lena’s hand. “So, you and Kara are friends?”

“Guess again,” Audra said in a sing-song voice, hanging off of her mother’s arm. Kara blushed and chuckled as she put her free arm around Lena’s waist.

“Eliza, this is Lena. My girlfriend.”

Eliza lit up. “A girlfriend!” She put an arm around Lena’s shoulder, leading her inside. “Let me show you around.”

Audra smirked up at her mother.

“You know, kid, you’re becoming too much like me,” Kara sighed.

“I love how it’s been so long that Eliza cares more about a girlfriend rather than her pregnant kid,” Maggie said, a repressed chuckle in her voice. She carried their bags in and up to Alex’s old room where they would be sleeping.

Alex smiled down at Kara. “I think it started well. Dr. Luthor? I didn’t know.”

“No one does. I found out while writing an article about her.” Kara shrugged, acting like it didn’t bother her.

“Okay but it’s not that hard.”

“She has two of them and she’s twenty-five.”

Alex leaned in and whispered softly. “Okay, that’s kinda sexy.”

Kara smirked and nodded, stepping inside. “Lena’s amazing. I love her a lot.”

Alex smiled softly. “I’m glad. Your choice in women is better than that in men.”

“Excuse you. James is a gold-standard guy.”

“Did you date him?” Alex arched a brow.

“…No.”

“Case in point.”

They had dinner out on the porch, the wind gently rustling the leaves and sending waves through the grass that fades out once it reaches the sand. Audra had finished the story about her school year and how Lena played into it.

Eliza was amused at how she gestured, thinking of the teenaged Kara coming out of her shell doing the same things. Lena and Kara watched on as if they hadn’t seen this bit before.

“Tell me this—what was it about it?” Eliza asked, smiling at Lena.

“About the letter?” Eliza nodded a bit. "I don’t know. I was kinda in a place in my life where why
the hell not just do something to make someone’s day? Who could say no to a kid just doing a project?” Lena smiled.

“‘Why not’ is just your mantra, isn’t it?” Alex asked Lena. Lena blushed.

“Basically. Why not help someone? Why not make this? Why not…go after the girl?”

“Because the girl is a wuss,” Maggie said.

Kara punched her on the arm. “I got there eventually!”

Kara came downstairs and sighed. She sank next to her sister and got a glass of wine handed to her.

“How did you swing two weeks off?” Maggie asked Lena.

“My friend Sam picked it up for me. I did that for her six months ago when she was going through personal stuff so she was more than ready to help out.”

“Will we ever get to meet her?” Alex asked. “I mean Kara has flashed you around our group so many times and it feels like you don’t have anyone to show off.”

“I really don’t have that many people in my life now.” Lena blushed. “I mean, I have the people Kara introduced me to. But I have only a few people. Sam and my friend Jack…Mercy’s MIA.”

“Mercy?” Kara arched a brow.

“She’s—an old mentor. She was Lex’s lover on and off. She disappeared when he did. She’s either with him or in her own little place of paradise.”

“I say you’ve picked a good bunch if you’re around the group,” Eliza cut in, smiling. “Fine bunch of people.”

“Your girls are good judges of character,” Lena said.

“Yeah, why you’re here!” Alex said, smirking as Lena turned pure red and hid her face in Kara’s shoulder. Kara only laughed.

“Savor this moment, Alex isn’t much for compliments,” Maggie told Lena, smirking. “Eliza you know much about Lena? She’s got a lot to precede her.”

“I know. I remember meeting her. She’s six years younger than all her peers and at a lecture about pacemakers that use a battery recharged by the body naturally. Came up to me in her full-on gothic regalia—”

“Wait…Lena was a goth?” Maggie asked.

“I dabbled,” Lena sighed and ran her fingers through her hair.

“Dabbled? What does that mean?”

“Piercings and metal bands. It’s easy to piss off a Catholic mom and dad if you dress like you’re a groupie of the Memphis Three,” Lena said lightly, grimacing slightly. “God my mother almost had a heart attack when she saw I had pierced my tongue.” She chuckled.
“Of course! God when Kara came home with her septum I was at a loss,” Eliza said, eyes wide.

“You then said “the gem kinda brings out your eyes,”’” Alex teased. Her mother rolled her eyes and smiled slightly.

“Clark was the person that lost it,” Kara added. “He freaked out so much I just let it close up. Wasn’t worth that man’s drama.”

“He’s easy to get his panties in a twist,” Alex muttered. “He coming to Christmas this year?”

“Said he would be,” Kara said. She smiled. “I think he’ll follow through.”

“It’ll be our first Christmas with the baby,” Maggie said. “He’s due in October.” She smiled.

“I’m really proud of you girls. I know this has been a big strain but here you are…it’s a good fit. You’ll make great parents,” Eliza said. She smiled and put a hand on Alex’s leg. Alex nearly teared up, hiding in Maggie’s arms.

“Sorry, hormones…”

Kara laughed a bit and patted her sister on the shoulder as she walked past. She made her way to the kitchen to get her and Lena a beer.

Eliza looked at Lena. “I hate to overstep my bounds…but do you ever want kids?”

“We already asked her that question,” Maggie said.

“The answer changed a bit. I’m…not afraid of the prospect.” Lena sighed, “I know your favor of me would be completely gone if I just said I don’t want kids and am dating your daughter who has a little one.”

“I wouldn’t judge you for it.” Eliza shifted so she was facing Lena. “I have Kara’s interest in mind, but you being unsure about kids doesn’t make you a bad person.”

“She knew how I felt going into this. I’m sorry, but we’re grown women. We know what we’re getting into.”

“That is true…but Kara is special. She would go into it.”

“She almost didn’t,” Lena said. “Her and I had a fluke of a date and I thought it was the end. Then by timing, we saw each other again. Got into a fight and she put her cards out. “Come to my house for dinner or don’t. I’ll know how you feel.” I did…and it was the right choice.”

Kara came back, clueless as she sat back down and passed her girlfriend her drink.

Eliza nodded a bit. “I like your perspective on that subject,” she said, not to draw inquiry from Kara.

They had turned on a movie. Lena and Maggie had passed out, leaving the Danvers women up. Alex had her legs stretched out, resting on the coffee table. Kara stayed in place, arm around Lena who rested her head on her shoulder. They were illuminated only by the blue light of the television and the flashing images of James Stewart as he goes about his filibuster as the striking Senator Smith.

“I think this is my favorite year so far,” Eliza said quietly, looking at her girls.
“I don’t know. I think next year will top it,” Alex said. Kara smiled softly.

"I want to be happy now." She played with Lena's hair. "Audra was my only priority for the past six years. She will always be first...but I want to be happy."

"And that's with her?" Eliza and Alex looked at her. They had the same look, Kara almost wanted to comment on it. But she didn't want to ruin it, seeing how they poise their heads and move their brows the same way. She wanted to keep the moment in any way. Remember the warmth, the sounds of breathing and indistinct voices, the looks of the women who saved her fondly awaiting the verdict.

"I wouldn't mind if it was."

Chapter End Notes

So I didn't touch this story for a few months. I thought I was going to work on this story a lot while recovering from my top surgery but I no energy and went back to school. I re-opened it because my school closed for two days due to weather (gotta love -27 windchill). I'm worried about writing myself into a corner for the next chapter.

Thank you for reading.

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